

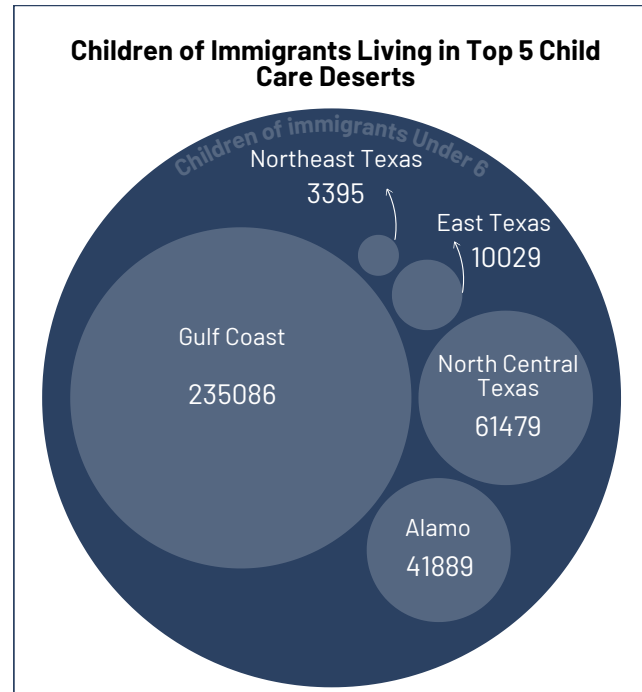
Barriers to Access for Early Childhood Education

Exposure to high-quality early childhood education (ECE) lays the foundation for future academic success, particularly for children from low-income families. Research shows that children who participate in high-quality ECE programs are more likely to graduate from high school, less likely to require special education services, and will experience fewer behavioral challenges later in life.

Programs like those in Alief ISD, located in Greater Houston, demonstrate the transformative impact of accessible ECE. The district’s implementation of full-day pre-K programs resulted in remarkable improvements in vocabulary development, increasing from 40% to 72% among participants.

Despite these benefits, many immigrant families face significant barriers to accessing ECE, including language challenges, lack of information, and logistical obstacles. Insights from our Immigrant ECE Working Group in North Texas underscore the need for a holistic approach to help support immigrant families. A key recommendation is the development of a clear communication strategy that incorporates tools, stories, and an asset-based approach to highlight the positive impacts an early childhood education has on children. Such strategies not only help families navigate challenges but also help foster collaboration across communities and stakeholders.

For the nearly 150,000 children under the age of six in Texas with a sole parent who is an immigrant, access to high-quality child care is not just beneficial—it is essential.¹ These parents, often the sole providers for their families, depend on reliable child care to work and sustain their households. Without affordable and accessible ECE options, these families face difficult trade-offs that can jeopardize both their employment and their child’s development.



A zip code is deemed a “Child Care Desert” if the number of children under age 6 with working parents is three times greater than the licensed capacity of child care providers in the area.²

Region	Total Zip Code Deserts	# of children of immigrants	Major Cities
North Central	51	61476	Plano, Denton, McKinney
Gulf Coast	43	235086	Houston, Katy, Huntsville
East Texas	38	10029	Tyler, Longview, Palestine
Alamo	30	41889	San Antonio, Seguin, Pleasanton
Northeast Texas	29	3395	Paris, Texarkana, Sulphur Springs



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Citations

1-Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Matthew Sobek, Daniel Backman, Annie Chen, Grace Cooper, Stephanie Richards, Renae Rodgers, and Megan Schouweiler. IPUMS USA: Version 15.0 [dataset]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V15.0>

2-See Footnote 1