

Childcare in Crisis:

The Local Access and Sustainability Challenge in Oklahoma

Why Licensed Capacity ≠
Accessible Care

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Half of Providers Are at or Above Capacity – But Many Slots Remain Empty

Infant and toddler rooms
are full or waitlisted

Older child slots
remain open

Staffing shortages keep
providers below licensed capacity



Childcare is Expensive

- **Reported annual cost at a local high quality tribal provider: ~ \$23k per child**

**Whole-program average*

Average Annual Tuition at Local Providers - Private Pay



**Annualized using 52 weeks*

Takeaway: Without additional subsidies, quality suffers.



DHS Rates Often Don't Cover Costs – Providers Drop DHS Participation

Low reimbursement drives providers out of the program

20 DHS-supported children lost in 30 days

Slots were filled by tribal or private pay families



Unpaid Absences – But Costs Don't Pause

CURRENT

DHS payments based on attendance

\$

0

No revenue
if children are absent



Costs continue
for staff, rent,
food, and care

Volatile cash flow. Financial strain.

THE NEED

Payment for enrolled slots

\$

Revenue supports
financial stability



Predictable support
covers ongoing
operating costs

Stable funding. Stronger providers.



Staffing Challenges Limit Available Childcare

Nontribal

\$10–\$17/ hour

Tribal

\$16–\$24/ hour

Some local providers cannot fill licensed spaces because of staffing shortages.

Source: Avedis provider interviews. Reported wages vary by position and credentials.



STAR Advancement Costs

Outpace Reimbursement Increases



Higher STAR ratings come with substantially higher costs, but reimbursement grows too slowly to keep up.

Providers Report Costs Beyond Daily Operations

**Accreditation application
and renewal costs**

**Training and curriculum
expenses**

**Facility improvements
identified by providers**

**Some providers identified these
costs as barriers to STAR
advancement**



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Source: Avedis local provider
interviews.

Centers Close, Workforce Shrinks, Families Lose Access — **Critical Early Years at Risk**

Families lose care & jobs

Workforce turnover increases

Disrupted care during critical birth-
to-five years



Stable Rates, Attendance Payments, Workforce Support & STAR Stability = Sustainable Access

Reimbursement rates that cover true cost

Payment for enrolled slots, not just attendance

Invest in workforce wages & training completion

Help meeting STAR requirements and
covering advancement costs

Together, We Can Secure Oklahoma's Childcare Future

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