Stephenson County is located in the northern part of Illinois, with a population of 47,711 (2010 U.S. Census). Stephenson County is home to persons identifying themselves as White (86.5%), Black (9%), or Hispanic/Latino (2.9%). According to the U.S. Census, 13% of residents live at or below the federal poverty level (FPL), compared to the state rate of 13.3%.

The U.S. National Register of Historic Places includes a tiny area in Stephenson County called “Kellogg’s Grove.” This grove includes the remains of a small cabin and the wagon train called the “Kellogg Trail.” The wagon trail was used by stagecoach travelers between Galena and Peoria. The cabin was used as a “wayside inn.”

Children under the age of 5 years constitute approximately 6% of the population of Stephenson County. Early care and education in the county are provided by Head Start, Preschool for All (PFA), and child care settings (including licensed child care centers, licensed family child care homes, and license-exempt child care centers or homes).

The Illinois Early Intervention Program (funded by IDHS) provides services in the home to children with disabilities, birth to age 3. Preschoolers with special needs (ages 3-5) may be served in PFA sites, Head Start programs, child care settings, early childhood special education classrooms, or the home.
According to population estimates reported on IECAM (2008 census estimates), 57% of 3- and 4-year-old children in Stephenson County are living in families at or below 185% FPL (first PFA priority level). The map (top right) shows the distribution of publicly funded preschool sites in Stephenson County (divided into townships). The color ramp (in the legend) indicates the percentage of 3- and 4-year-old children who live in households with an income at or below 185% FPL. Note that those townships in the darker shades of brown reveal a higher percentage of poverty. The map highlights the importance of locating PFA and Head Start sites in areas of highest need.

Child Care in Stephenson County

The map (bottom right) shows the distribution of child care settings superimposed on the county (divided into townships). Note that the red squares indicate licensed child care centers, the blue triangles license-exempt child care centers, and the green dots family child care homes. Although child care centers serve children who live above 185% FPL, many children from low-income families are cared for in child care settings all over the county.