



# 2026 SUPPLY AND DEMAND REPORT:

CHILD CARE IN IREDELL COUNTY

# 2026 Supply & Demand Report: Child Care in Iredell County

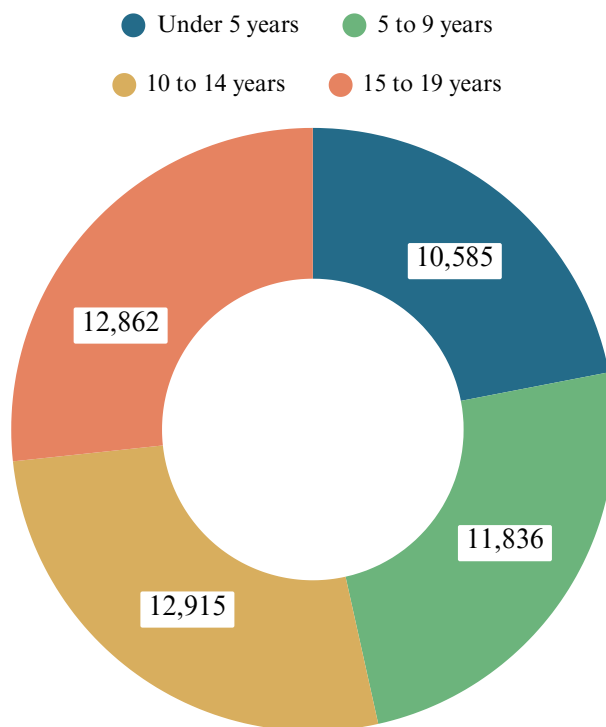
*A report on child care need, cost, and availability.*

Early care and education is a critical component of a strong and sustainable community. Access to high-quality childcare not only supports children’s cognitive, social, and emotional development, but also enables parents and caregivers to participate fully in the workforce. As communities grow and economic conditions shift, understanding the balance between the supply of early care programs and the demand for services becomes essential for informed decision-making and long-term planning.

In Iredell County, demographic trends, workforce participation rates, and compensation challenges within the early education field are shaping the local childcare landscape. While families increasingly rely on early learning programs to meet employment needs, providers face rising operational costs, staffing shortages, and difficulty offering competitive wages. These factors directly influence the availability, accessibility, and quality of childcare services across the county.

This **2026 Early Care and Education Supply and Demand Report for Iredell County** examines current capacity, enrollment trends, workforce conditions, and projected needs within the local childcare system. By analyzing available data and identifying gaps between supply and demand, this report aims to inform community leaders, policymakers, and stakeholders as they work collaboratively to strengthen early childhood infrastructure and ensure that all children have access to safe, affordable, and high-quality care

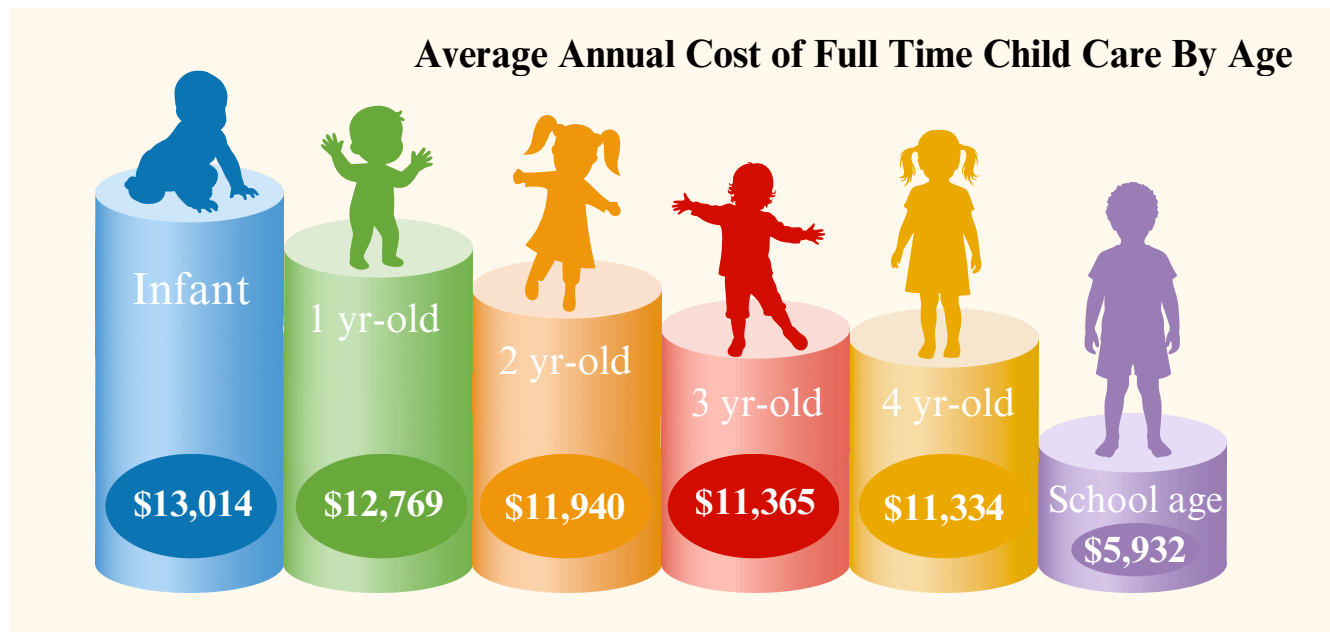
## IREDELL COUNTY CHILD POPULATION



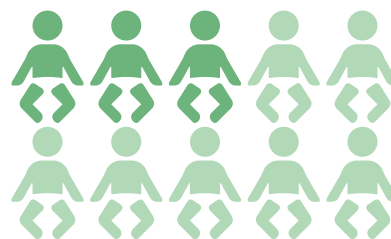
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In Iredell County the annual cost of childcare varies by age and type. Childcare is more expensive in Mooresville, compared to Statesville due to Mooresville's higher cost of living, increased demand from a growing population, higher overhead for facilities, and a more competitive, higher-wage labor market. Essentially, the high demand for services in the more expensive Mooresville childcare market forces the surrounding market in the remaining cities in Iredell County to adapt to a similar, higher price point for comparable care.



The average cost of childcare in Iredell County is **\$11,059**. According to NC Child (2025) **28.6%** of children in Iredell County live in low-income homes and **14.9%** of children live in households that are food insecure. Many families continue to struggle to afford monthly expenses and meet the basic needs of each family member.



**28.6%**

of Iredell County children are living in poor or low income homes

## LICENSED DAYTIME SLOTS AVAILABLE BY LICENSE TYPE

**33** ★★★★★  
at 5-star facilities

**22** ★★★★★  
at 4-star facilities

**17** ★★★  
at 3-star facilities

**0** ★★  
at 2-star facilities

**6** ★  
at 1-star facilities

**2**  
at temporary facilities

**0**  
at special provisional facilities

**0**  
at GS110-106 (religious programs)

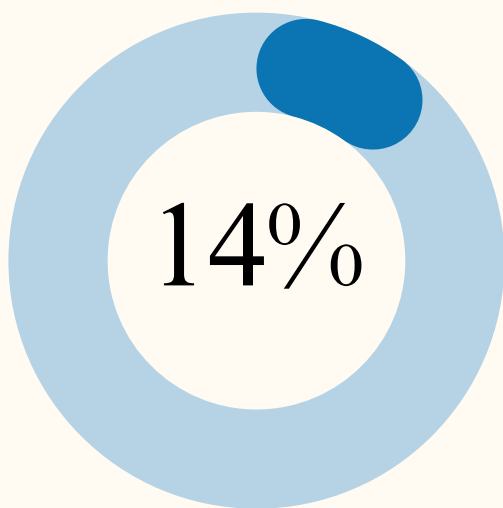
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For households earning minimum wage, the cost of childcare can consume as much as **75%** of annual income, leaving little remaining for essential needs such as housing, food, transportation, health care, and basic personal expenses. This financial strain forces many families to make impossible choices, often reducing work hours, leaving the workforce entirely, or relying on unstable care arrangements. At the same time, the rising cost of care, limited availability of childcare slots, and a persistent shortage of qualified early educators have created a system under significant stress. These challenges extend beyond families, directly affecting businesses through increased employee absenteeism, reduced productivity, and difficulty recruiting and retaining workers. Ultimately, inadequate access to affordable, high-quality childcare undermines workforce participation and economic growth, making childcare a critical issue for both families and the broader economy.

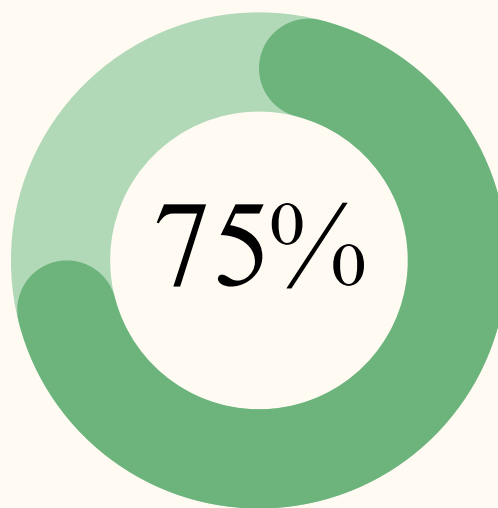
## Child Care Cost as Portion of Median Wage Income

Iredell County Median Income **\$82,154**



## Child Care Cost as Portion of Minimum Wage Income

Full Time Minimum Wage Income **\$15,080**



**\$11,363**

Annual average cost of childcare for one child in Iredell County.

**\$70,791**

Income left for median income earners after paying for childcare.

**\$3,717**

Income left for minimum wage income earners after paying for childcare.



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## *A report on child care need, cost, and availability.*

### **CHILD CARE SUBSIDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

The childcare subsidy program in Iredell County is a state-and-federally supported initiative that helps eligible families cover a portion of childcare expenses so parents or guardians can work, attend school, or participate in job training. Subsidy eligibility is based on factors like family income, work or education status, and special family circumstances, and requires an application through the Iredell County Department of Social Services. Funding for the program is limited, and families experience waiting lists, but those who qualify receive financial assistance to make licensed childcare more affordable for children from infancy through age 12. The amount families pay for childcare once they receive a childcare subsidy voucher varies based on family size, income, and childcare cost. The Iredell County Partnership for Young Children allocates Smart Start funds to support this subsidy system and connect families with childcare resources and referrals.

**Learning doesn't start in kindergarten**  
Why investment in early childhood is critical

**A** The vast majority of human brain development occurs in the first three years of life. Strengthening neural connections during this critical period leads to improved health, lower incarceration rates, better educational outcomes, and greater workforce readiness.

**B** Lack of public investment in early childhood care and education results in a gap between what parents can afford to pay in the early stages of their careers, and what it costs to provide high-quality care and education. The market is kept afloat by high tuition and low teacher wages.

**C** The state's economy is stronger when parents can participate in the workforce knowing their children are safe and cared for.

EdNC Early Bird

In **Iredell County**, the childcare subsidy program is a vital support for low-income working families, yet limited funding has resulted in persistent waitlists that leave many parents without affordable options. For families who cannot pay the full cost of care without assistance, being placed on a waitlist often means delaying a return to work, reducing hours, turning down job opportunities, or leaving the workforce entirely. Some parents are forced to rely on unstable or informal care arrangements, which can disrupt children's development and create ongoing stress for families. The lack of timely access to subsidy not only affects household stability and income but also impacts local employers who struggle with workforce shortages and employee absenteeism. As the cost of childcare continues to rise, extended subsidy waitlists exacerbate financial hardship for families and highlight the urgent need for expanded investment in childcare assistance in Iredell County.

#### **Requirements & Eligibility:**

- **Employment/Training:** Parents must be employed, looking for work, or enrolled in an education/job training program.
- **Income Limit:** Generally, income must be below 200% of the federal poverty level for children under 5 and 133% for school-aged children (5–12).
- **Residency:** Must reside in Iredell County.
- **Asset Limit:** Total household assets must not exceed \$1,000,000.
- **Child Age:** Children must be under age 13.

*“Access to high-quality, affordable early care and learning is crucial to child and family freedom and well-being. It enables parents to participate in the workforce or continue their education without concern for the safety of their children. It also puts North Carolina’s youngest residents on a path to future success” (Dukes, 2025).*

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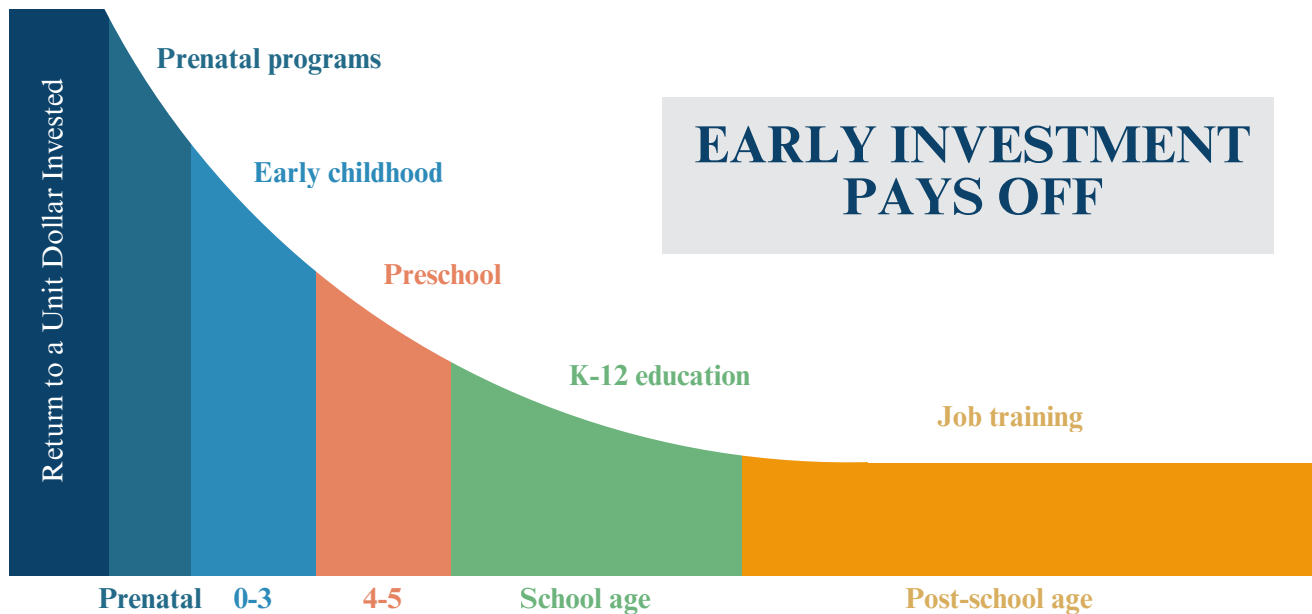
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Early education is essential to young children’s development, providing the foundation for the knowledge and skills that support lifelong learning. In Iredell County, the population is approximately 206,361, with 10,242 children under the age of five—about 5.13% of the community.

Childcare providers face significant challenges in offering competitive wages, further constraining an already limited supply of high-quality care. As pay increases in other industries, early educators are leaving the field in search of better compensation, placing added pressure on remaining programs to meet growing demand.



This persistent workforce shortage has reduced childcare availability for working families, making it harder to secure reliable, high-quality care and return to work. Currently, the county has 80 licensed childcare programs--serving over 2,000 children. If staffing challenges continue, additional closures are likely. Without access to quality childcare, families may be forced to rely on unsafe arrangements or withdraw from the workforce altogether.



*The highest rate of return in early childhood development comes from investing as early as possible, from birth through age five, in disadvantaged families. Starting at age three or four is too little too late, as it fails to recognize that skills beget skills in a complementary and dynamic way. Efforts should focus on the first years for the greatest efficiency and effectiveness. The best investment is in quality early childhood development from birth to five for disadvantaged children and their families.”— (James J. Heckman, 2012)*

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Childcare teachers in Iredell County, NC, earn an estimated base hourly wage of **\$13.61** per hour or roughly **\$28,315**, annually for full-time positions, which falls below the poverty line. Wages generally range from **\$12 to \$20** per hour, heavily dependent on job title, education level, certification (e.g., NC Early Childhood Credential), location and experience. Pay fluctuates between cities within Iredell County. In Mooresville some childcare programs offer higher wages, with preschool teachers earning an estimated **\$18.00+ per hour**.

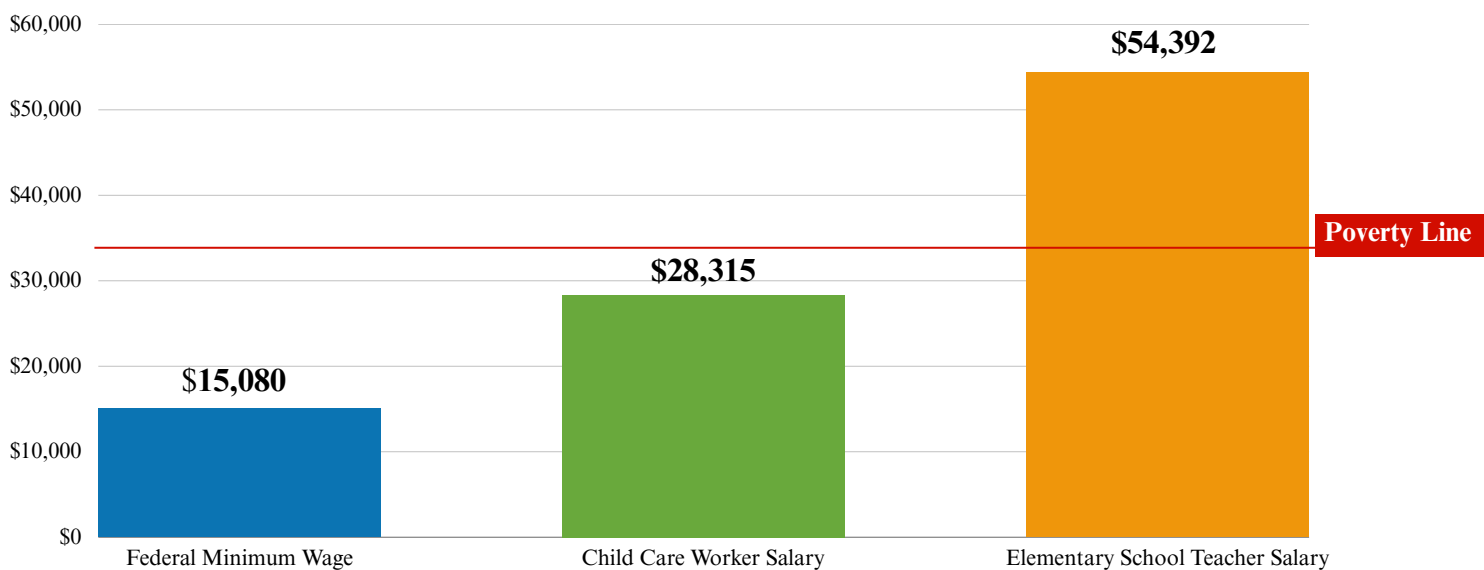
Iredell County  
Child Care Workers

**\$28,309**

Estimated Annual Salary

**\$13.61**

Average Hourly Rate



Early educators are often described as the workforce behind the workforce—yet they remain significantly underpaid. Reliable, high-quality childcare is essential for working parents, but ongoing staff turnover continues to limit families’ ability to remain in or return to the workforce. Without meaningful investment in the childcare workforce, programs cannot offer competitive wages to recruit and retain qualified educators. As funding sources diminish, the field is approaching a critical funding cliff—one that threatens to accelerate staff turnover, force program closures, and leave even more working parents without access to safe, high-quality learning environments for their children.

Early learning experiences play a critical role in shaping the architecture of the brain, laying the foundation for language development, problem-solving abilities, emotional regulation, and social skills. When children have access to stable, nurturing relationships and high-quality early learning environments, they are more likely to succeed academically and socially.

Strategic early investment helps close opportunity gaps before they widen. Children from under-resourced communities, in particular, benefit significantly from access to high-quality early education, helping level the playing field before they enter formal schooling. Investing in young children is not only a moral imperative; it is a sound economic strategy. Strong beginnings build stronger schools, stronger families, and stronger communities.

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## **STRENGTHENING EARLY CARE & EDUCATION IN IREDELL COUNTY**

In **Iredell County**, **192** families received a childcare referral in 2025. Of those families, **78** completed a follow-up survey, and **27** reported that they were successfully able to secure childcare as a result of the referral.

To help address the ongoing childcare shortage in **Iredell County**, the **Iredell County Partnership for Young Children (ICPYC)** maintains a public online job board that allows legally operating local childcare programs to post current employment opportunities.

In addition, the ICPYC launched the Iredell County Partnership Academy to attract individuals interested in entering the early care and education field. Through this initiative, participants receive free training that enables them to begin a career in early childhood education more quickly. Together, these efforts support providers in recruiting qualified staff and strengthening the local early childhood workforce.

ICPYC also serves as the regional lead for the free Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) consumer education hotline. Through this service, families can speak directly with a Child Care Resource & Referral Specialist who will:

- Collect information to guide the childcare search process
- Assess each family's specific needs and preferences
- Explain the different types of childcare available
- Provide information about regulatory requirements, including North Carolina's Star Rated License system
- Encourage families to visit programs and offer guidance on what to look for and ask during visits
- Discuss the cost of childcare and share information about financial assistance and available resources
- Provide referrals to licensed or license-exempt, legally operating childcare programs in Iredell County

Together, these services aim to support families in finding safe, high-quality childcare while also strengthening the local early childhood system.

*The Iredell County Partnership for Young Children (ICPYC) is a 501 (c) (3), public/private organization dedicated to measurably increasing learning and healthy development of children birth to age five in Iredell County. ICPYC provides services focused on raising the quality of early care and education, supporting families, advancing child health, and expanding literacy. ICPYC is the Smart Start affiliate for Iredell County. Our agency serves children birth to age 5 and their families and the early childhood workforce in Iredell County.*

<b>Child Care Programs in Iredell County February 2026</b>	<b>License Type</b>	<b>Type of Care</b>	<b>City</b>
A Better Place Christian Academy	4 Star	Child Care Center	Statesville
A Passion 4 Caring Family Child Care	1 Star	Family Child Care	Statesville
A Unique Inspiration Family Childcare Home	1 Star	Family Child Care	Statesville
Above & Beyond Early Learning Center	3 Star	Child Care Center	Mooresville
Advance Preschool/Mera Jams	5 Star	Child Care Center	Mooresville
American Child, Inc.	4 Star	Child Care Center	Statesville
Beautiful Minds Learning Academy	3 Star	Family Child Care	Statesville
Buffalo Shoals Head Start Center	5 Star	Child Care Center	Statesville
Celeste Henkel-ISS Staff Childcare	1 Star	Public Preschool	Statesville
Celeste Preschool	5 Star	Public Preschool	Statesville
Celeste Prime Time for Kids	5 Star	School Age Program	Statesville
Central Prime Time for Kids	5 Star	School Age Program	Statesville
Chesterbrook Academy	4 Star	Child Care Center	Mooresville
Cline Learning Center of Mooresville	5 Star	Child Care Center	Mooresville
Cloverleaf Elementary Preschool	5 Star	Public Preschool	Statesville
Cloverleaf Prime Time for Kids	5 Star	School Age Program	Statesville
Coddle Creek Prime Time for Kids	4 Star	School Age Program	Mooresville
Connor's Tender Loving Care	3 Star	Family Child Care	Mooresville
Cool Springs Prime Time for Kids	5 Star	School Age Program	Cleveland
Covenant Child Care Center	3 Star	Child Care Center	Statesville
Crayolitas Childcare Center	3 Star	Child Care Center	Statesville
Creative Care by Shonda	4 Star	Family Child Care	Statesville
Discovery Point Mooresville	Temporary License	Child Care Center	Mooresville
East Mooresville Intermediate BASP	4 Star	School Age Program	Mooresville
East Prime Time for Kids	5 Star	School Age Program	Statesville
Etta's Jambaloo Residential Child Care Center	3 Star	Family Child Care	Statesville
Fairview Church Kids Care	4 Star	Child Care Center	Statesville
Faith Child Enrichment Center, Inc.	5 Star	Child Care Center	Statesville
First Class Preparatory School	5 Star	Child Care Center	Mooresville
Future Generation Child Development Center, Inc.	4 Star	Child Care Center	Statesville
Harmony Elementary Preschool	5 Star	Public Preschool	Harmony
Harmony Prime Time for Kids	5 Star	School Age Program	Harmony
Holy Grounds Child Development Center	3 Star	Family Child Care	Mooresville
J-Bear Child Development Center	4 Star	Child Care Center	Mooresville
Jacobs Ladder Child Development Center	3 Star	Child Care Center	Troutman
Joyce's Family Child Care, Inc.	4 Star	Family Child Care	Mooresville

<b>Child Care Programs in Iredell County February 2026 cont.</b>	<b>License Type</b>	<b>Type of Care</b>	<b>City</b>
Kiddie Academy of Lake Norman	3 Star	Child Care Center	Mooresville
Lake Norman Prime Time for Kids	4 Star	School Age Program	Mooresville
Lakeshore Prime Time for Kids	3 Star	School Age Program	Mooresville
Learning Jungle Mooresville	5 Star	Child Care Center	Mooresville
Lifespan Early Learning Center	5 Star	Child Care Center	Statesville
Lil Steppers Childcare Academy	4 Star	Family Child Care	Statesville
Little Tots #3 Early Learning Center	3 Star	Child Care Center	Troutman
Little Tots Early Learning Center	3 Star	Child Care Center	Mooresville
Little Tots Early Learning Center #2	3 Star	Child Care Center	Mooresville
Mooresville Intermediate BASP	4 Star	School Age Program	Mooresville
Mooresville Intermediate School Learning Lab	5 Star	Child Care Center	Mooresville
Ms. Jenny's Rocking Horse Ranch, LLC	3 Star	Child Care Center	Mooresville
N. B. Mills Preschool	5 Star	Public Preschool	Statesville
N. B. Mills- ISS Staff Childcare	1 Star	Public Preschool	Statesville
N. B. Mills Prime Time for Kids	5 Star	School Age Program	Statesville
Parkview Elementary BASP	4 Star	School Age Program	Mooresville
Planet Playschool	3 Star	Child Care Center	Mooresville
Primrose School of Lake Norman	Temporary License	Child Care Center	Mooresville
River Meadow Daycare	Temporary License	Child Care Center	Mooresville
Rocky River Elementary School	5 Star	Public Preschool	Mooresville
Rocky River Elementary School BASP	4 Star	School Age Program	Mooresville
Scotts Elementary	5 Star	Child Care Center	Statesville
Scotts Prime Time for Kids	5 Star	School Age Program	Statesville
Sharon Prime Time for Kids	5 Star	School Age Program	Statesville
Shepherd Prime Time for Kids	5 Star	School Age Program	Mooresville
Small Beginnings Child Development Center II	5 Star	Child Care Center	Statesville
South Elementary BASP	4 Star	School Age Program	Mooresville
South Elementary School	5 Star	Public Preschool	Mooresville
Southeast Child Development Center	5 Star	Child Care Center	Statesville
Star Quality Home Daycare	4 Star	Child Care Center	Statesville
Stepping Stones Child Development Center-Davie	3 Star	Child Care Center	Statesville
The Goddard School	5 Star	Child Care Center	Mooresville
The Learning Experience	5 Star	Child Care Center	Mooresville
The Lemonade Stand Child Care & Preschool	5 Star	Child Care Center	Statesville

Child Care Programs in Iredell County February 2026 cont.	License Type	Type of Care	City
Third Creek Prime Time for Kids	4 Star	School Age Program	Statesville
Third Creek Preschool	5 Star	Public Preschool	Statesville
Triplett United Methodist Child Development Center	3 Star	Child Care Center	Mooresville
Troutman Prime Time for Kids	4 Star	Child Care Center	Troutman
Tutor Time Child Care/Learning Center	Special Provisional License	Child Care Center	Mooresville
Union Grove Elementary School	4 Star	Public Preschool	Union Grove
West-ISS Staff Childcare	1 Star	Public Preschool	Statesville
Woodland Heights-ISS Staff Childcare	1 Star	Public Preschool	Mooresville
Woodland Heights Prime Time for Kids	5 Star	School Age Program	Mooresville

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