



# TOTS Brief

## The Oklahoma Toddler Survey

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### Oklahoma Toddlers: Child Care Arrangements and Costs

Child care for many Oklahoma families with a two-year-old is a necessity. As a result, many of Oklahoma’s toddlers spend large amounts of time with providers other than their parents. Therefore, child care arrangements and their costs are significant issues for parents, providers, and others concerned about children.<sup>1</sup>

The Oklahoma Toddler Survey (TOTS) asked mothers of two-year-olds about their child care arrangements in 2012-2014. TOTS defines child care as “any kind of arrangements where someone other than yourself [the mother], husband or partner, legal guardian, or child's stepparent takes care of your child on a regular basis.”

#### Arrangements

Overall, 48.4% of two-year-olds in Oklahoma were in child care. Of those, 1/3 spent 40 hours or more in child care each week. The primary child care providers for Oklahoma’s toddlers were grandparents (34.3%) and child care centers (31.2%; Figure 1).

In the 12 months prior to the survey, 12.4% of mothers could not find child care for their two-year-old for a week or longer when it was needed. One in ten Oklahoma mothers in the 12 months prior to the survey reported that they or someone in their family had to quit a job, not take a job, or greatly change a job because of problems with child care.

#### Changing Arrangements

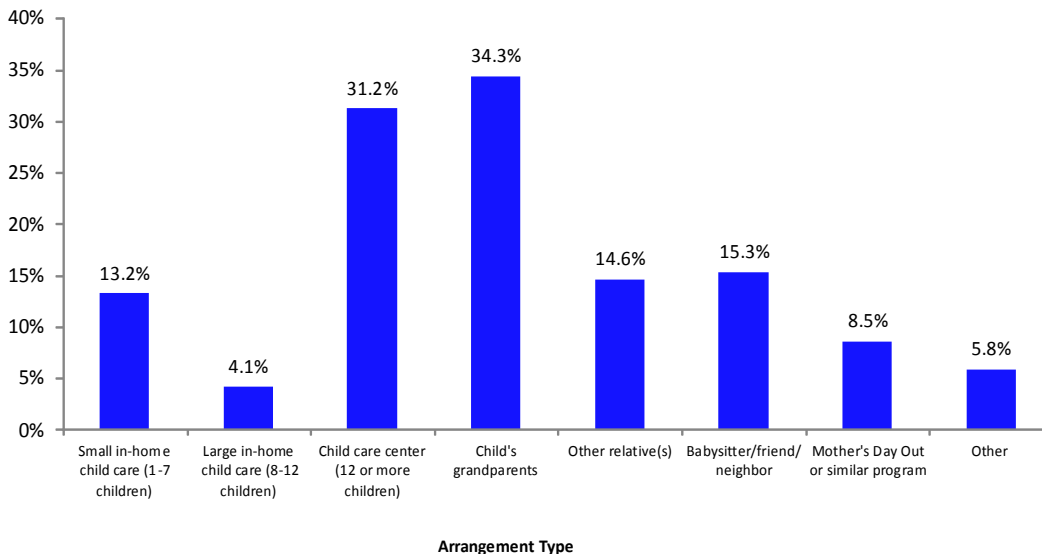
Safety, stability, and nurturing are critical for children as they grow and develop. Stability includes the degree of consistency in a child’s social, emotional, and physical environments.<sup>2</sup> In the month prior to the survey, Oklahoma mothers reported an average of 5 times that different arrangements for child care had to be made at the last minute.

Among racial and ethnic groups, Hispanic mothers had the highest average number of changes to child care arrangements (9.3), followed by Non-Hispanic (NH) Blacks (5.9), NH-whites (4.8), and NH-American Indians (1.1). Mothers enrolled in SoonerCare

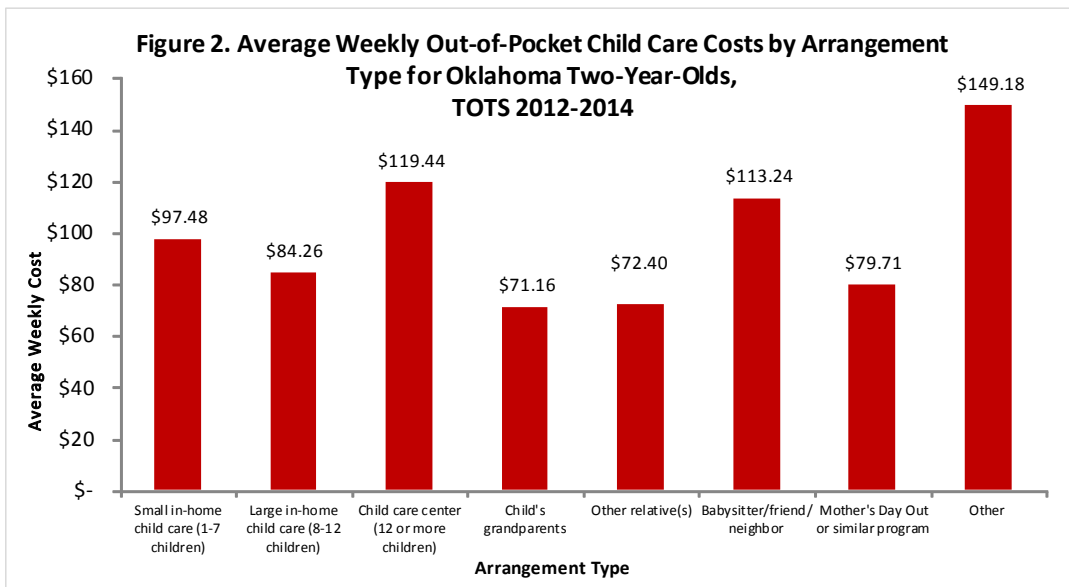
#### In Oklahoma:

- 48.4% of two-year-olds were in some type of regular child care
- Grandparents were the primary child care provider for more than 1/3 of Oklahoma’s toddlers in care
- Among mothers who received assistance to help pay for child care:
  - 60.1% received help through a government agency
  - 13% got help through a tribe
  - 10.6% received help through other sources
  - 8.7% got help through relatives
- Average out-of-pocket costs for child care was \$103.40 per week
- Mothers had to make different child care arrangements an average of 5 times in the month prior to the survey

Figure 1. Child Care Arrangements for Oklahoma Two-Year Olds, TOTS 2012-2014



An EEO Employer



**"I want him to feel safe and have consistency and it is hard to find very consistent child care."  
-TOTS mom**

The Oklahoma Toddler Survey (TOTS) is a two-year follow-back survey to the Oklahoma Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) survey. Mothers with live infants who respond to the PRAMS survey are sent a TOTS survey the month their children turn two-years-old. TOTS is a mixed-mode surveillance system. Two mail surveys are sent in an effort to gain participation followed by telephone surveillance for non-respondents.

The unweighted response rate for 2012-2014 data was 65.2% (n=5,641; excluding women ineligible to complete TOTS). Data were weighted to represent the two-year-old's birth cohort for those years. Prevalence rates were calculated using SAS callable SUDAAN.

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(Oklahoma's Medicaid program), also had a higher average number of changes to arrangements than mothers not on SoonerCare (7.8 versus 2.1, respectively; data not shown).

**Cost**

In the U.S., child care remains one of the most significant expenses in a family budget.<sup>3</sup> Oklahoma mothers reported an average out-of-pocket cost of \$103.40 for child care each week. However, 30.9% of mothers with toddlers in care reported not paying any out-of-pocket costs at all.

Figure 2 shows, by arrangement type, the average weekly out-of-pocket child care costs for Oklahoma two-year-olds. Grandparents were the most utilized providers and the lowest out-of-pocket cost at \$71.16 per week. More than any other racial or ethnic group, NH-American Indian mothers used grandparents as providers (42.8%; data not shown). The highest out-of-pocket costs were associated with other providers such as nannies.

In Oklahoma, 19.9% of mothers received payment help for child care. Of these, 60.1% received it through a government agency, 13%

through tribes, 10.6% through other sources, and 8.7% from relatives (Figure 3).

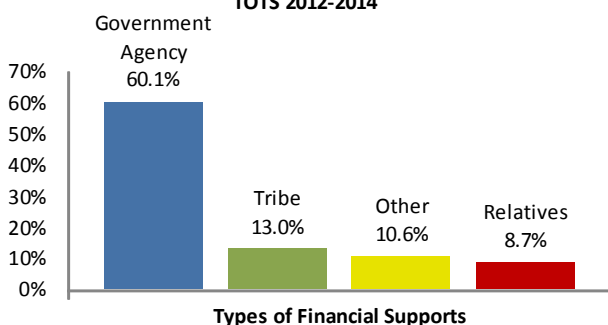
Among mothers receiving payment help, 28.4% were Hispanic, 21.2% NH-Black, 18.5% NH-white, and 18.3% were NH-American Indian. Additionally, 83.5% of mothers who received payment assistance were enrolled in SoonerCare (data not shown).

**Additional Considerations**

Child care subsidies and other financial supports can help parents access quality care.<sup>4</sup> From June 1 to July 31, 2016, new enrollments for the Oklahoma Department of Human Services' child care subsidy were frozen due to a budget shortfall. The program helps low-income Oklahoma families pay for child care. Any influence related to this gap in coverage may be observed in future data.

Expanding access to affordable child care options (such as Head Start and Early Head Start programs), increasing awareness and availability of financial supports, and continuously improving quality are all steps toward more Oklahoma families using safe, reliable, and affordable child care.

**Figure 3. Types of Financial Supports for Child Care Costs among Mothers Receiving Payment Help, TOTS 2012-2014**



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