
PREFACE

The military child-care system, the largest system of employer-sponsored child care in the country, has received high marks for providing quality, accessible care for children of military employees. At the same time, the Department of Defense (DoD) is under pressure to control costs and has considered a number of different approaches to delivering care. But efforts to control costs have been hampered by a lack of information on how much it actually costs to deliver care in various settings to children of different ages.

This report presents estimates of the costs associated with providing care to children in DoD-operated Child Development Centers (CDCs), Family Child Care (FCC) homes, and centers operated by outside providers under contract to the DoD. By commissioning this study, the DoD has enabled the first comprehensive analysis of child-care costs across the Military Services. An earlier report on military child-care costs by the U.S. Government Accounting Office focused exclusively on the Air Force, and earlier Service reports on child care provided some cost information, but those reports were limited in their scope. Here, the authors examine cost estimates across Services and across the various age groups served in CDCs and in FCC. To place the study within a broader context, the authors also examine employer-sponsored care provided by civilian employers.

The findings and the recommendations in this report should help military policymakers, military Child Development Program (CDP) managers, and installation-level commands better understand the issue of cost in delivering child care, and help them to determine the best use of resources for the DoD child-care system. This report

should also be helpful to civilian child-care policymakers and practitioners, who are increasingly looking at the military system as a model for delivering high-quality care to large numbers of children.

This report is the fourth in a series of RAND reports on military child care. The first, *Improving the Delivery of Military Child Care: An Analysis of Current Operations and New Approaches* (R-4145, 1992), examined military child-care operations prior to the implementation of the Military Child Care Act (MCCA) of 1989. The second, *Examining the Effects of Accreditation on Military Child Development Center Operations and Outcomes* (MR-524, 1994), analyzed a key aspect of the MCCA: accreditation of centers. The third, *Examining the Implementation and Outcomes of the Military Child Care Act of 1989* (MR-665, 1998), analyzed the many changes that the MCCA brought about.

This research was sponsored by the Military Community and Family Policy, Office of Children and Youth, and was conducted for the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness within the Forces and Resources Policy Center of RAND's National Defense Research Institute, a federally funded research and development center sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the unified commands, and the defense agencies.