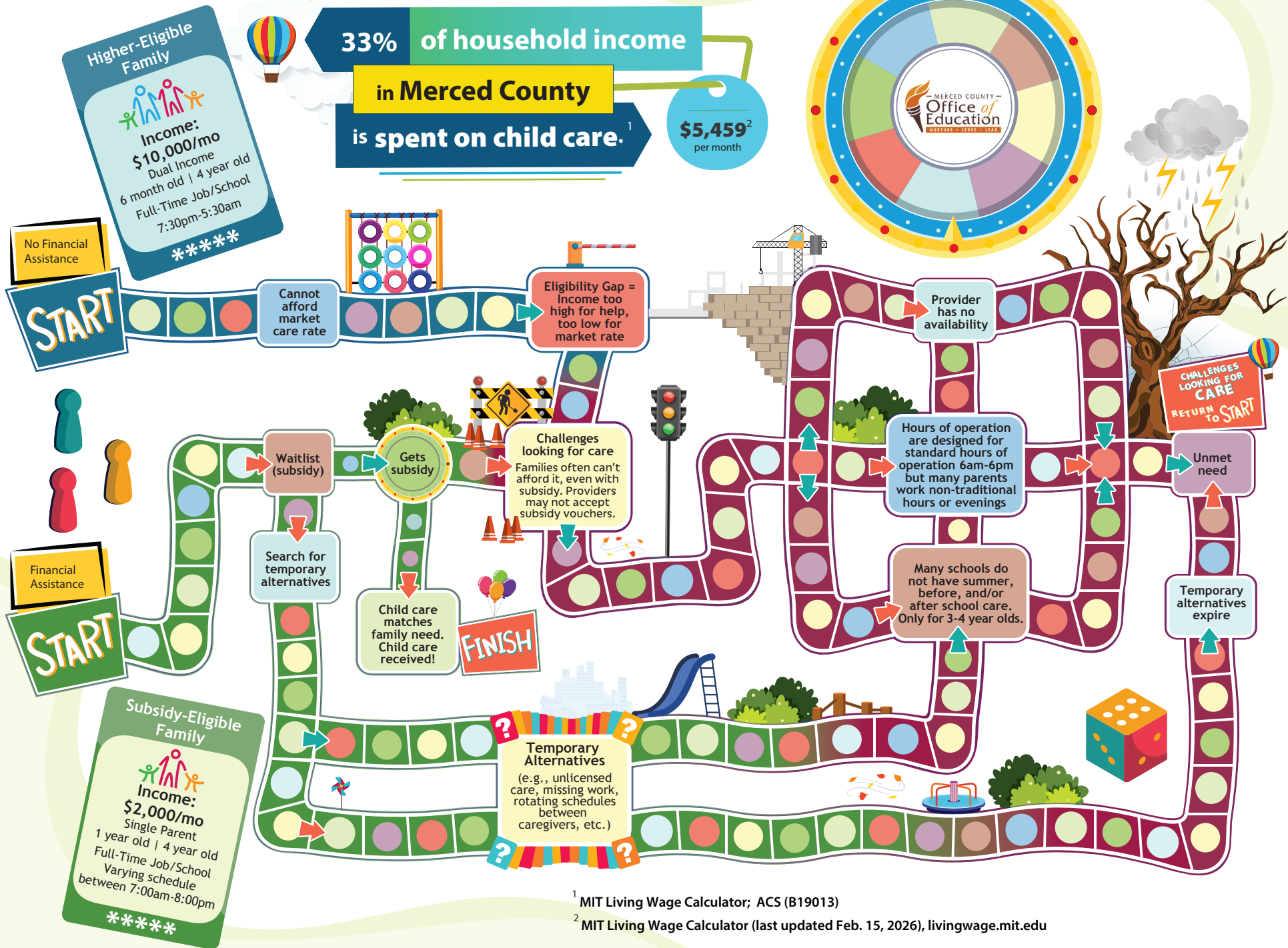


Families Can't Find Affordable Child Care



¹ MIT Living Wage Calculator; ACS (B19013)

² MIT Living Wage Calculator (last updated Feb. 15, 2026), livingwage.mit.edu

Families Can't Find Affordable Child Care

FY24-25

Now is the time to expand and strengthen the community-based child care system, so families can access the care that meets their unique needs.

The system provides licensed spaces for only
1 in 4 children
with working parents³

Child care costs more than in-state college tuition
Child Care (1 child): **\$11,909/year**
Merced College: **\$1,380/year**

Child Care (2 children): **\$21,770/year** = 33% of their income

23,548 working caregivers of children under 5 in Merced County.⁴

Merced County	
County specific data	\$65,510 Median yearly income (before taxes) in Merced County. ⁵
1,912 Available Licensed Home Spaces ⁶ 4,965 Available Licensed Center Spaces	1,699 Children are enrolled in Transitional Kindergarten (TK) ⁷ TK expansion reduced the licensed child care workforce, shrinking available supply for infants, toddlers, and families who need non-traditional hours.

The current child care system is unable to meet demand.

Merced COE	
Agency specific data representing a portion of Merced County	1,388 Families on the waitlist at Merced COE. Many are on the waitlist for years.
282 Providers available for referral	286 Licensed Providers receiving Child Care Subsidies 1,012 License-Exempt Providers receiving Child Care Subsidies
	3,376 Subsidized Licensed Spaces Family Child Care Homes 2,891 Subsidized Licensed Spaces Center-Based

Even when care is available, cost and other barriers can make it difficult for families to access care.

³ Child Care Aware of America

⁵ ACS 2024 B19013

⁴ ACS 2024 B23008

⁶ California Community Care Licensing Division (CCL)

⁷ California Department of Education (CDE)