



RURAL CHILD CARE INNOVATION PROGRAM

COMMUNITY SOLUTION ACTION PLAN FOR CHILD CARE

AUSTIN, MINNESOTA
MARCH, 2018

The Rural Child Care Innovation Program is possible due to generous funding from the Minnesota Department of Human Services.



This Community Solution Action plan is designed to be a deep dive into the Rural Child Care Innovation Program. You will step through every stage of the community engagement process from solution development to implementation. Please visit www.ruralchildcare.org for continued updates on community progress.

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"If employees can't find quality care for their children, they won't work for you. They won't move to your community, or they'll be forced to move away, or they might have to consider quitting their job to stay home with their children because they have no other option."

Kris Bevell
Editor
Prairie Business Magazine



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Rural Child Care Innovation Program (RCCIP), is a community engagement process designed to develop right-sized solutions to address the needs of early care and education in Minnesota's rural communities. The goal of RCCIP is to help communities identify the scope and size of their child care challenges, and to empower and support communities to develop solutions to address these challenges.

The Community Solution Action Plan for Austin, Minnesota, intends to outline the child care challenges identified in the community, and the proposed solutions to improve the state of child care in the area. A Core Team from Austin, with the support of First Children's Finance, conducted a thorough investigation and analysis to uncover the factors creating the child care shortage in the area through focus groups, individual interviews, and surveys with a multitude of stakeholders in the community.

To understand the potential need of child care in Austin, First Children's Finance conducted a Supply and demand gap analysis, which showed a child care shortage of 810 slots. The analysis revealed that it's very difficult to be a child care provider due to numerous rules and regulations, low pay and no benefits, long hours, and high operating costs. Staffing is a significant expense for many child care programs, resulting in 60-80% of overall expenses. This heavily influences the ability of child care providers to sustain their child care operations.

The analysis revealed that the child care shortage has severely impacted parents living in Austin. Nearly 22% of survey respondents declined employment or withdrew from the workforce due to child care issues. Absence from work (when a provider is closed for the day), inability to work a flexible schedule, inability to work different shifts, and tardiness to work hinders the ability of parents to advance in their careers.

Some of the major factors contributing to the child care shortage in Austin include increase in dual-working families, new immigrant populations looking for culturally appropriate care, attraction of new employees to the area, difficulties of being a child care provider and lack of community recognition for child care providers. Furthermore, there is a lack of business supports and business incentives in the area, including parent support and parent education.

Through the RCCIP, Austin has identified six goals to address the child care challenges. These goals include:

- **Develop a community recognition program**
- **Develop a new child care partnership**
- **Launch a new online database of child care providers**
- **Provide education and support to prospective providers**
- **Identify non-owner occupied space for family child care**
- **Promote available resources for child care for families**

In implementing these goals, the city of Austin will improve the state of child care, empower local child care providers through continuous community support, provide parents with more care options, and providers with better resources to run and operate their child care business. In the next 12 months, First Children's Finance will support the core team in implementing these goals and measuring outcomes of their efforts.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HIGH QUALITY CHILD CARE IN COMMUNITIES

In rural communities, ebbs and flows of the local economy greatly influence the sustainability of a community's child care supply, and vice versa. That's why the Rural Child Care Innovation Program addresses child care and early education challenges through a framework of regional economic development. A robust supply of high quality child care fosters community growth through:

Recruiting and retaining new businesses, employees, and families

Enabling parents to be more productive and less absent at work

Strengthening and feeding the pipeline for a skilled future workforce

The connection is clear: when our children thrive, so do our communities. Investing in early care and education is not only the right thing to do for our youngest citizens, but the best thing to do for our economic growth and prosperity.

INTRODUCING THE RURAL CHILD CARE INNOVATION PROGRAM

Child care is an economic driver for rural communities across the United States but many communities are facing shortages of high quality child care. The Rural Child Care Innovation Program is based on the fundamental idea that rural communities are greater than their size in numbers and greater than their current challenges. By mobilizing and empowering rural communities, the landscape of early care and education is changing in rural America.

PROGRAM FOCUS

Children living in rural areas are more likely to come from low-income households than children in urban areas, and are more likely to be living in poverty for longer periods of time. Many rural areas struggle to attract and retain a young, educated workforce, while others lack the resources to keep up with their own growth and success. Although rural communities face many challenges, they are also resilient. They have the innovation it takes to develop nimble, creative solutions that will be effective in rural areas. The Rural Child Care Innovation Program leverages communities' independent, can-do attitudes to address early care and education in Greater Minnesota.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES AND GENERAL TIMELINE

APPLICATION PHASE		
ACTIVITIES	TIMING	DETAILS
Webinar	April 24, 2017	I Information session on the engagement process and program expectations.
Application Deadline	May 5, 2017	
Selection of Communities	May 15, 2017	Communities notified via email
Program Setup	May 2017	FCF connected by phone with the main contact to set up first Core Team meeting

PLANNING PHASE		
ACTIVITIES	TIMING	DETAILS
Core Team Onboarding Retreat	July 12, 2017	Face-to-face meeting with FCF and the Core Team to discuss project details and expectations
Core Team Planning Meeting	August 7, 2017	Face-to-face meeting to map out community engagement activities and fully develop the timeline
Community Engagement Activities	July 2017- September 2017	Implementation of engagement activities within the community
Child Care Provider Trainings	To Be Scheduled	Series of business trainings and one-on-one consultation conducted by FCF
Town Hall Event	November 6, 2017	Community wide event to identify and develop community project activities

IMPLEMENTATION PHASE		
ACTIVITIES	TIMING	DETAILS
Implementation Planning Retreat	January 9, 2018	Face-to-face meeting to map out smart goals and implementation activities with project teams.
Community Solution Action Plan	February 2018	Report detailing community data, types of solutions, and community identified projects.
Regular Project Team Meetings	February 2018- September 2018	Implement community solutions.
Regular Core Team Meetings	February 2018- September 2018	Connect with FCF to discuss Project Team outcomes.
Technical Assistance Support	December 2017- September 2018	FCF is available for business support when needed.
Final Report	September 28, 2018	Core Team submits final report to FCF

EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

The Rural Child Care Innovation Program is designed to support fundamental change in the overall conditions for child care in the areas that it is delivered. This is accomplished through various methods that include:

- A thorough analysis of the current child care supply and demand, and evaluation of community factors impacting the local child care supply
- Events that educate community members about the link between quality child care, rural economic development and viable communities.
- A Community Solution Action Plan that includes innovative solutions generated through a facilitated Town Hall process
- Support and business improvement services to existing family child care providers and child care centers
- Access to First Children's Finance's expertise, resources and tools, including research and financial modeling
- Links to other communities working on similar issues

Measurements of success are determined through a tactical project management grid that provides guidance to the Core Team about the involved participants and their projected steps and progress towards project completion.

ABOUT AUSTIN, MINNESOTA

Austin, MN is a rural community in Southeastern MN with approximately 24,000 people and rapidly changing demographics. In 2002, Austin was a predominately white community while today the population is 23% non-white. There are over 46 languages spoken in our schools. There is a 20% poverty level and 2% unemployment in the Austin area. The diversity has grown as a result of immigrants and refugees from Africa, Southeast Asia, and Mexico, who are moving to Austin to work in the meat packing and production plants. Austin is also home to a Fortune 500 company. This employment picture creates vast economic diversity among the citizens.

LOCAL CORE TEAM REPRESENTATION

The Core Team was identified locally and asked to commit to investigating the child care challenges in Austin. The Core Team has and will continue to support development of solutions to sustain a high quality and sustainable child care infrastructure in the local area.

- **Amy Baskin**, Director of Community Education and Communications, Austin Public Schools
- **Angie Bissen**, Senior Human Resources Partner, Hormel Foods
- **Brady Engelby**, Family Child Care Licensor, Freeborn & Mower Counties
- **Diane Baker**, Executive Director, United Way of Mower County
- **Gema Alvarado-Guerrero**, Executive Director, Parenting Resource Center, Inc.
- **Holly Wallace**, Planning and Zoning Administrator, City of Austin
- **Pam Kellogg-Marmsoler**, Community Health Supervisor Mower County Health and Human Services
- **Shannon Hart**, Executive Director, Apple Lane Child Care Center
- **Sheri Dankert**, Assistant Secretary/Treasurer, The Hormel Foundation
- **Teri Steckelberg**, Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation

CHILD CARE DATA AND EARLY EDUCATION TRENDS

As part of the Rural Child Care Innovation Program, the local community was provided with various forms of support to understand the contributing factors for the child care challenges. First Children's Finance leveraged different data sources to pull together an illustrative picture of the impact of child care in the local area. These data sources include US Census Information, MN Child Care Licensing Records, Minnesota Department of Education, MN DEED, and other internal research tools including First Children's Finance data.

POTENTIAL NEED OVERVIEW

First Children's Finance conducted a supply and demand gap analysis which provided a view of potential child care needs.

This analysis was conducted in Mid-2017 and showed a shortage of 1,650 slots in Austin and surrounding areas. Additional focus on the 55912 zip code in Austin showed a gap of 810 slots.

ZIP CODE	CITY	# OF CHILD CARE CENTERS (CCC)	# OF FAMILY CARE CENTERS (FCC)	PLUS/ MINUS/ TOTAL
55909	Adams	0	4	-8
55912	Austin	3	41	-810
55917	Blooming Prairie	0	15	-10
55918	Brownsdale	0	1	-61
55926	Dexter	0	2	-12
55933	Elkton	0	0	-28
55940	Hayfield	0	9	-83
55950	Andyville	0	0	-7
55953	Lyle	0	5	13
55970	Rose Creek	0	5	-6
55973	Sargeant	0	0	-13
55977	Taopi	0	0	-22
55982	Waltham	0	2	-12
56007	Albert Lea	2	44	-372
56016	Clarks Grove	0	1	-14
56029	Emmons	0	1	-27
56036	Myrtle	0	2	-83
56043	Hayward	0	0	-25
56045	Hollandale	0	0	-63
56089	Twin Lakes	0	1	-8

FAMILY CHILD CARE – BY THE NUMBERS

First Children's Finance evaluated the current supply of family child care to identify trends that needed further examination.

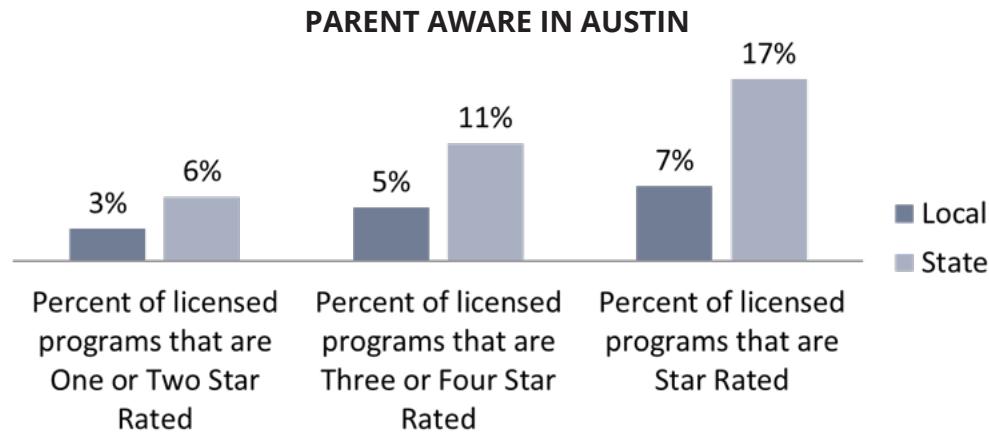
- The average length of service is lower than the state average which indicates a population of providers with shorter lengths of service
- Providers with less than 5 years of service and those with more than 20 years of service are most at risk for turnover in an industry that already sees tremendous employment turn-over rates.
- The area is ahead of the state average for family providers being located outside of their primary residences and in non-residential dwellings.

	LOCAL	STATE
Total Family Child Care Providers	133	8,693
Average Length of Service	11.4 years	12.3 years
Less than 5 years / Service	52/ 39.1%	2577 / 29.6%
More than 20 years / Service	30/ 22.6%	2150 / 24.7%
Non-Owner Occupied	6 / 4.5%	214 / 2.5%
Non-Residential Dwelling	3 / 2.3%	87 / 1.0%

QUALITY CHILD CARE OVERVIEW

First Children's Finance examined state-wide information about the number of child care programs that are participating in the Parent Aware program.

Parent Aware is Minnesota's Quality Rating and Improvement System that identifies programs that go above and beyond the general licensing requirements to obtain higher quality in their child care programs.



The chart above demonstrates that child care providers in Austin, MN lag behind the state average when it comes to Parent Aware enrollment. This is a critical component when we evaluate the quality child care program offerings in the area.

AVERAGE COST OF CHILD CARE

Child care is a large investment for families with children. A market rate survey of child care providers was conducted as part of the RCCIP to inform child care investments in the area.

The following chart shows the average cost of child care investment on a weekly basis at the 75th percentile for each age group in both a center and family child care setting. It means that 25% of child care programs charge more than the market average and 75% of child care programs charge less.

AGE GROUP- CHILD CARE CENTER	WEEKLY RATE	ANNUAL RATE
75TH PERCENTILE - INFANT WEEKLY	\$197.00	\$10,244
75TH PERCENTILE - TODDLER WEEKLY	\$188.00	\$9,776
75TH PERCENTILE - PRESCHOOL WEEKLY	\$174.00	\$9,048
75TH PERCENTILE - SCHOOL AGE WEEKLY	\$150.00	\$7,800

AGE GROUP- FAMILY CHILD CARE	WEEKLY RATE	ANNUAL RATE
75TH PERCENTILE - INFANT WEEKLY	\$140.00	7,280
75TH PERCENTILE - TODDLER WEEKLY	\$130.00	\$6,760
75TH PERCENTILE - PRESCHOOL WEEKLY	\$125.00	\$6,500
75TH PERCENTILE - SCHOOL AGE WEEKLY	\$125.00	\$6,500

Results of the 2016 Child Care Market Rate Survey: Minnesota Child Care Provider Business Update

While rates of investment for child care are high for families, many child care operations run on very slim margins due to the high cost of quality staffing and care. Staffing is a significant expense for many child care center programs at 60-80% of overall expenses.

Family Child Care providers invest significant portions of tuition revenue back into their operations leaving providers with less than minimum wage for compensation, according to research by First Children's Finance in 2016.

OTHER LOCAL SUPPORTING DATA

As part of the overall collection and review of data, First Children's Finance highlighted additional data outcomes that can impact third grade reading levels and local graduation rates. There are multiple studies indicate the link between early education and school readiness with third-grade reading levels and high school graduation rates. Lower achievement levels can be an early indicator of future challenges with high school graduation rates, engagement in higher education, and teen pregnancy rates.

THIRD GRADE READING LEVELS

DISTRICT	2016 PROFICIENCY RATE
Austin #492	45.30%
Blooming Prairie #756	51.60%
Albert Lea #241	54.40%
Glenville-Emmons #2886	52.40%
Lyle #497	31.60%
Southland #500	38.7
Hayfield #203	57.10%
Statewide	57.50%

LOCAL GRADUATION RATES

DISTRICT	2016 GRADUATION RATE
Austin #492	71.70%
Blooming Prairie #756	91.20%
Albert Lea #241	76.40%
Glenville-Emmons #2886	89.50%
Lyle #497	82.40%
Southland #500	93.30%
Hayfield #203	86.50%
Statewide	82.20%

ABILITY TO PAY FOR CHILD CARE

Many families working on the lower end of the wage spectrum have difficulty paying for child care. The following charts provide an overview of local economic factors that can further impact child care:

Local Poverty Information - Mower County

Total Population Living Below Poverty Threshold in Last 12 Months	6,267
Related Children Under Age 18 Living with Income Below Poverty Threshold	2,304
Families With Related Child Under Age 5 Living Below Poverty Threshold	336

Household Income - Mower County

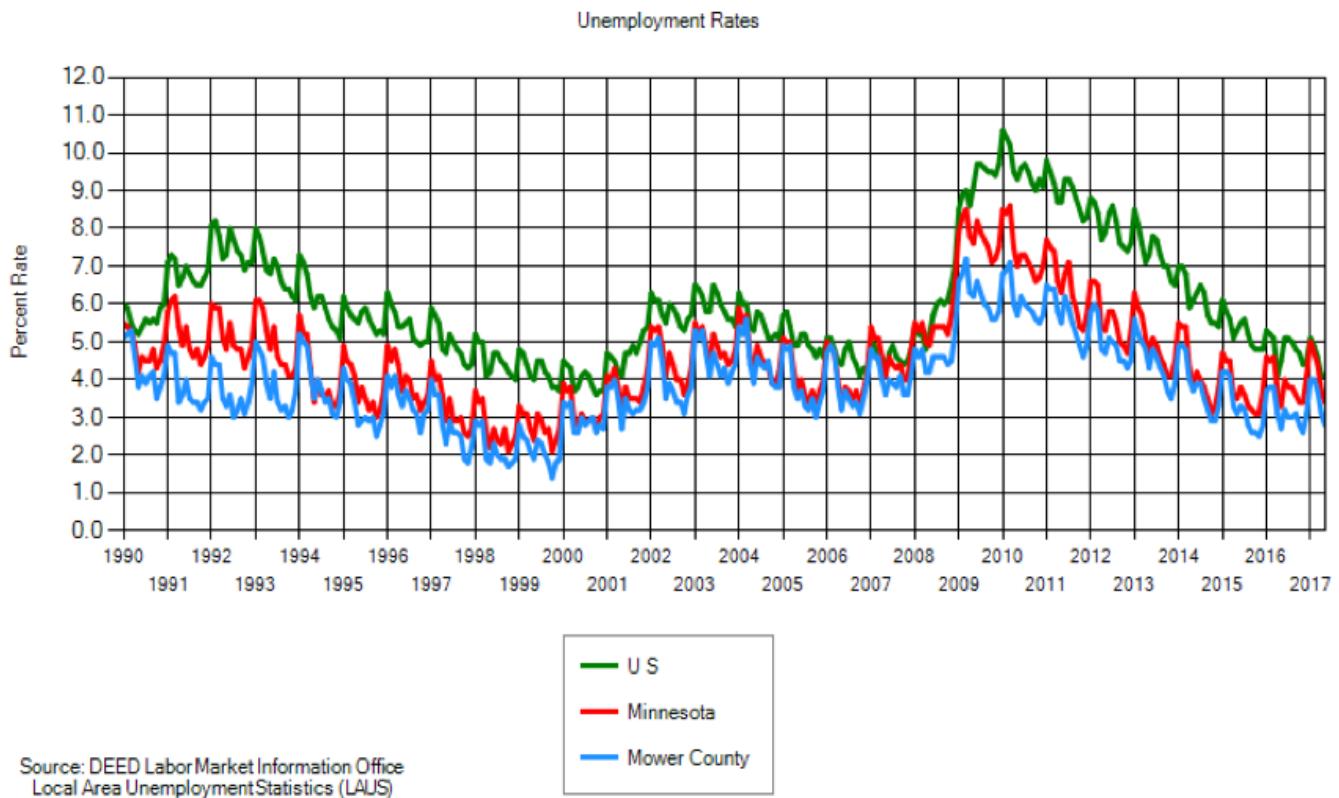
TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS ACS 2009-13 ESTIMATE	15,855	% OF TOTAL POPULATION
HOUSEHOLDS: INCOME LESS THAN \$10,000	991	6.3%
HOUSEHOLDS: INCOME \$10,000 TO \$14,999	1198	7.6%
HOUSEHOLDS: INCOME \$15,000 TO \$24,999	2119	13.4%
HOUSEHOLDS: INCOME \$25,000 TO \$34,999	1892	11.9%
HOUSEHOLDS: INCOME \$35,000 TO \$49,999	2253	14.2%
HOUSEHOLDS: INCOME \$50,000 TO \$74,999	2879	18.2%
HOUSEHOLDS: INCOME \$75,000 TO \$99,999	2143	13.5%
HOUSEHOLDS: INCOME \$100,000 TO \$149,999	1661	10.5%
HOUSEHOLDS: INCOME \$150,000 TO \$199,999	384	2.4%
HOUSEHOLDS: INCOME \$200,000 OR MORE	335	2.1%
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME	\$46,004	

Local Employment Conditions

Employment data was considered as it can be an indicator that additional child care is needed to support the employment needs of the community since there are more two-parent families employed.

Unemployment Rates – Mower County

- **2.8% Unemployment Rate**



Top Local Industries – Mower County

The largest employers were invited to participate in the child care conversation since they are impacted by absenteeism and less productivity when child care is a challenge.

INDUSTRY: EDUCATIONAL SERVICES, AND HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	5123	26.70%
INDUSTRY: MANUFACTURING	4543	23.70%
INDUSTRY: RETAIL TRADE	1942	10.10%

COMMUNITY INSIGHTS

Extensive outreach was conducted by the Core Team to engage the community about child care. This work included one-on-one stakeholder meetings with various community leaders, parent and provider electronic surveys, focus groups and presentations about child care. Through these various inputs, the Core Team was able to better understand the underlying causes of the local child care challenges.



Focus Groups



One on One Meetings



Surveys



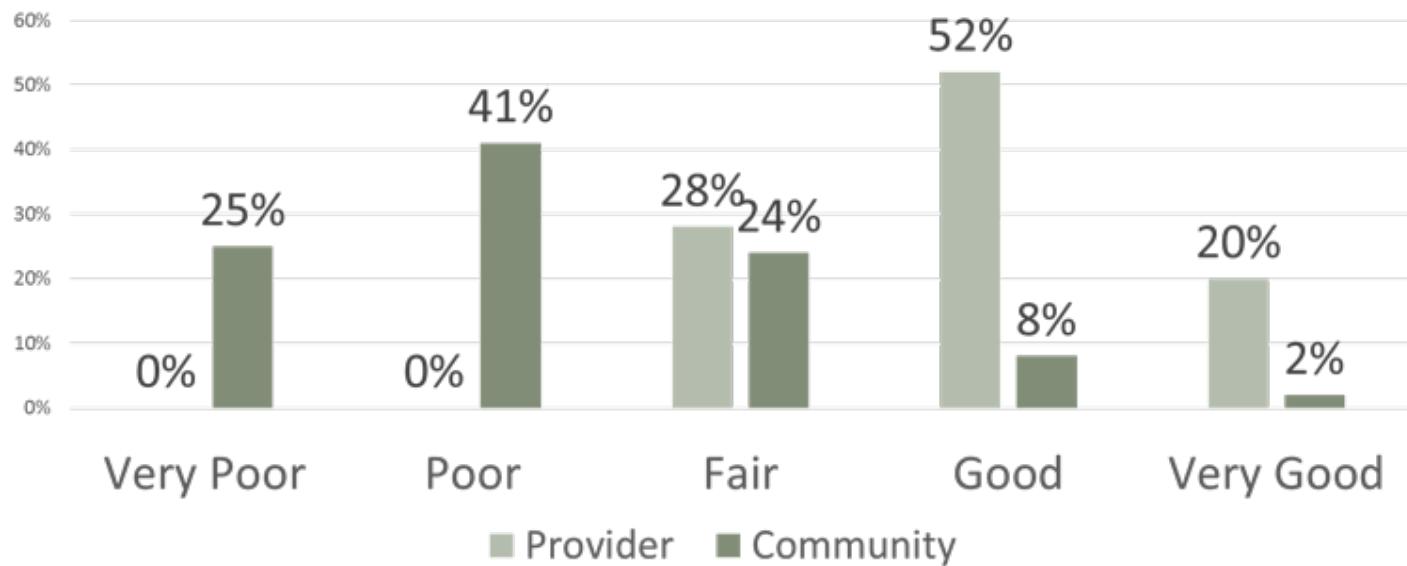
Presentations

COMMUNITY SURVEYS – SELECTED PERSPECTIVES

The general community was invited to participate in a comprehensive survey about child care in the local Austin, MN community. Over 800 individuals participated in the community survey and over 30 providers participated in a separate survey specific for child care providers.

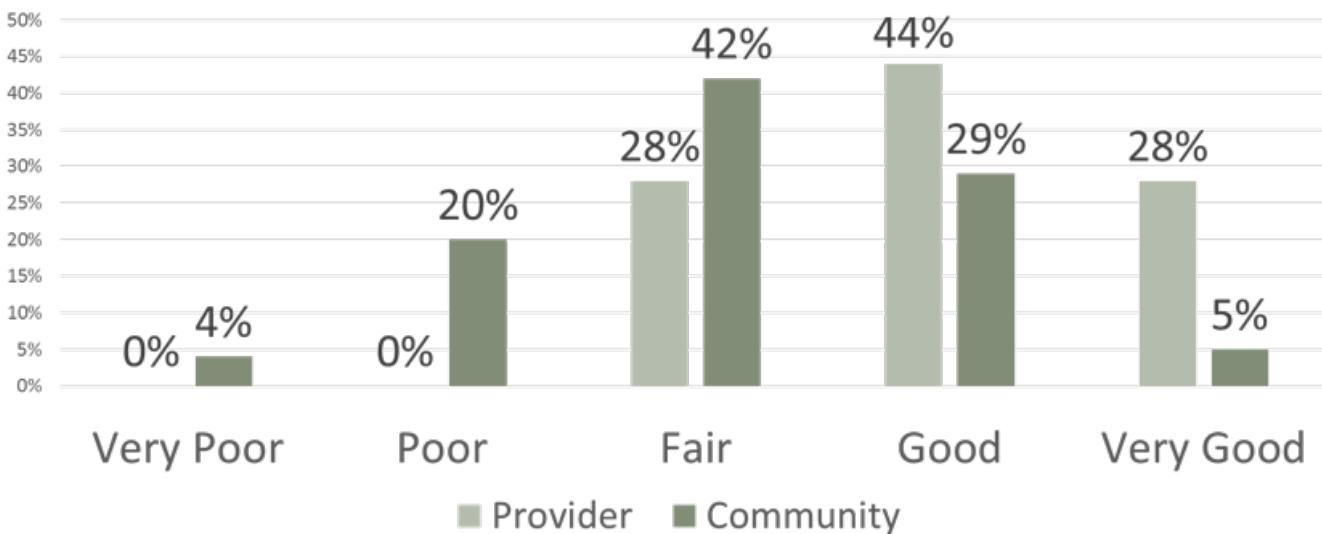
The following charts represent some highlighted perspectives within the community:

**PERCEPTIONS:
AVAILABILITY OF CHILD CARE IN THE LOCAL AREA**



Survey respondents indicated that they were traveling great distances to find appropriate child care. Nearly 15% indicated that they were traveling more than 11 miles for child care.

PERCEPTIONS: QUALITY OF AVAILABLE CHILD CARE IN THE LOCAL AREA

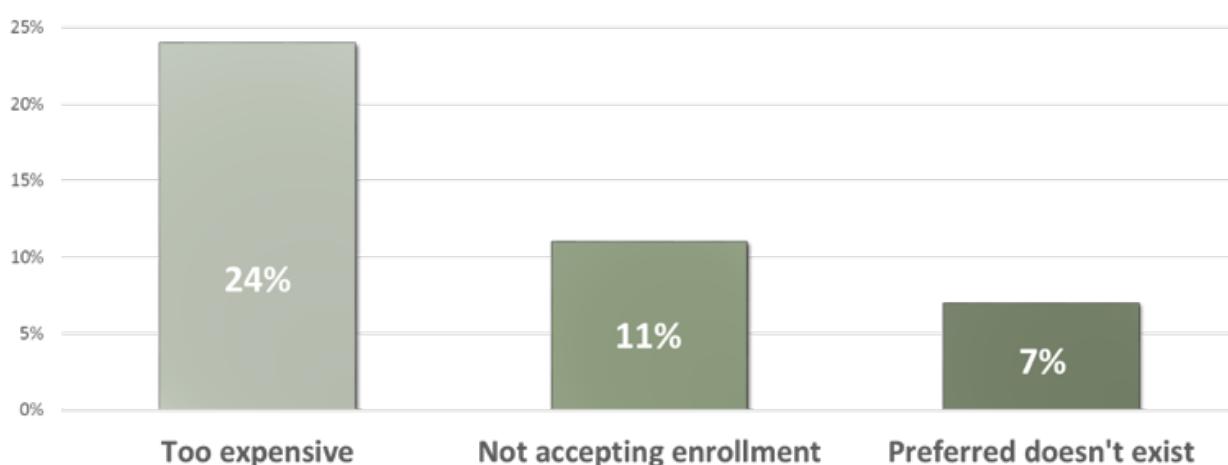


While specific questions about quality were not part of this survey, it was noted that there is a disconnect between child care providers, and the local community on the availability of high quality child care in the area. When survey participants were asked about what is important for them in a child care program, they ranked their preferences as follows (1 being the most important):

1. Safe and healthy environment
2. Licensed by DHS
3. Educational curriculum
4. Conveniently located
5. Provider has high level of education
6. Provider is Parent Aware rated
7. Provider is someone I know



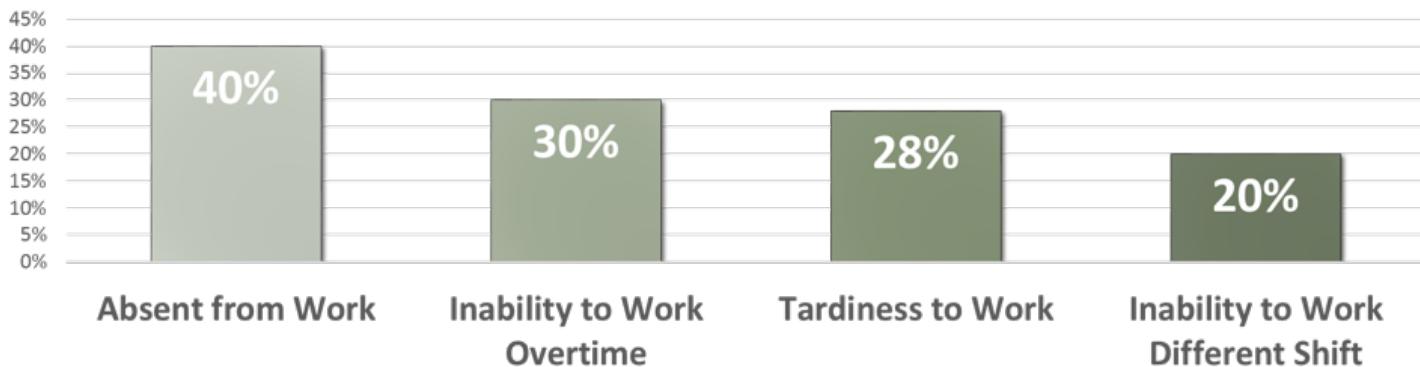
REASONS FOR NOT ENROLLING IN PREFERRED CARE



COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS IMPACTS OF THE CHILD CARE ISSUE

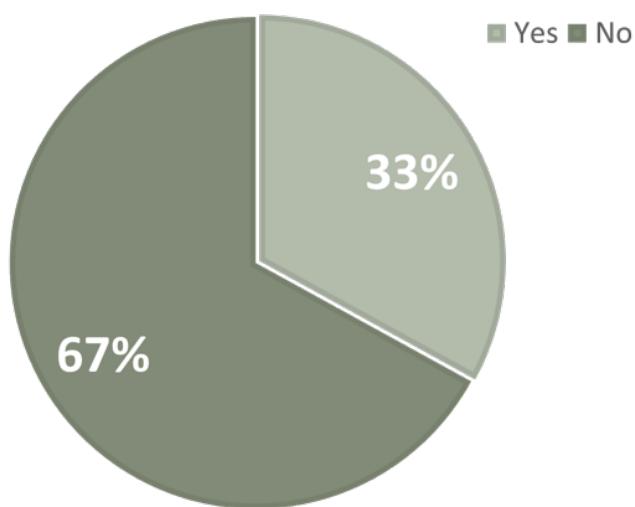
Beyond families and children, the greater community and local businesses can also be impacted by child care challenges and issues. Child care is often framed as an economic development issue by communities facing declining populations or challenges with the work force. These issues can compound and further extend into the business community by causing loss of workers due to unavailable child care or by businesses relocating to environments with better availability of care.

WORK ISSUES OCCURRED DUE TO CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS



Normal work environments can be adversely impacted when child care is a challenge for employers and workers. As illustrated, the biggest impact of child care limitations include absence from work (when a provider is closed for the day), inability to work a flexible schedule or work different shifts, and tardiness to work. A study in 2004 showed the national impact of child care issues in the economy, and it was valued at over \$3 billion dollars annually.

IMPACT ON FAMILY PLANNING – AUSTIN AREA



In addition to the impact on family planning child care shortages can also impact the local employment environment. In the survey, nearly 22% had declined employment or withdrawn from the workforce due to child care issues.

UNDERSTANDING THE UNDERLYING CHALLENGES

The Core Team in Austin spent several months investigating the underlying reasons for the local child care challenges. This work involved engaging with many members of the local area to determine the underlying causes for the identified shortage of care.

The Core Team identified the following factors impacting the child care system in Austin:

- THE COMMUNITY CONTINUES TO GROW AND EVOLVE**

"The community continues to try to draw young families to Austin. We are not prepared to offer the amenities necessary to support them. From spousal job opportunities, shopping needs, to child care"

-Local Resident

- ◊ **New immigrant population looking for culturally appropriate care**
- ◊ **Increased dual-working families**
- ◊ **Attraction of new employees to the area**

As communities grow and evolve, needs of new community members can sometimes be different from what the current child care market offers. Working to understand needs of specific populations and their child care needs can better position the community and the existing provider network to better respond to those needs.

- PARENTS ARE SEEKING CHOICES AND QUALITY IN THE COMMUNITY**

"For two years, I've called Apple Lane every few months and they are always full. I prefer a child care center but there aren't many center options" -Local Parent

- ◊ **Child Care Centers**
- ◊ **Specialized Offerings**
- ◊ **Drop-in Care / Sick Care**
- ◊ **Supplemental Activities**
- ◊ **Quality Food / Organics**
- ◊ **Curriculum and Assessments**
- ◊ **Increasing recognition in the community about the importance of high quality child care options**

With a unique Fortune 500 enterprise located in the local area, residents indicated the desire to have more choices and quality offerings available to select from. While some of these desires were in the form of new child care center offerings, many also included enhanced offerings within existing child care.

Leveraging interaction and engagement with existing families can provide additional insights as to the child care program offerings that are most important to families. As child care quality increases, the community should expect increased family investments in child care.

• IT'S DIFFICULT TO BE A FAMILY CHILD CARE PROVIDER

"It takes a lot of commitment to meet the requirements to be a child care provider. We also depend on parents to pay in a timely manner. It can wreak havoc on the wear and tear of your home."

-Local Provider

- ◊ Rules and regulations - ratios
- ◊ Low pay/no benefits
- ◊ Long hours/no flexibility
- ◊ High operating cost
- ◊ Damage to home/space
- ◊ Stressful career
- ◊ Increasing turn-over

The challenges of being a family child care provider are well-documented and come in a variety of ways. Licensing and regulations have changed over the years along with increasing expectations around outcomes for children entering the primary school system. Many family child care providers operate their businesses with minimal business supports which can sometimes lead to issues with overall sustainability.

• LACK OF COMMUNITY RECOGNITION AND SUPPORT

"Let the community know that we deserve more respect and less taking us for granted and expecting us to do the hardest job ever with low pay and long hours." -Local Provider

- ◊ Lack of respect and understanding of the child care business
- ◊ Not an easy career
- ◊ Work life balance is difficult – hard for parents to adjust when providers are closed

Family child care providers have a tough job – one that often comes with very few benefits and recognition. Local providers and other community organizations have an opportunity to recognize the ongoing contributions, and continues innovation of family child care providers in the child care industry. This could be achieved through recognition programs, and other material support such as training.

• DELIVERY OF INFANT AND TODDLER CARE IS HIGHLY REGULATED AND EXPENSIVE

"I had to call and start reserving spots for places shortly after finding out we were pregnant. We didn't get into our preferred place until three months after we would have liked." -Local Parent

- ◊ There aren't enough infant and toddler slots in the community

It is clear that a big part of the shortage of child care can be attributed to infant and toddler slots that are often difficult to find. Provider/Staff ratios for infants and toddlers are much less than preschool and school age children. Additional focus on ensuring these slots are created as part of larger community solutions is critical to address overall child care needs in the community.

- **INCREASING NEED FOR NON-TRADITIONAL CHILD CARE HOURS**

"We need more child cares that work past dinner time....up until midnight would be great"

-Local Parent

- ◊ **2nd and 3rd shift workers have very difficult time finding available child care**

Austin is home to several large organizations that employ local residents beyond traditional day shift hours. In many cases, these workers find balance with split shifts with partners or family members who pitch in to help. Even in this case, there are workers who don't have access to these options and require non-traditional care. Encouraging niche service delivery with new and existing providers could be an option to address this challenge.

- **PRICES FOR PARENTS ARE HIGH, AND COST OF DELIVERY FOR CHILD CARE PROVIDERS IS HIGH**

"The cost of child care is outrageous for the income families are bringing in. Families want to work to provide for their kids, but can't afford it..."

-Local Parent

- ◊ **Many families struggle to afford quality licensed child care**
- ◊ **Child care centers and in-home family providers alike invest much of their program income into delivery of services, leaving providers with less than minimal take home pay**

There is no clear answer to the ongoing challenge of costs of care versus family investment to get quality child care. Additional support in helping families with low-to-moderate incomes become acquainted with existing support systems such as CCAP and Early Learning Scholarships can help bridge the gap.

TOWN HALL MEETING & GATHERING

The town hall meeting is designed to provide an opportunity for the Core Team and the community to interact and understand the findings of the extensive focus groups and surveys. Participants shared ideas about how to address the child care challenges in the local community.

PROPOSED COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS

BUSINESS SUPPORTS

- Develop an active database of family child care providers and child care centers which includes listings of available openings
- Highlight Parent Aware funding advantages for child care providers

DIVERSITY AND CULTURE

- Refugee Agency offers a class for prospective and unlicensed child care providers to learn about licensing and the child care business
- Refugee Agency staffs a child care support position

BUSINESS INCENTIVES

- Develop and operate a one-stop shop for child care providers to find information on start-up incentives/grants, and other information

LICENSING & REGULATION

- Work to make the Austin area a pilot zone for the testing different regulations that might be expanded statewide

NEW CARE OPTIONS

- Develop and implement a local nanny service network as another choice for child care in the local area
- Expand the capacity of existing child care providers by creating a network of volunteer support leveraging retired individuals and high school students
- Utilize existing space to create a place for existing providers to run their businesses outside of their homes
- Work to recruit and retain child care providers from diverse backgrounds
- Develop a local network of providers that can provide back-up and sick child care
- Develop on-site child care with large employers in the local area
- Work to support additional development of options and quality offerings with existing providers which might include offerings such as language immersion

PARENT EDUCATION

- Develop a campaign that supports both providers and parents by providing basic information about child care so there is better understanding

PROVIDER SUPPORTS

- Provide more mentoring and training support for existing providers to improve credibility and outcomes. Educate providers on the benefit of the increased quality.
- Develop and implement a recognition program for providers that highlights best practices and innovation
- Explore ways to create and provide health insurance for child care providers
- Provide parent education classes on how to best utilize existing financial resources to support child care investments
- Develop a local transportation service to assist and support providers transport children in the local community to activities and resources

SHIFT WORK OPTIONS

- Develop a volunteer network to provide care during 2nd and 3rd shifts that is not traditionally available
 - Create a location that can provide care for parents that work non-traditional child care hours
-

IMPLEMENTATION PROJECTS

The Town Hall meeting is an opportunity to leverage multiple view points and ideas related to addressing the local child care challenge. After the Town Hall meeting, the Core Team met to discuss all ideas and formulated an action plan to move forward. The following SMART goals were developed.

SMART GOAL ONE- DEVELOP A COMMUNITY RECOGNITION PROGRAM

CORE TEAM LEAD – Shannon Hart

In the next 6 months, develop and implement a community program that will recognize local family child care providers using mass media outlets..

Expected Outcomes and Impact

This new recognition program will highlight the quality and innovation contributions of family child care providers. The final metric is still being determined by the Core Team, but the project will ultimately raise community awareness of quality child care options in the community.

SMART GOAL TWO- DEVELOP A NEW CHILD CARE PARTNERSHIP

CORE TEAM LEAD – Angie Bissen

In the next 12 months, identify a location and partner to develop new child care partnership with employers in the Austin area.

Expected Outcomes and Impact

This project is focused on increasing supply of child care in the local community. The primary metric is a net increase of 100 slots or more of child care center capacity.

SMART GOAL THREE –LAUNCH A NEW ONLINE DATABASE OF CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

CORE TEAM LEAD – Shannon Hart

Create an online database of child care providers in the Austin area that provides basic information about providers and their openings in the next 6 months.

Expected Outcomes and Impact

Goal three is designed to support increased awareness of existing child care provider openings and availability of those openings. Measurement of success for this opportunity will be focused on parent feedback through an updated parent survey, and overall reduction in time of openings for existing child care providers.

SMART GOAL FOUR – PROVIDE EDUCATION & SUPPORT TO PROSPECTIVE PROVIDERS

CORE TEAM LEAD – Amy Baskin

Within the next 12 months, provide education and support to family child care providers and prospective providers to increase licensed child care supply by 50 slots in Austin.

Expected Outcomes and Impact

Increased education and support of prospective licensed child care providers will result in a net increase of 50 family child care slots.

SMART GOAL FIVE – IDENTIFY NON-OWNER OCCUPIED SPACE FOR FAMILY CHILD CARE

CORE TEAM LEAD –Sheri Dankert

In the next six months, identify six vacant spaces available in the community to be used by start-up family child care providers to run their businesses.

Expected Outcomes and Impact

The expected outcome from this work is the identification of at least six facility arrangements to be used by existing or new family child care providers. This work supports SMART Goal Four and the development of new licensed slots for family child care.

SMART GOAL SIX- PROMOTE AVAILABLE RESOURCES FOR CHILD CARE FOR FAMILIES

CORE TEAM LEAD – Diane Baker

Educate parents in the community about the critical elements for quality care and how to utilize available resources in the next 12 months.

Expected Outcomes and Impact

SMART Goal Six will equip parents with better understanding and supporting materials needed to better utilize all available financial and other resources for child care. A final metric has not been developed yet but is expected to include measurement of increased utilization of CCAP funding and Early Learning Scholarships.



ABOUT FIRST CHILDREN'S FINANCE

Founded in 1991, First Children's Finance is a multi-state nonprofit organization. We work with communities, and early care and education businesses to increase the supply and sustainability of high quality early care and education in urban and rural areas. We do this through business management training, one-on-one consulting, and financing. For more information about First Children's Finance, please visit: www.firstchildrensfinance.org

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