



Parents have a significant impact on children’s emotional development through their daily interactions with the child. Positive developmental interactions between parents and young children—such as reading together—can enhance children’s development and learning.<sup>56</sup> The family’s social activities are also

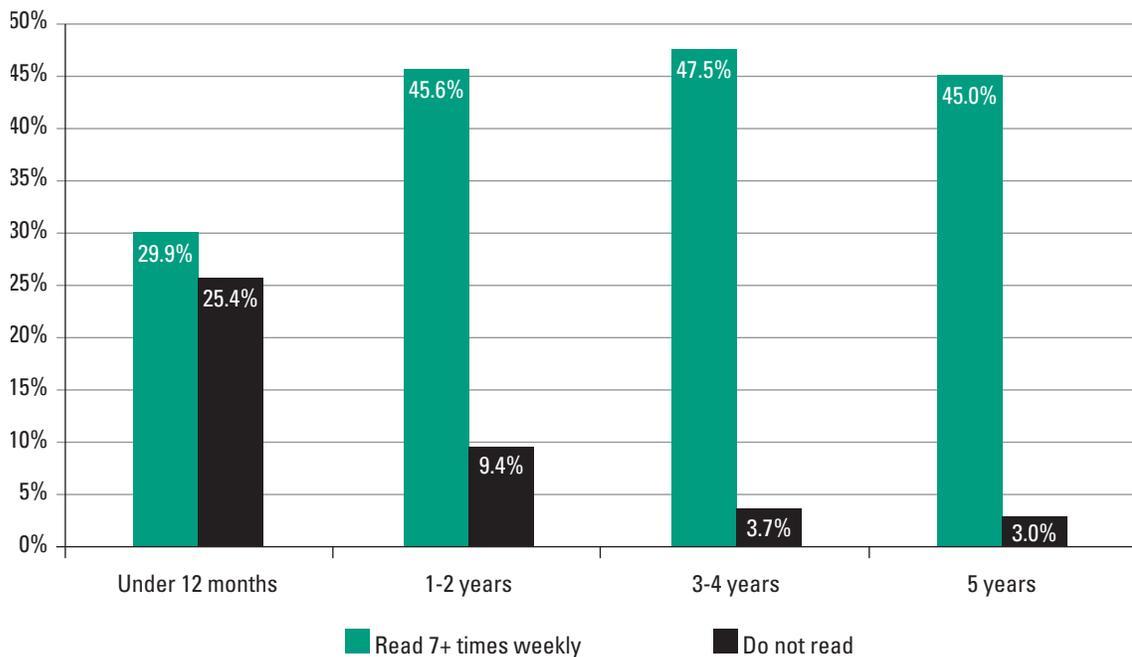
important. Social isolation of the family is a marker for stress, and lack of social support leads to a greater risk of inadequate nurturing of the child’s emotional development.

**Parent-Child Interaction: Reading Together**

Reading together—which includes sharing picture books in addition to reading stories out loud—is an important shared activity that focuses the parent’s attention on the child and helps with parent-child attachment. Regular reading also promotes early literacy. Professional educators as well as the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that parents read daily with young children.

Exhibit 31 shows that California parents are falling short of this recommendation. Only 43.6% of parents of children age 0-5 years report that someone in the household reads to the child at least seven times in a typical week. This is lower than the 55% of parents who reported reading to their child age 0-5 years in a recent First 5 survey on early care and education.<sup>57</sup> The lower rate may be due to no specific mention of picture books in the CHIS 2001 question; to the larger number of fathers who were

**EXHIBIT 31 – READING TOGETHER BY CHILD AGE, CHILDREN AGE 0-5 YEARS, CALIFORNIA 2001**

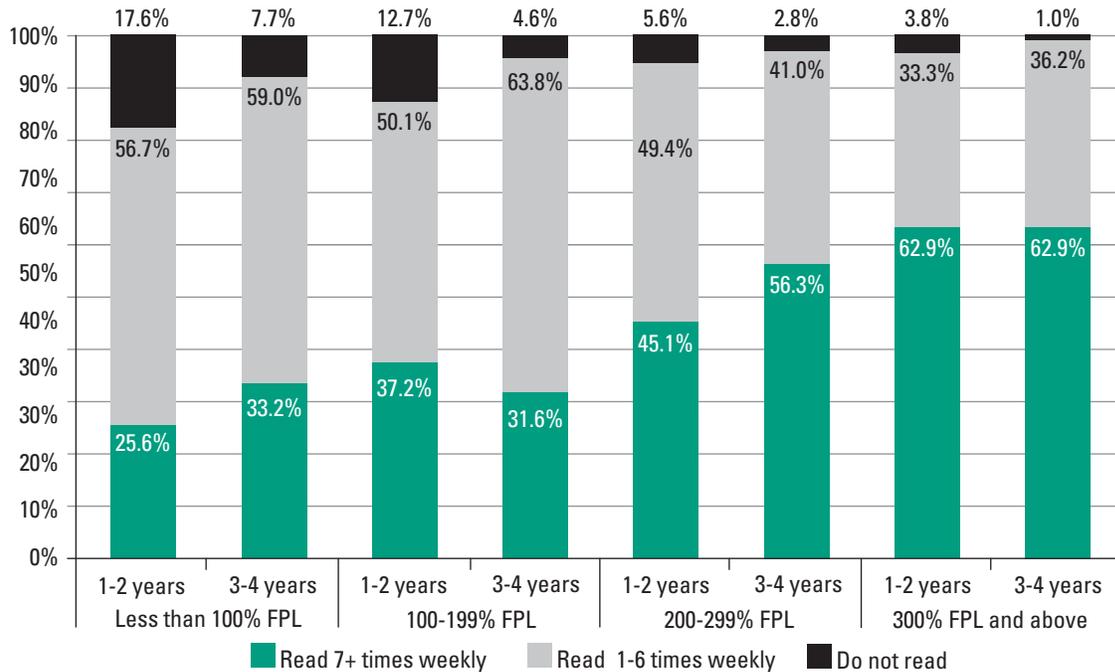


Test of the association of reading with child age is statistically significant (p<0.05) (chi square).

56 Shonkoff J, Phillips D, eds. *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press; 2000.

57 Inkelas M, Tullis E, Flint R, Wright J, Becerra R, Halfon N. 2002. Public opinion on child care and early childhood education, California 2001. First 5 California.

**EXHIBIT 32 – FREQUENCY OF READING BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME AND CHILD AGE, CHILDREN AGE 1-4 YEARS, CALIFORNIA 2001**



Tests of the association of reading frequency with child age are statistically significant for each income group ( $p < 0.05$ ) (chi square).

interviewed in CHIS 2001; and to the special efforts of CHIS 2001 to reach households that are normally difficult to reach in telephone surveys. Comparison to national figures shows that fewer parents in California read to their child daily. Nationally about 52% of children under age three years are read to daily, and about 58% of children age 3-5 years are read to every day.<sup>58</sup>

Unlike children nationally, daily reading among most California children does not increase once children reach the age of 12 months. CHIS 2001 shows that about 45.5% of children age 1-2 years, 47.5% of children 3-4 years and 45% of five year olds are read to *daily*. The exception is that daily reading increases for preschoolers among higher-income families (Exhibit 32). The lower reading rates for lower-income children continue throughout early childhood.

About one-third of California parents read together with their young child several times a week or even less often. About 8.9% of children age 0-5 years are not read to by their parents or by anyone else in the household.

Reading at all, and reading frequency, increases with household income. Exhibit 32 shows that for children below 200% FPL, daily reading does not increase for children age 3-4 years, relative to children age 1-2 years, even though this is a critical time for parent-child reading. Rates of daily reading are substantially higher for children in households at or above 300% FPL.

Reading also varies with the race/ethnicity, citizenship, maternal education, and the age of the parent. Daily reading ranges from a low of 26% of Latino children to 40.9% of African-American, 42.4% of Asian/Pacific-Islander, 60.5% of Non-Latino White, and 61.2% of

58 Halfon N, Olson L, Inkelas M, et al. Summary statistics from the National Survey of Early Childhood Health, 2000. National Center for Health Statistics. Vital Health Statistics 15(3). 2002.

## Promoting Early Literacy and School Readiness: Disparities in Reading with Young Children

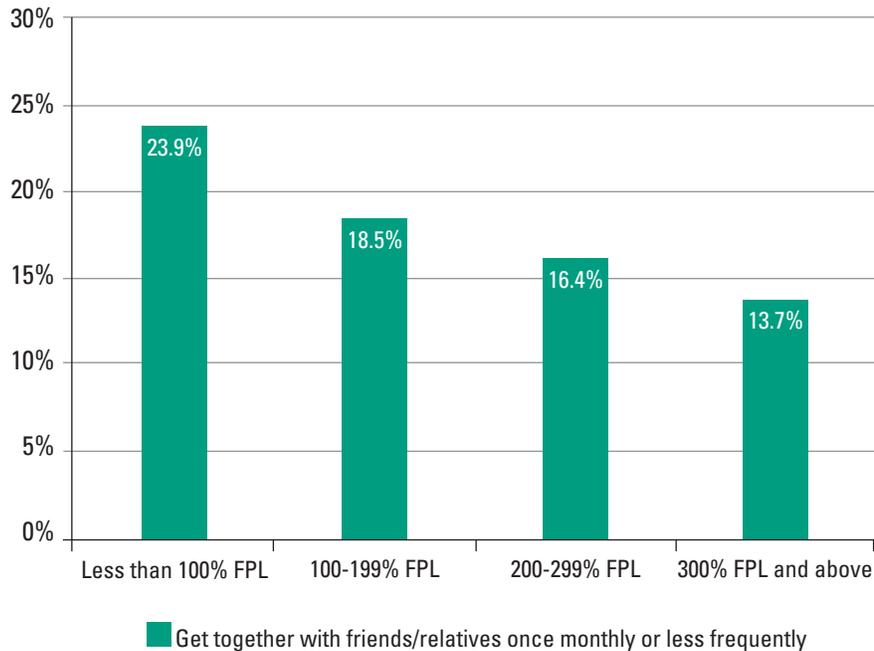
Reading is a simple development-promoting activity that parents can do with their young child to promote school readiness. Parents reading to their young child is an essential activity that focuses the parent's attention on the child and helps with parent-child attachment. A regular reading routine also gives parents protected, focused time with their young child. Regular reading promotes early literacy for children. Because of the association of reading with positive outcomes for young children, professional educators, as well as the American Academy of Pediatrics, recommend that parents read daily with young children.

CHIS 2001 shows that California parents are falling far short of what is recommended. Only 43.6% of parents of children age 0-5 years say that someone in the household reads to the child at least seven times in a typical week. Comparison to national data shows that parents in California are reading less than parents nationally. An important finding is that unlike children in other states, daily reading among most California children does not increase once children grow out of infancy and grow from being toddlers to preschoolers. Although the rate of daily reading increases for higher-income families, children in low-income households are no more likely to be read to daily as their interest in books, and the importance of reading, grows exponentially after infancy.

The large disparities in reading by income, race/ethnicity, and maternal education show that a subgroup of children are at significantly higher risk of not being ready for school. Only about one-third of children age 1-4 years in households below 200% FPL are read to daily. In contrast, two-thirds of children age 1-4 years in households above 300% FPL are read to daily. Disparities by race/ethnicity are quite substantial. Only about 26% of Latino children are read to daily. In contrast, about 40.9% of African-American and 42.4% of Asian/Pacific-Islander children are read to daily. A larger proportion of Non-Latino White children (60.5%) and American Indian/Alaska Native children (61.2%) are read to daily. The fact that U.S. born children are nearly twice as likely as foreign-born children to be read to daily shows the gap in development-promoting experiences that create disparities in young children's readiness for school.

Several strategies hold promise. Ensuring that parents know how important reading together is for young children's learning is important. Pediatric providers and programs that serve young children, such as WIC, Head Start, and child care programs, all have a role to play in emphasizing the benefits of reading. Although parent literacy is important in reading, it should not be a barrier since picture books and stories can still be shared. Pediatric providers and community-based programs can also refer parents to literacy programs. Parent literacy is an important predictor of children's school readiness and in their academic success.

**EXHIBIT 33 – SOCIAL ISOLATION BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME, CHILDREN AGE 0-5 YEARS, CALIFORNIA 2001**



Test of the association of social isolation with income is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) (chi square).

American Indian/Alaska Native children. U.S. born children are nearly twice as likely as other children to be read to daily. Children whose mothers have less education are substantially less likely to be read to daily, and more likely to not be read to at all. Older parents are more likely to read with their child, and they read more frequently than younger parents. About 69.1% of children with parents 40 years or above and 63.8% of children with parents 30-39 years are read to at least four times weekly, compared to 52.7% of children with parents under age 18 years and 55.3% of children with parents age 19-29 years of age.

These large gradients by income, education, and citizenship show that young children who are most at risk of starting school without being ready to learn are not getting the early literacy experiences that they need.

Reading is an important part of preparing children emotionally and academically for school. Young children in California who are at greatest risk for not being ready to start school are not getting the benefit of daily reading. It is important to emphasize to parents that daily reading

improves their child's chances of being ready to learn. There is a growing body of evidence to suggest that frequent if not daily reading can be encouraged by children's health care providers, early care and education providers, and programs such as WIC, to reduce disparities in this important parent-child activity.

### Socialization with Friends and Relatives

Social activities of the family are a key measure of socialization and social support. Parents of most young children in California (82.4%) say that they spend time with friends or relatives at least every other week. About 17.6% are more isolated and get together with friends or relatives only once a month, or even less frequently.

Lower-income parents are more socially isolated than higher-income parents. This income gradient shows that as income increases, social isolation declines. Exhibit 33 shows that while 86.3% of parents at 300% FPL and above get together frequently with family or friends, fewer (76.1%) of parents below the FPL get together frequently. Parents and

their young children also appear to be more socially isolated when they are not U.S. citizens or when they are less acculturated. For example, about 85.2% of families of U.S. born children, and only 70.2% of families of non-citizen children, get together with family or friends at least twice monthly. This suggests that social isolation is a bigger problem for lower income, less acculturated parents. Given the stress of child-rearing, these parents may not be receiving the social support they need.

### Early Care and Education

While child care has always been an important part of child rearing, increased workforce participation now makes child care a necessity for most parents. Nationally, about 60% of children age 0-5 years are in some type of non-parental care arrangement, and 27% have more than one care arrangement. Child care thus plays an important role in the contribution of early care and education experiences to school readiness. High-quality, developmentally-appropriate experiences during early childhood have been linked to better cognitive and social-emotional outcomes in the school years. The California Joint Committee to Develop a Master Plan for Education–Kindergarten through University has acknowledged the importance of early experiences for short- and long-term educational outcomes by addressing early child development and school readiness in its plan.

CHIS 2001 shows that about 36.1% of children age 0-5 years have a regular child care arrangement for at least ten hours per week. Most children who have a regular child care arrangement spend more than 20 hours a week in child care. About 16.6% of young children spend more than 40 hours per week in child care. These rates are similar to recent First 5 survey data<sup>59</sup>, although slight methodological differences make the rates not directly comparable.

Some young children have multiple care arrangements. Of children spending at least ten hours weekly in child care, nearly half (41.5%) receive child care from a grandparent or family member. About 29.2% receive child care in family day care. About 26.6% are in a child care center. About 17.9% of young children are cared for in their

own home by a non-family member (a nanny). About 10.3% are in Head Start or state preschool, while 29.7% are in another type of preschool or nursery school.

### Child Care Licensing and Parent Satisfaction

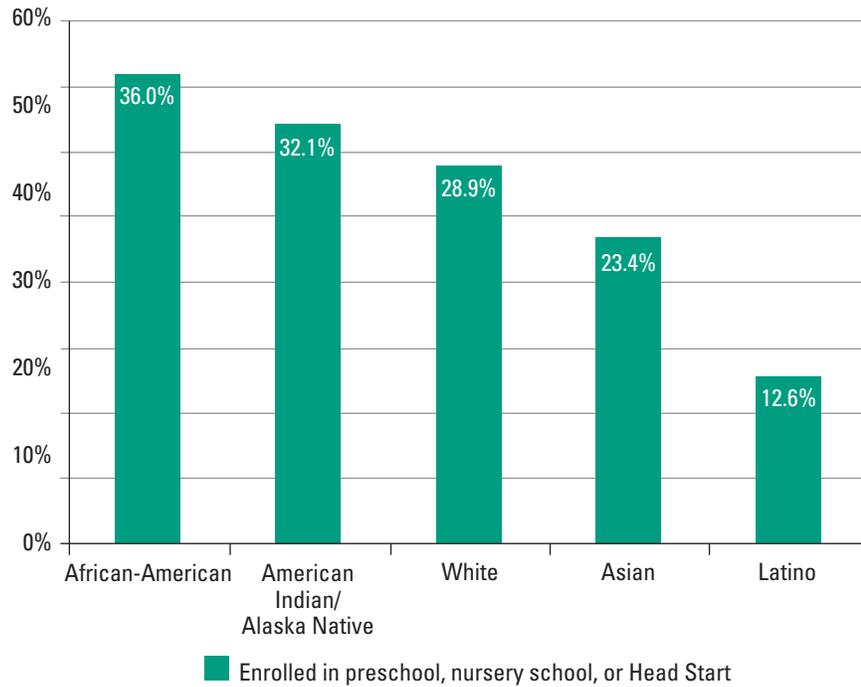
Children's enrollment in licensed—rather than unlicensed—care arrangements is one way of assessing access to quality child care. Because child care licensure is associated with many dimensions of child care quality, disparities in use of licensed arrangements may put some children at a disadvantage in terms of being prepared for school.

Among children in a child care arrangement that is not a family member or nanny, most are reported by their parents to have licensed providers. CHIS 2001 shows that about 85.2% of children spending more than ten hours weekly in a family day care or other child care program or preschool are reported to have licensed providers. Thus, few parents whose children are in centers, nursery schools, or family day care say that the child's provider (or providers if in multiple arrangements) is unlicensed. Fewer mothers (57.2%) with less than high school education report licensed arrangements, compared to 88% with a high school diploma, 85.3% of those with some college, and 90.7% of college graduates.

Parent satisfaction with child care is one way of gauging the quality of children's early care experiences. CHIS 2001 shows that most parents are satisfied with the quality of their child's care arrangements. A substantial number (19.8%) are only somewhat satisfied, or are not at all satisfied. Fewer parents whose child is in a structured child care center or preschool are dissatisfied (17.7%). About 20% of parents whose child is in a family day care arrangement and 31% of parents who do not use child care are dissatisfied with their arrangement. Some studies suggest that parents give high overall ratings of child care even when objective measurement of the child-care setting shows that it does not meet recommended standards, and thus parent ratings of satisfaction should be interpreted with this in mind.

59 Inkelas M, Tullis E, Flint R, Wright J, Becerra R, Halfon N. 2002. Public opinion on child care and early childhood education, California 2001. First 5 California.

**EXHIBIT 34 – ENROLLMENT IN PRESCHOOL, NURSERY SCHOOL, OR HEAD START BY CHILD'S RACE/ETHNICITY, CHILDREN AGE 3-5 YEARS, CALIFORNIA 2001**



Test of the association of preschool participation with race/ethnicity is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) (chi square).

### Participation in Preschool

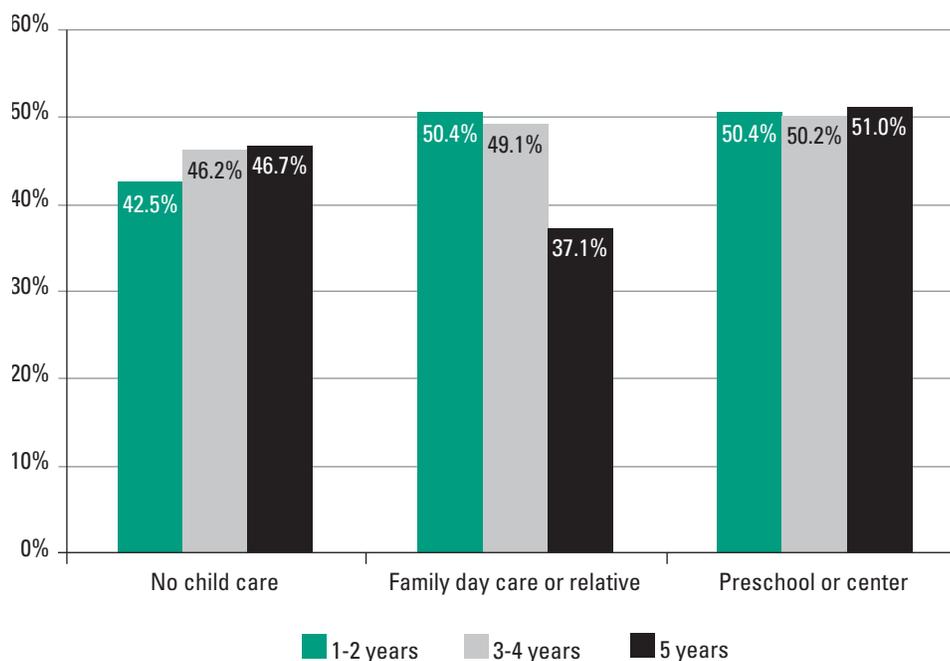
Preschool can help prepare children for school, not only through academic activities but through interaction and socialization. The First 5 California Universal Preschool Initiative is trying to increase access to preschool for all young children. Both California First 5 and local commissions will benefit from knowing which children are participating in preschool as the initiative unfolds. First 5 will also benefit from understanding the characteristics of preschool-age children who have not been in preschool so that the needs of these children can be anticipated and planned for.

CHIS 2001 shows that few children of preschool age (3-5 years) are enrolled in Head Start or a preschool program. About 22.4% of preschool age children are in a preschool program such as Head Start, preschool, or nursery school. The rate of preschool participation is slightly higher for children age four years (at 31.8%) than for children age three years (at 18.4%).

Enrollment in a preschool or Head Start program at age 3-5 years is lower for Latino children (12.6%) than for African-American children (36.0%) showing that Latino children enroll at about one-third the rate of African-American children (Exhibit 34). Enrollment for children age 3-4 years shows the same pattern with 13.8% of Latino and 44.4% of African-American children age 3-4 years enrolled in either preschool or Head Start. Enrollment increases with household income, from 10.4% of children age 3-5 years in households below 100% FPL to 13.3% at 100-199% FPL, 21.6% at 200-299% FPL and 35.1% at 300% FPL and above. The same pattern is found for children age 3-4 years with participation rates of 12.4% for 0-99% FPL, 14.8% at 100-199% FPL, 24.4% at 200-299% FPL, and 39.8% at 300% FPL and above.

Head Start is a key program for improving the school readiness of socio-economically disadvantaged children. Yet many children who are eligible for Head Start are not enrolled. Among income-eligible children, in households with income below 100% FPL, only 9.4% of 3-4 year olds

**EXHIBIT 35 – DAILY READING BY CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENT,  
CHILDREN AGE 3-5 YEARS, CALIFORNIA 2001**



Test of the association of child care arrangement with daily reading at home is statistically significant overall and for the age groups of 3-4 years and 5 years ( $p < 0.05$ ) (chi square). Test of the association is not statistically significant for the age group of 1-2 years.

are in a Head Start or state preschool program. Among eligible preschool-age children, African-American children are more likely than Latino children to be in Head Start.

### Summary

Parents, policy-makers, advocates and researchers have all become increasingly concerned about the extent to which child care arrangements offer an environment that promotes growth and learning. Child care has an important and growing role in supporting optimal cognitive, social and emotional development of young children. Fewer than half of California's young children age 3-4 years are enrolling in preschool. Both income and race/ethnicity are associated with disparities in preschool enrollment. Enrollment among the lowest income children is only one-third the rate of enrollment for children at or above 300% FPL despite the availability of Head Start for young children in low-income households. Future CHIS surveys will make it possible to track changes in preschool enrollment with both state- and county-level preschool initiatives.

### Characteristics of Children in Different Child Care Arrangements

Parents choose child care arrangements based on many factors, including cost, availability, preference for family or for center care, and views on the importance of different features of early care and education. Some parents view preschool and Head Start as programs that can help young children learn and become ready for school.

Patterns of reading for young children are described earlier in Section 7. Exhibit 35 shows that preschool age children who are not in a preschool or Head Start program are not getting the early literacy benefits they need. Daily reading is greater among children who are attending preschool (50%) with 45.9% of children in relative care or family day care and 44.8% of children who are not in child care reading daily with their parents. This shows that parents who want to or have been able to enroll their child in preschool or Head Start are also more likely to be doing these early-literacy activities at home. Yet even among

children enrolled in preschool or Head Start, only about half are being read to daily at home. This shows the importance of promoting reading in all early care and education programs, both in family day care and in center settings.

Exhibit 36 shows that health and well-being varies for children in different child care arrangements. Some of these characteristics differ across arrangements because different types of care are used as children grow. These characteristics are useful for understanding the kinds of needs that children have. For example, rates of the parent and child reading together are higher for children in structured programs than for children at home or in family day care settings. Children in structured settings are more likely to have lower rates of soda consumption than children at home or in family day care or relative care. These home activities and health behaviors may be important to address, as increasing numbers of young children enter structured preschool programs.

These characteristics also show how the population of children may change as increasing numbers of children age 3-4 years enter preschool programs through state and local First 5 preschool expansion initiatives. For example, fair or poor health is less frequent among children in preschool (3%) than among children in family day care or at home (6.9%). Asthma is more common among children in structured programs (15.7%) than for children at home (7.8%) due in part to exposure to allergens in these settings. Also, children in preschool or center programs are identified with activity limitation at nearly twice the rate of children who are in family day care, or at home with the parent, although—due to small sample size—this difference is not statistically significant in CHIS 2001. Greater identification of limitations may result not only because children in preschool are (on average) older, but because many learning and motor disabilities are only identified once children move into these structured settings. Thus, as universal preschool initiatives are launched throughout California, it will be important to anticipate greater identification of disability in children not previously known to have problems.

**EXHIBIT 36 – CHILD CHARACTERISTICS BY CARE ARRANGEMENT,  
CHILDREN AGE 0-5 YEARS, CALIFORNIA 2001**

	<b>NOT IN CHILD CARE, OR LESS THAN 10 HOURS*</b>	<b>FAMILY DAY CARE OR RELATIVE**</b>	<b>PRESCHOOL OR CHILD CARE CENTER***</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>AGE</b>				
LESS THAN 12 MONTHS	76.3%	22.5%	1.3%	100%
1-2 YEARS	63.3%	31.9%	4.9%	100%
3-4 YEARS	58.1%	28.2%	13.6%	100%
5 YEARS	65.1%	22.7%	12.2%	100%
<b>CHILD CARE EXPERIENCES</b>				
VERY SATISFIED WITH CHILD CARE	69.1%	80.1%	82.3%	
<b>PHYSICAL WELL-BEING</b>				
EXCELLENT/VERY GOOD HEALTH	72.0%	80.3%	81.3%	
ACTIVITY LIMITATION	3.3%	3.8%	5.6%	
DIAGNOSED WITH ASTHMA	7.8%	14.2%	15.7%	
SYMPTOMS AT LEAST MONTHLY	39.3%	32.9%	35.3%	
TAKE MEDICATION	49.0%	53.1%	55.6%	
UNINSURED BUT ELIGIBLE FOR PUBLIC PROGRAM	6.2%	4.1%	2.2%	
<b>NUTRITION</b>				
2+ SERVINGS OF FRUIT DAILY	86.3%	85.0%	87.4%	
3+ SERVINGS OF VEGETABLES DAILY	18.4%	17.2%	15.3%	
DRINK SODA (1-2 YEARS)	19.2%	20.2%	8.6%	
DRINK SODA (3-4 YEARS)	26.0%	25.3%	19.5%	
DRINK SODA (5 YEARS)	30.3%	31.3%	20.6%	
<b>LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT</b>				
2+ HOURS OF TELEVISION/COMPUTER USE	67.9%	70.1%	61.6%	
READING DAILY (1-2 YEARS)	42.5%	50.4%	50.4%	
READING DAILY (3-4 YEARS)	46.2%	49.1%	50.2%	
READING DAILY (5 YEARS)	46.7%	37.1%	51.0%	
<b>ECONOMIC WELL-BEING</b>				
RECEIVING FOOD STAMPS	19.3%	18.9%	12.8%	

\* Children who spend no time or fewer than 10 hours weekly in child care

\*\* Children who spend at least 10 hours in child care but are not in preschool, nursery school, Head Start, or child care center

\*\*\* Children who spend at least 10 hours in child care and are in preschool, nursery school, Head Start, or child care center

Tests of the association of child care arrangement are statistically significant (p<0.05) (chi square) for child age, satisfaction with child care, child health, asthma diagnosis, health insurance, soda intake (overall, and age 1-2 years) and reading (overall, age 3-4 years, age 5 years).



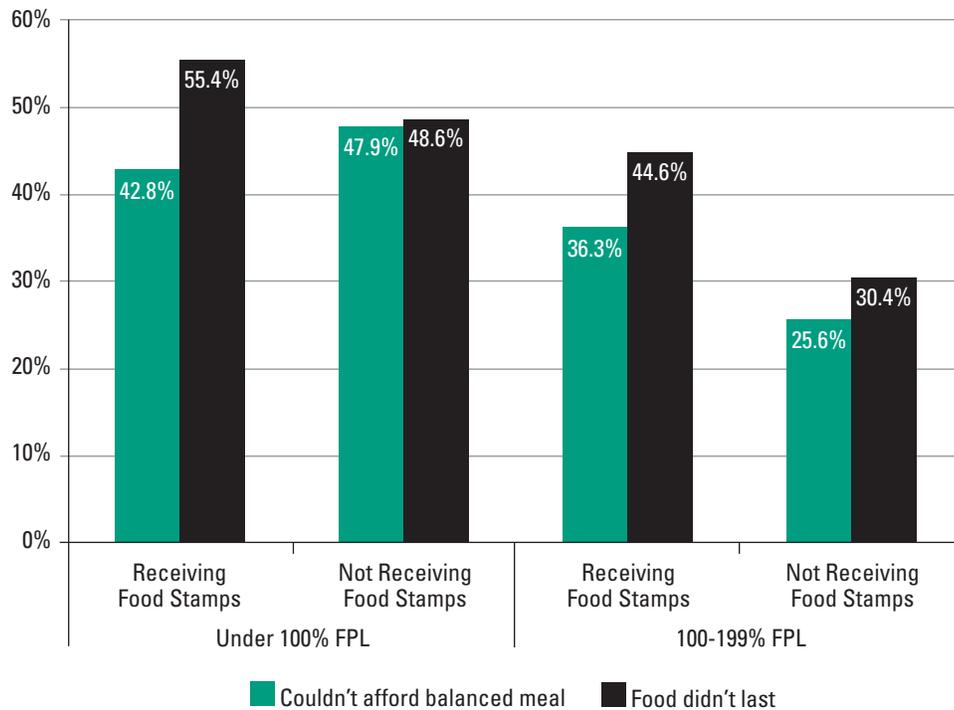


The well-being of children is affected by the material and economic well-being of their families. The ability of families to provide children with their basic physical needs is an important component of child well-being. Children from low-income families have poorer health and fare less well than higher-income children on other well-being indicators. School-age children in lower-income families are more likely to have difficulty in school and are at greater risk of becoming teen parents and having low income as adults.<sup>60</sup>

**Food Insecurity**

Children’s physical health and development are jeopardized when they do not receive appropriate nutrition and health care. Households with food insecurity have poorer quality meals and suffer from anxiety about their food supply.<sup>61</sup> CHIS 2001 shows that many California households with young children have been unable to provide balanced meals for financial reasons. Among young children in California households with income below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), about 51.2% of parents report that their food did not last and they could not afford to get more, either “sometimes” or “often” over the past 12 months.

**EXHIBIT 37 – FOOD INSECURITY IN HOUSEHOLDS WITH INCOME LESS THAN 200% FPL, BY USE OF FOOD STAMPS, CHILDREN AGE 0-5 YEARS, CALIFORNIA 2001**

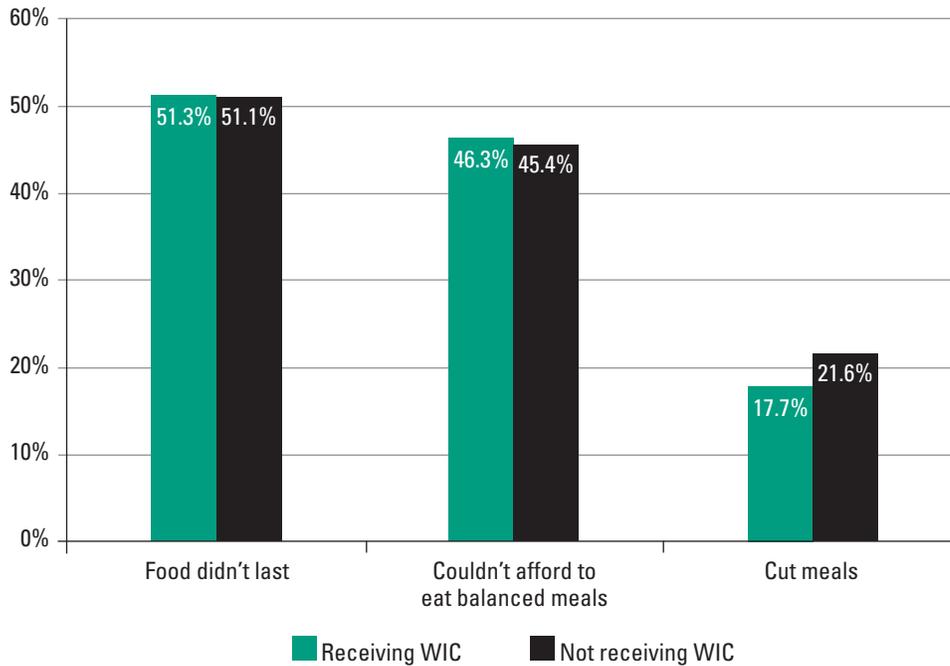


Tests of the association of food insecurity with receipt of Food Stamps, for each income group, are not statistically significant.

60 Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, America’s Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2001. Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S.Government Printing Office.

61 ibid

**FIGURE 38 – FOOD INSECURITY IN HOUSEHOLDS WITH INCOME LESS THAN 100% FPL, BY PARTICIPATION IN WIC, PARENTS OF CHILDREN AGE 0-5 YEARS, CALIFORNIA 2001**



Tests of the association of food insecurity with WIC participation are not statistically significant.

Food insecurity affects the quality of meals more often than it causes hunger or eating less. Parents of 45.9% of young children in these low-income households report not being able to afford balanced meals. Somewhat fewer parents have cut the size of meals or skipped meals (19.1%), or eaten less than they should (25.9%). Just as for children nationally,<sup>62</sup> food insecurity is a significant problem but hunger affects only some of the food-insecure households.

Although many low-income households report problems affording balanced meals and adequate amounts of food, not all low-income households receive Food Stamps or participate in the Women, Infant and Children (WIC) Supplemental Food Program. Only 14.9% of households under 300% FPL with young children are receiving Food Stamps, including 39.7% of children below the FPL and very few children above the FPL. CHIS 2001 shows that

the low-income families receiving Food Stamps are experiencing the greatest food insecurity. Many families who are not receiving this support are also having trouble. About half of families below 100% FPL with children age 0-5 years who are receiving Food Stamps report occasionally or often being unable to afford a balanced meal (42.1%) or food not lasting (55.4%), with fewer reporting that they cut the size of or skipped meals (21.4%). Exhibit 37 shows that similar food-insecurity problems affect low-income families whether or not they receive Food Stamps.

WIC participation is high among income-eligible children. Overall, WIC participation declines with child age. In low-income households about 45.8% of infants, 35% of toddlers age 1-2, and 28.5% of children age 3-4 years are reported to be receiving WIC. Yet many low-income households in which the child is receiving WIC continue to

62 Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being*, (2001). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

have food insecurity (Exhibit 38). Of the lowest income households, food insecurity affects a similar proportion of families receiving and not receiving WIC. While WIC improves the child's nutrient intake, it does not fully address the fundamental problem of food insecurity.

### **Income Assistance**

Key public assistance programs for mothers and young children include Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) and WIC. Since welfare reforms were enacted in 1996, the number of families using TANF has fallen. Nationally the proportion of children who are living in families receiving TANF income assistance has dropped to 5.8% of all children.<sup>63</sup> The proportion of young children in California who are receiving TANF, or CalWorks (5.9%) is similar to the national proportion.

<sup>63</sup> ChildTrends Data Bank, Social Support Benefits AFDC/TANF, <http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org/income/benefits/50AFDCTANF.htm>