



Child Care Program Report

Fiscal Years 2023-2024

A Report to the Texas Legislature
and
Legislative Budget Board
December 2024

This report is submitted by the Texas Facilities Commission (TFC) pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 663.052 and is due December 1st of every even-numbered year. For additional information, please contact Lia Edwards, General Counsel Division, at lia.edwards@tfc.texas.gov or Rick Glancey, Government Relations, at richard.glancey@tfc.texas.gov.

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Program History

The Texas Legislature established the State of Texas child care program for state employees (the Program) in 1989 (Article 6252-3e of the Vernon's Annotated Revised Civil Statutes of the State of Texas, currently codified in Texas Government Code Chapter 663). The Program serves State of Texas employees of all income levels and provides quality child care services. The legislature intended the Program's facilities to be housed in existing or newly constructed state-owned buildings. Upon its inception, the Program was assigned as an agency function and duty of the State Purchasing and General Services Commission. Its successor agency, the Texas Facilities Commission (TFC or the Commission), currently administers and operates the Program pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 663.101.

Facilities

The Program currently consists of one facility, Emma's Garden-Capitol Complex Child Care Center (the Center), located in the Barbara Jordan State Office Building at 1601 Congress Ave, Austin, Texas. The Program relocated there in the Summer of 2022, upon completion of the purpose-built space. The new facility is a significant improvement over the former location, offering more space and amenities, including three adjoining outdoor play areas.

The Center's new location allowed the Program to expand from a maximum capacity of 121 children to as many as 200 children. The design includes two classrooms for four-year-olds and three classrooms each for infants, toddlers, two-year-olds, and three-year-olds. There is also a library, a staff breakroom, and private rooms designed to accommodate special activities, such as third-party physical and speech therapy and breastfeeding. The three playgrounds are set up for different age groups and provide new playscapes with shade structures, water play accommodation, and age-appropriate nature teaching through gardening, role-playing, and other activities. Staff, children, and parents have eagerly embraced the new facility.

By Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 4, issued during the 88th Regular Session of the Texas Legislature, the Capitol Complex Child Care Center was renamed "Emma's Garden" in honor of the late Emma Barrientos, a respected civic leader and champion of the Center, and wife of former State Senator Gonzalo Barrientos. A dedication ceremony was held in July 2024, attended by Mrs. Barrientos' family and state and local officials.





Program Operations

TFC performs its responsibilities concerning the Program through contracted service providers. The University of Texas at Austin Child Development Center (UTCDC) holds the contract for the Program. During its meeting on March 18, 2015, the Commission approved the Interagency Cooperation Contract and associated Lease award to UTCDC. The associated Lease Agreement between TFC and the Board of Regents of the University of Texas System for the Use and Benefit of the University of Texas at Austin became effective on April 20, 2015. The Interagency Cooperation Contract for Child Care Services and Operation and Management of the State of Texas Child Care Program between TFC and the University of Texas at Austin was executed on May 18, 2015. The initial contract term was for six years, beginning June 1, 2015, and expiring on August 31, 2021. The contract included renewal options for two additional two-year periods. The Commission elected to exercise both renewal options and amended the contract to continue through August 31, 2025. A new Lease Agreement was executed for the new location for the period August 1, 2022 through August 31, 2025, with renewals available.

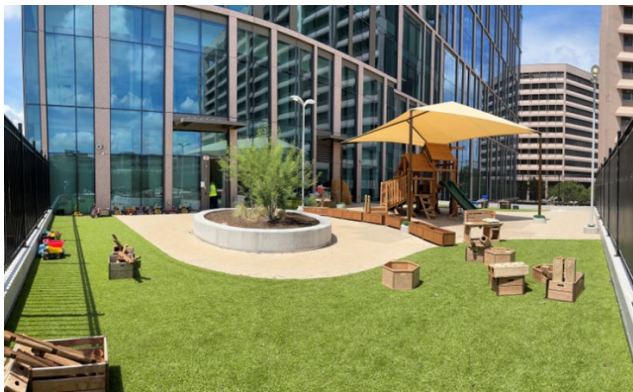
The philosophy of UTCDC is to nurture each child's growth and education in a stimulating and caring learning environment. This environment allows children the opportunity to develop linguistic, social, physical, and cognitive skills. Professionally trained teachers and caregivers plan activities and arrange stimulating learning opportunities for the different developmental stages of a child's life. The Program values strong partnerships with parents as essential to achieving its goals. As a result, UTCDC established a Parent Advisory Council (PAC) at the Center. The PAC provides feedback regarding the Center's operation and reviews the annual parent survey for areas of improvement. This group meets monthly and serves as a voice for enrolled families.

Program Accreditation

UTCDC was awarded national accreditation in January 2017 through the National

Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs (NAC). NAC allows early learning professionals to demonstrate and document quality performance using research-based criteria and evidence-based practices. NAC also provides a comprehensive, ongoing quality improvement system that recognizes the inherent diversity among programs through the self-study and award process. In January 2020, the UTCDC submitted its self-study to NAC for reaccreditation, and accreditation officials conducted their visit in May 2021. UTCDC was reaccredited through May 2025 and is required to submit annual reports to certify their continuing compliance.

In addition to this accreditation, the facility was elevated to a four-star rating in February 2017 from Texas Rising Star, which offers a quality rating and improvement system for Texas early childhood programs. UTCDC has continued to maintain this status, allowing them to offer need-based tuition subsidies through the Texas Workforce Commission in addition to the income-based sliding scale discounts detailed below in Table 1.



Tuition Rates

The UTCDC uses a sliding-scale tuition structure based on annual household income, thus providing affordable services to State of Texas employees of all income levels. Tuition is based on the following annual household income levels:

Level A	\$0 - \$64,999 (10 slots available; excess qualified families pay at Level B until a vacancy becomes available at Level A)
Level B	\$65,000 - \$124,999
Level C	\$125,000 +

At the June 15, 2016, Commission meeting, the Commission approved the first non-discretionary tuition increase. Since then, the Commission has approved each of UTCDC's annual requests for needed tuition increases to cover rising costs, including facility staff salaries, for the upcoming fiscal year. Current and past tuition rates are outlined in Table 1 below.

The UTCDC and the PAC have supported each tuition increase to maintain the quality and

integrity of the education and services rendered by the staff at this facility. Similar tuition increases are implemented at UTCDC’s two other child care locations. The Commission approved these motions based on the UTCDC’s performance during each contract term, the exceptional quality of their services, curriculum, and parent support.



Table 1 Tuition Rates for the school year beginning September 1

Year	Rate Level	Infant	Toddler	Two	Three	Four
2020	A	\$750	\$725	\$695	\$665	\$665
	B	\$1,040	\$895	\$830	\$800	\$800
	C	\$1,155	\$1,055	\$950	\$895	\$895
2021	A	\$785	\$760	\$730	\$700	\$700
	B	\$1,075	\$930	\$865	\$835	\$835
	C	\$1,190	\$1,090	\$985	\$930	\$930
2022	A	\$810	\$785	\$755	\$725	\$725
	B	\$1,100	\$955	\$890	\$860	\$860
	C	\$1,215	\$1,115	\$1,010	\$955	\$955
2023	A	\$860	\$835	\$805	\$775	\$775
	B	\$1,175	\$1,030	\$965	\$935	\$935
	C	\$1,315	\$1,215	\$1,110	\$1,055	\$1,055
2024	A	\$860	\$835	\$805	\$775	\$775
	B	\$1,225	\$1,080	\$1,015	\$985	\$985
	C	\$1,515	\$1,415	\$1,310	\$1,155	\$1,155

As part of the annual request to increase tuition, UTCDC staff compile a tuition survey of comparable nearby child care programs. Table 2 contains a sampling of facilities within four miles of the Emma’s Garden- Capitol Complex Child Care Center collected in Spring 2024. Despite the increases, the Program’s rates at all three income levels are consistently lower than those of the other programs. TFC staff believes the rate increases permit the Program to continue offering a high standard of care led by dedicated staff. For this reason, approving the tuition increases is in keeping

with the State’s interest in achieving best value for the State, the Program, the children, and their families.

Table 2 Tuition Survey of Comparable Child Care Programs- Spring 2024

Program	Infant	Toddler	Two	Three	Four
Child's Day	\$2,150	\$1,925	\$1,850	\$1,775	\$1,695
Hyde Park Baptist CDC	\$1,800	\$1,700	\$1,700	\$1,700	\$1,700
Children Discovery School	\$1,575	\$1,475	\$1,425	\$1,425	\$1,425
Open Door	\$1,685	\$1,545	\$1,400	\$1,315	\$1,315
Congregation Beth Israel	\$1,750	\$1,650	\$1,525	\$1,525	\$1,415
First English Lutheran	\$1,525	\$1,415	\$1,330	\$1,280	\$1,280
St. David’s Episcopal	N/A	\$1,450	\$1,415	\$1,385	\$1,350
Primrose- Mueller	\$1,689	\$1,643	\$1,624	\$1,602	\$1,494
Bright Horizons (Cap Metro)	\$1,515	\$1,405	\$1,345	\$1,250	\$1,250
Averages of programs	\$1,738	\$1,583	\$1,515	\$1,464	\$1,435
UT CDC (as of 9/1/24)	\$860- 1,515	\$835- 1,415	\$805- 1,310	\$775- 1,155	\$775- 1,155

Enrollment and Wait List

Children between six weeks to five years old are eligible for enrollment in the Program. Families may apply to the Center when they have a due date or begin the adoption process. The Center maintains a two-tiered wait list. State employees working 30 hours or more per week, with benefits, are placed on the Tier One list; those working fewer than 30 hours, with benefits, are placed on the Tier Two list. Once the Center exhausts the Tier One wait list for a particular age group, openings are offered to those on the Tier Two wait list. A family may defer an offer of enrollment with no penalty and maintain their position on the wait list. Thus, it is possible for available spaces and a wait list to exist simultaneously.

Before COVID, the Center consistently had a wait list for all age groups, with higher demand for younger children. Upon reopening in August 2020, UTCDC exhausted the wait list but operated at or near capacity until relocation. In the Summer of 2022, the expanded capacity afforded by the new location in the Barbara Jordan State Office Building increased demand for child care services.

As of November 2024, the Center has a significant wait list, but the numbers do not tell the whole story. The majority of the demand is for infant spots. Typically, any infant openings are filled by siblings of older students, who receive priority, so very few infant spots are available. However, as of this writing, there are a handful of spaces available for children in the Toddler, Three, and Four age groups. All families on the wait list for those groups have been contacted, but no one has chosen to

claim the spots, and the families retain their positions on the wait list.

Table 3 Enrollment and Wait List Breakdown

	Enrolled			Availability (Nov. 2024)	Waitlist		
	State	UT	Total		State	UT	Total
Infants	11	7	18	-	120	401	521
Toddlers	22	17	39	1	11	31	42
Twos	23	22	45	-	12	29	41
Threes	19	27	46	2	7	6	13
Fours	24	16	40	1	1	2	3
Total	99	89	188		151	469	620

Please note that a significant portion of the infant wait list represents children who have not yet been born.

Updated Nov. 22, 2024

Although no formal study has been done, UTCDC and TFC believe that the increase in demand for infant care may be twofold: 1) State employees who have been required to return to the office want to enroll their children in care near their work and 2) the closing of other child care centers, leaving a shortage of available infant care throughout the area. As for the older age groups, expanded access to preschool programs through local school districts, often at low or no cost, may contribute to decreased demand.