



RURAL CHILD CARE INNOVATION PROGRAM

COMMUNITY SOLUTION ACTION PLAN
FOR CHILD CARE

Baraga County, Michigan

AUGUST 2023



First Children's Finance





The Rural Child Care Innovation Program is provided by the Michigan Department of Education utilizing American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, from the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health, and Human Services.

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

Michigan State Director:
James Henderson

Program Lead:
Melissa Newkirk

Contributing Member:
Nancy Schmidt

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“If employees cannot find quality care for their children, they won’t work for you. They won’t move to your community, or they will 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 Michigan's rural communities. The goal of RCCIP is to help communities identify the size and scope of their child care challenges and to empower and support communities to develop solutions to address these challenges.

The Community Solution Action Plan for Baraga County 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 Baraga County, with the support of First Children's Finance, conducted a thorough investigation and analysis to uncover the factors contributing to 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 for child care in Baraga County, First Children's Finance conducted a Supply and Demand Gap Analysis and community surveys, which showed a child care shortage of approximately 143 child care slots in the Baraga County Area. The analysis revealed it is exceedingly

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 Baraga County. Forty-seven percent of survey respondents declined employment or withdrew from the workforce due to child care issues, and 14% of employers responded that child care impacted their ability to attract employees. Additionally, 23% of employers said the child care shortage has impacted their ability to retain employees. Absence from work, 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 and the ability of employers to meet their business needs.

Some of the major factors contributing to the child care shortage in Baraga County include affordability for working families, a child care staffing shortage and lack of support and recognition by the local community.

Through the RCCIP, Baraga County has identified three goals to address child care challenges. These goals include:

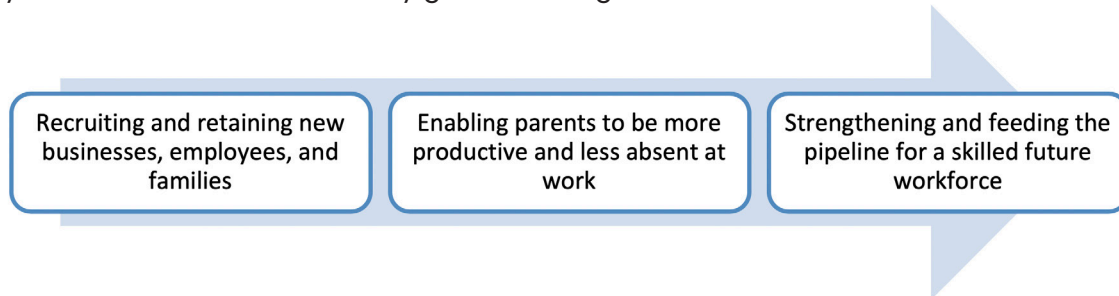
1. Support families, providers, and employers with the tools they need to champion for the importance of early childhood care and education programs and services including the need for additional investment in Baraga County.
2. Increase the early childhood care and education workforce by improving professional practice, education, and opportunity.
3. Develop partnerships between the Baraga County Task Force, and early childhood care, and education programs in Baraga County.

In implementing these goals, Baraga County will improve the state of child care, empower local child care businesses through continuous community support, provide parents with more care options,

and give child care entrepreneurs stronger resources to run and operate their child care business.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HIGH QUALITY CHILD CARE IN COMMUNITIES

In rural communities the ebbs and flows of the local economy influence the sustainability and supply of child care and vice versa. Because of this 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:



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 INNOVATIVE 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 (RCCIP) 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 innovative spirit required to develop nimble, creative solutions that will be effective in their communities. The Rural Child Care Innovation Program leverages communities' independent, can-do attitudes to address early child care and education in Michigan.

Program Activities & General Timeline

PHASE	TIMING	ACTIVITIES
Project Planning	September – December 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing and communication of application process; outreach to rural communities as potential applicants Application opened November 14, 2022 Informational Webinar hosted November 16, 2022 Application Deadline December 9, 2022
Project Planning	December 2022– February 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed and scored applications. Determined selected communities. Notified selected communities.
Discovery	February 2023– April 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launched Core Team onboarding sessions. Completed Supply/Demand/Gap analyses for RCCIP communities. Core Team identified Town Hall date. Conducted qualitative data collection and analysis.
Discovery	May 2023– June 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provider Appreciation event hosted. Qualitative data collection analyzed. Town Hall coordination set and confirmed by Core Team, promotion/registration. FCF prepared for Community Solution Action Plans
Discovery	July–August 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town Hall event hosted. SMART Goal/Implementation Meeting hosted. Community Solution Action Plan (CSAP) drafts created by First Children’s Finance. Community launched SMART goal projects with goals based on Community Solution Action Plans.
Discovery	August 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Solution Action Plan reviewed by Core Team for feedback.
Implementation	September 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community reported ongoing progress towards SMART/implementation goals and projects. Finalized project implementation plans for Core Teams. Community Solution Action Plans completed and published.

▶ EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

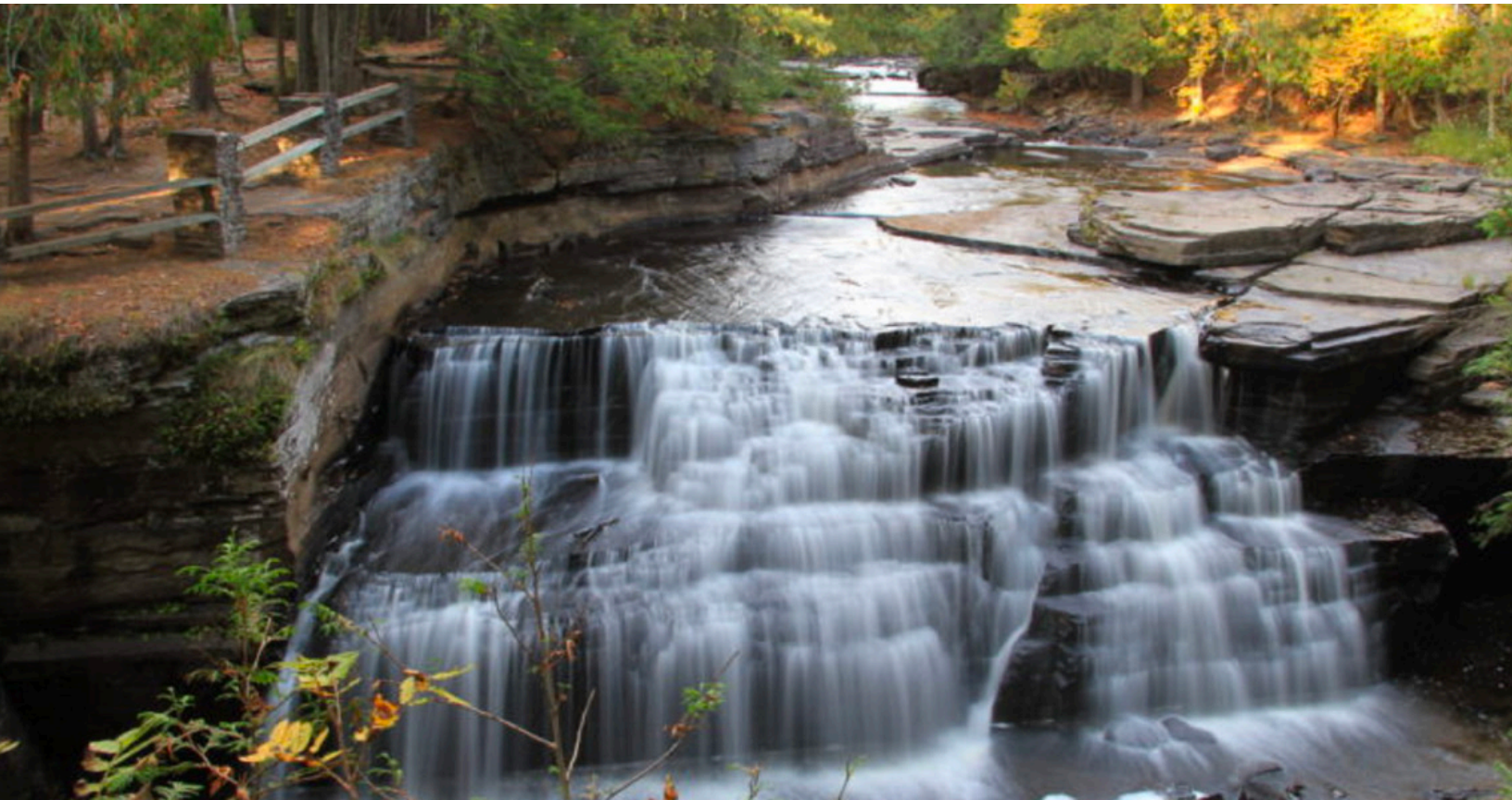
The Rural Child Care Innovation Program is designed to support fundamental change in the overall condition of child care in the areas that it is delivered. This is accomplished through various methods that include:

- 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 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 BARAGA COUNTY

Baraga County is located in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan on the shore of Lake Superior at the south east base of the Keweenaw Peninsula. According to the 2021 U.S. Census the total population is 8,215 and has a total area of 1,069 square miles which is made up of both land and water. Baraga County's top industries are healthcare and social assistance, retail trade, and manufacturing. Many tourists visit annually to enjoy all four seasons in Baraga County.



▶ LOCAL TEAM REPRESENTATION

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

▶ Iola Brubaker*	Keweenaw Family Resource Center
▶ Abbey Carlson*	Copper Country Great Start Collaborative
▶ Julie Catherino	Great Start to Quality
▶ Katie Waara	Baraga Keweenaw Child Development Board
▶ Kim Swanson	Keweenaw Bay Indian Community
▶ Lisa Denomie	Keweenaw Bay Indian Community
▶ Melissa Paulson	Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College
▶ Stacy Somero	Keweenaw Bay Indian Community
▶ Tammy Magaraggi	Western Upper Peninsula Health Department
▶ Ashley Herbert	Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College
*Indicates Core Team Lead	

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 data to understand the contributing factors to 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 the U.S. Census, Michigan Child Care Licensing Records, Michigan Department of Education, Federal Reserve Economic Data, and other internal research tools including First Children's Finance data.

▶ POTENTIAL NEED OVERVIEW

First Children's Finance conducted a child care supply demand gap analysis which provided a snapshot of potential child care needs. When analyzing the data for Baraga County, First Children's Finance focused on the data for all zip codes located in Baraga County to determine the overall need. The supply demand gap analysis from April 2023 estimates a shortage of 143 slots for children ages birth-five years of age with all available parents participating in the workforce.

Baraga County Child Care Need Analysis



Selected Zip Codes

- 49861 Michigamme
- 49946 L'Anse
- 49908 Baraga
- 49962 Skanee
- 49919 Covington
- 49970 Watton



0
Licensed
Family Child
Care
Providers

0
Licensed
Group
Home
Providers

5
Licensed
Child Care
Centers

143
Birth to 5 spots needed
FCF Calculation



89%
Children under 5 with
all parents in the
workforce
Estimate based on the 2021 ACS

132

Current child care
capacity
FCF Calculation



275
Children under 5 with all
parents working
Estimate based on the 2021 ACS



\$810
per month
Cost of Infant/Toddler child care
Michigan 2021 Market Rate Child Care
Study Survey 75 percentile -Baraga County



\$720
per month
Cost of Preschool child care
Michigan 2021 Market Rate Child Care
Study Survey 75 percentile-Baraga County

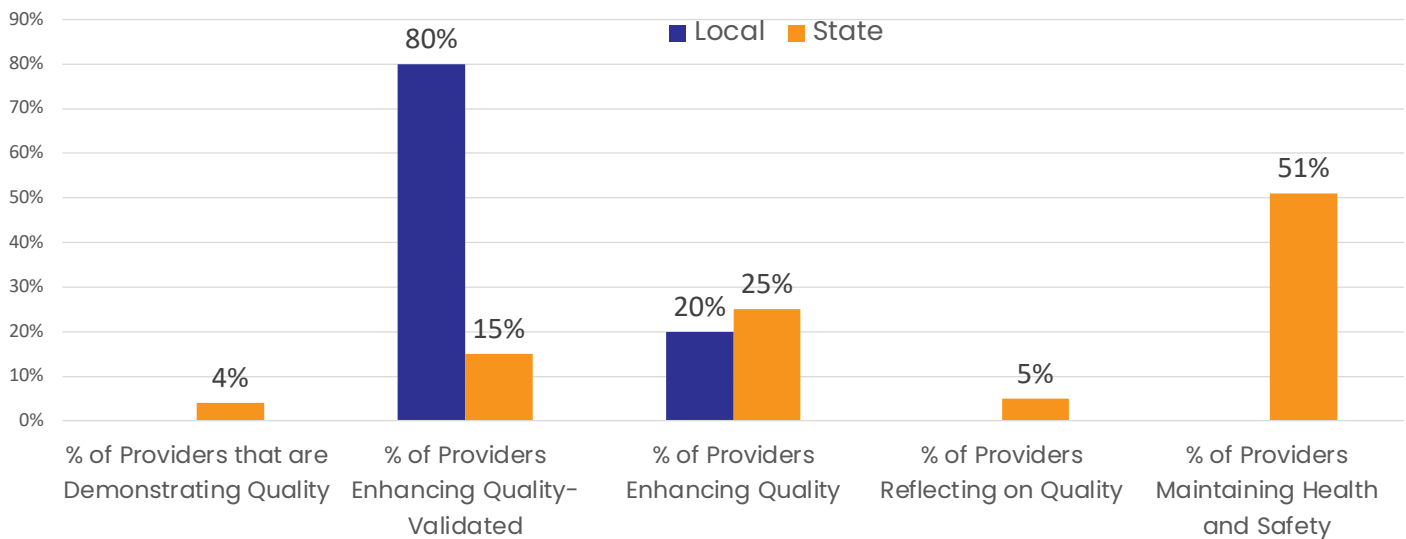
▶ FAMILY CHILD CARE – BY THE NUMBERS

In rural communities' family child care or family group care is a primary delivery mechanism for child care; it is a critical factor in the overall supply of child care in rural areas because its size and scale are most likely to be financially sustainable. First Children's Finance evaluated the current supply of family child care in Baraga County and found that it currently does not exist. To date, Baraga County is solely based on Center based child care.

▶ QUALITY CHILD CARE OVERVIEW

First Children’s Finance examined state-wide information about the number of child care programs that are participating in Great Start to Quality. According to Great Start to Quality, the process of quality improvement never ends. There is always new research and learning in the field of Early Care and Education and in the new process, programs are encouraged and supported to continue to reflect on their practices, in line with the program’s philosophy. Great Start to Quality’s mission is the focus on high-quality early learning experiences that build the foundation for skills children need to thrive in school and in life. To accomplish this, they offer support to strengthen Michigan’s providers of early care and education so they can continuously improve the services and support they provide young children, their families, and the community.

Great Start to Quality Participation in Baraga County vs. The State of Michigan



Source: Great Start to Quality

The chart above demonstrates how providers in Baraga County and the State of Michigan are rated with the levels of quality. While the program is optional for those providers to enroll in, it can provide great benefits and resources to those that do so. Programs are rated on the scale in the figure below. This is a critical component when we evaluate the quality child care programs offered in the area. We should note that Great Start to Quality has recently changed their rating systems from a STAR system to Levels of Quality. The conversion chart is below to further explain the transition.

Star Ratings transition to Quality Levels	
Base Rate ☆☆☆☆☆	Maintaining Health & Safety
1 STAR ★☆☆☆☆	Maintaining Health & Safety
2 STAR ★★☆☆☆	Reflecting On Quality
3 STAR ★★★☆☆	Enhancing Quality
4 STAR ★★★★☆	Enhancing Quality-Validated
5 STAR ★★★★★	Demonstrating Quality

▶ AVERAGE COST OF CHILD CARE

Child care is a large investment for families with children. According to Public Policy Associates the 2020 market rate survey included a survey of 6,896 licensed child care providers known to be open across Michigan. Public Policy Associates conducted in-depth interviews with twenty-four providers and analyzed the cost to provide care using a variety of extant data and the Provider Cost of Quality Calculator from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child Care. These rates are reflected below for Baraga County.

Area Market Rates –Baraga County– Based On (45 hrs./52 wks.)

Age Group	Weekly Rate	Annual Cost
▶ 75th Percentile- Infant weekly	\$202.50	\$10,530
▶ 75th Percentile- Toddler Weekly	\$202.50	\$10,530
▶ 75th Percentile- Preschool Weekly	\$180	\$9,360
▶ 75th Percentile- School Age Weekly (15hrs/44wks)	\$60	\$2,640

2020 Child Care Market Rate Survey

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

▶ OTHER LOCAL SUPPORTING DATA

As part of the overall collection and review of data, First Children’s Finance shared additional data outcomes such as third grade reading proficiency rates and local graduation rates. There are multiple studies indicating a link between the quality of early education opportunities and school readiness. Third grade reading proficiency rates and high school graduation rates are one way to link the two. Lower achievement levels from birth to age five can be an early indicator of future challenges in school, engagement in higher education, and teen pregnancy rates. The higher the quality of early care and education programs for children birth to age five, the higher the achievement later in life. Baraga County has reading proficiency levels well below the state average while the graduation rates are above the state average.

Third Grade Reading Levels

District	2021-2022 Proficiency Rate
▶ Baraga Area Schools	33.3%
▶ Arvon Township School District	Not reported
▶ L’Anse Area Schools	21.1%
Michigan Statewide Average	41.6%

Local Graduation Rates

District	2021-2022 Graduation Rate
▶ Baraga Area Schools	78.13%
▶ L’Anse Area Schools	94.1%
Michigan Statewide Average	81.01%

Source: Michigan Department of Education



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 chart provides an overview of the local household income.

Household Income – Baraga County

Total households ACS 2021	# of Households	%
▶ Less than \$10,000	234	7.4%
▶ \$10,000 to \$14,999	149	4.7%
▶ \$15,000 to \$24,999	424	13.4%
▶ \$25,000 to \$34,999	395	12.5%
▶ \$35,000 to \$49,999	531	16.8%
▶ \$50,000 to \$74,999	512	16.2%
▶ \$75,000 to \$99,999	348	11%
▶ \$100,000 to \$149,999	348	11%
▶ \$150,000 to \$199,999	151	4.8%
▶ \$200,000 or more	72	2.3%
Total Households	13,342	
Median Household Income	\$45,792	

U.S. Census American Community Survey 2021



LOCAL EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

Employment data was also considered by First Children’s Finance in the analysis of the child care crisis in Baraga County. It can be an indicator that additional child care is needed to support the employment needs of the community, since there are more families with all parents in the workforce.

Unemployment Rates – Baraga County

In April 2023, when this initial analysis of data for Baraga County began, the unemployment rate last reported was from February 2023. The unemployment rates for the country were 3.6%; State of Michigan was 4.3%; and Baraga County was 9.1%.

The unemployment rates for February 2023 are portrayed in the chart below and have since decreased within the county to 6.7% in June 2023. This could indicate a larger need for child care in the community.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Community Employers – Baraga County

Employers in the Baraga County Area were invited to participate in the child care conversation and complete surveys because they are impacted by absenteeism and decreased employee productivity when child care is a challenge. Furthermore, many employers have been able to provide valuable insight and resources into child care discussions.

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 and electronic surveys of parents, providers, and employers. Through these inputs, the Core Team better understood the underlying causes of local child care challenges.

FOCUS GROUPS



ONE ON ONE MEETINGS



SURVEYS



PRESENTATIONS



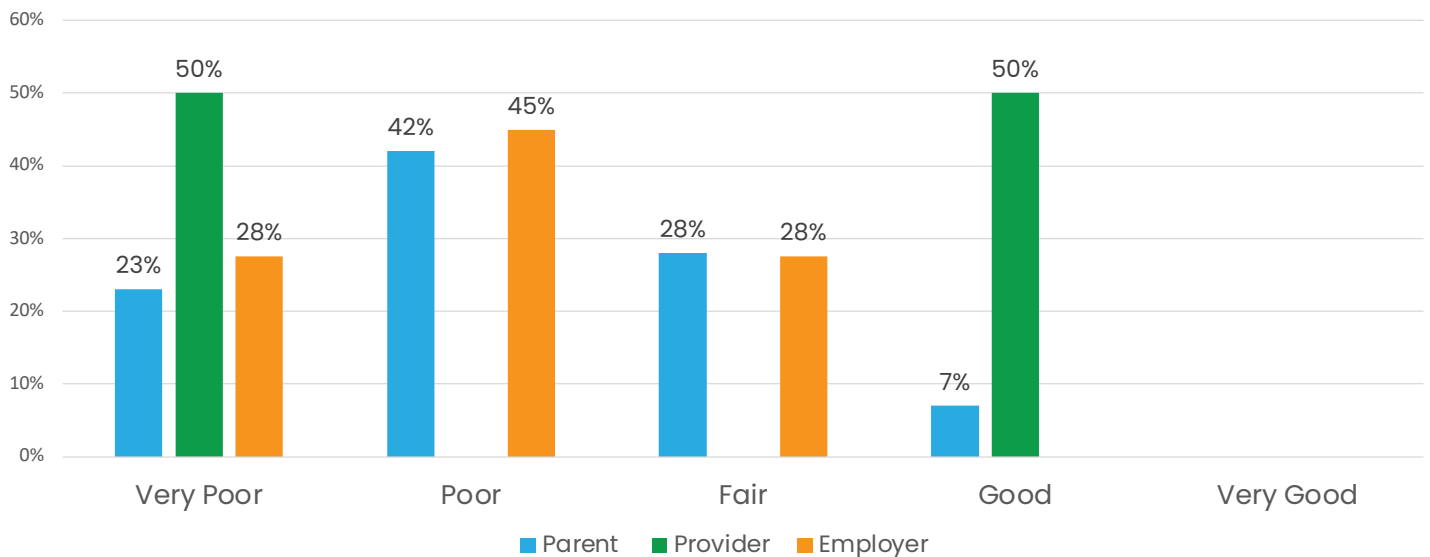
COMMUNITY SURVEYS – SELECTED PERSPECTIVES

The general community was invited to participate in comprehensive surveys about child care in Baraga County. Forty-seven individuals completed the parent survey, and twenty-two local businesses completed the employer survey. A separate survey gathered information from two local child care businesses.

Perceptions: Availability of Child Care in Baraga County

Survey participants were asked to rate the availability of child care in their community. The chart below reflects those responses.

How Would You Rate the Availability of Child Care Options in Baraga County?



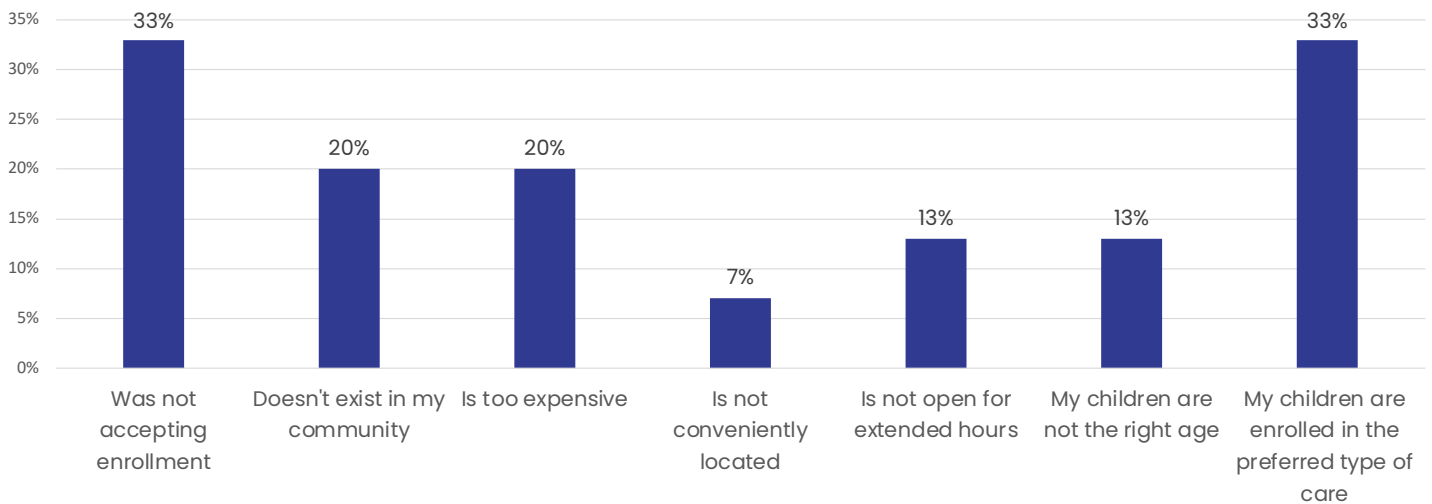
Perceptions: Quality of Available Child Care in the Local Area

While specific questions about quality were not part of this survey, it was noted that there is a positive perception between child care providers and the local community on the quality of child care programs 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. The provider demonstrates a safe and healthy environment.
2. The provider has achieved an elevated level of education or credentials.
3. The provider uses an educational curriculum.
4. The provider is conveniently located.
5. The provider is licensed by the State of Michigan.
6. The provider is a friend, family member, neighbor, or someone I have a personal relationship with.

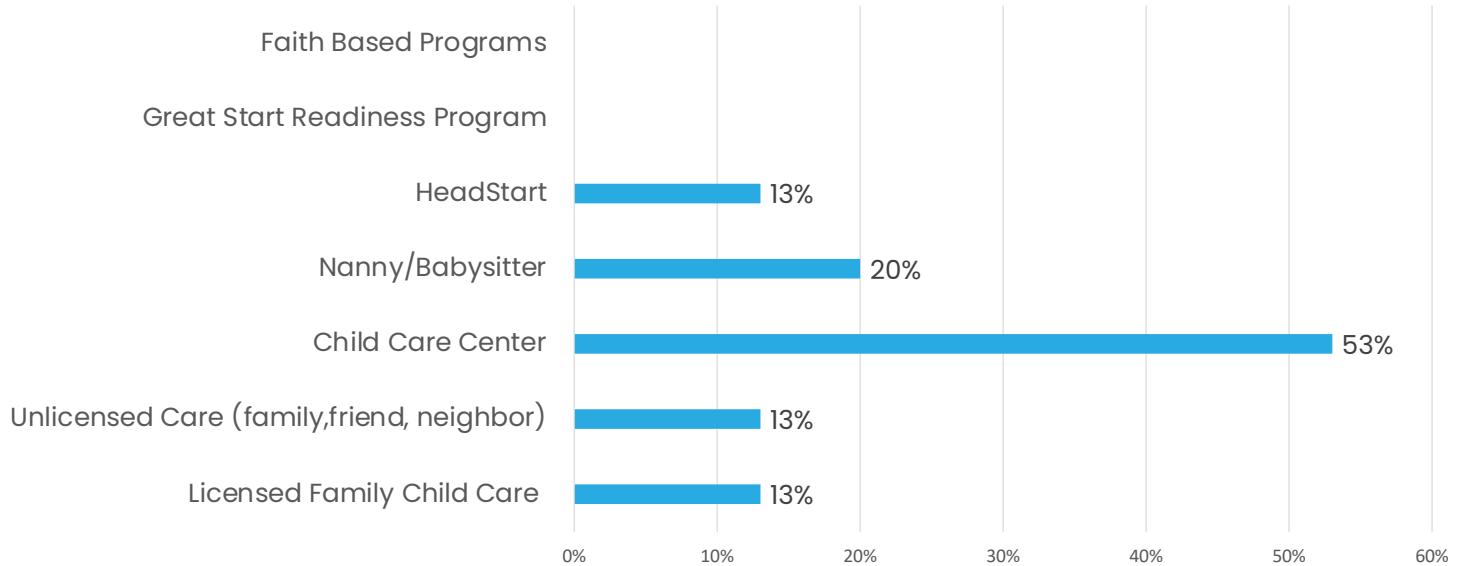
Reasons for Not Enrolling in Paid Child Care

The Baraga County Core Team explored data related to why parents may not be enrolled in paid child care. A breakdown of the parent survey revealed that their preferred type of child care was not accepting enrollment, does not exist within the community or they simply cannot afford to pay for child care. It was also noted in the survey that many families were seeking extended hours of care that is currently not offered in the community.



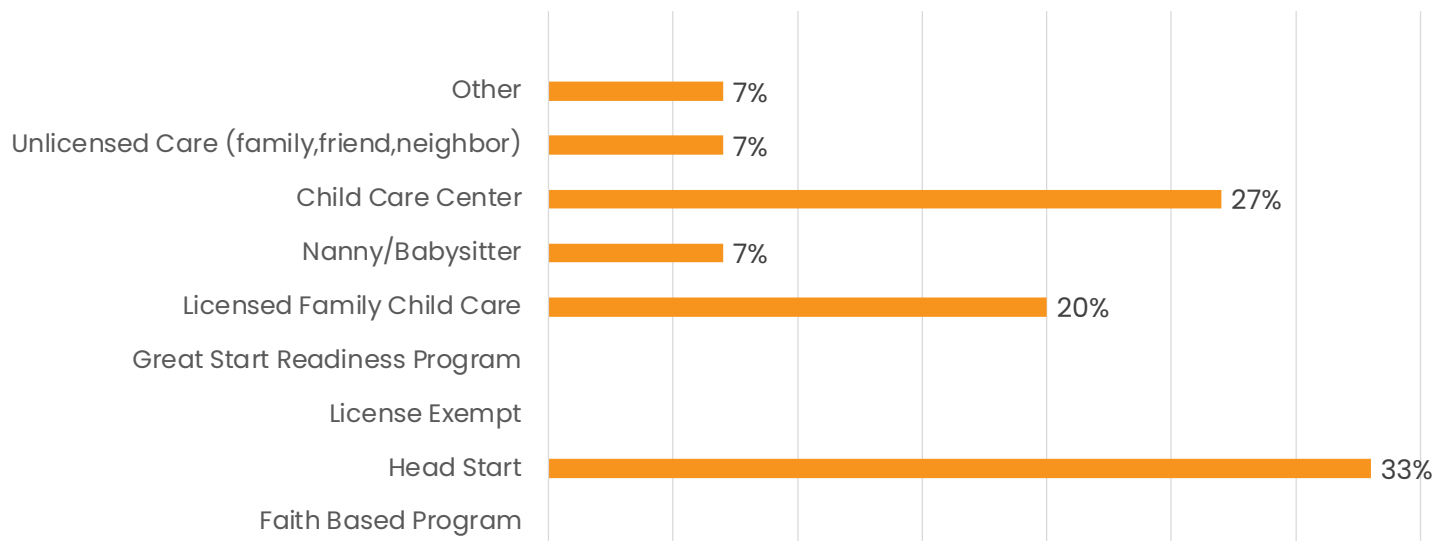
Types of Care Parents are Currently Using

The chart below shows the types of child care utilized by families in the Baraga County Area.



Types of Care Parents Prefer to Utilize

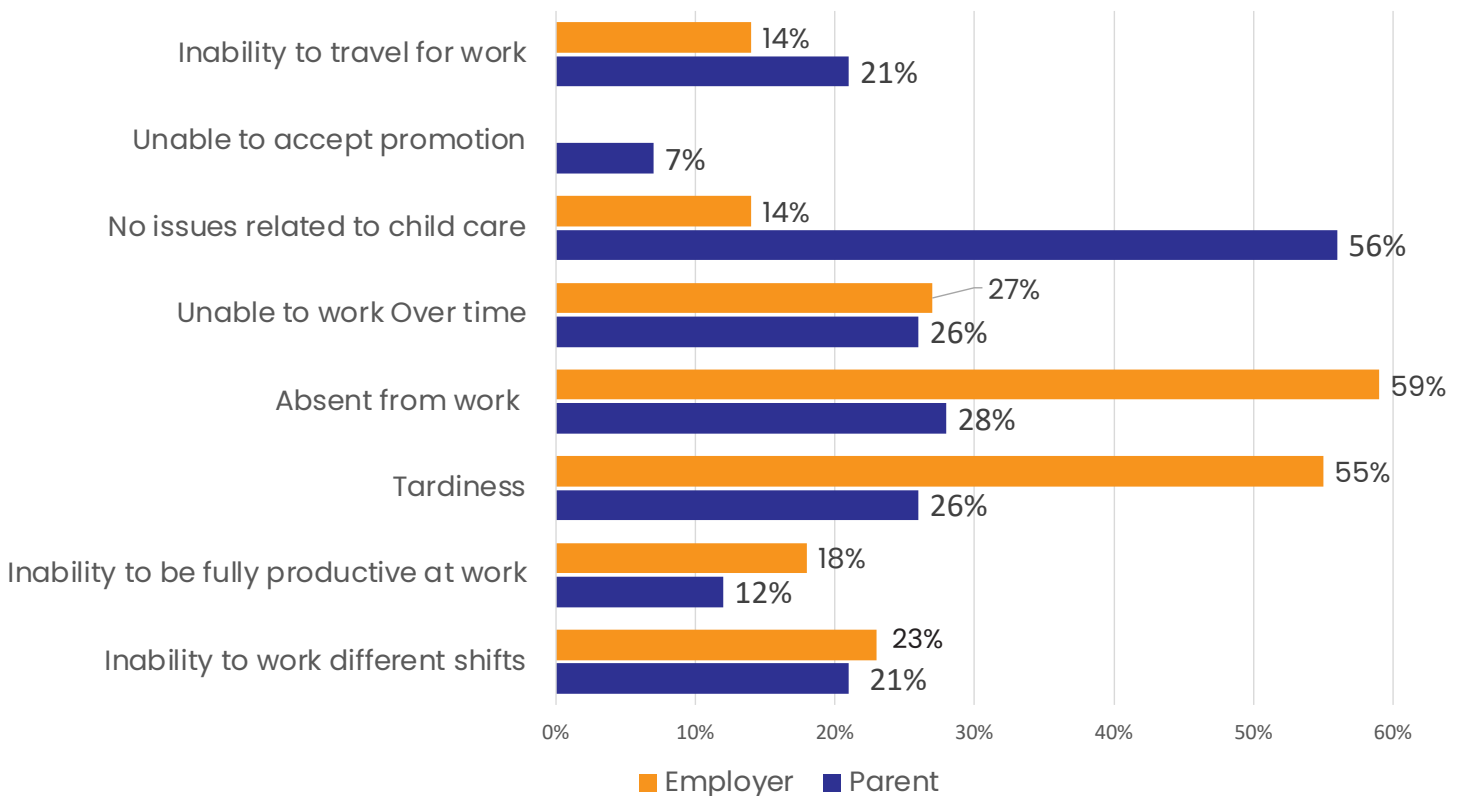
The types of care parents in the Baraga County Area prefer are shown on the chart below. When a community can better meet the preferred child care options of families, the community will be more successful in attracting new families and individuals to the community to live and work.



How Child Care Shortages Impact the Community and Employers

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 workforce. These issues can compound and further extend into the business community by causing the loss of workers due to the lack of child care or by businesses relocating to communities with better availability of care. The chart below illustrates the occurrence of various work-related issues from a parent (employee) and an employer perspective.

Work Related Issues That Occurred Over the Past 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, inability to work a flexible schedule or work different shifts, and tardiness to work.

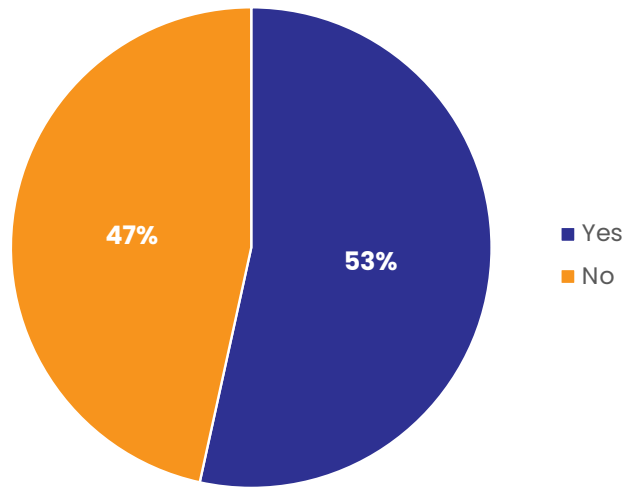
From the employer survey, 14% of employers said the child care shortage has affected their ability to attract employees while 23% of employers indicated the lack of child care has impacted their ability to retain employees.

Additional child care related challenges for parents included 21% not able to travel for work, and 7% were not able to accept a promotion. Employers responded that 14% of their employees were not able to travel for work due to child care challenges.

Impact on Family Planning – Baraga County

Parents participating in the survey were asked if child care availability had impacted their family planning. The chart to the right shows the results.

Has the Availability of Your Preferred Child Care Option Impacted Your Decision to Have Another Child or Limit the Size of Your Family?



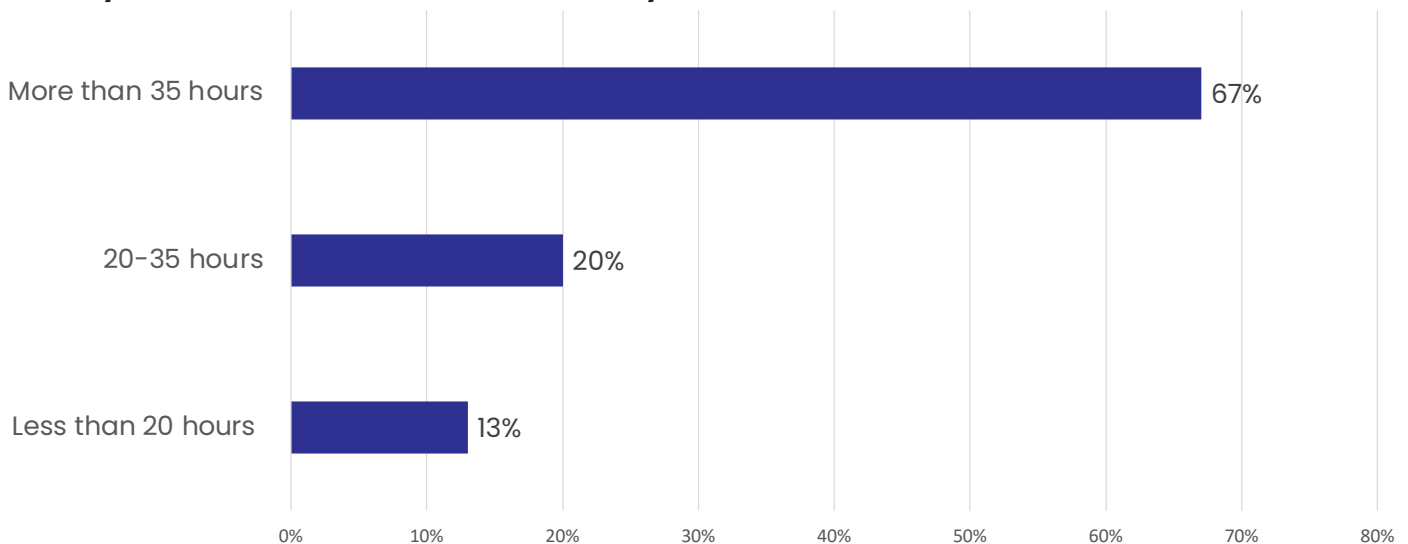
Baraga County must consider this data point. If families report their family size is impacted by the availability of child care, it stands to reason that families could relocate to different communities where child care is readily available.

In addition to impacting family planning, child care shortages can also impact the local employment environment. In the survey, 47% of parents have declined employment or withdrawn from the workforce due to child care issues at some point in their career. Rural communities need to look closely at child care as a strategy to retain young professionals and their families.

▶ TYPES OF CHILDCARE REQUIRED

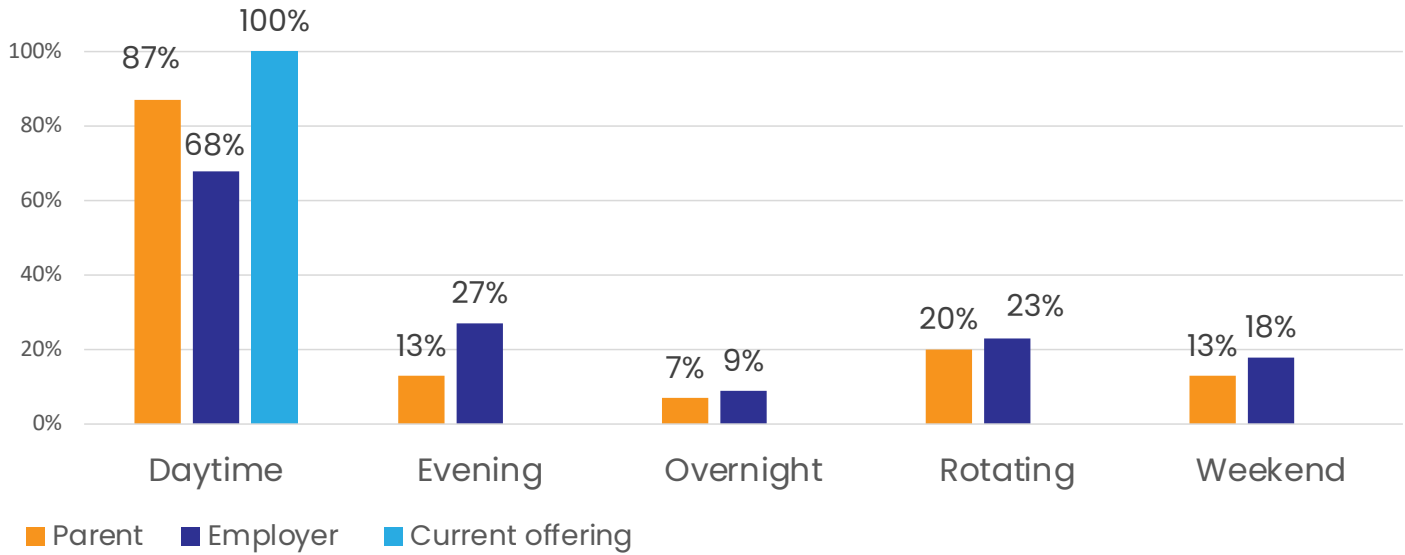
It is important for a community to understand the types of child care parents need to identify the right sized solutions for the community. The survey indicated that 67% of parents need more than 35 hours of care per week and are seeking full-time child care options.

How Many Hours of Child Care Do You Need Weekly?



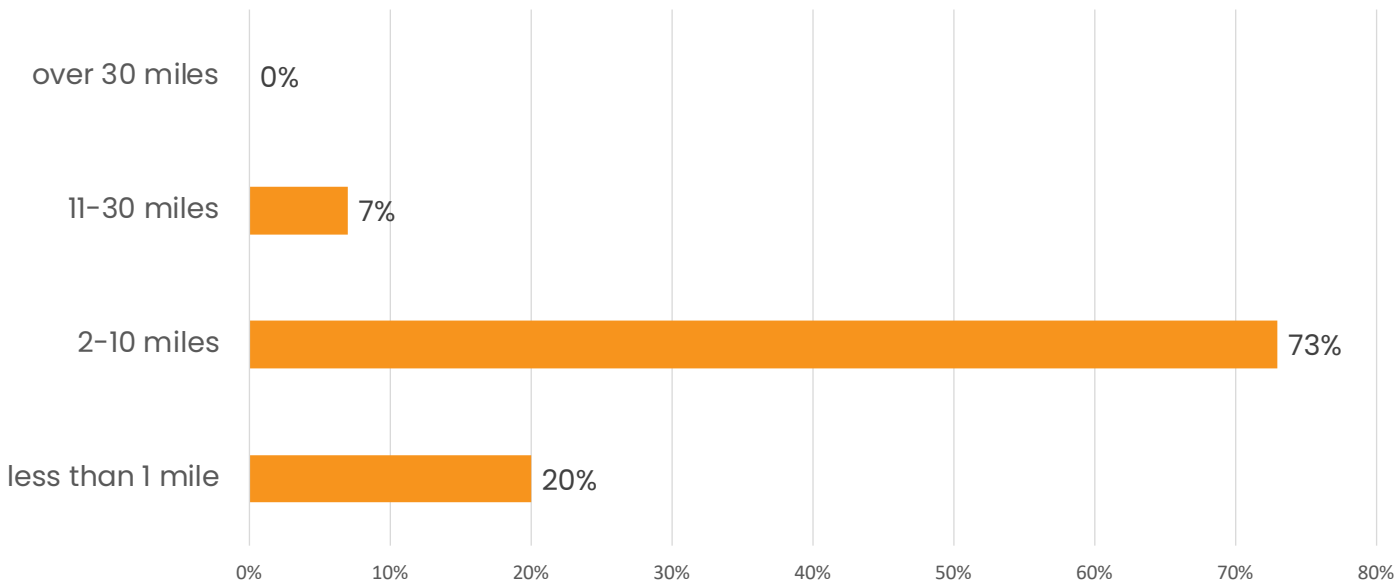
It is also important to determine when parents need care so the community can offer options that meet that need. The chart below shows the hours of care needed from both a parent perspective and an employer perspective. As we see in many communities, the survey showed employers believe families need care options on evenings, overnights, rotating shifts, and weekends at a much higher rate than families want. It is important to be aware of these things as a community creates options for child care. Baraga County should carefully consider child care options that will be utilized by families.

What Type of Child Care Arrangements are Needed vs. What is Currently Being Offered in Baraga County



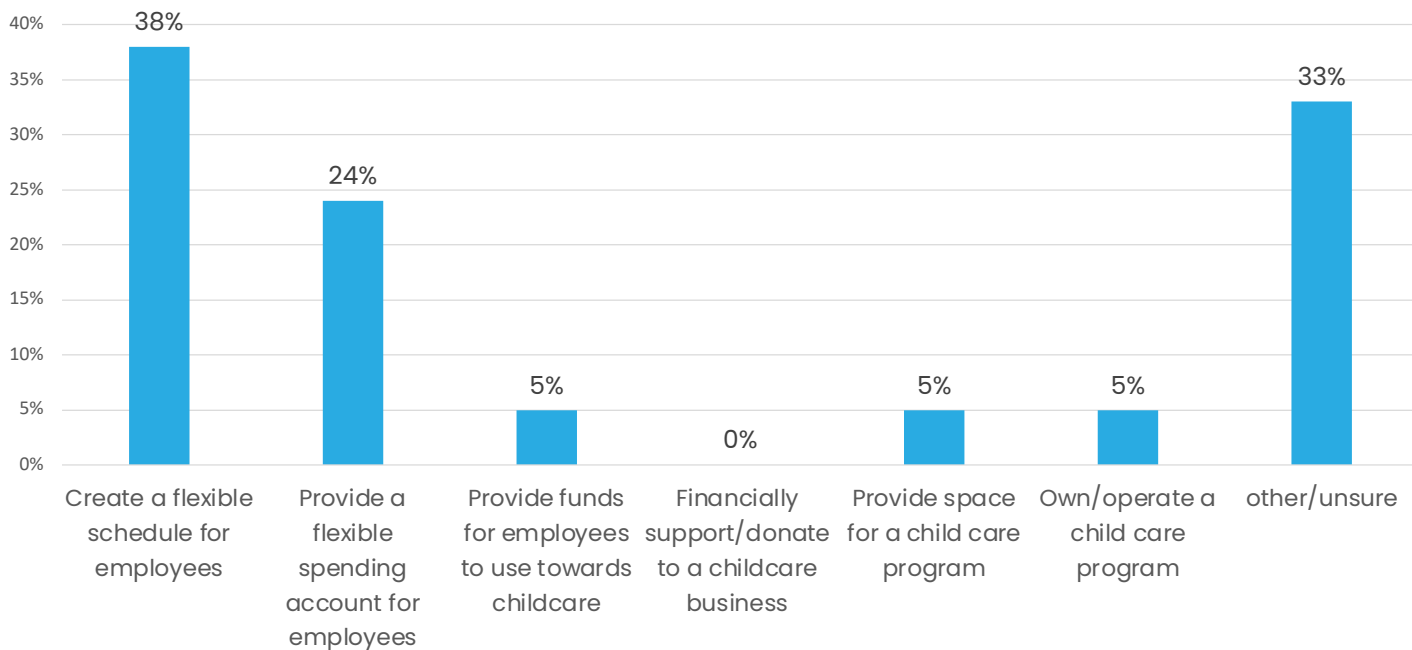
Baraga County Area survey respondents indicated that they were traveling significant distances to find appropriate child care. Seven percent indicated that they were traveling more than eleven miles for child care.

How Many Miles (one way) are You Traveling for Child Care?



Employers can help address the child care shortage in multiple ways. From the employer survey, the top two ways employers in the Baraga County area are willing to help is to 1) create flexible schedules, and 2) provide flexible spending accounts for child care expenses. Thirty-eight percent of respondents identified they would be willing to create a flexible schedule and 24% reported that they would be willing to provide a flexible spending account.

Employers Willing to Assist to Address the Issue





UNDERSTANDING THE UNDERLYING CHALLENGES

The Core Team in Baraga County spent several months investigating the underlying reasons for the local child care challenges by engaging with members of the community and surveying community members. Digging deeper into the child care challenge led to discovery about the situations many families, providers and employers are experiencing and the factors contributing to those challenges.

FACTOR: It is Challenging to be a Child Care Provider

- Providers do not feel respected as business owners while parents and the larger community do not understand the value of the services they offer.
- Child care centers cannot find, retain, and afford to pay quality workers competitive wages.
- The child care workforce receives low wages for long hours of work and has no access to benefits such as health insurance, retirement, or PTO.
- Child care is a complicated business model-and regulations and supports are constantly changing.
- A child care business is expensive to start and the first year may not have a positive cash flow.

The challenges of being a child care provider or running a child care center business is well-documented. Licensing rules and regulations have changed over the years along with increasing expectations around outcomes for children entering kindergarten. Many family child care providers operate their businesses with minimal community support which can lead to issues with sustainability. Child care providers have a tough job – one that comes with very few benefits or recognition. The Baraga County community can recognize the ongoing contributions and continuous innovation of family child care providers and child care centers in the serving region. This could be achieved through recognition programs and other financial or material support.

FACTOR: Quality & Regulations: Two Sides of One Coin

- Need for low-cost, local training to increase quality care, or other support to enhance programs
- Overall parents agree there is high quality child care, but sometimes parents take what they can get – even if they do not like or trust the program
- Frustration with paperwork and rules
- Highly regulated industry – a growing number of requirements and regulations for centers and home-based providers
- Potential new providers may be intimidated by the licensing process, and experienced providers may be frustrated by the regulations

Baraga County Area residents indicated the desire to have more licensed child care choices and quality offerings available to families. While some of this desire is for new child care offerings, many also want enhanced offerings within existing child care.

Leveraging interaction and engagement with existing child care programs and families can provide additional insights to support and understand child care programs within the area. As child care quality increases, the community should expect increased family and community investments in child care.

FACTOR: High Cost and Low Availability of Child Care

- Families have a tough time finding and affording child care
- Employers see the need to provide flexibility to schedules, when possible, to accommodate lack of child care
- Infant care is extremely hard to find, and some families find that there is a two year wait list
- Child care has small profit margins, is expensive to start, and may require time to achieve desirable cash flow
- Parents want high quality care, but they cannot pay enough to compensate providers
- Employers struggle with lost productivity and many other grievances when employees have challenges with child care
- It is challenging to find care that meets families' needs.
- Programs have a challenging time charging enough to maintain staff or be financially stable

There is no clear answer to the ongoing challenge of cost 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 can help bridge the gap.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPED SOLUTIONS

First Children's Finance and the Baraga County Area RCCIP Core Team conducted a consensus workshop with the community to produce a variety of viable solutions to address the child care shortage. Below are the main points of conversation from the session..

THEME: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- Establish a list of those that are unlicensed and providing care in Baraga County. Encourage people to become licensed, but also offer resources to ensure that health and safety standards are being met.
- Investigate the root cause of the decline in early childhood care and education in Baraga County

THEME: PARTNERSHIPS

- Partner with local businesses for sponsorships for early childhood care and education support
- Build relationships with the Baraga County Task Force and early childhood care and education programs within Baraga County
- Development of provider engagement events

THEME: COMMUNITY EDUCATION

- Explore local school district support for the development of a Career Technical Education program for early childhood care and education
- Education and support for the different CDA programs that are available

IMPLEMENTATION PROJECTS

After the consensus workshop held during the Town Hall session, the Core Team met to develop SMART Goals to address the prioritized child care needs of the community. The SMART Goals, project team leaders, team-members and expected outcomes are listed below.

SMART GOAL ONE– Support families, providers, and employers with the tools they need to champion for the importance of early childhood care and education programs and services including the need for additional investment in Baraga County.

- Develop a community awareness campaign of the importance of investing in early childhood care and education programs and services
- Create a system of community champions that are able to speak about early childhood care and education issues to local, state, and federal policy makers and key stakeholders
- Connect families, employers and providers with current financial supports that reduce the cost of care

Project Team Lead – Iola Brubaker
Additional Team Members – Abbey Carlson

Expected Outcomes and Impact:

- The development of a strong network of individuals to champion for early childhood care and education in Baraga County
- Educational support to the community on the economic impact of lack of early childhood care and education in Baraga County

SMART GOAL TWO: Increase early childhood care and education workforce by improving professional practice, education, and opportunity.

- Provide support to unlicensed providers with education, resources, and access to licensing
- Collaborate with Michigan Works to develop a survey for past child care providers and educators to explore the root cause of attrition. Gather the data to present to local providers.

Project Team Lead – Iola Brubaker
Additional Team Members – Abbey Carlson

Expected Outcomes and Impact:

- To understand the reasons why child care educators are leaving early childhood care and education
- To strengthen the early childhood care and education workforce in Baraga County so that closed classrooms and programs can reopen
- To provide education and resources to unlicensed providers to ensure that health and safety measures are being met
- To engage unlicensed providers and encourage them to complete the steps to become licensed

SMART GOAL THREE: Develop partnerships between the Baraga County Task Force and early childhood care and education programs in Baraga County.

- Investigate hiring a Baraga County Parent Liaison through Great Start Collaborative
- Provide joint trainings and meetings to build relationships.
- Development of Provider engagement events

Project Team Lead – Iola Brubaker

Additional Team Members – Abbey Carlson

Expected Outcomes and Impact:

- A strong early childhood care and education community to support the Baraga County workforce
- Strengthen relationships between the employers and providers within Baraga County



ABOUT FIRST CHILDREN'S FINANCE

Founded in 1991, First Children's Finance (FCF) is a national nonprofit organization based in Minneapolis, Minnesota with regional offices in Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, and Vermont. First Children's Finance works to stabilize, improve, and expand high-quality child care businesses serving low and moderate-income families. First Children's Finance provides financing, child care business training and consulting, and builds partnerships that connect child care businesses with the resources and expertise of the public and private sectors.

First Children's Finance understands the issues and challenges child care businesses face in today's world. We have industry specific expertise and a shared commitment to the success of child care.

In addition, First Children's Finance aligns its work with child care leaders, businesses and regional initiatives committed to quality. We define quality as the creation of environments that support healthy brain development for young children to enhance early learning. FCF brings a unique perspective, approach, and experience to providing business planning and financial assistance to our child care and economic development partners.

For more information visit www.firstchildrensfinance.org



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