

# Thrive By 5 Louisville: Fast Facts

Thrive By 5 Louisville is making early learning a top priority for Louisville, breaking down barriers for the future of our children and city.



## Louisville's Early Learning Gap

In Louisville, too many children start school already behind, and early learning gaps become lifelong obstacles.

**Every year, 59% of Jefferson County kindergarteners<sup>1</sup>, 5,266 children<sup>2</sup>, start school already behind.**

That means most five-year-olds begin their very first day already working uphill.

This isn't just an education issue. It's a community-wide prosperity issue. When children start strong, families are stronger, classrooms are stronger, and Louisville's future workforce is stronger.



## The Economic Payoff

**Fixing child care isn't a cost. It's a catalyst allowing parents to rejoin the workforce.**

- Making child care \$500 a month more affordable for families could add 2,200–3,700 workers to the region's economy.<sup>3</sup>
- But here's the truth: early care and learning providers aren't charging too much—they're operating on razor-thin margins, which limits pay for early educators to less than \$15/hour with limited or no benefits.<sup>3</sup>

**The gap isn't between parents and providers. It's between what quality care costs and what families can realistically afford.**

The solution is a shared investment that lowers costs for families while strengthening the quality of care.

- The return on investment? Every \$1 invested in quality early childhood education yields \$7.30 in lifelong returns through improved education, better health outcomes, reduced crime, and increased earnings.<sup>3</sup>
- Statewide, affordable child care access could generate an additional **\$600 million to \$1.1 billion** annually in state income and sales-tax revenue by adding **16,130–28,349 workers** to the labor force.<sup>3</sup>

Louisville can't solve its workforce crisis without solving the child care crisis.



## Barriers to Access

We can't solve a problem without first understanding what is causing it. While many factors are at play, we know the cost of care is a significant one.

The 2023–2024 Louisville Early Learning Workforce Study reports that **child care for just one toddler costs families about 15% of their household income**. This is more than double the federal benchmark for affordability of early learning and care.<sup>4</sup>

Thrive By 5 Louisville is the bridge—not just between parents and providers, but between what's possible and what's next.

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1. "Kentucky School Report Card", Kentucky Department of Education. (2025)  
2. "2024–2025 Elementary Schools Data Book," Jefferson County Public Schools. (2025)  
3. "A Workforce Solution That Works," Kentucky Chamber Center for Policy and Research. (2025)  
4. "2023–2024 Louisville Early Learning Workforce Study," Thrive By 5 Louisville.(2025)