

Early Educators in the U.S. Territories

Early educators in the territories are even more overlooked than their state counterparts in the United States of America. They face additional marginalization as a result of their political status in the United States as territory residents. To call attention to these inequities, the *Early Childhood Workforce Index* includes, for the first time, the five inhabited U.S. territories — American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands — though the available data and information are limited.

For the most part, residents of the territories are considered U.S. citizens (residents of American Samoa being the exception), yet nevertheless, they are subject to different treatment as a result of the territories' lack of statehood. While the territories have their own governments and governors similar to the states, residents do not have federal voting rights. This status means, for example, that U.S. citizens born in Puerto Rico have no say in presidential elections or federal legislation — including the authorization of statehood, which falls to Congress — despite the island having a population three times the size of Rhode Island.

In addition to their secondary political status, the U.S. territories are islands physically separated from the continental United States. In some cases, such as American Samoa, the territories also have very small populations. Residents of the U.S. territories face multiple barriers that have only increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. They not only lack infrastructure support from the federal government to respond to economic downturns and recurrent natural disasters, but also have more limited health infrastructure.¹

These factors, an outgrowth of the dynamics of colonialism and the effects of systemic racism, lead to the territories being sidelined or given inequitable treatment in areas such as federal funding, media reporting, and data collection efforts. A lack of data contributes to the inequity and can mask the magnitude of disparities with residents of the states and the impacts of these disparities on the populations in the territories.

The lack of general data about residents of the territories is also reflected in early care and education (ECE), where large nationwide data collection efforts such as the National Survey of Early Care and Education often do not include the territories, exacerbating challenges in understanding the status and well-being of early educators. These broad and specific challenges pose barriers to building high-quality ECE services — including appropriate preparation, support, and compensation for early educators — in each of the territories. Securing adequate funding for ECE services and infrastructure in the territories is even more difficult than in the states because of reliance on funds from a federal government in which they have limited voice.

Early educators in the territories are persistently left out of ECE discussions in the United States, yet they are impacted by many of the same federal ECE programs as the states. Though data and information on educators and ECE policies in the U.S. territories are currently limited, they must not continue to be ignored. Following, we provide brief profiles of the territories. For more information on our sources for the 2020 *Index*, see **[Appendix 1: Data Sources & Methodology](#)**.



American Samoa



Location

Group of islands in the South Pacific Ocean, about halfway between Hawaii and New Zealand



Total population

49,437 (July 2020 estimate)



Child population under age 6

Not available



GDP per capita

\$11,200 (2016 estimate)



Major racial/ethnic groups

Nearly 90 percent of the population is Samoan, and there is a small population of Tongans (3 percent) and Filipinos (2 percent). (2010 estimate)

Early Care and Education

The American Samoa Department of Education houses the Early Childhood Education/ Head Start division and operates early childhood education centers. Federal Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) resources are administered through the American Samoa Department of Human and Social Services. There is no pre-K program. A quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) has been under development and piloted.

Occupation	Number of employees	Hourly median wage (2019)
Child care worker	Not available	Not available
Preschool teacher	Not available	Not available
Center director	Not available	Not available



Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI)



Location

Islands in the western part of the North Pacific Ocean, about three-quarters of the way from Hawaii to the Philippines



Total population

51,433 (July 2020 estimate)



Child population under age 6

Not available



GDP per capita

\$24,500 (2016 estimate)



Major racial/ethnic groups

About one-half of the population identifies as Asian (including Filipino, 35 percent; Chinese, 7 percent; Korean, 4 percent; and other Asian, 4 percent), and about one-third as Pacific Islander (Chamorro, 24 percent; Carolinian, 5 percent; and other Pacific Islander, 6 percent) (2010 estimate)

Early Care and Education

Federal CCDF resources are administered through the CNMI Department of Community and Cultural Affairs. Head Start and Early Head Start are administered by the CNMI public school system. There is no pre-K program. A QRIS has been under development and piloted.

Occupation	Number of employees	Hourly median wage (2019)
Child care worker	Not available	Not available
Preschool teacher	Not available	Not available
Center director	Not available	Not available



Guam



Location

Island in the northwestern part of the North Pacific Ocean, about three-quarters of the way from Hawaii to the Philippines



Total population

168,485 (July 2020 estimate)



Child population under age 6

Not available



GDP per capita

\$35,600 (2016 estimate)



Major racial/ethnic groups

A little more than one-third of the population identifies as Chamorro (37 percent) and about one-quarter identify as Filipino (26 percent) (2010 estimate)

Early Care and Education

The Guam Department of Human Services administers federal CCDF dollars. Guam’s Department of Education administers Head Start services, typically through the island’s elementary schools. Guam is also the only territory to establish a territory-funded pre-K program, which is also operated by the Guam Department of Education. This program began as a pilot in 2015 with four public school classrooms and 72 children.² As of the 2018-2019 year, the program had not yet been expanded.³ Pre-K lead teachers in Guam are required to have an associate degree with early childhood education specialization and either pre-K or pre-K to 2nd grade certification, and assistant teachers are required to hold a high school diploma.⁴ A QRIS has been under development and piloted.

Occupation	Number of employees	Hourly median wage (2019)
Child care worker	Not available	\$9.23
Preschool teacher	120	\$10.20
Center director	Not available	Not available



Puerto Rico



Location

Island in the Caribbean Sea, east of the Dominican Republic



Total population

3,189,068 (July 2020 estimate)



Child population under age 6

146,455



GDP per capita

\$39,000 (2016 estimate)



Major racial/ethnic groups

While most of the population identifies as Hispanic/Latinx (99 percent), 76 percent also identify as White and 12 percent as Black (2010 estimate)

Early Care and Education

Puerto Rico provides child care subsidies and Head Start services to qualifying families through the *Administración para el Cuidado y Desarrollo Integral de la Niñez* (ACUDEN, Administration for Comprehensive Child Care and Development) — a government agency created for the explicit purpose of administering federal ECE funds. ACUDEN also runs the QRIS system, Pasitos (Baby Steps). There is no pre-K program.

Occupation	Number of employees	Hourly median wage (2019)
Child care worker	2,010	\$8.86
Preschool teacher	3,450	\$10.89
Center director	240	\$16.20



U.S. Virgin Islands



Location

Islands in the Caribbean Sea, east of Puerto Rico



Total population

106,235 (July 2020 estimate)



Child population under age 6

Not available



GDP per capita

\$37,000 (2016 estimate)



Major racial/ethnic groups

Black, 76 percent; White, 15.6 percent; Asian, 1.4 percent; other, 4.9 percent; and multiracial, 2.1 percent; additionally, 17.4 percent self-identify as Latinx (2010 estimate)

Early Care and Education

The Department of Human Services administers Head Start and CCDF funding across the three main islands. All ECE directors and teachers are required to have a Child Development Associate Credential.⁵ There is no pre-K program. A QRIS has been under development and piloted.

Occupation	Number of employees	Hourly median wage (2019)
Child care worker	70	\$12.00
Preschool teacher	160	\$16.44
Center director	Not available	Not available

Endnotes

1. Hall, C., Rudowitz, R., & Gifford, K. (2019). Medicaid in the Territories: Program Features, Challenges, and Changes. Retrieved from: <https://www.kff.org/report-section/medicaid-in-the-territories-program-features-challenges-and-changes-issue-brief/>.
2. Barnett, W.S., Friedman-Krauss, A.H., Weisenfeld, G.G., Horowitz, M., Kasmin, R., & Squires, J.H. (2017). The State of Preschool 2016: State Preschool Yearbook. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research. Retrieved from: http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Guam_YB16.pdf.
3. Friedman-Krauss, A.H., Barnett, W.S., Garver, K.A., Hodges, K.S., Weisenfeld, G.G., & Gardiner, B.A. (2020). The State of Preschool 2019: State Preschool Yearbook. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research. Retrieved from: http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Guam_YB2019.pdf.
4. Friedman-Krauss et al. (2020).
5. Friedman-Krauss, A.H., Barnett, W.S., Garver, K.A., Hodges, K.S., Weisenfeld, G.G., & Gardiner, B.A. (2020). The State of Preschool 2019: State Preschool Yearbook. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research. Retrieved from http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Virgin_Islands_YB2019.pdf.