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JEFFERSON COUNTY **BRIGHT FUTURES** CHILD CARE SURVEY PROJECT

FINAL REPORT

FUNDED BY COLORADO GIVES FOUNDATION

About The Fund for a Healthier Colorado

The Fund for a Healthier Colorado (Healthier Colorado) is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization working statewide to improve the health and wellbeing of all Coloradans. We believe every individual across the state should have the opportunity to live a healthy life, regardless of race, income, geography, disability status, gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation. That is why we work across the state and across the aisle to further policies that give Coloradans an equitable opportunity to live healthy lives.

About Open Answer

Open Answer is an integrity-driven organization committed to community outreach, connection, and empowerment. They work with campaigns and nonprofit groups to provide direct outreach and field strategy. Open Answer believes that when you engage with individuals and activate their voice, you unleash their power to make change.

About Groundswell for Good, LLC

With more than a decade of research experience in the public policy and advocacy field, Sarah founded Groundswell for Good, LLC to support mission-focused organizations in identifying, analyzing and communicating data to advance social change. As a mom to two toddlers, Sarah is passionate about using her lived and professional experience to advance work that helps moms and young children thrive.

Acknowledgments

Healthier Colorado extends our sincere gratitude to the Jefferson County parents and caregivers who participated in our survey and shared their lived experiences to inform this report. We are grateful to the Jeffco Bright Futures Roadmap Steering Committee for their partnership and the Colorado Gives Foundation for their funding and support. Last, we want to thank our sister organization, Open Answer, and Sarah Hughes with Groundswell for Good, LLC. for their time and expertise.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To support implementation of the [JeffCo Bright Futures Roadmap](#) (Roadmap), JeffCo families with children under age six were surveyed to collect information regarding families' current child care and early childhood circumstances, asking questions aimed to fill knowledge gaps not provided through other data sources to garner a deeper understanding of families' experiences.

METHODOLOGY

A survey was created in both English and Spanish and fielded in Jefferson County, Colorado in summer 2023, targeting neighborhoods with a high density of families with children under 6. A supplemental street canvass approach was also used to seek survey respondents, which included tabling at multiple parks, rec centers, daycares, splash pads, libraries, and events.

Respondents were from Lakewood, Arvada, Pine, Evergreen, Wheat Ridge, Edgewater, Columbine, and Golden. In total, there were 472 responses to the survey, but only 423 responses were eligible for analysis.

KEY FINDINGS

Demographics

The majority of the respondents were between the ages of 35 and 44, married, and female. Seven percent of respondents shared that they received government assistance to pay for child care. The breakdown of household incomes and racial/ethnic diversity within the sample is fairly similar to those of Jefferson County families overall. Ninety-one percent of respondents' primary language spoken at home was English. The vast majority of respondents came from households with all available parents working in some capacity and about 3 percent of respondents were full or part-time students. Twelve percent of respondents shared that they regularly cared for children who were not their own.

Child Care Arrangements

Two-thirds (65 percent) of respondents reported that their child was in some form of non-parental child care arrangement. Of these:

- Nearly 1 in 5 families reported that they used a combination of care arrangements for their child. Thirty percent of respondents use some type of unlicensed or license-exempt care as their sole source of care, while 51 percent rely solely on licensed settings.
- Cost (51 percent), quality rating (44 percent), and proximity to home (36 percent) were the most commonly selected when asked what are the top two most important factors the family considered when choosing a care arrangement.
- One-third of families are not utilizing their ideal care arrangement. Seventy-one percent of the respondents shared that it was difficult finding child care, with parents of infants and toddlers finding it much more difficult to find care.
- Seventy-one percent of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with their care arrangements, while three percent were not satisfied with their care arrangements. Families with incomes below \$50,000 were less likely to be very satisfied with their care arrangements when compared to higher income families.
- Child care challenges are causing widespread employment challenges or disruptions for families with young children. Child care issues caused more than half of parents with children in care outside of the home to utilize some type of paid leave to take time off of work, while almost one-third (31 percent) had to take unpaid leave.
- The majority of respondents are typically paying more than 10 percent of their household's monthly income on child care costs, with 20 percent paying one-quarter to half of their household's monthly income on care, and 4 percent of respondents paying more than 50 percent of their monthly household income on child care.
- Families make significant financial sacrifices to afford child care such as using credit cards to pay bills, borrowing money from family or friends, or taking out a loan.

The remaining 35 percent of children were cared for by a parent(s).

- Fifty-five percent said that it was important to them that they or their partner care for their children. The second most common reason families used parental care was due to the high cost of child care.
- Seventeen percent of respondents stated that they were not using non-parental child care because they could not find a spot at all.
- Thirty-eight percent stated that a lack of child care prevented them from pursuing employment or educational opportunities within the past year.



RECOMENDATIONS:

#1: Advocate for increased investments in early childhood programs at the federal, state, and local levels.

- Create a public awareness and education campaign;
- Form strategic partnerships across the state;
- Build a strong coalition of supporters; and
- Educate and collaborate with businesses, employers, and nontraditional stakeholders.

#2: Increase supports for FFN and other unlicensed providers.

- Implement the recommendations learned through the Thriving Providers Project;
- Expand access to high-quality home visiting services and programs like PASO to provide early childhood training to unlicensed providers; and
- Partner with birthing hospitals, birthing centers, ob/gyn offices, pediatricians and other child health providers, libraries, family resource centers, the Triad Early Childhood Council and other community-based organizations that can reach families.

#3: Improve access to the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) for under-resourced working families and parents in school/job training.

- Conduct an analysis of the JeffCo CCCAP program and inventory ways the program can be improved for families;
- Improve provider payment practices where possible to encourage providers to participate in the program;
- Implement presumptive eligibility for all families;
- Improve access to priority populations; and
- Help families determine if they are eligible for additional public benefits programs when they apply for CCCAP.

JEFFERSON COUNTY BRIGHT FUTURES CHILD CARE SURVEY PROJECT



ABOUT THE PROJECT

[The JeffCo Bright Futures Roadmap](#) (Roadmap) is a shared community vision to best support the county's children, prenatal through age eight, and their families. The Colorado Gives Foundation partnered with Healthier Colorado to support implementation of the Roadmap. Healthier Colorado's work through this grant project seeks to inform implementation work on Cornerstone #1: Families in Jeffco have a variety of high-quality early care and education options that meet their needs and are provided through a mixed-delivery system.

By surveying JeffCo families with children under age six, we collected information regarding families' current child care and early childhood circumstances, asking questions aimed to fill knowledge gaps not provided through other data sources to garner a deeper understanding of families' experiences. This report includes the survey methodology, data analysis, trends, and policy opportunities to sustain the long-term vision of the JeffCo community.

METHODOLOGY

Healthier Colorado partnered with Sarah Hughes with Groundswell for Good, LLC. (Groundswell) to create the survey and conduct the data analysis. We also partnered with our sister organization, Open Answer (OA) to field the survey, as they specialize in conducting community outreach, connection, and empowerment through their work. They are skilled canvassers and field strategists that have conducted direct outreach and engagement with communities across the metro region. TFHC and OA's work aligns with that of the Bright Futures Roadmap in that we believe that those community members most impacted by policies should be engaged throughout the policy building and implementation process.

The survey was created by Groundswell, with input from Healthier Colorado and OA, based on the goals of the Roadmap and input from the Colorado Gives Foundation. OA translated the survey into Spanish, and fielded both the English and Spanish surveys in JeffCo from July 11 - August 25, 2023, targeting neighborhoods with a high density of families with children under 6 as determined by the American Community Survey data. Through a supplemental street canvass approach, OA tabled at multiple parks, rec centers, daycares, splash pads, libraries, and events. More than one-third of the surveys came from Lakewood zip codes with additional representation from Arvada, Pine, Evergreen, Wheat Ridge, Edgewater, Columbine, and Golden. See Appendix A for additional details on the data collection.

In total, there were 472 responses to the survey (including responses to both the English and Spanish versions). Groundswell cleaned and analyzed the survey results. Five responses were discarded because there were no children under age 6 who were not yet in kindergarten in their household. Forty-three responses were also discarded because they provided a ZIP code outside of Jefferson County. Finally, one response was discarded because the respondent was the owner of a child care facility and answered questions for all the children in his care, rather than for the children living in his household, leaving a total of 423 responses for analysis. Groundswell provided a summary of key findings from the survey result analysis.

ZIP CODE	SURVEY #	SURVEY LOCATION
80214	45	Edgewater
80215	45	Lakewood
80033	39	Arvada/Wheat Ridge
80228	36	Lakewood
80439	34	Evergreen/Pine/Conifer
80226	34	Lakewood
80003	29	Arvada
80002	24	Arvada
80005	21	Arvada
80232	19	Lakewood

For respondents that had multiple children under the age of 6, they were asked to report on the child care arrangements for their youngest child only.

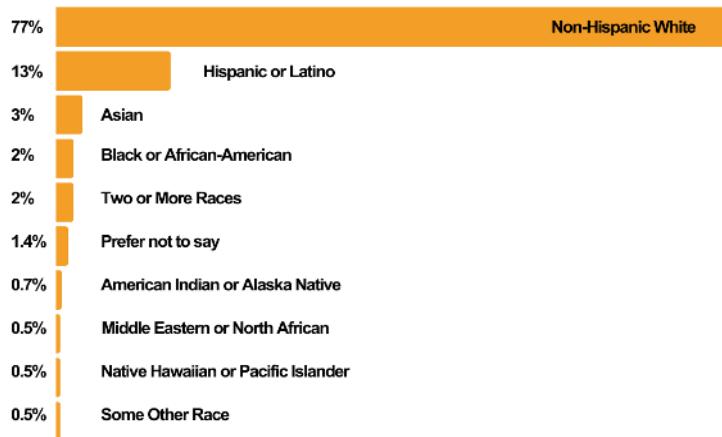
KEY FINDINGS

The findings of the survey can be accessed fully in Appendix B.

Demographics of survey respondents

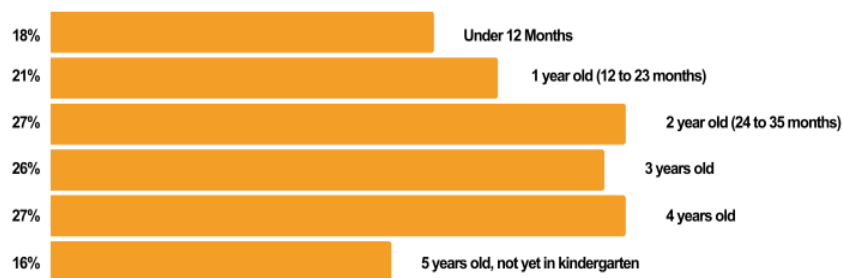
The majority of the respondents to the survey were between the ages of 35 and 44. A large majority - 81 percent - were married, and three-quarters were female. About half of the families earned \$100,000 or less, with 12 percent earning less than \$50,000 per year. A quarter - 26 percent - earned \$150,000 or more annually. Just 7 percent of respondents shared that they received government assistance to pay for child care. The breakdown of incomes within the sample is fairly similar to the income breakdown of Jefferson County families overall. Further, the vast majority (77 percent) of the survey respondents identified as non-Hispanic White, with 13 percent of respondents identifying themselves as Hispanic or Latino. Ninety-one percent of respondents' primary language spoken at home was English.

Race/Ethnicity of Survey Respondents



A detailed graph of respondents' young children by age is provided below.

Respondent's Young Children by Age



About half of the respondents were working full-time and another 20 percent worked part-time. Respondents also reported that 75 percent of their co-parent in the household was employed full-time and another 8 percent were employed part-time. The vast majority of respondents came from households with all available parents working in some capacity. About 3 percent of respondents were full or part-time students. Twelve percent of respondents shared that they regularly cared for children who were not their own and could therefore be considered family, friend, or neighbor (FFN) care providers.

CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS

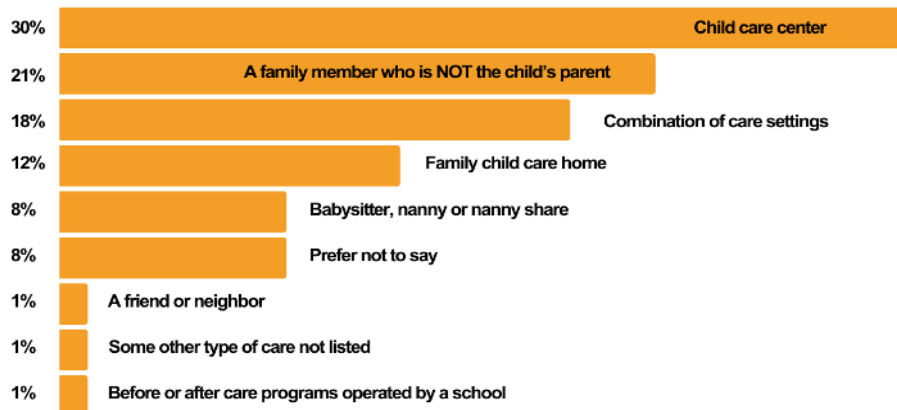
Non-parental Care

Two-thirds (65 percent) of respondents reported that their child was in some form of non-parental child care arrangement.

Care Arrangements: Nearly 1 in 5 families reported that they used a combination of care arrangements for their child. Thirty percent of respondents use some type of unlicensed or license-exempt care (family, friend, neighbor, babysitter, nanny, or nanny-share) as their sole source of care, while just over half (51 percent) rely solely on licensed settings.

“[I] had my daughter during COVID [and] had major panic/anxiety. [A] family friend stepped in and took weight off [my] shoulders.”

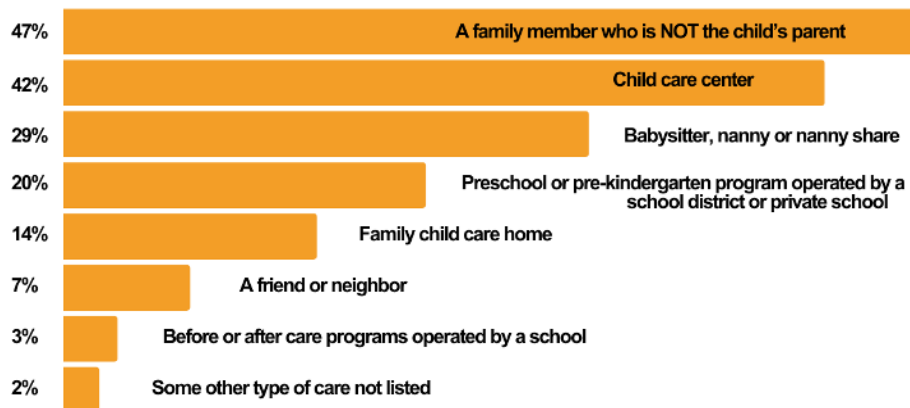
Among respondents who used some form of non-parental care for their child, child care centers were the most common single source of care, followed by care provided by a family member.



Child care centers and unlicensed/license-exempt care are the most common single type of care for all children under the age of 6 not yet in Kindergarten at around 30 percent each. Not surprisingly, more preschool aged children (3-5) were served by a program run by a school district than infants and toddlers. Also more infants and toddlers were served in family child care homes when compared to preschoolers.

When looking at types of care alone or in combination, nearly half (47 percent) of respondents shared that they use child care provided by a family member who is not the child’s parent, either as the sole source of child care or in combination with another source of care. Approximately 29 percent of parents shared that they use babysitters, nannies, or nanny-shares and 7 percent used friends or neighbors to provide at least some of the care for their child. Clearly, many respondents are using some type of license-exempt/unlicensed care to provide some or all of the care for their child.

When looking at types of care used either alone or in combination, care provided by a family member who is not the child’s parent was the most commonly reported type of care among families whose child was in some form of non-parental care



“The wait time for my child was incredibly long and we really had to lean on our older parents during that time. I don’t know how we would have made it work if we lived away from family.”

Parental Choice: When asked to choose the top two most important factors the family considered when choosing a care arrangement, cost (51 percent), quality rating (44 percent), and proximity to home (36 percent) were the most commonly selected. Six percent shared that they selected their care arrangement because it was the first program to provide an open spot. More than two-thirds of respondents said that their current form of care was their ideal form, meaning that one-third of families are not utilizing their ideal care arrangement.

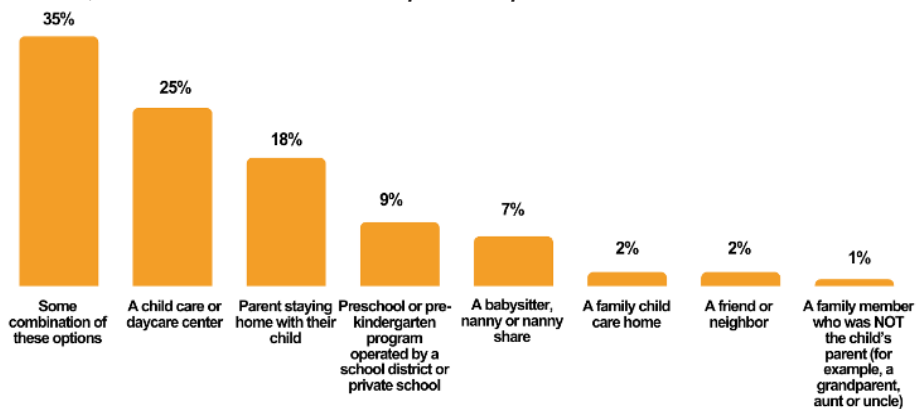
“When I was newly pregnant with my first kiddo, I told my boss just to give her a heads up. It was then that she told me to start looking at daycares and to get on waiting lists. I thought she was joking. Here I was, looking at daycares before I told many people. We didn’t have daycare lined up until two or three weeks before I went back to work. It was scary and very frustrating.”

Seven in ten (71 percent) of the respondents shared that it was somewhat or very difficult finding child care. However, parents of infants and toddlers (0-2) found it to be much more difficult to find care when compared to parents of preschoolers (3-5). Forty-three percent said finding care for their infant or toddler was very difficult, while only 29 percent said that finding care for their preschooler was very difficult.

“Having access to child care that is affordable to my family would mean we wouldn’t have to rely on our elderly parents for child care.”

Satisfaction: Overall, 71 percent of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with their care arrangements, while three percent were not satisfied with their care arrangements. Almost 86 percent of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of care provided to their child, with only 2 percent of respondents sharing that they were not satisfied with the level of quality. Forty-percent of respondents were only somewhat (29 percent) or not at all (11 percent) satisfied with the cost of their child care arrangement. Also, families with incomes below \$50,000 were less likely to be very satisfied with their care arrangements when compared to higher income families.

Among respondents with a child in non-parental care who reported their current form of care was not their ideal form of care, more than a third said their most preferred option would be some combination of care settings



“Having access to child care that is affordable to my family would mean everything because then my daughter would be provided with early education and extra learning opportunities, aka better language skills and social skills.”

Employment: Child care challenges are causing widespread employment challenges for families with young children. One quarter (24 percent) of respondents whose child was in some form of non-parental care stated that they or someone in their family had to quit a job, not take a job, or greatly change their job because of child care issues over the past year. More than half (53 percent) of those with a child in some form of non-parental care stated that child care issues caused them to utilize some type of paid leave (vacation, sick, etc.) to take time off of work, while almost one-third (31 percent) of families shared that they had to take unpaid leave from work.

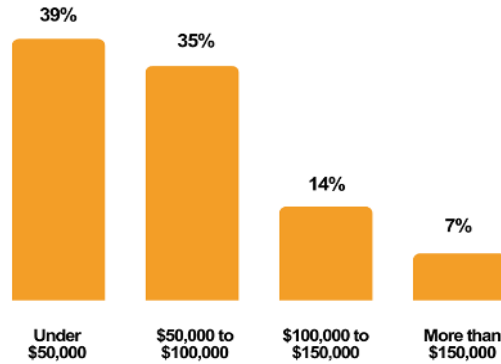
“Having access to child care that is affordable to my family would mean peace of mind knowing our children are safe even when we need to work.”

Cost: The majority of respondents are typically paying more than 10 percent of their household’s monthly income on child care costs, with 20 percent paying one-quarter to half of their household’s monthly income on care. Four percent of respondents shared that they are paying more than 50 percent of their monthly household income on child care. And while this is a relatively small percentage, for this population in particular, the cost of care is a huge barrier to the family’s economic security. When the cost of care is so high, families have to make significant financial sacrifices to afford child care. Thirteen percent of respondents with a child in child care reported that they had to use credit cards to pay bills or child care expenses in order to afford child care. Eight percent reported having to borrow money from family or friends to afford child care, while 2 percent reported having to take out a loan to afford child care costs.

“Having access to child care that is affordable to my family would mean that I would have more money to spend on groceries and rent.”

Likely due to the high costs associated with child care, families with incomes below \$50,000 were less likely to have their children in some form of non-parental care than families with incomes above \$150,000 (61 percent compared to 79 percent, respectively). For families earning below \$100,000, FFN care is the most commonly used form of care. Families earning above \$100,000 most typically utilize a licensed child care center.

Among respondents whose child was in non-parental care, those whose family incomes were below \$100,000 were significantly more likely than families with higher incomes to report using care provided by a family member, friend or neighbor.



“Having access to child care that is affordable to my family would mean that we could afford birthdays.”

Non-traditional hour care: Forty-four percent of respondents needed care outside of traditional work hours, including twenty percent who needed weekend care, 10 percent who needed care in the late evening and 5 percent who needed care overnight.

“It was incredibly hard to find safe child care that met my needs as someone who works nights.”

Parental Care

For the remaining 35 percent of children who were cared for by a parent(s), 55 percent said one of the reasons their child was not in some form of non-parental care was that it was important to them that they or their partner care for their children. However, the second most common reason families used parental care was due to the high cost of child care. Families utilizing parental care shared that they would likely use quality child care if it was available to them at a cost they could afford with 84 percent responding “yes” or “maybe.”

“There needs to be more options available to parents. Child care, as it is now, is pushing women out of the workforce... Child care seems reserved for the rich and not available to the working class who often need the help the most.”

Additionally, 17 percent of respondents stated that they were not using non-parental child care because they could not find a spot at all. Nearly 10 percent cited an inability to find a part-time spot as a barrier to care, and 6 percent reported their child was not in child care because they could not find care for the hours that they needed. And 38 percent of these respondents stated that a lack of child care prevented them from pursuing employment or educational opportunities within the past year.

“Having access to child care that is affordable to my family would mean we could send our youngest to child care and I could go back to work full time rather than becoming a homemaker. Not that there is anything wrong with that, it’s just not what works for my family.”



RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are recommendations to the JeffCo Bright Futures Roadmap Steering Committee utilizing the results of the survey, national and state data trends, and other nationally-recognized best practices.

Recommendation #1

Advocate for increased investments in early childhood programs at the federal, state, and local levels.

Our country has historically and persistently undervalued and therefore underinvested in the child care sector. Rooted in gender and racial discrimination, the vast majority of child care providers and educators are women with an over-representation from women of color. Our society also devalues the importance of caregiving more broadly. However, the rising cost of living has made it necessary for women to work to support their families, even in two-parent households. That is why it is essential that we continue to seek and advocate for additional investments in our youngest children and their families.

“Everyone deserves quality, subsidized day care or child care. We need to expand universal pre-k outside of ages 3-5 and [have] more variety of hours. Parents shouldn’t have to worry about going into debt.”

Therefore, it is recommended that the following strategy under Roadmap Cornerstone 1 be continued: “Develop an implementation plan and secure a dedicated public funding stream for universal preschool and other early care and education initiatives by 2024.”

Please find additional sub-recommendations below:

- **Create a public awareness and education campaign** - Child and family advocates must raise awareness among the public and policymakers about the child care challenges facing our communities today. The high-costs and lack of supply, particularly for infant and toddler care, make finding licensed care slots impossible for some families and in certain communities. The low-wages and high-expenses associated with child care has caused child care closures across the nation and a workforce shortage that has surpassed crisis level. The Roadmap is a great tool JeffCo stakeholders and advocates can use to elevate child care as a local, state, and national priority. This survey also provides rich data - both quantitative and qualitative - about the child care experiences of parents and families in your local communities. At the end of the day, everyone depends on someone that depends on child care. The issue must be elevated in order to build public will and policymaker support for policies that will improve and sustain the child care sector.

“Child care will be our single most expensive bill almost on par with our mortgage. This is the reason many of my friends are not having children, or like us are only planning on having one child. We are all middle-income educated 30+ and cannot afford to work and have child care.”

- **Form strategic partnerships across the state** - If not already in partnership, the Roadmap Steering Committee should collaborate with other efforts across the state of Colorado to improve access to child care. To ensure that all families in Jefferson County have a variety of high-quality early care and education options that meet their needs and are provided through a mixed-delivery system, Colorado will need significant state and federal investments on top of local investments.
- **Build a strong coalition of supporters** - Build a large listserv of people who support one or more Cornerstones of the Roadmap. These folks can be called upon to support the public awareness and education campaign as well as can contact their elected officials and other policymakers to push for policy improvements. Find ways to continue to engage with these individuals so they feel part of a greater movement for change. It would also be an asset for a small group of core parents, caregivers, and providers to be trained and prepared as advocates and spokespeople. Storytelling is a vital component to any campaign and having folks at the ready to share their lived experiences will allow the Roadmap team to be prepared for any opportunities that might arise.
- **Educate and collaborate with businesses, employers, and nontraditional stakeholders** - As seen in the results of this survey, a lack of affordable, available child care and other child care issues impacted families' ability to work or go to school. Given the challenges many companies are facing with hiring qualified staff, solving the child care crisis could expand the number of people seeking work or schooling to improve their marketable skills. Large employers may be interested in opening up a child care center of their own, and can be connected to the employer-based child care work occurring across Colorado.

“Having access to child care that is affordable to my family would mean focus for work and quality time when my child is home.”

Recommendation #2

Increase supports for FFN and other unlicensed providers.

Given that a high rate of families are seeking and utilizing care from unlicensed care providers - FFN providers, nannies, nanny-shares, and babysitters - it is vitally important that these providers have access to resources to support them in their caregiving work. As we heard in the survey, many families prefer having a provider that they know and trust, that speaks the same language, or has cared for their older children. Family, friend, and neighbor and other unlicensed providers (such as babysitters, nannies, or nanny-shares) can be extremely high-quality options for families and are often the only option for many families with challenging work schedules or low-incomes who cannot afford licensed care.

“We currently have an au pair living with us. We chose this option for child care because it was a more affordable option than the home daycare our daughter was attending, even though we really loved the home daycare our daughter went to. When our second child was born, we had to figure out a different option, because we couldn’t afford to send both of our children to this home daycare.”

Please find additional sub-recommendations below:

- **Implement the recommendations learned through the Thriving Providers Project** - The full report can be accessed [here](#).
- **Expand access to high-quality home visiting services and programs like Providers Advancing Student Outcomes (PASO) to provide early childhood training to unlicensed providers** - The curricula in these models provide information and training on child development, school readiness, child safety, nutrition, healthy learning environments, and more. These models also utilize a coaching or mentorship role through the home visitor or PASO staff member that provides 1:1 support to the providers in the program, which can reinforce what is learned and can provide other needed supports and community connections to providers that are often disconnected from the broader early childhood system.
- **Partner with birthing hospitals, birthing centers, ob/gyn offices, pediatricians and other child health providers, libraries, family resource centers, the Triad Early Childhood Council and other community-based organizations that can reach families** - These trusted community partners can not only equip parents with the information they need to raise healthy children and become their child’s first teacher, but they can also support FFN and other unlicensed providers through activities for children, resources, and connection to other community members. In particular, the healthcare system and healthcare providers are often disconnected and siloed from the early childhood system. Families and caregivers do

not often seek assistance about child care and early childhood programming and resources through these entities in spite of the fact that families are more likely to routinely access health care for their child than other services. Partnerships and shared learning opportunities across early childhood and health stakeholders could help bridge the information and knowledge gap that families often have about what is available to them in the community.

“If it weren’t for us having close community ties, we wouldn’t have child care.”

Recommendation #3

Improve access to the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) for under-resourced working families and parents in school/job training.

“What we really need is government subsidies. Child care workers deserve to be paid well, but it’s ridiculous that a family at our income level struggles to pay for daycare. How are people supposed to be able to afford it? The government needs to step in and help.”

The survey results showed that families with lower incomes had significantly more challenges accessing affordable licensed child care options than their higher-income peers. According to the most recent data available from the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC), just 10 percent of eligible families received child care subsidies in Fiscal Year 2022-23. There are many challenges both families seeking care and providers serving children in the CCCAP program face due to complexities and inequitable policies at the state and local county level. If the program could improve for families and access could be improved, more families with lower incomes could access the child care provider of their choice.

“Having access to child care that is affordable to my family would mean focus for work and quality time when my child is home.”

Please find additional sub-recommendations below:

- **Conduct an analysis of the JeffCo CCCAP program and inventory ways the program can be improved for families** - Work with CDEC, the county human services department, child care experts, parents and providers to make recommendations on ways to improve the county's CCCAP program. Opportunities for policy change should be explored by conducting an analysis of current policies and how those compare to the flexibilities allowed in the federal and state rules. Focus groups and surveys of families who receive CCCAP, used to utilize CCCAP, or that tried to access CCCAP but were unable to should also be conducted to learn how they experience(d) the program and in what ways it could be improved to help families and streamline the process. Improvements could include streamlined eligibility determination processes, simplified application processes, and improved communication processes between the human services department and the families. The recommendations from the analysis, if implemented, could help the county decrease unnecessary barriers to affordable child care for low-income working parents who are struggling to make ends meet.
- **Improve provider payment practices where possible to encourage providers to participate in the program** - Far too many providers are unable to participate in the CCCAP program due to low reimbursement rates and payment practices that are unsuitable for the business model. However, making changes like paying providers based on a child's enrollment for the month as opposed to withholding payments when a child is necessarily absent will help providers feel secure in the amount of money they will receive per child in reimbursements. Finally, a fair reimbursement rate for license-exempt providers should be adopted. For example, the reimbursement rate should be raised to meet the minimum wage requirements for Colorado of \$13.65/hour.
- **Implement presumptive eligibility for all families** - JeffCo can utilize local private or public funding to provide presumptive eligibility for families applying to receive child care assistance. Similar to how the state already provides presumptive eligibility to families experiencing homelessness, the county human services department may define minimum presumptive eligibility criteria and verification requirements for considering a child eligible for child care services for up to three months while full eligibility verification is underway. This would provide families with immediate access to child care while they are going through the verification process, which can be confusing and time consuming. Families would no longer have to pass up work opportunities, lose a child care slot, or piece together care while awaiting for their CCCAP eligibility determination, providing them with the ability to go to work or school and the child a safe and nurturing learning environment.
- **Improve access to priority populations** - We have long known - and the data from the survey reiterates - that certain populations have less access to licensed child care than others. For instance, high-quality infant and toddler care is challenging and expensive to provide, and it is estimated that there is only one licensed slot for every three infants across Colorado, while in certain geographic areas it is likely worse. One tool available within CCCAP that the county could utilize are grants and contracts to providers to help ensure providers have the stable funding they need to provide slots for children with disabilities/special health care needs, infants and toddlers, or for children needing care during nontraditional hours.

- **Help families determine if they are eligible for additional public benefits programs when they apply for CCCAP** - Colorado's PEAK platform is an online service for Coloradans to screen and apply for medical, food, cash, and early childhood assistance programs. Unfortunately, it is not well known and the application can be challenging for families to complete on their own. The county's human services department staff could assist families with their PEAK applications or could utilize the data provided to them through the CCCAP application to determine eligibility for additional public benefits, such as housing assistance, SNAP, WIC, Medicaid, or TANF. Decreasing the financial burdens on a family decreases stress and promotes their economic well-being, all of which supports a child's healthy development.

“Having access to child care that is affordable to my family would mean so much. Money saved, feeling supported by government, ability to live in Colorado.”



APPENDIX A.

Open Answer Summary of Survey Collection

Jeffco Bright Futures Final Report

July 11- August 25

We are happy to have completed our survey collection in Jefferson County with more surveys collected than the goal of 350. We also, had great representation of folks from Jeffco, with a diversity of zip code, income, and experience. Our original goal was 350 surveys however our team secured well over that amount. We averaged about 5.6 surveys completed per shift with about 90% of our surveys being from Jefferson County parents. Through a street canvass approach, we were able to table at multiple parks, rec centers, daycares, splash pads, libraries, and events. Over 1/3 of our surveys came from Lakewood zip codes while others were scattered between Arvada, Pine, Evergreen, Wheat Ridge, Edgewater, Columbine, and Golden. Some zip codes had regions in Denver County and Jefferson County such as 80123 and 80212. Overall this approach allowed us to hit our goal but coordination with different sites could be stressful. Parks, splash pads, and libraries had public space we did not need to get permission for but rec. centers and daycares had to be scheduled. Rec. Centers and Childcare centers allowed us to table inside.

THE NUMBERS	
Total Surveys Collected	472
Total Shifts	83.5
Surveys Collected per. Shift	5.6

Our Strategy:

When beginning this project, we put a lot of strategic thought into our approach. We know that parents are very protective of their children, and of all information regarding their children and their household. Because of this, we made a couple of decisions early on to add comfort, trust, and legitimacy to our work, which led to our success throughout:

- Conversational, friendly team hand selected for this particular project.
- Team with either subject matter or location familiarity.
- Interactive tabling set up with coloring board, stickers, bubble machines etc.
- Buddy canvassing so parents could focus on the long survey, even if their child was being fussy.

- Partnering with libraries and rec centers during baby and toddler story time and swimming lessons.

Challenges We Faced:

- Discomfort with survey questions and refusal to complete.
- High heat during August in CO, and no indoor locations for that day.
- Not knowing who had children under 6 without the child being present.
- Babysitters, nannies, and grandparents with child instead of parents and primary caregivers.

Zip Code Break Down:

ZIP CODE	SURVEY #	SURVEY LOCATION
80214	45	Edgewater
80215	45	Lakewood
80033	39	Arvada/Wheat Ridge
80228	36	Lakewood
80439	34	Evergreen/Pine/Conifer
80226	34	Lakewood
80003	29	Arvada
80002	24	Arvada
80005	21	Arvada
80232	19	Lakewood

APPENDIX B.

JeffCo Bright Futures Survey: Key Findings

Overview:

In total, there were 472 responses to the survey (including responses to both the English and Spanish versions). Five responses were discarded because they answered “no” to the screening question asking whether there were children under 6 who were not yet in kindergarten in their household. Forty-three respondents provided a ZIP code outside of Jefferson County and thus their responses were also discarded. One response was discarded because the respondent was the owner of a child care facility and answered questions for all the children in his care, rather than for the children living in his household, leaving a total of 423 responses for analysis.

Demographics:

Below are some key points regarding the demographics of survey respondents.

Age: The majority of respondents were between the ages of 35 to 44.

- 2.4% were 18 to 24
- 40.2% were 25 to 34
- 51.5% were 35 to 44
- 4.7% were 45 to 54
- 0.7% were 55 to 64
- 0.2% were 65 or older
- 0.2% prefer not to say

Marital status: Most respondents were married.

- 81% were married
- 15% were single
- 3% were divorced
- 1% prefer not to say
- 0.4% other

Gender: Nearly three-quarters of respondents were female.

- 73% female
- 27% male
- 0.2% non-binary

Income: Families earning more than \$150,000 per year made up the largest group within the sample of respondents. The income breakdown of the sample is fairly similar to the income breakdown of Jefferson County families overall. Low- to middle-income families were somewhat overrepresented in the survey sample in comparison to all Jefferson County families with children under 18. This pattern is not surprising, given that the survey specifically targeted families with

children under 6. We know families with young children are more likely than families with older children to have low incomes, given child care challenges that cause many parents to have to drop out of the workforce or reduce work hours, as well as the fact that parents of young children are often earlier in their careers and earning less. The specific income breakdown of the sample is as follows:

- Under \$35,000: 4%
- \$35,000 to \$50,000: 8%
- \$50,000 to \$75,000: 14%
- \$75,000 to \$100,000: 19%
- \$100,000 to \$150,000: 21%
- More than \$150,000: 26%

Race/Ethnicity: The racial/ethnic distribution of respondents is fairly similar to the racial/ethnic distribution in Jefferson County as a whole. The racial/ethnic breakdown of respondents was as follows:

- Non-Hispanic White: 77%
- Hispanic or Latino (of any race): 13%
- Asian: 3%
- Two or More Races: 2%
- Black or African-American: 2%
- American Indian or Alaska Native: 0.7%
- Middle Eastern or North African: 0.5%
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander: 0.5%
- Some Other Race: 0.5%
- Prefer not to say: 1.4%

Average number of children under 6, not yet in kindergarten, per respondent: 1.4

Ages of children: Note that these percentages will not add up to 100%, since many respondents had multiple children under age 6.

- Under 12 months: 18%
- 1 year old (12 to 23 months): 21%
- 2 years old (24 to 35 months): 27%
- 3 years old: 26%
- 4 years old: 27%
- 5 years old, not yet in kindergarten: 16%

Age of youngest child (for families with multiple young children in the household, the survey asked them to report on the child care arrangements for their youngest child):

- Under 12 months: 18%
- 1 year old (12 to 23 months): 21%
- 2 years old (24 to 35 months): 20%
- 3 years old: 19%
- 4 years old: 14%
- 5 years old, not yet in kindergarten: 8%

FFN caregivers: About one in eight people in the sample said they regularly cared for children who were not their own and thus can be considered Family, Friend and Neighbor caregivers.

- Yes: 12%
- No: 88%

Receiving government assistance to pay for child care: Only 7% of survey respondents said they received government assistance to pay for child care.

- No: 91%
- Prefer not to say: 0.7%
- Unsure: 1.4%
- Yes: 7%

Primary language spoken at home: Nine out of 10 survey respondents spoke English as their primary language at home. Nearly 7% spoke a language other than English, with Spanish being the most common.

- English: 91%
- Language other than English: 6.6%
- Did not report: 2.4%

Employment status of respondents: Three-quarters of respondents were working at least part-time, with about half of all respondents employed full-time.

- 51% were employed full-time
- 20% were employed part-time
- 15% were not employed and were currently NOT looking for work
- 4% were not employed and were currently looking for work
- 2% were on paid leave from work
- 1% of respondents were both in school and working
- 1% were self-employed
- 0.9% were full-time students
- 0.9% were part-time students
- 0.7% were on unpaid leave from work
- 0.5% were retired
- 0.7% prefer not to say

Employment status of other parent in household: Nearly three-quarters of respondents reported that their child's other parent was employed full-time.

- 75% were employed full-time
- 8% were employed part-time
- 7% said their child did not have another parent in the household
- 3% were not employed and NOT currently looking for work
- 2% were not employed and currently looking for work
- 1% were both in school and working
- 1% were full-time students
- 1% prefer not to say
- 0.7% were on paid leave from work
- 0.7% were on unpaid leave from work
- 0.5% were part-time students
- 0.2% were retired
- 0.2% were self-employed

Child care arrangements: About two-thirds of respondents reported that their child was in some form of non-parental child care. In families with multiple children, respondents were asked to answer questions about the care arrangements for their youngest child.

- 65% were in child care
- 35% were cared for by a parent

Key findings among respondents whose child was NOT in any form of non-parental child care:

Below are some highlights from the data on respondents whose child was NOT in any form of non-parental child care.

Reasons why child is not in child care: The most commonly cited reason respondents gave for why their child was not in any form of non-parental child care was that it was important to them that they or their spouse/partner care for their children. The second most common reason was cost, with more than 40% of respondents citing this as a barrier to care. Note that respondents could select multiple responses to this question, so these percentages will add up to more than 100%.

- It's important that my spouse/partner or I care for our children: 55%
- Cost: 42%
- Could not find a spot: 17%
- On maternity or paternity leave: 13%
- Only needed part-time care but could not find part-time hours: 9%
- Could not find care for the hours I needed it: 6%
- Other/unspecified: 4%
- Do not have transportation to get to/from child care: 1%

Desire to use child care: A significant share of parents/caregivers whose child was NOT currently in any form of non-parental care indicated they would use quality child care if it were available to them at a cost they could afford. When asked whether they would use quality child care if it were available to them at a cost they could afford, 84% of those whose child was not currently in child care responded “yes” or “maybe.”

- Yes: 57%
- No: 16%
- Maybe: 27%

Child care as a barrier to education and employment: Nearly 40% of respondents whose child was NOT in any form of non-parental child care indicated that a lack of child care had prevented them from seeking employment or education opportunities in the past 12 months.

- 38% say a lack of child care has prevented them from seeking employment or education opportunities in the past 12 months
- 62% say it has not

Waitlist for care: Of those whose child was not in any form of non-parental child care, more than one in five said their child was on a waitlist for care.

- 22% said their child was on a waitlist for care
- 77% said they were not on a waitlist for care
- 1% were unsure

Length of waitlist: Of those whose child was not in non-parental child care and who reported their child was on a waitlist, nearly half said they had been on a waitlist for more than six months.

- 16% said they had been on a waitlist for under 3 months
- 38% said they had been on a waitlist for 3 to 6 months
- 41% said they had been on a waitlist for 6 to 12 months
- 6% said they had been on a waitlist for longer than 12 months

Key findings among respondents whose child was in some form of non-parental child care:

Below are some highlights from the data on respondents whose child was in some form of non-parental child care during a typical week.

Type of care: There are two different ways we can break down the data on type of care, since we allowed respondents to select multiple care arrangements, knowing that families are often piecing together care from different sources. There are two options below.

Type of care, option 1: These data show the percent of respondents using each type of care, regardless of whether that is the ONLY type of care they use or whether they are piecing together multiple forms of care. In looking at the data this way, care provided by a family member who is NOT the child's parent is the most common form of care.

- 47% of respondents indicated they use care provided by a family member who is NOT the child's parent (for example, a grandparent, aunt or uncle), either alone or in combination with another form of care
- 42% of respondents indicated they use a child care or daycare center (not in someone's home), either alone or in combination with another form of care
- 29% of respondents indicated they use care provided by a babysitter, nanny or nanny share, either alone or in combination with another form of care
- 20% of respondents indicated they use care provided by a preschool or pre-kindergarten program operated by a school district or private school, either alone or in combination with another form of care
- 14% of respondents indicated they use care provided by a family child care home (licensed care provided in someone's home), either alone or in combination with another form of care
- 7% of respondents indicated they use care provided by a friend or neighbor, either alone or in combination with another form of care

- 3% of respondents indicated they use care provided by before or after care programs operated by a school, either alone or in combination with another form of care
- 2% of respondents indicated they use some other form of care not listed

Type of care, option 2: These data show each form of care as an exclusive category (e.g., the percent of respondents who report using a child care center ONLY and not in combination with another form of care). Families who piece together multiple forms of care are then shown in their own separate category. Nearly one in five respondents indicated using a combination of care arrangements.

- 30% of respondents used a child care center only
- 21% of respondents used care provided by a family member who was not the child's parent only
- 18% of respondents used a combination of care settings
- 12% of respondents used a family child care home only
- 8% of respondents used a babysitter, nanny or nanny share only
- 8% of respondents used a preschool or pre-kindergarten program operated by a school district or private school only
- 1% of respondents used care provided by a friend or neighbor only
- 1% of respondents used some other type of care not listed
- 1% of respondents used some other type of care not listed
- 1% of respondents used before or after care programs operated by a school only

Difficulty of finding child care: Among respondents whose child was in some form of non-parental child care, nearly three out of four said finding care for their child had been somewhat or very difficult, with more than one-third saying it was very difficult.

- 36% said it was very difficult
- 35% said it was somewhat difficult
- 17% said it was somewhat easy
- 11% said it was very easy

Most important factors in choosing their care arrangement: When asked to choose the two most important factors they considered when choosing a care arrangement for their child, cost, quality rating and proximity to home rose to the top:

- Cost: 51%
- Quality rating: 44%
- Proximity to home: 36%
- Provider shares my values: 17%
- Hours of operation: 16%
- Wanted my child cared for by someone I already knew: 10%
- It was the first program to offer me a spot: 6%
- Proximity to work or school: 5%
- My other child was cared for by the same provider: 3%
- Provider speaks my home language: 1%
- Other: 1%

Overall satisfaction with child care: Overall, respondents report being satisfied with their child's care arrangement. More than 70% reported being satisfied or very satisfied.

- 37% were very satisfied
- 27% were somewhat satisfied
- 34% were satisfied
- 3% were not satisfied

Satisfaction with location of child care: More than 80% of respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the location of their child's care arrangement.

- 41% were very satisfied
- 15% were somewhat satisfied
- 39% were satisfied
- 5% were not satisfied

Satisfaction with operating hours: About 76% of respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the operating hours of their child care setting.

- 32% were very satisfied
- 19% were somewhat satisfied
- 44% were satisfied
- 5% were not satisfied

Satisfaction with cost: Cost was the aspect of care that respondents were least satisfied with. About 60% of respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the cost of their child care arrangement. Nearly 11% were not satisfied.

- 25% were very satisfied
- 29% were somewhat satisfied
- 35% were satisfied
- 11% were not satisfied

Satisfaction with quality: Nearly 86% of respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of their child's care arrangement.

- 40% were very satisfied
- 12% were somewhat satisfied
- 46% were satisfied
- 2% were not satisfied

Whether current form of care is ideal form of care: One in three respondents whose children were in some form of non-parental care said their current form of care was NOT their ideal child care arrangement.

- 68% said their current form of care WAS their ideal form of care
- 32% said their current form of care was NOT their ideal form of care

Most preferred form of care: When asked what their most preferred form of care would be (among those who said their current form of care was NOT their ideal form of care), the largest share of respondents reported preferring some combination of care options. The second-largest share reported preferring a child care or daycare center.

- 35% said their ideal form of care was some combination of the below options
- 18% said having their child cared for by them or their spouse/partner was their ideal form of care
- 25% said a child care or daycare center (not in someone's home) was their ideal form of care

- 9% said a preschool or pre-kindergarten program operated by a school district or private school was their ideal form of care
- 7% said a babysitter, nanny or nanny share was their ideal form of care
- 2% said a family child care home was their ideal form of care
- 2% said a friend or neighbor was their ideal form of care
- 1% said a family member who was NOT the child's parent (for example, a grandparent, aunt or uncle was their ideal form of care

Job changes due to child care: When asked whether the respondent or anyone in their family had had to quit a job, not take a job, or greatly change their job because of problems with child care in the past 12 months:

- 24% said yes
- 76% said no

Employment challenges due to child care: Child care challenges are causing widespread employment challenges for families with young children. Among respondents who had a child in some form of non-parental child care,

- 53% said child care problems caused them to take vacation days, sick days or other paid leave in the past 12 months
- 31% said child care problems caused them to cut their work hours
- 31% said child care problems caused them to take unpaid leave from work
- 31% said child care problems caused them to supervise one or more children while working
- 13% said child care problems caused them not to look for a job in order to care for children
- 11% said child care problems caused them to leave a job
- 1% said child care problems caused them to lose a job
- Only 25% said they had not had to do any of these things due to child care problems.

Remote work as a workaround for child care issues: When asked whether child care challenges led them or anyone in their household to accept remote work and, on a regular basis, work while without child care for their child(ren):

- 33% said yes
- 66% said no
- 1% chose prefer not to say

Ability to afford child care: When asked how they would describe their ability to afford child care costs each month:

- 8% said extremely challenging
- 18% said very challenging
- 28% said somewhat challenging
- 26% said not at all challenging

Child care costs as a percent of income: When asked what percentage of their household's monthly income (after taxes) they would estimate is used for child care costs in a typical month:

- 26% said less than 10 percent
- 40% said 10 percent to 24 percent
- 20% said 25 percent to 49 percent
- 4% said more than 50 percent
- 10% said they weren't sure

Financial sacrifices to afford care: Many families are making significant financial sacrifices merely to afford child care. Among respondents whose child was in some form of non-parental child care:

- 21% said they had had to cut back on work hours to afford child care
- 13% said they had had to use credit cards to pay bills or child care expenses to afford child care
- 8% said they had had to borrow money from family or friends to afford child care
- 3% said they had had to cut back on needed food to afford child care
- 3% said they had had to fall behind on rent or mortgage payments to afford child care
- 3% said they had had to go without needed medical care, including oral or mental health care, in order to afford child care
- 2% said they had had to take out a loan (not from family or friends) in order to afford child care
- 66% said they had not had to do any of these things

Child care during non-traditional hours: Many families need child care outside of traditional hours. Among respondents whose child was in some form of non-parental child care, nearly half reported needing child care during at least one time of day that is outside of traditional hours. Specifically:

- 20% reported needing care in the early evening hours (6:00 pm to 6:59 pm)
- 19% reported needing care on the weekends (Saturdays or Sundays)
- 15% reported needing care in the evening (7:00 pm to 8:59 pm)
- 12% reported needing care in the early morning hours (6:00 am to 6:59 am)
- 10% reported needing care in the late evening hours (9:00 pm to 11:59 pm)
- 5% reported needing care overnight (12:00 am to 5:59 am)
- 56% did not need care during non-traditional hours

Bright Futures Parent Survey Breakdowns by Characteristics

Child care usage by age: Whether or not a child is cared for in some form of non-parental care varies by age. For example, 49% of infants were in some form of non-parental care, compared to more than 75% of 3-year-olds and 5-year-olds who were not yet in kindergarten.

- Under 12 months: 49% in some form of non-parental care
- 1 year old (12 months to 23 months): 59%
- 2 years old (24 months to 35 months): 67%
- 3 years old: 77%
- 4 years old: 68%
- 5 years old, not yet in kindergarten: 77%

Type of child care by age group: Child care centers were the most common type of care for both infant/toddler and preschool age groups. FFN care was the second-most common form of care for both groups. Infants and toddlers were more likely than preschoolers to be cared for in family child care homes.

Infants/toddlers (ages 0-2):

- 29% were cared for in a child care center
- 21% were cared for by a family member, friend or neighbor
- 17% were cared for in a combination of settings
- 16% were cared for in a family child care home
- 10% were cared for by a babysitter, nanny or nanny share
- 3% were cared for in a preschool or prekindergarten program run by a school district or private school

Preschoolers (age 3 through 5-year-olds not yet in kindergarten)

- 30% were cared for in a child care center
- 22% were cared for by a family member, friend or neighbor
- 19% were cared for in a combination of settings
- 14% were cared for in a preschool or prekindergarten program run by a school district or private school
- 6% were cared for in a family child care home
- 6% were cared for by a babysitter, nanny or nanny share

Difficulty of finding child care by age group: Parents of infants and toddlers were much more likely than parents of preschoolers to report that finding care for their child was very difficult.

Infants/toddlers (ages 0-2):

- 43% said finding care for their child was very difficult
- 32% said it was somewhat difficult
- 16% said it was somewhat easy
- 9% said it was very easy

Preschoolers (age 3 through 5-year-olds not yet in kindergarten):

- 29% said finding care for their child was very difficult
- 40% said it was somewhat difficult
- 18% said it was somewhat easy
- 14% said it was very easy

Child care usage by income: Families with incomes below \$50,000 were less likely to have their children in some form of non-parental care than families with incomes above \$150,000.

Percent of families with their child in some form of non-parental care:

- 61% of families earning less than \$50,000 per year
- 56% of families earning between \$50,000 and \$100,000 per year
- 63% of families earning between \$100,000 and \$150,000 per year
- 79% of families earning more than \$150,000 per year

Type of child care by family income: The type of child care families report using varies by household income. FFN care is the most common form of care used by families earning less than \$50,000 per year. FFN care becomes less common among families with higher incomes. A child care center is the most common form of care used by families earning more than \$150,000 per year.

Most common form of care by family income:

- For families earning below \$50,000: FFN care (39% of families)
- For families earning between \$50,000 and \$100,000: FFN care (35% of families)
- For families earning between \$100,000 and \$150,000: A child care center (43% of families)
- For families earning above \$150,000: A child care center (38% of families)

Overall satisfaction with care by family income: Families with incomes below \$50,000 per year are less likely to report being very satisfied with their care than families earning more than \$150,000 per year.

Percent of families who report being very satisfied with their child care by family income:

- 23% of families earning below \$50,000 per year
- 30% of families earning between \$50,000 and \$100,000 per year
- 39% of families earning between \$100,000 and \$150,000 per year
- 48% of families earning more than \$150,000 per year



