

ABOUT CLASP

The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) is a national non-profit that works to improve the lives of low-income people. CLASP's mission is to improve the economic security, educational and workforce prospects, and family stability of low-income parents, children, and youth and to secure equal justice for all.

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Report documents local need, barriers to accessing child care subsidies

Fewer parents in Monroe County, New York are accessing the child care they need to work and support their families. The [Center for Governmental Research](#), in Rochester, NY, recently released a [report](#) documenting a nearly 40 percent decline in children receiving subsidies since 2001--from 13,575 children served in an average month in 2001 to 8,400 children on average during the first four months of 2007. According to the report, over 12,000 children in Monroe County are living in families that are potentially eligible for child care assistance and are not receiving it.

The report drew on multiple sources including Census data, State and County data, and focus groups and interviews with parents, providers, Department of Human Services staff, and child care advocates. Several policy changes at the county and state levels have contributed to the decline in children receiving assistance:

- Since 2002, income eligibility for child care subsidies in Monroe County has fallen from 200 percent of poverty to 165 percent.
- While fewer families are income-eligible for assistance, more parents seeking child care subsidies are being denied. The rate of applicant denial increased from 11 percent in 2001 to 50 percent in 2006. A contributing factor to this increase in denials was failure of applicants to comply with a 2004 New York State law that requires applicants to seek child support payment as a [condition of receiving child care assistance](#). (Federal law does not require parents to seek child support from a non-custodial parent in order to obtain a child care subsidy although several states have this requirement.)
- Finally, the county has decreased spending on child care in recent years, contributing to an accumulation of approximately \$5 million in unspent child care funds.

Interestingly, the report found that the overall decline in children receiving assistance occurred both among low-income working families and families receiving Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) assistance—even while the number of families receiving TANF increased slightly. The report was unable to conclude why a large number of TANF child care cases were of a short duration or why few families transitioned to the income-eligible child care assistance program.

States and localities can benefit greatly from conducting local assessments such as this one that map the need for child care assistance and determine where there is a need for child care subsidies, whether it matches the location of licensed providers, as well as what challenges parents and providers face in navigating the child care subsidy system. Interviews in Monroe County revealed that in addition to demographic and policy changes, perceptions of a burdensome and unfriendly application process also contributed to fewer families seeking and retaining. Information, such as that included in the CGR report, can help determine what policies could be put in place to better [support families and their](#)

access to child care subsidies.