

Child Care Market Analysis

Clayton County, Iowa

November 2023

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Prepared for:

Clayton County Foundation for the Future
Clayton County Child Care Steering Committee

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This project was made possible in part through a Rural Child Care Market Study grant received by Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque in partnership with Clayton County Foundation for the Future through the Empower Rural Iowa initiative, a program administered by the Center for Rural Revitalization, a division of Iowa Economic Development Authority. Additional partnerships and funding were provided by Alpine Communications, Aureon, Clayton County Board of Supervisors, Clayton County Development Group, Guttenberg Municipal Hospital & Clinics, and the Roger and Connie Halvorson CCFF Fund for Entrepreneurship.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2023, First Children's Finance was commissioned by Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque, on behalf of the Clayton County Child Care Steering Committee, to conduct this *Child Care Market Analysis*. This analysis provides relevant child care data, child care market analysis, and First Children's Finance's key findings regarding child care in Clayton County, Iowa.

The data in this report has been collected from three original surveys developed by First Children's Finance along with data published by the US Census Bureau, US Department of Health and Human Services, Iowa Workforce Development, Iowa Department of Health and Human Services, and Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral. This analysis is First Children's Finance's professional interpretation of the data available as of the date of this report. The information and analysis presented in this document are intended to provide a basis for sound business and community planning decisions, but no warranty is stated or implied as to completeness or accuracy.

PUTTING THIS STUDY INTO USE

This report can be used by employers and other community members that may be considering recruiting or adding new child care businesses, to better understand what parents most prefer for settings and offerings. It can also be used by both existing and future child care programs to understand the families wanting child care and to make operational decisions, such as what ages to care for, hours of operation, and understanding what factors are important to parents.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the purpose of this *Child Care Market Analysis* the child care market area is defined as Clayton County, Iowa, including the incorporated cities and unincorporated rural areas. The US Census Bureau estimates that both the total population and the number of children ages 0 to 11 in Clayton County have decreased over the last 10 years. The population of Clayton County as of 2021 is 17,173 and the total number of children ages 0 to 11 is 2,481. Taking into consideration the data collected through this study, First Children's Finance estimates that 1,559 of the 2,481 children are from families that are likely to use an Iowa Department of Health and Human Services regulated child care setting, either licensed child care centers or registered child development homes.

In Clayton County the average family size is 2.84 people and the median income for families with children under the age of 18 is \$80,392 per year. According to Iowa Workforce Development, as of Quarter 1 of 2023, there are an average of 5,547 people employed by companies in Clayton County, and the average weekly wage among those workers was \$893. The industry that employs the most people is health care & social assistance with an average of 970 employees and an average weekly wage of \$838.

A key part of this analysis was a survey to gain input from parents on their child care needs and preferences, compared to the current supply. Of the parents that participated, 174 reported they currently have children age 12 or younger, and an additional 16 do not currently have children, but plan to have or adopt children in the next 5 years. Using the most popular responses, a current parent would be described as married and living in either Guttenberg or Elkader. They work first-shift Monday through Friday in Elkader, and the nature of their job is in health care & social assistance. Their spouse also works first-shift Monday through Friday in Elkader, and the nature of their job is agriculture, fishing, hunting. They currently use child care in Elkader, Monday through Friday. They use child care 40 to 49 hours per week for their younger children, less than 10 hours per week for before and after school care, and 40 to 49 hours per week for older children during the summer. They are satisfied with their current child care provider.

Using the most popular responses, a future parent would be described as married and living in either Edgewood or Strawberry Point. They work first-shift Monday through Friday in Edgewood, and the nature of their job is manufacturing. Their spouse also works first-shift Monday through Friday in Edgewood, and the nature of their job is also manufacturing.

For working parents, choosing child care may be one of the most critical decisions they make. According to longitudinal research, the child care environment parents choose will have lasting effects on their child. When there are not enough child care spaces in a community, finding *any*

care is a challenge; and options for *quality* care that meet the needs and preferences of families can be even more challenging.

There are several forms of early care and education available in Iowa to meet family's varying needs and preferences. The educational experiences are different for each type of care and most communities desire to have multiple types of care and education available. Through a child care needs survey developed by First Children's Finance and conducted in Clayton County in 2023, it was determined that most of the parents that are likely to use "outside" care want their child in a setting that is regulated by the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services. The most preferred child care setting among both current and future parents is a licensed center, followed by a registered child development home. Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) data shows that as of October 2023 there are 613 spaces within 14 HHS regulated child care programs in Clayton County.

Participants in the child care needs survey indicated there is a shortage of child care spaces. When asked if they had difficulty finding child care, 67% of parents with children ages 0 to 5 (not in kindergarten) that had looked for care in the last 12 months and 52% of those with children ages 5 to 12 (school age children) that had looked for care in the last 12 months indicated they had some level difficulty finding child care. The most named obstacle was their preferred child care provider didn't have any openings and their child was placed on a waitlist.

After analyzing local demographics, child care supply, and the survey results, First Children's Finance conducted a *Child Care Gap Analysis*. The gap analysis determined there are 1,559 children in Clayton County that are from families that would likely use regulated child care within Clayton County. As of November 2023, there are 581 regulated child care spaces in Clayton County that are available for full-time year-round. When broken down by age group, it can be determined there is a shortage of 975 total spaces: 151 spaces for children ages 0 to 2, 79 spaces for preschool age children, 745 spaces for school age children during the school year, and 716 spaces for the school age children during the summer months.

Key Findings of This Analysis

Complete details of these key findings are contained in this report. These key findings are based on research and conditions of the current child care market. If the community or the child care environment changes significantly, current findings may be affected.

Finding 1: The Percentage of Families with All Parents in the Labor Force is Increasing

According to the US Census Bureau the percentage of families with all parents in the labor force has been increasing. All parents in the labor force means if a family is headed by a couple, both parents are working and if it is headed by a single parent that parent is working. With more parents working, it is reasonable to assume this would create an increased demand for child care.

As of 2021, 80% of families with children ages 0 to 5, and 79% of families with children ages 6 to 17 living in Clayton County have all parents in the labor force. In 2016, those percentages were 70% and 77% respectively.

Finding 2: Parents Want Center-Based Child Care that is Available Full-Time and Year-Round

Through the child care needs surveys, both current and future parents indicated the most preferred child care arrangement was a licensed child care center. When asked if they were selecting child care today, parents indicated they would prefer to drop-off between 7:00 am and 7:59 am and pick-up between 5:00 pm and 5:59 pm, Monday through Friday. Separately a majority of current parents indicated they prefer year-round care for their children, regardless of age.

Finding 3: Parents Have Difficulty Finding Child Care

Current parents were asked if they had looked for child care in the last 12 months. Eighty-five (85) parents indicated they had looked for care for children ages 0 to 5, and 28 parents indicated they had looked for care for children ages 5 to 12. Among those looking for care for ages 0 to 5, 67% indicated they experienced some level of difficulty, and among the those that looked for care for ages 5 to 12, 52% indicated they experienced some level of difficulty. Obstacles named by parents were almost exclusively related to the child care providers they prefer not having any openings and their children being placed on a waitlist.

Finding 4: Median Family Income is Higher than the Child Care Assistance Threshold

The median annual income for families in Clayton County with children under the age of 18 is \$80,392. To be eligible to initially qualify for tuition assistance for 2023, the annual income for a household of 3 cannot exceed \$39,776, and for a household of 4 it cannot exceed \$48,000. While many households with children in Clayton County exceed these income levels, comments provided through the child care needs survey indicate some families still struggle to pay for child care expenses out of pocket.

Finding 5: There is a Shortage of Child Care Spaces Among All Age Groups

There are an estimated 2,481 children ages 0 to 11 living in Clayton County. Through the *Child Care Gap Analysis* First Children's Finance estimates 1,559 children are from families who prefer and are likely to use an Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) regulated child care setting. According to Iowa HHS, there are 613 regulated spaces of which 581 are available year-round plus an additional 32 spaces that are available during the summer only. That means the child care gap could be as high as 975 total spaces: 151 spaces for children ages 0 to 2, 79 spaces for preschool age children, 745 spaces for school age children during the school year, and 716 spaces for the school age children during the summer months.

Finding 6: Over One-Quarter of Parents are Experiencing Limited Employment Due to Child Care

Through the child care needs survey conducted as part of this study, parents were asked if child care challenges are currently limiting their or their spouse's or partner's employment (ex. working part-time when full-time preferred, or not working within preferred field). Twenty-six percent (26%) answered yes.

Finding 7: Parents Indicate Child Care Challenges are Affecting their Job

Over the last 12 months, parents have experienced child care challenges that have in turn affected their job. The adverse effects experienced by at least one-quarter of the parents that participated in the child care needs survey were: had to leave work early (48%), missed a day of work because provider was closed, on vacation, or not available (39%), arrived late to work (29%), and unable to work overtime (26%).

Finding 8: Local Businesses Indicate Child Care Challenges are Affecting their Employees

Over the last 12 months, employers have been impacted by the adverse effects their employees experienced because of child care challenges. The effects experienced by at least one-quarter of employers were, employees missing at least one day of work because their child care provider was closed, sick, or on vacation which was experienced by 60% of employers, employees arriving late to work which was experienced by 53% of employers, employees having to leave work early which was experienced by 50% of employers, employees missed at least one day of work because the child care provider did not have room or a space for a child which was experienced by 25% of employers, and employees were unable to accept a different schedule of shift which was also experienced by 25% of employers.

Finding 9: Child Care Providers are Willing to Expand

Child care providers that participated in the child care needs survey were asked about their willingness to expand and serve more children. Six (6) centers and 1 home said yes. Providers were also asked what support they would need in order to be able to expand to serve more children. The responses indicated most child care programs would need funding for new or larger facilities, to possibly relocate, help recruiting more staff, and finding ways to pay better wages to keep staff.

MARKET DESCRIPTION

Study Area

Clayton County is located in northeastern Iowa. It is bordered by Allamakee, Buchanan, Delaware, Dubuque, Fayette, and Winneshiek counties in Iowa and Crawford and Grant counties in Wisconsin. Elkader is the county seat. Other incorporated communities within the county are Clayton, Edgewood (partial, also in Delaware County), Elkport, Farmersburg, Garber, Garnavillo, Guttenberg, Luana, Marquette, McGregor, Monona, North Buena Vista, Osterdock, Postville (partial, primarily in Allamakee County), St. Olaf, Strawberry Point, and Volga.

Population and Demographics

Total Population

According to the US Census Bureau, as of 2021 the total population of Clayton County is 17,173, which is a net change of -977 since 2011. Communities that have a larger population than 10 years ago are Clayton, Elkader, Farmersburg, Garber, Marquette, North Buena Vista, Osterdock, Postville, Strawberry Point and Volga. Communities that have a smaller population than 10 years ago are Edgewood, Elkport, Garnavillo, Guttenberg, Luana, McGregor, Monona, and St. Olaf.

Table 1: Population Change by Community

	2011	2021	Net Change
Clayton County	18,150	17,173	-977
Clayton	36	71	+35
Edgewood	940	661 ¹	-279
Elkader	1,230	1,270	+40
Elkport	120	17	-103
Farmersburg	262	389	+127
Garber	74	109	+35
Garnavillo	899	743	-156
Guttenberg	1,845	1,578	-267
Luana	242	210	-32
Marquette	321	462	+141
McGregor	977	747	-230
Monona	1,857	1,548	-309
North Buena Vista	180	108	-72
Osterdock	58	136	+78
Postville	2,094	2,711	+617
St. Olaf	180	135	-45
Strawberry Point	1,275	1,479	+204
Volga	190	251	+61

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2011, 2021)

¹ Information provided by Edgewood Economic Development indicates this is likely an error and the population is approximately 900.

Fertility

As of 2021 there were 3,032 women ages 16 to 50 living in Clayton County. The US Census Bureau estimates that 203 (6.6%) of them gave birth in the prior 12-month period. Overall, 155 (5.1%) both gave birth and were in the labor force. Compared to 2011, these percentages of women giving birth is lower, but the percentage of women that both gave birth and that are also in the labor force increased.

Table 2: Fertility of Clayton County

Year	Women 16-50	Gave Birth	% Gave Birth	Gave Birth and In Labor Force	% Gave Birth and in Labor Force
2011	3,582	241	6.7%	177	4.9%
2021	3,032	203	6.6%	155	5.1%

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2021)

Children Ages 0 to 11

As of 2021 the number of children ages 0 to 11 living in Clayton County is 2,481, which is a net change of -280 since 2011. Among individual communities, the greatest number of children are in Postville (only partially in Clayton County), where there are 350, followed by Strawberry Point with 271, Elkader with 200, and Garnavillo with 160.

Table 3: Population Ages 0 to 11 by Community

	2011	2021	Net Change
Clayton County	2,761	2,481	-280
Clayton	0	0	---
Edgewood	225	88	-137
Elkader	136	200	+64
Elkport	52	0	-52
Farmersburg	49	85	+36
Garber	10	13	+3
Garnavillo	161	160	-1
Guttenberg	213	110	-103
Luana	35	43	+8
Marquette	123	38	-85
McGregor	19	95	+76
Monona	312	134	-178
North Buena Vista	4	12	+8
Osterdock	12	19	+7
Postville	463	350	-113
St. Olaf	22	35	+13
Strawberry Point	194	271	+77
Volga	24	26	+2

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2011, 2021)

Race

Within Clayton County 97.7% of the population is one race, while 2.3% are two or more races. The race that most residents identify as is White, which was 96.7% of the population, followed by Some Other Race (0.4%), Black or African American (0.3%), Asian (0.3%), and American Indian or Alaska Native (0.1%).

Table 4: Race

	Clayton County	
Total Population	17,173	100%
One Race	16,780	97.7%
White	16,594	96.7%
Black or African American	50	0.30%
American Indian or Alaska Native	13	0.10%
Asian	53	0.30%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	0.00%
Some Other Race	70	0.40%
Two or More Races	393	2.3%

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2021)

Hispanic or Latino

Creating an inclusive child care program by recognizing and incorporating the different cultures of the children helps build strong relationships with families and children. Among residents of the Clayton County, 2.09% are Hispanic or Latino, with the largest group being Mexican, followed by Honduran and Nicaraguan.

Table 5: Hispanic or Latino by Specific Origin

	Clayton County	
Total Population	17,173	100%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	359	2.09%
Mexican	244	1.42%
Puerto Rican	3	0.00%
Guatemalan	8	0.05%
Honduran	39	0.23%
Nicaraguan	37	0.23%
Salvadoran	16	0.09%
Peruvian	7	0.04%
All Other Hispanic or Latino	5	0.03%

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2021)

Language Spoken at Home

It can be helpful to look at what languages are spoken within a community to determine if there may be barriers for parents that want to use child care but do not speak English. Most Clayton County residents speak only English (93.6%), while 6.4% speak a language other than English. Among those that speak a language other than English at home, 74.6% speak English very well.

Table 6: Language Spoken at Home

	Clayton County	
Population Age 5 and older	16,166	100%
Speaks Only English	15,138	93.6%
Speaks Language Other than English	1,028	6.4%
Spanish	412	2.5%
Other Indo-European Language	506	3.1%
Asian and Pacific Islander Languages	57	0.4%
Other Languages	25	0.2%
Speaks Language Other than English	1,028	100%
Speaks English Very Well	767	74.6%
Speaks English Less than Very Well	261	25.4%

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2021)

Educational Attainment

The education level of parents may influence their job choice or the industry they work in, which in turn determines their child care needs. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 42.9% of the population age 18 to 24 has some college, an associate's degree, or a bachelor's degree or higher. When it comes to the population age 25 and older, 47.4% have some college, an associate's degree, or a bachelor's degree or higher.

Table 7: Educational Attainment

	Clayton County	
Total Population 18-24	1,117	100%
Less than High School	203	18.2%
High School Graduate, or equivalent	435	38.9%
Some College or Associate's Degree	429	38.4%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	50	4.5%
Total Population age 25+		
Less than High School	1,118	9.1%
High School Graduate, or equivalent	5,369	43.6%
Some College or Associate's Degree	3,698	30.0%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	2,140	17.4%

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2021)

Working Families

As of 2021 there are 7,319 total households in Clayton County, of which 4,639 are family households. The average household size is 2.31 persons, while the average family household size is 2.84 persons. Over one-half of all households are family households (63%), while nearly one-quarter of all households (24%) have children under the age of 18.

The median income² in Clayton County is \$58,148, while the median income of families is higher at \$74,931, and even higher for families with children under the age of 18 at \$80,392. In Clayton County 80% of families with children ages 0-5 and 79% of families with children ages 6-17 have all parents in the labor force. All parents in the labor force means if there are two parents in the home, they both work; or if there is a single parent, that parent is working.

Table 8: Household Types and Characteristics

	Clayton County
Total Households	7,319
Average household size	2.31
Median Income	\$58,148
Family Households	4,639
Average family size	2.84
Median Income	\$74,931
Family Households w/children under 18	1,744
<i>Married couples</i>	1,219
<i>Male householder (no spouse present)</i>	194
<i>Female householder (no spouse present)</i>	331
Family w/children- Median Income	\$80,392
<i>Married couples- Median Income</i>	\$96,865
Male householder- Median Income	\$43,088
<i>Female Householder- Median Income</i>	\$30,804
Households w/children ages 0 to 5	1,291
Households w/children ages 0 to 5, and all parents in the labor force	1,031
<i>Households w/children ages 0 to 5, and all parents in the labor force</i>	80%
Households w/children ages 6 to 17	2,241
Households w/children ages 6 to 17, and all parents in the labor force	1,769
<i>Households w/children ages 6 to 17, and all parents in the labor force</i>	79%

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2021)

² Median income is the amount which divides the income distribution into two equal groups, half having income above that amount, and half having income below that amount.

Economy in the Area

Labor Force and Unemployment

A competitive job market can make it hard for child care programs to attract and retain quality staff. According to Iowa Workforce Development, as of August 2023 the total labor force (residents age 16 or older that are choosing to participate in the workforce) living in Clayton County is 9,520. Of those, 9,200 are employed, while 320 (3.3%) are unemployed. In comparison, in August 2018 the total labor force was 10,270 with 10,060 employed, and 210 (2.1%) unemployed. This data indicates that, in August 2023 there were 750 fewer residents participating in the labor force than there were 5 years prior.

Place of Work and Time Leaving Home

According to the US Census Bureau as of 2021, there are a total of 8,666 workers age 16 and over living in Clayton County, of those 63.9% work in Clayton County, 23.6% work outside the county but within Iowa, and 12.5% work out of state. The most popular hour for residents of Clayton County to leave home to go to work is 7:00 am to 7:59 am (29.2%) and the mean travel time is 24 minutes.

Table 9: Place of Work and Time Leaving Home to Go to Work

	Clayton County
Total workers 16 years and over	8,666
Workers who worked from home	8.1%
<i>Time leaving home to go to work</i>	
12:00 am to 4:59 am	8.2%
5:00 am to 5:29 am	7.0%
5:30 am to 5:59 am	7.9%
6:00 am to 6:29 am	8.4%
6:30 am to 6:59 am	9.4%
7:00 am to 7:29 am	16.0%
7:30 am to 7:59 am	13.2%
8:00 am. to 8:29 am	7.8%
8:30 am to 8:59 am	2.8%
9:00 am to 11:59 pm	19.3%
Mean travel time (minutes)	24 mins.
<i>Place of Work</i>	
Within county of residence	63.9%
Outside county of residence	23.6%
Outside Iowa	12.5%

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2021)

Employees and Wages

According to Iowa Workforce Development, as of Quarter 1 of 2023, there is an average of 5,547 people employed by companies located in Clayton County, which is a decrease of 427 from the same period in 2018. The average weekly wage of those working at these companies is \$893, down from \$961 in 2018. Of all the industries in Clayton County the industry that employs the most people on average is health care & social assistance (970), followed by manufacturing (964), and educational services (747). Average wages range from a low of \$225 per week for accommodations & food service, to a high of \$1,757 per week for utilities.

Table 10: Employees and Wages for Clayton County

	Q1 2018			Q1 2023		
	Total Locations	Average Employees	Avg. Wk. Wage	Total Locations	Average Employees	Avg. Wk. Wage
Accommodations & Food Service	48	327	\$165	47	280	\$225
Administrative & Waste Management	12	38	\$300	11	44	\$1,159
Agriculture, Fishing & Hunting	32	224	\$595	29	156	\$900
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	12	---	---	---	---	---
Construction	63	547	\$1,000	56	450	\$992
Educational Services	10	711	\$802	13	747	\$926
Finance & Insurance	37	222	\$923	32	187	\$1,111
Health Care & Social Assistance	65	986	\$602	76	970	\$838
Information	11	77	\$738	11	69	\$1,212
Management of Companies and Enterprises	3	---	---	---	---	---
Manufacturing	33	1,061	\$785	34	964	\$991
Mining, Quarrying, & Oil & Gas	2	---	---	---	---	---
Other Services (except Public Admin)	51	149	\$482	45	117	\$768
Professional, Scientific, Technical	34	122	\$920	36	129	\$1,813
Public Administration	37	343	\$643	37	320	\$743
Real Estate, Rental, Leasing	13	26	\$790	14	25	\$778
Retail Trade	86	705	\$475	82	650	\$581
Transportation & Warehousing	43	154	\$591	48	187	\$1,172
Utilities	4	15	\$1,081	4	16	\$1,757
Wholesale Trade	34	267	\$962	28	236	\$1,241
Total	630	5,974	\$961	603	5,547	\$893

Note: Data from Iowa Workforce Development (2018, 2023)

Child Care and Preschool Workforce and Wages

Most child care and preschool workers fall under one of three categories as defined by the US Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system: Childcare Workers³, Education and Childcare Administrators, Preschool and Daycare⁴, or Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education⁵.

According to Iowa Wage Report Data from Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) for Northeast Iowa Balance of State⁶ for 2022, the entry wage⁷ for Childcare Workers in the region is \$8.48, while the mean⁸ wage is \$10.18 and experienced wage⁹ is \$11.04. There are 480 of these workers in the region, and 5,250 across the state.

For Education and Childcare Administrators, Preschool and Daycare in the workforce region, the entry wage is \$13.80, the mean wage \$18.53, and experienced wage \$20.89. There are 80 of these workers in the region, and 1,170 across the state.

For Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education, the entry wage in the area is \$9.54, the mean wage \$15.90, and experienced wage \$19.08. There are 360 of these workers in the region, and 5,370 across the state.

Table 11: Northeast Iowa Balance of State Childcare and Preschool Workforce and Wages

	Total Jobs in Region	Total Jobs Statewide	Entry Wage	Mean Wage	Experienced Wage
Childcare Workers	480	5,250	\$8.48/hr.	\$10.18/hr.	\$11.04/hr.
Education & Childcare Admin, Preschool & Daycare	80	1,170	\$13.80/hr.	\$18.53/hr.	\$20.89/hr.
Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	360	5,370	\$9.54/hr.	\$15.90/hr.	\$19.08/hr.

Note: Data from Iowa Workforce Development (2022)

³ SOC Definition: Attend to children at schools, businesses, private households, and childcare institutions. Perform a variety of tasks, such as dressing, feeding, bathing, and overseeing play. Illustrative examples: Au Pair, Daycare Provider, Nanny.

⁴ SOC Definition: Plan, direct, or coordinate academic or nonacademic activities of preschools or childcare centers and programs, including before- and after-school care. Illustrative examples: Childcare Center Administrator, Head Start Director, Preschool Director.

⁵ SOC Definition: Instruct preschool-aged students, following curricula or lesson plans, in activities designed to promote social, physical, and intellectual growth. Illustrative examples: Home-based Preschool Teacher, Nursery School Teacher, Preschool Head Start Teacher.

⁶ Northeast Iowa Balance of State (BOS)- Aggregate data for the counties of Allamakee, Buchanan, Butler, Cerro Gordo, Chickasaw, Clayton, Delaware, Fayette, Floyd, Franklin, Hardin, Howard, Mitchell, Winneshiek and Worth.

⁷ Entry Wage is the average of the lowest third of reported wages for the occupation.

⁸ Mean Wages is the average wage and is computed by dividing the estimated total wage for an occupation by its weighted employment.

⁹ Experienced Wage is the average of the upper two-thirds of reported wages for the occupation.

EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

Early Care and Education Environments in Iowa

There are several forms of early care and education available in Iowa to meet each family's varying needs and preferences. These include:

- Licensed Child Care Centers and Preschools
- Head Start and Early Head Start
- School-Based Programs
 - School-Age Care
 - Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program
- Registered Child Development Homes
- Legal Unregulated Home Care
 - Nanny or Au Pare
 - Family, Friend or Neighbor care

The educational experiences are different for each type of care and most communities desire to have multiple types of care and education available.

Iowa Department of Health and Human Services¹⁰

In Iowa, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), formerly Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS), oversees programs that fall into three categories—Licensed Centers, Registered Child Development Homes, and Child Care Homes. The level of regulation and requirements placed on the provider varies based on the type. *See table starting on page 20 for a side-by-side comparison.*

Licensed Centers

Licensed Centers include child care centers (including child care programs operated by school districts), preschool programs, and Head Start. A center can care for larger groups of children, which are typically separated by age groups according to specific staff-to-child ratios. All centers are required to have an Iowa HHS inspection prior to opening and an annual inspection

¹⁰ Information in this section adapted from “Child Care Overview”. Iowa Department of Health and Human Services. <https://hhs.iowa.gov/childcare/overview>.

after that. A licensed center may apply for a Child Care Assistance¹¹ Provider Agreement and may participate in the voluntary Iowa Quality for Kids (IQ4K) quality rating system¹².

Registered Child Development Homes (a.k.a. Registered Homes)

Anyone caring for more than 6 children at a time is required to register with the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services. Registered child development homes can provide care for up to 8, 12 or 16 children at a time depending on the registration level. Registration levels A, B, or C are based on the providers' experience and if there are any assistants or co-providers present. These programs are required to have an Iowa HHS inspection prior to opening and an unannounced annual inspection after that. A registered child development home may apply for a Child Care Assistance Provider Agreement with HHS and may participate in the voluntary ChildNet¹³ program and IQ4K.

Child Care Homes

Child Care homes can care for 6 or fewer children at any given time. These programs are not required to register but have the option to do so. A Child Care Home may apply for a Child Care Assistance Provider Agreement with HHS. Child Care Homes serving children eligible for child care assistance must complete an unannounced inspection once per year to assure compliance with health, safety, and fire standards. These providers are not eligible to participate in ChildNet or IQ4K.

¹¹ Child Care Assistance (CCA) is a tuition assistance program available to children of income-eligible parents. The tuition reimbursement is paid directly to the child care program based on the child's attendance.

¹² IQ4K is voluntary rating system for Licensed Centers and Preschools, Registered Child Development Homes, Head Start programs, and child care programs that are operated by school districts. Participating providers achieve a rating on a scale of 1 to 5, by meeting key indicators of quality in the areas of nutrition & physical activity, professional development, leadership & administration, family & community partnerships, environment, teaching staff qualifications, and teaching & learning for centers, and the areas of nutrition & physical activity, professional development, family & community partnerships, environment, provider qualifications, and teaching & learning for homes.

¹³ ChildNet certification is a requirement for Child Care Home providers wishing to achieve a Level 2 and higher in the Iowa Quality Rating System. To earn ChildNet certification, the provider must complete the ChildNet training series with Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R), enroll in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and demonstrate 100% compliance with the Iowa Department of Human Services' Registration checklist through a certification visit with their local CCR&R Child Care Consultant.

Table 12: HHS Requirements for Child Care Providers in Iowa

	Non-Registered Home w/out HHS agreement	Non-Registered Home w/HHS agreement	Child Development Home A	Child Development Home B	Child Development Home C (2 providers)	Child Development Home C (1 provider)	Licensed Center
State Regulated	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Maximum Capacity ¹⁴	6	6	8	12	16	8	Varies by license
Inspection prior to Registration/Licensing			•	•	•	•	•
Annual Facility & Records Inspection		•	•	•	•	•	•
Minimum age of caregiver		18 years	18 years	20 years	21 years	21 years	Director 21 Years
Iowa child abuse registry check ¹⁵		•	•	•	•	•	•
Iowa criminal records check ⁷		•	•	•	•	•	•
National (FBI) Fingerprint-based records check		•	•	•	•	•	•
Experience required				2 years or 1 year w/child related degree	5 years or 4 years w/child related degree	5 years or 4 years w/child related degree	Combination of experience and education
Minimum education required				High school or GED	High school or GED	High school or GED	Director/ On-Site Supervisor High school or GED
Minimum pre-service & orientation trainings		•	•	•	•	•	•
Professional Development (every 2 years)		6 hours	24 hours	24 hours	24 hours	24 hours	
CPR and First Aid Certification		•	•	•	•	•	•
Mandatory Reporter Training		•	•	•	•	•	•

Table continues on next page.

¹⁴ A home provider's own children are included in their legal capacity. Their school-age children are not unless they are being home-schooled.

¹⁵ Iowa child abuse registry and Iowa criminal records checks are required for all household members age 14 and older.

Table continued from previous page.

	Non-Registered Home w/out HHS agreement	Non-Registered Home w/HHS agreement	Child Development Home A	Child Development Home B	Child Development Home C2 (2 providers)	Child Development Home C (1 provider)	Licensed Center
Non-smoking environment		•	•	•	•	•	•
Fire-extinguishers and smoke detectors		•	•	•	•	•	•
2 direct exits				•	•	•	•
Space requirements				•	•	•	•
Quiet area for sick children				•	•	•	•
Reference letters			3 letters of reference				

Adapted from: Iowa Department of Human Services (2011)

<https://ccmis.dhs.state.ia.us/providerportal/ChildCareRequirements.aspx>

Additional HHS Requirements for Child Care Providers in Iowa

- Non-Registered Homes may have up to 6 children, as long as at least one child is school-aged.
- Child Development Home A: Limit of 6 preschool children with a maximum of 4 aged 24 months or younger. Of these, no more than 3 can be 12 months of age or younger. They can also care for 2 school-aged children for a total maximum of 8 children in care at any one time.
- Child Development Home B: Limit of 8 preschool children with a maximum of 4 children aged 24 months or younger. Of these, no more than 3 can be 12 months of age or younger. They can also care for 4 school-aged children for a total maximum of 12 children in care at any one time. When there are more than 8 children present for more than 2 hours, an assistant 14 years or older needs to be present.
- Child Development Home C (2 providers): Limit of 14 preschool children with a maximum of 6 aged 24 months or younger. 2 additional school-age children can also be in care for a total maximum of 16 children in care at any one time. Whenever there are more than 8 children present, the business co-provider needs to be present.
- Child Development Home C (1 provider): Limit of 8 children with a maximum of 4 aged 24 months or younger.
- Center and preschool staff to child ratios: babies up to 23 months 1:4; 2-year-olds 1:6; 3-year-olds 1:8; 4-year-olds 1:12; 5-year-olds and older 1:15.

Iowa Department of Education

Iowa's Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program administered by the Iowa Department of Education provides an opportunity for all young children in the State of Iowa to enter school ready to learn by expanding voluntary access to quality preschool curricula for all four-year-old children. Participating school districts receive funding to offer at least 10 hours of preschool per week during the school year. Districts may provide the preschool directly or contract with a community partner to provide preschool on their behalf.

Until January 2016 some schools that offered child care, preschool (other than the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program), or before and after school care, were exempt from being licensed with Iowa HHS, because they were overseen by the Iowa Department of Education. Now many of those programs need to be licensed as a child care center under HHS. An instructional program for children who are attending prekindergarten, as defined by the State Board of Education under Iowa Code section 256.11, or a higher grade level and are at least four years of age, or are at least three years of age and eligible for special education under chapter 256B, administered by a public or nonpublic school system accredited by the Department of Education or the State Board of Regents, or a nonpublic school system that is not accredited by the Department of Education or the State Board of Regents, is exempt from child care licensing under HHS.

Iowa Legal Unregulated Care

In Iowa, parents may choose "family, friend, or neighbor care" or other unrelated caregiver such as a nanny or au pair. These types of care are not regulated and typically not tracked, unless the provider has an agreement with HHS to accept child care assistance, at which time they are considered a Child Care Home as described earlier. Because these providers are "off the radar" and data is not available, the data in this section does not include unregulated providers. These homes are reflected in the column titled "Non-Registered Home without HHS agreement" in the table below.

Iowa Early Care and Education Supply

The total number of HHS regulated child care providers and child care spaces across Iowa has changed over the last few years. According to Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) data, from 2017 to 2022 the total number of child care providers in Iowa declined by 24%, yet the total number of child care spaces increased by 5%, while the number of children ages 0 to 5 declined 2%. During that same time, across Child Care Resource & Referral Northeast Iowa (Region 2)¹⁶ the number of child care programs declined by 22%, the number of child care spaces declined by 1%, and the number of children ages 0 to 5 declined by 3%.

¹⁶ Includes the counties of Allamakee, Black Hawk, Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Cerro Gordo, Chickasaw, Clayton, Delaware, Dubuque, Fayette, Floyd, Franklin, Grundy, Hancock, Howard, Mitchell, Winneshiek and Worth.

Industry changes that occurred during this time that may have influenced these changes are:

- As of January 2016, child care, preschool (other than the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program), and before and after school programs operated by a school district are no longer exempt from licensing. In some communities this resulted in a shift with some spaces previously counted under the Department of Education being counted under HHS.
- Starting in September 2016, all child care center staff, registered child development home operators, and child care home operators that accept Child Care Assistance were required to take the 12-hour “Essential Child Care Preservice” training.
- As of July 2017, Child Care Home operators that accept Child Care Assistance were required to complete preservice training, have their home inspected at least once a year, and meet other regulations that had not previously been required.
- Since being established in 2007, participation of school districts in the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program has increased significantly. Overall participation of school districts reached 99% in 2022, with 324 of 327 districts participating. Overall enrollment has increased from 5,126 children in 2007, to 24,497 children in 2022. As more districts participate, this has increased the number of child care spaces under both HHS and Department of Education.

Clayton County Early Care and Education Supply

According to Child Care Resource & Referral data, from 2017 to 2022 Clayton County experienced a net loss of 52 regulated child care spaces. The largest loss was 25 spaces within licensed centers & preschools, followed by a loss of 20 spaces within Department of Education Programs.

Table 13: Programs and Spaces in Clayton County

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Net Change
Total Programs	22	21	23	21	20	20	+2
HHS Centers & Preschools	8	9	9	9	9	8	---
Dept. of Ed. Programs	5	5	5	5	5	4	-1
Registered Child Dvpmt. Homes	6	5	4	4	3	6	---
Child Care Homes	3	2	5	3	3	2	-1
Total Spaces	578	580	594	589	577	526	-52
HHS Centers & Preschools	391	406	422	422	422	366	-25
Dept. of Ed. Programs	100	100	100	100	100	80	-20
Registered Child Dvpmt. Homes	72	64	52	52	40	68	-4
Child Care Homes	15	10	20	15	15	12	-3

Note: Data from Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral.

As of November 2023, there were 14 HHS regulated programs with 584 spaces in Clayton County listed by HHS. They breakdown as follows:

- Licensed Child Care Centers and Preschools- There are 10 licensed child care centers and preschools, which account for 541 (93%) spaces.
- Registered Child Development Homes- There are 4 registered child development homes, which account for 43 (7%) spaces.
- Child Care Homes- There are no child care homes.

Table 14: HHS Licensed Centers and Preschools in Clayton County, November 2023

Program Name & Location	Hours	HHS Capacity	Child Care Assistance	QRS Level	Ages	Year-Round
Berry Tender Child Care, Strawberry Point	5:15 am -6:30 pm Mon-Fri	70	Yes	---	0 to 12	Yes
Dr. Clifford C. Smith Childcare Center, McGregor	5:30 am -6:00 pm Mon-Fri	38	Yes	---	0 to 12	Yes
Dr. Smtih School Age Program, McGregor	5:30 am -6:00 pm Mon-Fri	29	No	---	5 to 12	No
Elkader Childcare and Learning Center, Elkader	6:00 am -6:00 pm Mon-Fri	100	Yes	---	0 to 12	Yes
Garnavillo Community Day Care, Garnavillo	Child Care 6:00 am -6:00 pm, M-F	74	Yes	---	0 to 12	Yes
Kids Kampus Community Child Care, Guttenberg	6:00 am -6:30 pm Mon-Fri	47	Yes	4	0 to 12	Yes
Kinderwood Child Care Center, Edgewood	6:00 am -6:00 pm Mon-Fri	76	Yes	---	0 to 12	Yes
Little Bulldog Child Care, Monona	6:00 am -6:00 pm Mon-Fri	67	Yes	4	0 to 12	Yes
NEICAC-Guttenberg Head Start, Guttenberg	6:00 am -6:00 pm Mon-Fri	20	N/A	4	3 to 5	Yes
NEICAC-Monona Head Start, Monona	6:00 am -6:00 pm Mon-Fri	20	N/A	4	3 to 5	Yes

Note: Data from Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (2023)

Table 15: HHS Registered Child Development Homes in Clayton County, November 2023

Program Name & Location	Hours	HHS Capacity	Child Care Assistance	QRS Level
Debra Mason (Registered B), McGregor	7:00 am-5:30 pm Mon-Fri	12	Yes	1
Kristine Novy (Registered B), Luana	7:00 am-5:30 pm Mon-Fri	12	Yes	1
Mary Biedermann (Registered B), Monona	7:00 am-5:00 pm, M 6:00 am-6:00 pm, T-F 24-hours, Sat & Sun	12	Yes	1
Wanda Lacy (Registered C), Guttenberg	5:30 am-6:30 pm, M 5:30 am-7:00 pm, T-F	16	Yes	---

Note: Data from Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (2023)

In addition to the providers listed in the previous tables, HHS lists 6 additional programs that are exempt from being licensed. These programs appear to be either preschool or before and after school programs associated with public or private schools. The following table shows the programs listed by HHS as of November 2023 in the “Program Name & Location” column. The “Program Details” column shows information FCF was able to collect using a combination of school district websites, parent handbooks, and local steering committee members. Based on FCF’s research and information provided by the steering committee members, it can be concluded that 2 of these programs are no longer operational.

Table 16: HHS License Exempt Programs in Clayton County, November 2023

Program Name & Location	Program Details
Central CSD- Central Wee Little Warriors, Elkader	<i>Detailed information not available.</i>
Central CSD- Multiage Preschool, Elkader (max. 20 children per session= 60 total)	Half day 4-year-old Preschool 8:15 am-11:30 am, M-Th (SWVPP, no cost) Full day 4-year-old Preschool 8:15 am-3:15 pm, M-Th (SWVPP plus 1/2 day charge) Junior Kindergarten 8:15 am-3:15 am, M-Th (weekly fee)
Clayton Ridge CSD- Preschool, Guttenberg ¹⁷	Full day 4-year-old Preschool 8:15 am- 3:15 pm, M, T, Th, F Optional Day Preschool 8:15 am- 1:45 pm, Wednesday
MFL-MarMac CSD- Preschool, Monona	3-year-old Preschool 8:15 am-11:15 am W & F (monthly fee) Half day 4-year-old Preschool 8:15 am-11:40 am, M, T, Th (SWVPP, no cost) Full day 4-year-old Preschool 8:15 am-3:15 pm, M, T, Th (SWVPP plus monthly charge)
St. Mary and Immaculate Conception School System, Guttenberg	<i>Steering committee members and Iowa Department of Education data indicate this program is no longer operational.</i>
St. Mary’s School, Guttenberg	<i>Steering committee members and Iowa Department of Education data indicate this program is no longer operational.</i>

Note: Program name and location information from Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (2023). Program details from school district websites and handbooks, in combination with information provided to FCF by the local child care steering committee.

¹⁷ Steering Committee members indicate a preschool class is also held in Guttenberg, however as of November 2023, that location is not included in information on the school district website, in the preschool parent handbook, or data published by Iowa Department of Human Services or Iowa Department of Education.

Residents of Clayton County are served by 7 public school districts. Some are located entirely within the county, while others stretch into other counties, or are centered in a neighboring county and only serve a portion of Clayton County. The following school districts serve the county:

- Central Community School District- The district is based out of Elkader. The district also serves the Clayton County communities of Elkport, Garber, St. Olaf, and Volga. The district has 1 preschool building and 1 elementary building, both are located in Elkader. Enrollment for 2022-2023 school year was 473 students (PK-12), with 42 of those in preschool, and 221 in kindergarten through 6th grade.
- Clayton Ridge Community School District- The district is based out of Guttenberg. The district also serves the Clayton County communities of Clayton, Garnavillo, North Buena Vista, and Osterdock. The district has 1 elementary building in Garnavillo that serves preschool through 5th grade. In addition, some students attend online through Iowa Virtual Academy (IVA). Enrollment for the 2022-2023 school year for both in person and online instruction was 1,485 students (PK-12), with 623 of those being in person and 862 online. There are 539 students in preschool through 5th grade, with 30 students attending preschool and 276 students attending kindergarten through 5th grade in person, and 233 students attending kindergarten through 5th grade online.
- Edgewood-Colesburg Community School District- The district is based out of Edgewood which sits in both Clayton and Delaware counties. The district also serves the community of Colesburg which is in Delaware County. The district has 1 elementary building in Edgewood in Delaware County, that building serves preschool through 6th grade. Enrollment for the 2022-2023 school year was 516 students (PK-12), with 36 of those in preschool, and 273 in kindergarten through 6th grade.
- MFL MarMac Community School District- The district is based out of Monona. The district also serves the Clayton County communities of Farmersburg, Luana, McGregor, Marquette, and Monona, as well as a small unincorporated area of Allamakee County. The district has an elementary building in Monona that serves Preschool through 3rd grade, and an intermediate building in McGregor that serves 4th and 5th grades. Enrollment for the 2022-2023 school year was 894 students (PK-12), with 79 of those in preschool, 366 in kindergarten through 5th grade.
- North Fayette Valley Community School District- The district is based out of West Union in Fayette County and serves a small unincorporated area of western Clayton County. The district has 3 elementary buildings that serve preschool through 5th grade. The elementary in West Union serves preschool through 3rd grade, the elementary in Elgin serves preschool through 5th grade, and the elementary in Fayette serves 4th and 5th grade. Children enrolled in preschool attend either one of the elementary buildings or a

“Community Partner” program that has been contracted by the school district and meets all Department of Education requirements. According to the school district website, preschool is offered at 4 community partner sites, in addition to 2 of the elementary buildings. All elementary and preschool locations are in Fayette County. Enrollment for the 2022-2023 school year was 1,107 students (PK-12), with 65 of those in preschool, and 472 in kindergarten through 5th grade.

- Postville Community School District- The district is based out of Postville which sits in both Allamakee and Clayton counties. The district also serves unincorporated areas of 3 counties-northwestern Clayton, northeast Fayette County, and southeast Winneshiek County. The district has 1 elementary building serving preschool through 6th grade. Children enrolled in preschool attend a “Community Partner” program that has been contracted by the school district and meets all Department of Education requirements contracted. According to the Iowa Department of Education website, preschool is offered at 2 community partner sites. All elementary and preschool sites are located in Postville. Enrollment for the 2022-2023 school year was 694 students (PK-12), with 31 of those in preschool, and 312 in kindergarten through 6th grade.
- Starmont Community School District- The district is based out of Arlington in Fayette County. The district serves the communities of Strawberry Point in southwest Clayton County, Arlington in southeast Fayette County, and Lamont in northeast Buchanan County, and some unincorporated areas of northwest Delaware County. The district has 1 elementary building in Arlington that serves preschool through 5th grade. Enrollment for the 2022-2023 school year was 584 students (PK-12), with 34 of those in preschool, and 230 in kindergarten through 5th grade.

Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program (SWVPP) is available through all 7 school districts that serve Clayton County. According to the Iowa Department of Education, enrollments for the 2022-2023 school year were collectively 133.5 students. Based on the funding formula used by the state, each enrolled student is counted as 0.5 full time equivalent (FTE). It does need to be noted these enrollments may be duplicative with some of the preschool enrollments listed above, as many districts offer additional hours of preschool that are not funded through the SWVPP program. These enrollments include both students that attend SWVPP at their local school building as well as those that attend through a community partner program that has been contracted by the school district and meets all Department of Education requirements. *See table on next page.*

Table 17: Statewide Voluntary Preschool Programs Serving Clayton County

School District	2022-2023 FTE Enrollment
Central Community School District	16.5
Clayton Ridge	12.0
Edgewood-Colesburg Community School District	18.0
MFL MarMac Community School District	27.5
North Fayette Valley Community School District	31.0
Postville Community School District	13.5
Starmont Community School District	15.0

Note: Data from Iowa Department of Education (2023)

Local Price Point

Besides individual providers changing their rates, changes in the average tuition rates can be the result of providers going out of business, new providers coming into the market, or providers no longer reporting their tuition rates if they stop accepting child care assistance. When comparing tuition rates, it is important to note that some providers charge tuition that is all-inclusive, while others may charge separate fees, or charge for specific items or require parents to furnish supplies, snacks, or other items, and some programs operate full-time while some are only part-time.

The average weekly tuition rates for care within a licensed center within Clayton County have increased over the last 5 years for infants through school age, and decreased for before & after school care. As of July 2022, the average weekly rates ranged from a low of \$157.00 per week for four- and five-year-old care, to a high of \$181.50 per week for infant through two-year-old care. Before & after school care averaged \$44.00 a week.

Table 18: Average Weekly Tuition Rates of Licensed Centers, Clayton County

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Infant	\$149.50	\$152.76	\$162.13	\$152.10	\$150.75	\$181.50
Toddler	\$146.75	\$150.93	\$159.88	\$149.40	\$141.75	\$181.50
Two-Year-Old	\$141.00	\$145.34	\$153.25	\$144.90	\$141.75	\$181.50
Three-Year-Old	\$134.50	\$138.00	\$142.75	\$144.90	\$141.75	\$164.00
Four- & Five-Year-Old	\$134.50	\$137.55	\$142.30	\$144.00	\$141.75	\$157.00
School-Age (full-time)	\$133.25	\$129.95	\$134.05	\$133.65	\$141.75	\$157.50
Before & After School	\$51.50	\$52.20	\$58.00	\$59.60	\$63.00	\$44.00

Note: Data from Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral.

The average weekly tuition rates for care within a registered child development home within Clayton County increased from 2017 to 2021, and then decreased in 2022. As of July 2022, average

weekly rates for care in a registered child development home was \$137.70 for all ages. Before & after school care averaged \$61.20 a week.

Table 19: Average Weekly Tuition at Registered Homes, Clayton County

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Infant	\$132.50	\$137.70	\$125.00	\$125.00	\$146.25	\$137.70
Toddler	\$132.50	\$137.70	\$125.00	\$125.00	\$146.25	\$137.70
Two-Year-Old	\$132.50	\$132.30	\$125.00	\$125.00	\$146.25	\$137.70
Three-Year-Old	\$126.45	\$132.30	\$125.00	\$125.00	\$146.25	\$137.70
Four- & Five-Year-Old	\$126.45	\$132.30	\$125.00	\$125.00	\$146.25	\$137.70
School-Age (full-time)	\$126.45	\$132.30	\$125.00	\$125.00	\$146.25	\$137.70
Before & After School	\$56.20	\$58.80	\$60.00	N/A	\$65.00	\$61.20

Note: Data from Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral.

With a portion of residents out-commuting to other counties and school districts boundaries that cross county lines, the average rates in neighboring counties can be informative. Average weekly tuition at both licensed centers and registered homes varies from county to county.

When it comes to average weekly tuition for care at licensed centers, Dubuque County had the highest average for all ages. In contrast Buchanan County had the lowest average for infants through school age, while Allamakee had the lowest average for before & after school care.

Table 20: Average Weekly Tuition at Licensed Centers in Surrounding Counties, 2022

	Allamakee	Buchanan	Clayton	Delaware	Dubuque	Fayette	Winneshiek
Infant	\$190.00	\$161.55	\$181.50	\$181.25	\$224.10	\$168.75	\$172.50
Toddler	\$190.00	\$161.55	\$181.50	\$181.25	\$224.10	\$168.75	\$172.50
Two-Year-Old	\$173.34	\$153.90	\$181.50	\$165.00	\$204.30	\$163.35	\$162.50
Three-Year-Old	\$158.36	\$145.80	\$164.00	\$155.00	\$202.05	\$163.35	\$162.50
Four- & Five-Year-Old	\$176.55	\$145.80	\$157.00	\$150.00	\$200.70	\$157.50	\$139.50
School-Age	\$140.00	\$138.15	\$157.50	\$150.00	\$194.85	\$153.90	\$168.75
Before & After School	\$47.00	\$65.80	\$44.00	\$80.40	\$83.80	\$70.00	\$75.00
Total Centers	5	2	8	9	44	9	10
Spaces w/in Centers	320	40	366	459	4,514	596	533

Note: Data from Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral (2022)

When it comes to average weekly tuition for care at registered homes, Fayette County had the highest average for infants through three-year-old, and Dubuque County and Allamakee County had the highest for four- & five-year-old, and Dubuque County for school age, plus before & after school care. In contrast, Winneshiek County had the lowest average tuition for infants through three-year-old, Delaware and Winneshiek tie for four- & five-year-old and school age, and Winneshiek County for before & after school care. See table on next page.

Table 21: Average Weekly Tuition at Registered Homes in Surrounding Counties, 2022

	Allamakee	Buchanan	Clayton	Delaware	Dubuque	Fayette	Winneshiek
Infant	\$140.85	\$148.50	\$137.70	\$129.15	\$153.90	\$157.50	\$138.60
Toddler	\$140.85	\$140.85	\$137.70	\$129.15	\$153.45	\$157.50	\$135.00
Two-Year-Old	\$140.85	\$137.25	\$137.70	\$129.15	\$152.55	\$157.50	\$135.00
Three-Year-Old	\$140.85	\$137.25	\$137.70	\$129.15	\$153.45	\$157.50	\$135.00
Four- & Five-Year-Old	\$157.50	\$137.25	\$137.70	\$129.15	\$157.70	\$157.50	\$132.75
School-Age	\$150.00	\$137.25	\$137.70	\$135.00	\$153.45	\$149.85	\$135.00
Before & After School	\$62.00	\$61.00	\$61.20	\$60.00	\$71.00	\$66.60	\$61.60
Total Registered Homes	8	11	6	3	60	7	20
Spaces w/in Homes	96	136	68	32	636	84	228

Note: Data from Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral (2022)

Child Care Assistance in Iowa

Child Care Assistance (CCA) is available to the children of income-eligible parents to help pay for care at Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) approved child care programs while a parent or caretaker works or attends school. Child care programs are reimbursed directly from HHS when they provide care to a family that qualifies. Starting in July 2023, the income eligibility limit for those initially applying for CCA was raised from 145% to 160% of Federal Poverty Level (FPL), or 200% if they have a child with special needs (no change). According to the federally determined poverty threshold that went into effect January 2023, 160% of FPL is equivalent to \$39,776 for a household of 3, and \$48,000 for a household of 4. Once approved a family's income will be checked annually, and they continue to be eligible if their income does not exceed 225% of FPL, which is equivalent to \$55,935 for a household of 3, and \$67,500 for a household of 4.

Reimbursements are based on the number of units a child attends each week but cannot exceed the number approved by HHS. A unit is a half-day (up to 5 hours). In most cases, a child that attends full-time, five days a week would be approved for up to 10 units (2 half-day units, for 5 days), depending on several factors, including the parent or caretaker work or school schedule. A child care provider is reimbursed at a rate equal to the amount they would charge a private pay family (or equivalent), with a maximum reimbursement based on their participation in the Iowa Quality for Kids (IQ4K) quality rating improvement system (QRIS).

As of October 2023, 11 (79%) of the 14 regulated and eligible programs in Clayton County are approved to accept CCA. Two of the programs that do not are Head Start programs, an income based preschool program. See table on next page.

Table 22: Half-Day Maximum CCA Reimbursement Rates as of March 1, 2023

Age Group	No QRS		QRS Level 1 or Level 2		QRS Level 3 or Level 4		QRS Level 5	
	Basic Care	Special Needs	Basic Care	Special Needs	Basic Care	Special Needs	Basic Care	Special Needs
Licensed Centers								
Infant/Toddler	\$23.21	\$51.94	\$23.21	\$51.94	\$23.21	\$51.94	\$24.05	\$51.94
Preschool	\$18.98	\$30.43	\$19.50	\$30.43	\$20.00	\$30.43	\$21.00	\$30.43
School Age	\$15.00	\$30.34	\$15.50	\$30.34	\$16.00	\$30.34	\$17.00	\$30.34
Child Development Home A or B								
Infant/Toddler	\$14.00	\$21.00	\$14.00	\$21.00	\$14.00	\$21.00	\$15.00	\$21.00
Preschool	\$12.75	\$19.13	\$13.00	\$19.13	\$13.75	\$19.13	\$15.00	\$19.13
School Age	\$11.25	\$16.88	\$12.50	\$16.88	\$13.00	\$16.88	\$13.50	\$16.88
Child Development Home C								
Infant/Toddler	\$15.25	\$22.88	\$15.25	\$22.88	\$15.25	\$22.88	\$16.25	\$22.88
Preschool	\$15.00	\$22.50	\$15.00	\$22.50	\$15.00	\$22.50	\$16.00	\$22.50
School Age	\$13.00	\$19.50	\$13.75	\$19.50	\$14.50	\$19.50	\$15.00	\$19.50
Child Care Homes (not registered)								
Infant/Toddler	\$12.98	\$19.47	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Preschool	\$12.50	\$18.75	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
School Age	\$10.82	\$16.23	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Note: Data from Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (2023)

CHILD CARE NEEDS SURVEY RESULTS

In 2023, three electronic surveys developed by First Children’s Finance were distributed for the purpose of determining how child care affects employers and parents, and to gain insight from child care providers about the current challenges and opportunities they are experiencing. To ensure there are no biases and to maintain confidentiality, survey links were distributed and then collected and analyzed by First Children’s Finance as an independent third party. Comments made by survey participants are shared verbatim, as long as an individual respondent, local employer, or child care program cannot be identified, in which case the comment may have been partially reported or edited to remove the identifying information.

Employer Survey Results

A total of 40 companies are represented in the employer survey results. Participating employers represent the following industries: Accommodations & Food Service; Construction; Educational Services; Finance & Insurance; Health Care & Social Assistance; Information; Manufacturing; Public Administration; Retail Trade; and Other Services. Collectively they employ 40,195 full-time, with 1,613 of those employees working at or reporting to their Clayton County locations. Currently there are 79 full-time and 66 part-time vacancies.

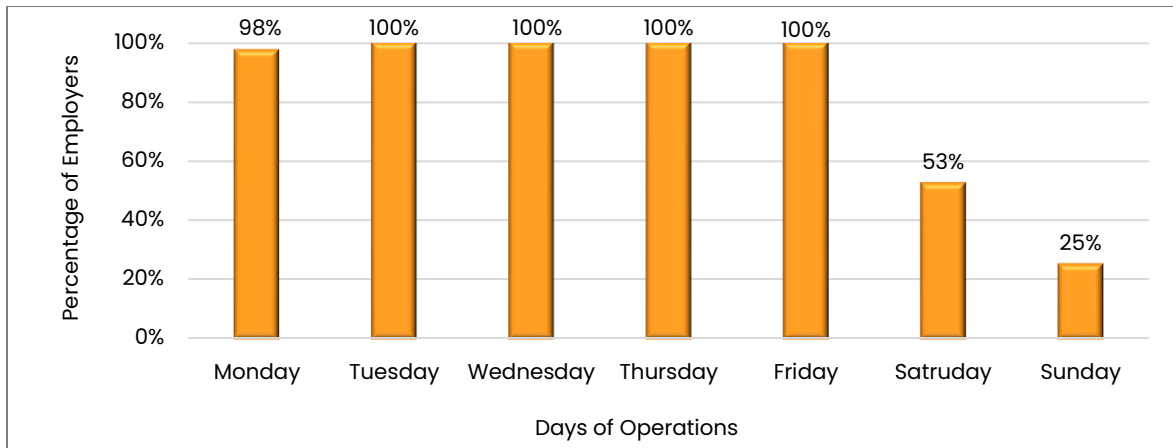
Table 23: Employees and Vacancies by Shift

Shift	Full-Time Employees	Part-Time Employees	Full-Time Vacancies	Part-Time Vacancies
First Shift (days)	1,213	218	47	25
Second Shift (evenings)	78	44	22	34
Third Shift (overnight)	21	39	10	7
Total	1,312	301	79	66

In a separate question, employers were asked how many new positions they plan to add at their Clayton County locations in the next 3 years. Forty-eight percent (48%) indicated they are planning to collectively add 91 positions. The majority, 14 employers, plan to add 1 to 3 positions, while 2 plan to add 4 to 10 positions, 1 plans to add 20 positions, and 1 plans to add 35 positions.

When asked which days of the week their employees typically work, 19 (48%) indicated they operate Monday through Friday, while 10 (25%) operate Monday through Saturday, and 10 (25%) operate Monday through Sunday (7 days per week). Additionally, 1 (2%) operates Tuesday through Saturday. *See figure on next page.*

Figure 1: Days Employees Typically Work



When it comes to hours and days of operation, 6 (15%) employers operate 24-hours per day 7 days per week while 1 (2%) operates 24-hours per day Monday through Friday. In addition, 18 operate days Monday through Friday, 10 (25%) operate days Monday through Saturday, 2 (5%) operates days Monday through Sunday, and 1 days Tuesday through Saturday. The remaining 2 (5%) operate days and evenings Monday through Sunday.

Employers were asked if some or all of their employees work set shifts, and what are the hours for each shift. The following comments were received:

- *First shift 6:00 am to 2:00 pm. Split Shift 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. Second Shift 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm.*
- *8:00 am to 3:45 pm, and 3:00 to 11:00.*
- *Restaurant shifts employees coming and going all day.*
- *It varies, but nursing/EMS shifts are 6:00 am to 6:00 PM, 6:00 PM to 6:00 AM. Provider shifts are 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM, 7:00 PM to 7:00 AM. All other departments start around 7:00 AM or later, and end by 5:00 pm.*
- *1st Shift: 6:00 AM to 2:30 PM, 2nd Shift: 2:00 PM to 10:30 PM, 3rd Shift: 10:00 PM to 6:30 AM*
- *6:00 am to 2:00 pm, 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, 10:00 am to 6:00 pm, 2:00 pm to 10:00 pm, 10:00 pm to 6:00 am.*
- *5:00 am to 2:00 pm, 2:00 pm to 10:00 pm, 10:00 pm to 6:00 am.*
- *4:00 pm to 11:30 pm.*
- *5:45 am to 2 pm, 1:45 pm to 10 pm, 9:45 pm to 6 am.*
- *1st: 8:00 to 4:00, 2nd: 2:30/4:00 to 10:00/midnight, 3rd: Midnight to 9:00. We also have some split shifts 6:00 to 9:00 & 3:00 to 6:00, as well as several staff who have varied schedules day to day.*
- *Office & Public Works - 7:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Police - 7:00 AM to 3:00 PM, 3:00 PM to 11:00 PM, 11:00 PM to 7:00 AM. Library 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM.*
- *Our police department works varying shifts.*

- 10 ½ hour shift.

Twenty-three percent (23%) of employers indicated there are sometimes changes or fluctuations in their hours or days of operations, such as shut-down, seasonal changes, planned overtime of a group of workers. Comments received about schedule fluctuations were:

- *Breaks for summer and Christmas.*
- *Large groups require more employees on duty.*
- *Our agency is shut down from Christmas to New Years and the majority of our staff work school year schedules.*
- *Usually not as much activity in June, July, and early August.*
- *Seasonal changes in the winter.*
- *Summer time has a lot more guests and busier.*
- *Overtime and split shifts.*
- *Two-week layoff during the winter.*
- *Callouts and overtime in the winter months with snow removal and power outages, call-outs in the summer months with power outages during storms.*
- *During the summer we add 20-22 part-time employees.*

Employers were asked what percentage of their employees are female. Overall, the majority of employers report that over one-half of their employees are female. Seventeen percent (17%) reported less than one-quarter, 23% reported between one-quarter to one-half, 12% reported one-half to three-quarters, and 48% reported over three-quarters.

Table 24: Composition of Workforce

	Percent of Employers
0% to 25% Female	17%
26% to 50% Female	23%
51% to 75% Female	12%
76% to 100% Female	48%

Employers were asked what percentage of their employees have children age 12 or younger. Overall, most employers reported that less than half of their employees have children age 12 or younger. Fifty percent (50%) reported less than one-quarter, 30% reported between one-quarter to one-half, and 20% reported one-half to three-quarters. *See table on next page.*

Table 25: Percent of Employees with Children Age 12 or Younger

	Percent of Employers
0% to 25% have children	50%
26% to 50% have children	30%
51% to 75% have children	20%
76% to 100% have children	0%

Employers were asked to estimate the percentage of their workforce that lives in Clayton County. The majority reported between 76% and 100% of their workforce lives in Clayton County. Five percent (5%) reported less than one-quarter of their workforce lives in the county, 13% reported between one-quarter and one-half, 23% reported between one-half and three-quarters, and 59% reported more than three-quarters of the workforce lives in Clayton County.

Table 26: Percent of Employees Living in Clayton County

	Percent of Employers
0% to 25% live in the County	5%
26% to 50% live in the County	13%
51% to 75% live in the County	23%
76% to 100% live in the County	59%

Twenty percent (20%) of employers indicated their company had employees that departed during the last 12 months as a direct result of child care challenges. Collectively they lost 13 employees, with each losing 1 or 2 employees. As a follow up, employers were then asked a series of questions about productivity, absenteeism, and other challenges as they relate to child care.

When it comes to employee productivity, 25% of employers indicated they had challenges related to productivity due to employee’s child care challenges, while 15% were unsure, and 60% said they did not. Comments received were:

- *We have employees that must choose between child care and work. When they are the only source of childcare they cannot work.*
- *We have issues due to our start time for nurses at 6:00 AM. The daycare center doesn't open early for our nurses.*
- *If our staff do not have access to childcare, they utilize available leave to stay home with their children. Days away from work mean days our students aren't getting needed services.*
- *We become shorthanded when an employee has to stay home to care for kids due to childcare staffing or illness.*
- *When our daycare has to close due to illness, our whole district is affected.*

- *When the center closes, we have employees that can't work.*
- *I'm sure we have a couple individuals that probably check in with their kids or daycare providers during working hours.*
- *Last minute call offs due to lack of childcare.*
- *Some do, but not all.*
- *Sick children, days of no school = no childcare, require some absent days and hampers production. We try to be flexible, and some take their lunch at 7:30 to go home and get their kids to school.*
- *Some of them have to take time off work when they can [not get anyone] to watch their kids.*
- *Most of our employees have spouses with very flexible jobs that can take care of their children when our employees need to work. We try to be very flexible for all employees, to put their children's and family's needs first and work around school and daycare schedules or activities.*
- *Scheduling.*

When asked about absenteeism due to employee's child care challenges, 35% of employers indicated they had experienced challenges, while 13% were unsure, and 53% had not. Comments received were:

- *Daycares won't take sick kids.*
- *Employees need to leave work to take care of their children at any hour.*
- *Yes, when the daycare shuts down certain rooms unexpectedly, our staff have to stay home to watch their kids if they don't have back up.*
- *I am not aware of any issues. None have been brought to my attention.*
- *Child care is unable to take child because of sickness or other reasons.*
- *But could be possible.*
- *There is occasional absenteeism due to kids, but nothing excessive.*
- *When our daycare has to close due to illness, our whole district is affected.*
- *Sick daycare providers as many of our employee children go to in-home daycares, daycares being closed on days of operation, the responsibility falls on many of our working mothers to handle drop offs, pickups, and any time the children are sent home due to illness.*
- *I believe most absenteeism due to child care challenges occurs when a child becomes ill and cannot stay at their regular daycare center, requiring a family member or parent to care for the child, which can be difficult for households with both parents working or limited family resources. Most of our employees utilize a formal daycare center, so it is possible their rules may be more stringent than in-home daycare or other providers.*

- *Yes, many of our hourly employees are secondary incomes so they stay home when childcare isn't available.*
- *We have a couple employees that have trouble finding child care so [they] take off work or need to tend to a sick child from time to time.*
- *Last minute call offs due to lack of childcare.*
- *Sick children, days of no school = no childcare, require some absent days and hampers production. We try to be flexible and some take their lunch at 7:30 to go home and get their kids to school.*
- *Sometimes we plan on people and they cannot make it because of sick children.*
- *Some of them have to take time off work when they can [not get anyone] to watch their kids.*
- *It happens but is not excessive or what I would consider a challenge for our agency.*
- *We do try to be flexible with our employees to work around daycare and school schedules and activities, however there are some instances when this is not possible, and the employees will need to utilize their paid time off to stay home with a child or attend an activity.*

In a separate question, 15% of employers indicated they had experienced difficulty hiring due to child care options or challenges, 20% were unsure, and 65% had not. Comments received were:

- *We have had one recruit that declined because they couldn't find daycare.*
- *We have struggled to fill some positions and have had some employees leave to stay at home. They may have done this even if there was child care available. I am not sure.*
- *Not a lot but it has happened.*
- *Two potential employees could not find child care.*
- *The topic has been discussed in interviews.*
- *Moms need to balance their work schedule with childcare. They cannot work if they have childcare issues.*
- *Applicants have not specifically told us if this was an issue during the hiring phase.*
- *If we have had employees or potential employees with child care issues, they have not informed us of those issues.*

Employers were given a list of common effects their employees (not job applicants) may experience due to child care challenges and were asked to select all that they are aware of as having affected their employees in the last 12 months. The three most common challenges were missing a day of work because their child care provider was closed, on vacation, or not available (60%), arrived late to work (53%), and had to leave work early (50%). One-quarter (25%) indicated that their employees had experienced no challenges with their job due to child care. See table on next page.

Table 27. Effects of Child Care Challenges on Employees

	Percent of Employers
Missed a day of work because their provider was closed, on vacation, or not available	60%
Arrived late to work	53%
Had to leave work early	50%
Missed a day of work because their provider did not have room or space for a child	25%
Unable to accept a different work schedule or shift	25%
Unable to work overtime	15%
Have had to reduce the number of hours worked	15%
Had to bring their child to work with them	13%
Did not accept a desired job offer	10%
Other	10%
Lower productivity	8%
Had to leave their child home alone to go to work	8%
Quit a job	8%
Unable to travel for work	8%
Received disciplinary action (not including firing)	5%
Had to change jobs to one that works with their child care arrangement	3%
Got fired	3%
Took a job that does not fit their skills	0%
Our employees experienced no issues related to work and child care	25%

Comments provided by those selecting other were:

- *Only missed due to ill children they couldn't take to daycare. Not usually a problem, we are flexible.*
- *All employees are older females with no children at home. One employee did have to leave several times to help with child care for a grandchild.*
- *Had to work from home to provide childcare while working.*

Employers were asked if their company currently offered any child care related benefits to their employees (they were asked to select all that applied). The benefits listed typically have some cost to the employer. The majority of employers (63%) do not offer any of the benefits on the list. Thirty-seven percent (37%) indicated they do offer employees dependent care flex spending accounts, which does typically result in some costs for the employer to pay an entity to administer the program. *See table on next page.*

Table 28: Child Care Related Benefits Currently Offered

	Percent of Employers
Dependent Care Flex Spending Accounts	37%
Financial assistance to help employees pay for child care	0%
None of the above	63%

Employers were then asked what prevents their company from offering any or some benefits listed above. Comments received were:

- *Small businesses cannot afford to offer any type of assistance to employees. My employment taxes are high and there is no money left to offer anything to anyone.*
- *Bargaining agreements.*
- *Not able to provide these benefits.*
- *Costs and no one falls into that area currently.*
- *It has never been presented as an idea to offer as an option.*
- *I'm new. I think it is a great option.*
- *All employees are employed by the city as part-time employees.*
- *Has not been an issue.*
- *I'm not certain.*
- *Knowing how to proceed in offering this benefit.*
- *We do not have many employees with young children currently.*
- *Government entity, limited budget.*
- *Benefits are decided by corporate.*
- *It's not fair to the childless families.*
- *Costs.*
- *Need.*
- *No need at this time.*
- *Cost.*
- *We are supported by property tax dollars and utility customer fees. We are unable to provide traditional paid incentives to our employees.*

Employers were then given a second list of child care related benefits and asked which they offer to their employees (they were asked to select all that applied). The benefits on this list typically do not result in the employer incurring additional costs. The largest group of employers (45%) indicated they do not offer any of the benefits on the list. The next largest group, 43%, indicated they offer employees a flexible schedule if their regular care option is not available. *See table on next page.*

Table 29: Child Care Related Benefits Currently Offered

	Percent of Employers
Child care information included in orientation	10%
Child care information included in employee handbook	13%
Flexible schedule if regular care is not available	43%
Work-from-home option if regular care is not available	8%
None of the above	45%

Employers were then asked what prevents their company from offering any or some benefits listed above. Comments received were:

- *This is a convenience store, not much flexibility here. My employees can switch hours with another employee if needed.*
- *Can't flex schedules or work from home due to job requirements.*
- *We can offer flexible schedules for many positions, but not direct care giver positions.*
- *Need to be face-to-face with our students.*
- *We are very flexible; hours can be made up on a later date or they can use their flex hours. Flex hours example: scheduled for 30 hours this week and put in 38 hours. [The extra] 8 hours can be placed into flex to compensate for days missed at a later date.*
- *Not sure of policy.*
- *Our type of business. We also don't want to put something in our employee handbook unless we are certain it can be offered.*
- *We are a production shop our schedules are rigid. We could do more for orientation, never thought of this.*
- *24-hour hands-on workers are required.*
- *We allow work from home, but 90% of the jobs here require physical presence.*
- *Costs.*
- *Nothing.*
- *Just a small business.*
- *We provide face-to-face services to people with disabilities so we are limited on how much flexibility and work from home options we can provide.*
- *We are not able to provide the bulk of our employees with a work from home option due to the duties they perform.*

Employers were asked to share any other ways their business assists employees with child care. Comments received were:

- *We tell new employees about day care providers, and we allow Garnavillo Day Care to use our gym. We provide transportation to and from day care. Our food service program caters meals to Garnavillo Day Care.*

- We try to work around their schedule.
- No other ways.
- During the pandemic, we partnered with local community members to help our team when the daycare closed.
- We try to be as accommodating as possible to allow time off when any family issues arise.
- We try to be as flexible and understanding as possible when it comes to child care and family situations in general.
- A variety of leaves and we just try to be flexible.
- We provide employees with 1 sick day per month and allow them to accrue up to 132 sick days. These days can be used to care for their sick children if day care will not accept the child when sick.
- Trying to be understanding and flexible when/where we can.

Employers were asked how their business would be willing to assist in addressing the child care shortage and/or supporting child care businesses. A list of options was provided and respondents asked to select all that apply. The largest group of employers (55%) selected none of the above. One-quarter (25%) selected “other” (see comments below), followed by a donation or financial contribution to build, remodel, or expand a child care center with 13%.

Table 30: Solutions Employers are Willing to Consider

	Percent of Employers
Provide space for on-site child care center (owned & operated by another entity)	8%
Own and operate a child care center (either on-site or off-site)	3%
Provide a significant donation or financial contribution for a child care center as a match for a grant application	5%
Donation or financial contribution to build, remodel, or expand a child care center	13%
Donate land or provide a financial contribution to purchase land to build a larger child care center	0%
Directly employ the Center Director (paying wages and benefits) in order to help reduce operating costs of a center	0%
Annual donation or financial contribution that is equal to the full wages of a child care center director	0%
Annual donation or financial contribution for a portion (but not all) of the wages of a child care center director	8%
Other (see comments on next page)	25%
None of the above	55%

Comments received from those indicating “other” were:

- *Transportation of school kids from school to day cares.*
- *Now that we are owned by [a national company] we would have to run any of these options past management. We are open to discussions and want to partner but will need approval of anything prior to full commitment.*
- *Participate in local fundraisers.*
- *We already own the building and let them use it at no cost. We employ the director and one associate (the 2 highest-paid employees of the daycare). We cover other miscellaneous costs as well.*
- *We continuously make donations to many childcare facilities in Clayton County and other counties we serve.*
- *General donation.*
- *Extension has childcare education available to providers.*
- *Not sure.*
- *The feds and states need to take money away from the colleges and give it to the childcare centers and quit expecting taxpayers to pay for college but not childcare.*
- *We will think about it.*

Employers were given another list with additional ways a business may assist in addressing the child care shortage and/or supporting child care businesses. Respondents were asked to select all that apply. The largest group of employers (53%) indicated none of the above. Thirty-three percent (33%) indicated they would appoint an employee to serve on the Board of Directors of a child care program, followed by a donation or financial contribution for operating a child care program (20%).

Table 31: Solutions Employers are Willing to Consider

	Percent of Employers
Appoint an employee to serve on the Board of Directors of a child care program	33%
Provide child care providers access to purchase supplies through our company to take advantage of bulk pricing or discounts	8%
Provide in-kind services to reduce expenses of a child care program (ex. bookkeeping, payroll, maintenance, cleaning, etc.)	5%
Donation or financial contribution for operating a child care program	20%
Donation or financial contribution for child care scholarships for your employees	8%
Donation or financial contribution for child care scholarships for all children	5%
Pay a child care provider the tuition of a vacant slot in order to reserve or hold that slot for one of your employees (with the employees taking over payment upon enrolling)	0%
Other (see comments on next page)	8%
None of the above	53%

Comments received from those indicating “other” were:

- *We offer an onsite child care center that is open to the public and employees can utilize.*
- *Participate in local fundraisers.*

Employers were asked “what do you think is the biggest challenge facing parents in regard to child care, and what will resolve that challenge”? Comments received were:

- *Costs and availability for ill child.*
- *Quality care and cost.*
- *The closing of certain rooms within a daycare is difficult for working parents with more than one child. The uncertainty is stressful on them. Start and end times are also a source of stress for my nurses. Open slots for people moving or working in Elkader is also an issue.*
- *I think parents struggle to afford child care in general. I see stressors on parents when daycares are forced to close due to illness and/or short staffing. I don't think parents necessarily understand the benefits of a dependent care flex program if their work offers it and I think the \$5000 limit per family is too low (IRS limit) if families have multiple children. I have heard many comments about the loss of the 4-year-old preschool funding creating hardships on families. When that program was offered at no cost, I think it helped take pressure off families.*
- *Availability and cost.*
- *Not enough spaces for children, cost.*
- *Having enough spaces for children.*
- *Lack of options means you are at the mercy of one provider for an entire town – expecting employees are highly stressed due to lack of daycare options. They require higher costs, more travel, and/or less working hours to accommodate.*
- *Not sure.*
- *Changing child care providers if necessary.*
- *Employee costs to stay in the black.*
- *Lack of workforce and ability to increase wages.*
- *Availability of child care in general, Monona has had 3 or more in-home providers retire or close in the last few years and there have not been enough new providers to offset that change. Incentives, whether that be through grants or other means to help offset the increased cost of operating an in-home or child care center.*
- *Costs and restrictive rules with absenteeism.*
- *Cost and flexibility.*
- *Availability and cost.*
- *Daycares open earlier and later.*
- *Costs.*

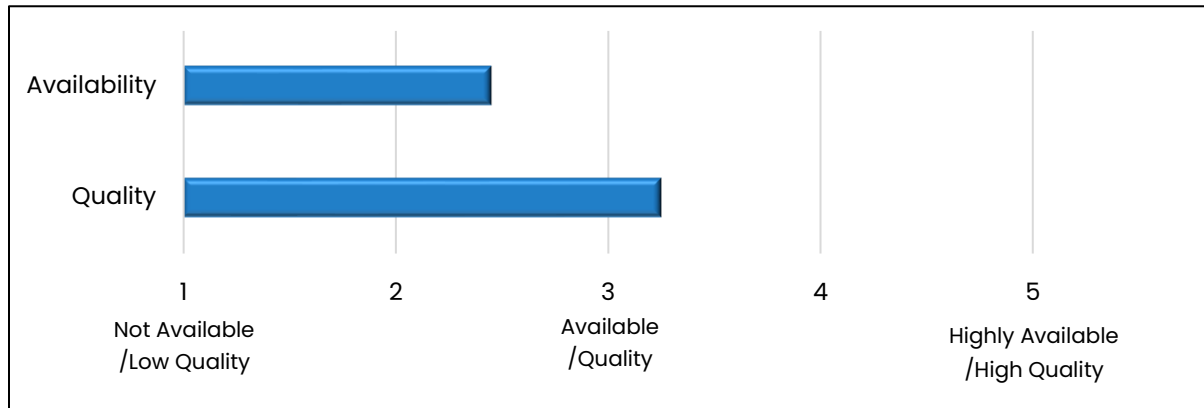
- Overall cost, and whether they can make enough to pay for child care, outside of the home.
- You spend more sending them to daycare than you make working.
- Too few people want to work in that industry.
- One of our child care facilities is in an older building requiring frequent repairs. They would like to relocate to a larger, modern facility, but do not have the funds to make that happen. They try to keep the rates parents are charged low and reasonable while still paying a livable wage to employees, which is a difficult balancing act.
- Balancing the cost vs. what they are paid at their job.
- Seek and accept municipal growth as a priority.

Employers were asked what opportunities should be explored to help address the child care supply in Clayton County. Comments received were:

- Additional child care facilities with oversight.
- Partnerships/grants.
- Seeking any funding sources that would supplement daycare/preschool center operations would be good. I don't think community members will be necessarily inclined to support staff wages, but I think they would be generous with infrastructure and supplies. I also think we need to educate our community on the trajectory of development and success as it ties to having quality childcare as opposed to risks to children who do not have access to safe quality childcare.
- More providers and affordability.
- Not sure.
- School backed child care and child care facilities.
- Childcare partnerships - increased pay for employees.
- After school programs, summer programs, meal/snack programs, grants available to not only centers, but in-home child care.
- Daycares open earlier and later.
- Work with providers on funding scholarships or ways to lower day care costs.
- More of them.
- Everything.

Employers were asked to rate the *availability* of child care in Clayton County on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not available, 3 available, and 5 highly available (the higher the score, the more available). The average rating was 2.45. Employers were then asked to rate the *quality* of child care in Clayton County on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being low quality, 3 quality, and 5 high quality (the higher the score, the higher quality). The average rating was 3.25. See figure on next page.

Figure 2: Employer Ratings of Child Care in Clayton County



Employers were asked to provide additional thoughts about their employees' needs related to child care. Comments received were:

- *The more quality childcare options, the better.*
- *As far as I am aware, our employees' needs for childcare are being met the majority of the time. We have occasional hiccups when an employee needs to leave work (mainly for events or sick children), but the remaining employees have been willing to fill in where needed.*

The final question asked employers to provide any additional comments they had about child care in Clayton County. Comments received were:

- *Availability to more childcare centers would be beneficial, which reduces when childcare is not available due to vacation/sickness/etc.*
- *We are lucky in the MFL MarMac School District to have two daycare centers available.*
- *I will say it again, reduce funding to colleges and give funding to childcare centers.*
- *Right now, the issue seems to be the availability of employees. This seems to be true for many employers though.*

Child Care Provider Survey Results

A total of 10 child care providers surveys were completed. Eight (8) of the programs are located in Clayton County, while 2 are located in Delaware County but serve families from Clayton County. Among the participating programs, 8 are a licensed child care center or preschool, and 2 are home-based providers. One (1) of the home providers is registered with the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), while 1 is not. When asked for more details, the home provider that is not registered indicated they had never been registered with HHS and is not interested in becoming registered. Comments received were:

- *We're currently looking to buy a house so when we do I will become registered.*

Providers answered questions about the length of time their child care program has been in operation, and how much longer they plan to provide care (home providers only). Among centers, the largest group, 6 providers, indicated their program has been in business for 20 years or longer, the remaining 2 centers have been operating between 10 and 19 years. One (1) home provider has been in business 12 years, while the other home is in their first year of business. Both home providers indicated they intend to continue providing child care for an additional 5 or more years.

Table 32: Years Child Care Business Has Been in Operation

	20+ Years	10 to 19 years	5 to 9 years	1 to 4 years	Less than 1 year
Homes	---	1	---	---	1
Centers	6	2	---	--	---

The capacity is assigned to a center or registered home by HHS is based on usable square footage, there are often reasons for the provider setting a lower preferred capacity, such as the ability to staff all classrooms, or large spaces like multi-purpose rooms in centers counted in the total license that do not work well for a classroom.

The 8 centers have a collective capacity of 496 children according to Iowa HHS, however some prefer to operate at a capacity that is lower than the maximum they are allowed by HHS. The preferred collective capacity is 467, and the current collective enrollment is 440, with 267 being full-time and 173 being part-time (includes 110 before and after school children). The 1 registered home has a legal capacity of 12 children, their preferred capacity is 12 children, and their current enrollment is 10 children. The 1 nonregistered home has a legal capacity of 6 children, their preferred capacity is 4 children, and they currently have 4 children enrolled. *See table on next page.*

Table 33: Participating Programs by Type

	Total Providers	Legal Capacity	Preferred Capacity	Full-Time Enrollment¹⁶	Part-Time Enrollment
Licensed Center/Preschool	8	496	467	267	173
Registered Homes	1	12	12	0	10
Unregistered Homes	1	6	4	4	0
Totals	10	514	483	271	183

Collectively, centers reported they have 121 employees, 59 part-time (35 hours per week or less) and 62 full-time (36 hours per week or more). Seven (7) of the 8 centers, reported they had employees leave (voluntarily or involuntarily) during the last 12 months. Collectively, the centers lost 34 full-time and 16 part-time employees, this adds up to 50 total employees turning over in one year (it should be noted that it is possible that an individual was employed by and departed from more than one center within this time period, therefore we do not know if there were 50 different individuals or if there is duplication due to one or more individuals working for more than one child care center). The home providers indicated they do not have any staff or assistants working with them.

Currently, 4 of the 8 centers report they currently have a total of 14 vacant staff positions, 5 full-time and 9 part-time. When asked how hiring staff had been over the last 12 months, the centers experienced different levels of difficulty. Overall, 13% indicated it was very easy, 25% indicated it was somewhat easy, 25% somewhat difficult, 25% very difficult, and 12% did not try to hire. Neither of the home providers uses staff or an assistant. Comments received were:

- *Did not have very many applications but did find a qualified person within those applicants.*
- *This is the first time I have had people apply in the past 3 years. From 2020 to spring 2023 was a struggle.*
- *Word of mouth seems to be the biggest way to get applicants, other than social media marketing.*
- *Nobody has work ethic, and we can't pay enough.*

When asked if they had to limit enrollment or close a classroom due to not having enough staff during the last 12 months, 37% indicated yes. Comments received were:

- *Limit enrollments due to lack of staff. Currently fully staffed and able to call those on waiting list. Still have 14 families on a waiting list, but do not have room at the center to accept more families.*
- *We've had to close 1 room 4 times from January 2023 to May 2023 due to employee last-minute calling in. Since this employee has resigned, [we] have not had to [do] this since.*
- *For 6 months we had to close one room a day.*

When asked if in the last 12 months they had turned away families or put them on a waitlist due to lack of openings, 88% of the centers and 50% of the homes indicated yes. Comments received were:

- *Our waitlist is constantly changing. We have an average of 10 to 12 children on our waitlist at any time.*
- *We have a short waitlist for the infant room.*
- *We were full with a waitlist.*
- *21 families age infant to 3.*
- *We are at capacity with a long waitlist.*
- *I have put 20 or more kids on a waiting list.*

Nine (9) providers (90%) indicated they provide care between the hours of 5:15 am and 6:30 pm, Monday through Friday, while 1 (10%) provides care between 7:30 am and 5:00 pm, Tuesday through Thursday. Ninety percent (90%) operate year-round, and 10% operate during the school year only. None of the providers are open for what are considered extended hours (after 6:30 pm) or weekends.

Child care providers were given a list of factors that parents may consider when looking for child care and asked to indicate which one factor seems most important to parents that contact them looking for child care. Seventy percent (70%) indicated available space/timing of enrollment is the most important factor, while 10% indicated that care includes preschool, 10% indicated positive interactions between staff and children, and 10% indicated tuition rates or price. See *table on next page*.

Table 34: Factor Most Important to Parents Inquiring About Care

	Percentage of Providers
Available space/timing of enrollment	70%
Care includes preschool	10%
Dependable staff or provider	---
Drop-in or occasional care	---
Educational curriculum used	---
Evening or 2 nd shift care (after 7:00 pm)	---
Health and safety policies	---
Iowa Quality Rating System (QRS) rating	---
Location	---
Part-time options	---
Positive interactions between staff and children	10%
Second-shift care	---
Secured entrance	---
Special needs care	---
Third shift/overnight care	---
Transportation to and from school or preschool	---
Tuition assistance or scholarships	---
Tuition rates or price	10%
Upkeep or appearance of the facility and playground	---
Weekend care	---

Many providers will participate in programs that improve business operations or provide funding to off-set costs. Providers were asked about multiple federal and state programs available to licensed centers, registered homes, and some unregistered homes. Overall, the centers are aware of most programs, with varying levels of actual participation. All of the programs are familiar with the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), Iowa HHS Child Care Assistance, and the Child Care Assistance pilot program for child care workforce, even if they have not participated.

Table 35: Child Care Programs Participation in Funding Opportunities

	Current or Past Participant	Aware of, But Never Participated	Not Familiar With/Not Heard Of
Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)	7 centers 1 home	1 center 1 home	---
Iowa HHS Child Care Assistance	7 centers ---	1 center 2 homes	---
Child Care Assistance (CCA) Pilot Program for Child Care Workforce	6 centers ---	2 centers 2 homes	---
Agreement with school to provider Universal Preschool (4-year-old preschool)	4 centers ---	3 centers 1 home	1 center 1 home

As a follow up, providers were asked about additional programs involving quality improvement, technology and education. Overall, most programs are either participating in or at least aware of the current opportunities. There are 2 centers and 1 home that are not familiar with or have not heard of most of the programs.

Table 36: Child Care Programs Participation or Knowledge of State Programs

	Current or Past Participant	Aware of, But Never Participated	Not Familiar With/Not Heard Of
New IQ4K Quality Improvement Rating System	6 centers 1 home	2 centers 1 home	---
TEACH Scholarship Program	3 centers ---	4 centers 1 home	1 center 1 home
Child Care WAGE\$® salary supplement	3 centers 1 home	3 centers ---	2 centers 1 home
FieldPrint Fingerprinting	2 centers 1 home	4 centers ---	2 centers 1 home
Current opportunity for HHS-funded monthly subscription fees for either Playground or brightwheel child care management software	2 centers ---	5 centers 1 home	1 center 1 home

Child care providers were also asked how many children in their program are receiving or are eligible for some form of financial assistance such as child care assistance, the food program (CACFP), or other needs-based grants or scholarship programs. All of the providers indicated they had some enrollments that are eligible. Collectively the centers have 63 full-time and 30 part-time enrollments receiving or eligible for financial assistance. Home providers indicated they have no children enrolled that are eligible.

Providers were asked a series of open-ended questions about being a child care provider, what they saw for the future of child care, and any other comments they have about child care. Responses to these questions are listed below.

Providers were asked if they had the opportunity, would they wish to expand their current child care program to serve more children. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the centers and 50% of the home providers said yes. Respondents were asked to explain how they would expand. Comments received were:

- *We would expand if we had grant funding to expand our building and we were sure we could staff more classrooms.*
- *If we had 1 more staff, we could serve the short waitlist children for the infant room. We have limited space but are able to serve most of the needs of people that inquire about childcare in our center.*

- *There are more rooms in our building, although they would need renovated to be approved for care (water added, flooring, windows).*
- *Due to our limited space and not enough funding, it would be a great opportunity to be able to build a second location that would allow more capacity to hold more children. Unfortunately, we've expanded all that the ground will allow.*
- *We could be cutting ties with the district that rents half of our building but our district pays for our utilities and insurance and pays rent too, so it wouldn't financially benefit our centers I don't think.*
- *It would be great for our community if we were able to expand and provide quality care for more children at an affordable rate.*

If you wish to expand your program, what kind of support would you need in order to be able to serve more children? Comments received were:

- *Grant funding to expand building, help with recruiting employees and help paying a wage that would keep staff.*
- *Financial.*
- *Grants, additional funding, location.*
- *More reliable staff.*

What is the greatest challenge or barrier for expanding an existing child care program, and what solutions would help? Comments received were:

- *The cost of expanding building space. Grants to cover building expenses would be a solution.*
- *Financial support and volunteers.*
- *Funding and space*
- *Funding.*
- *Staffing.*
- *I could expand to group family child but have no desire to do so.*

What is the greatest challenge or barrier for starting a new child care program, and what solutions would help? Comments received were:

- *Startup costs and finding staff are both barriers. The costs to comply with state regulations are very high (fire regulation, space regulations, etc.)*
- *Financial support and volunteers.*
- *More information/guidance needed.*
- *Funding.*
- *There were big barriers for me.*

How do you think the community could better support child care providers? Comments received were:

- *Volunteer for fundraising activities.*
- *Understand, and appreciate the value of people in this extremely important field.*
- *Donate more, participate in fundraisers, bring activities to the center to help us engage the children and employee retention.*
- *Donations.*
- *Encourage employees to utilize the center.*

What challenges do you see in the future for child care in Clayton County?

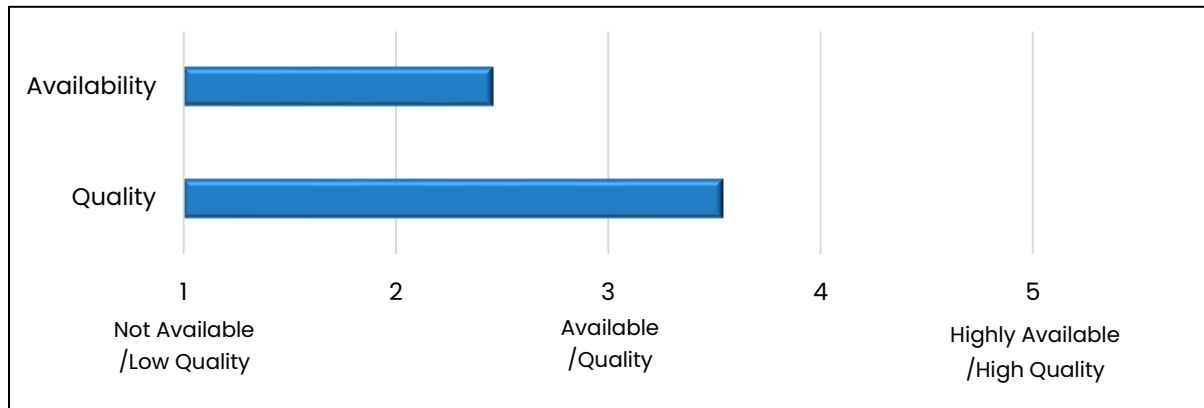
- *Keeping employees at our established centers.*
- *Keeping quality workers. People need to be paid better to retain employees, but this is hard without the budget taking a hit, or having rates higher than families are able to afford.*
- *Expansion areas and grant/funding opportunities.*
- *Funding, being able to pay staff a livable wage.*
- *Staff Shortage and financial burdens.*

What opportunities do you see in the future for child care in Clayton County? Comments received were:

- *Jobs, housing, more sports and miscellaneous activities being offered to children.*
- *I love my job and where I am, but I do have a dream of opening my own center in the near future perhaps in Monona.*
- *I see a lot of childcare closing because they cannot keep going financially and staff shortages.*

Child care providers were asked to rank the *availability* of child care in Clayton County on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not available, 3 available, and 5 highly available (the higher the score, the more available). The average rating was 2.46. Providers were then asked to rank the *quality* of child care in Clayton County on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being low quality, 3 quality, and 5 high quality (the higher the score, the higher quality). The average rating was 3.54.

Figure 3: Child Care Provider Ratings of Child Care in Clayton County



The final question allowed providers to share any additional comments they had about child care in Clayton County. The following comments were received:

- *Funding will always be the number one concern when providing enriching and engaging activities and opportunities for our youth!*

Parent Survey Results

A total of 174 individuals that currently have children ages 12 or younger and want to use child care in Clayton County completed the parent survey. This group is referred to as “current parents”. A second group consisting of 16 individuals, indicated they do not currently have children ages 12 or younger but plan to have or adopt children in the next 5 years, this group is referred to as “future parents”. Current parents completed questions that provide information about both their current and future child care needs, while future parents completed only questions about their future child care needs. Some questions were required while others were not, therefore responses from all questions are included in the aggregate data, even if an individual did not complete all survey questions.

Using the most popular responses, a current parent would be described as married (91%) and living in either Guttenberg (14%) or Elkader (13%). They work first-shift Monday through Friday (84%) in Elkader (25%), and the nature of their job is in health care & social assistance (30%). Their spouse also works first-shift Monday through Friday (70%) in Elkader (23%), and the nature of their job is agriculture, fishing, hunting (23%). They currently use child care in Elkader (20%), Monday through Friday. They use child care 40 to 49 hours per week for younger children, less than 10 hours per week for before and after school care, and 40 to 49 hours per week for older children during the summer. They are satisfied with their current child care provider (87%).

Using the most popular responses, a future parent would be described as married (75%) and living in either Edgewood (25%) or Strawberry Point (25%). They work first-shift Monday through Friday (94%) in Edgewood (50%), and the nature of their job is manufacturing (31%). Their spouse also works first-shift Monday through Friday (92%) in Edgewood (25%), and the nature of their job is also manufacturing (25%).

Parents were asked where they live. Among current parents, 90% live in Clayton County while 10% live outside the county. The communities with the most current parents represented are Guttenberg (14%), followed by Elkader (13%). Among future parents, 100% live in Clayton County. The communities with the most future parents represented are Edgewood (25%), Strawberry Point (25%), and Elkader (19%). *See table on next page.*

Parents that live outside of Clayton County were asked if the availability of child care in Clayton County influenced their decision to live elsewhere. One (1) current parent answered, yes.

Comments received were:

- *No. We always wanted to live in Edgewood. So we were going to take whatever childcare we can in the area.*

- We moved to Postville because it had a daycare and was close to my job in Decorah, we didn't come across a lot of other options when searching.

Table 37: Parents' Place of Residence

	Current Parents	Future Parents
Clayton County	90%	100%
Clayton	3%	0%
Colesburg	1%	6%
Edgewood	6%	25%
Elgin	2%	0%
Elkader	13%	19%
Elkport	1%	0%
Farmersburg	4%	0%
Garber	2%	0%
Garnavillo	9%	0%
Guttenberg	14%	6%
Luana	1%	0%
Marquette	2%	0%
McGregor	5%	6%
Monona	11%	13%
North Buena Vista	0%	0%
Osterdock	0%	0%
Postville	0%	0%
St. Olaf	3%	0%
Strawberry Point	11%	25%
Volga	3%	0%
Outside Clayton County	10%	0%
Allamakee County	3%	0%
Buchanan County	1%	0%
Delaware County	5%	0%
Fayette County	1%	0%
Crawford County, WI	1%	0%

In a separate question, parents were asked which school district their children are enrolled in or are mostly likely to be enrolled in when they become school aged. The district selected by the most current was Clayton Ridge Community School District (29%), followed by Central Community School District (22%) and MFL MarMac Community School District (22%). Among future parents, the most popular response was Edgewood-Colesburg Community School District (38%), followed by Starmont (25%). See table on next page.

Table 38: School District Where Children Are Enrolled

	Current Parents	Future Parents
Central Community School District	22%	13%
Clayton Ridge Community School District	29%	6%
Edgewood-Colesburg Community School District	11%	38%
MFL MarMac Community School District	22%	19%
North Fayette Community School District	1%	0%
Postville Community School District	1%	0%
Starmont Community School District	12%	25%
Other- Allamakee Community School District	1%	0%
Other-Oelwein Community School District	1%	0%
Other- Prairie Du Chien, WI	1%	0%

The most common industry or occupational nature for the current parent who completed the survey (self) is health care & social assistance (30%) and for future parents it was manufacturing (31%). The most common occupation among the spouses or partners for current parents was agriculture, fishing, hunting (23%) and for future parents it was manufacturing (25%).

Table 39: Nature of Job or Occupation

	Current Parents		Future Parents	
	Self	Spouse or Partner	Self	Spouse or Partner
Accommodations & Food Service	2%	1%	---	---
Administrative & Waste Management	1%	---	---	---
Agriculture, Fishing, Hunting	4%	23%	6%	17%
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	1%	---	---	---
Construction	2%	10%	---	8%
Educational Services	18%	6%	19%	8%
Finance & Insurance	11%	3%	6%	---
Health Care & Social Assistance	30%	5%	13%	---
Information	---	---	---	---
Management of Companies	1%	1%	13%	---
Manufacturing	7%	16%	31%	25%
Mining, Quarrying, & Oil & Gas	---	3%	---	8%
Professional, Scientific & Technical	3%	6%	6%	---
Public Administration	2%	3%	---	---
Real Estate, Rental, Leasing	1%	---	---	---
Retail Trade	3%	1%	---	17%
Transportation & Warehousing	1%	3%	---	---
Utilities	1%	1%	---	---
Wholesale Trade	---	2%	---	---
Other Services	10%	15%	6%	17%
Do not work	1%	1%	---	---

Parents were asked what town their job is located in or where they do most of their work. Among current parents, 80% indicated their own job is located in Clayton County and 69% indicated their spouse's or partner's job is located in Clayton County. Among future parents, 100% indicated their own job is located Clayton County and 67% indicated their spouse's or partner's job is located in Clayton County. Elkader is the most common location for their own job (self) for both current and future parents as well as the spouse or partner for current parents, while Edgewood is the most common location for the spouse or partner for future parents.

Table 40: Parents' Place of Employment

	Current Parents		Future Parents	
	Self	Spouse or Partner	Self	Spouse or Partner
Clayton County	80%	69%	100%	67%
Clayton	1%	4%	---	8%
Colesburg	1%	1%	---	---
Edgewood	9%	4%	50%	25%
Elkader	24%	23%	25%	8%
Elkport	---	---	---	---
Farmersburg	1%	2%	---	---
Garber	---	1%	---	---
Garnavillo	6%	6%	---	---
Guttenberg	14%	7%	6%	---
Luana	2%	2%	---	---
Marquette	1%	1%	---	---
McGregor	4%	1%	6%	---
Monona	9%	5%	13%	---
North Buena Vista	---	---	---	---
Osterdock	---	1%	---	---
Postville	2%	3%	---	8%
St. Olaf	2%	1%	---	---
Strawberry Point	5%	8%	---	17%
Volga	1%	1%	---	---
Across whole county	---	1%	---	---
Outside Clayton County	20%	31%	0%	33%
Arlington	1%	---	---	---
California	---	1%	---	---
Cedar Raids	1%	---	---	---
Center Point	---	---	---	8%
Delaware County	1%	---	---	---
Delhi	---	1%	---	---
Des Moines	---	1%	---	---
Dubuque	1%	4%	---	---

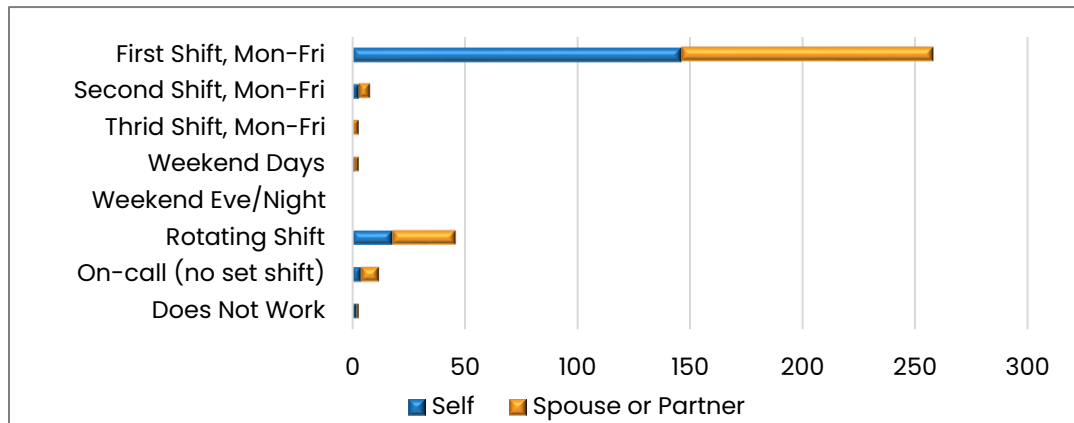
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	Current Parents		Future Parents	
	Self	Spouse or Partner	Self	Spouse or Partner
Dyersville	1%	3%	---	8%
Elgin	---	1%	---	---
Farley	---	1%	---	---
Fayette	1%	---	---	---
Greeley	---	1%	---	---
Independence	1%	1%	---	---
Manchester	4%	3%	---	8%
Oelwein	2%	1%	---	---
Peosta	---	1%	---	---
Prairie du Chien, WI	3%	5%	---	8%
Tama	---	1%	---	---
Travels/Trucking/Varies	---	4%	---	---
Waukon	2%	2%	---	---
West Union	2%	1%	---	---
Wisconsin	1%	1%	---	---

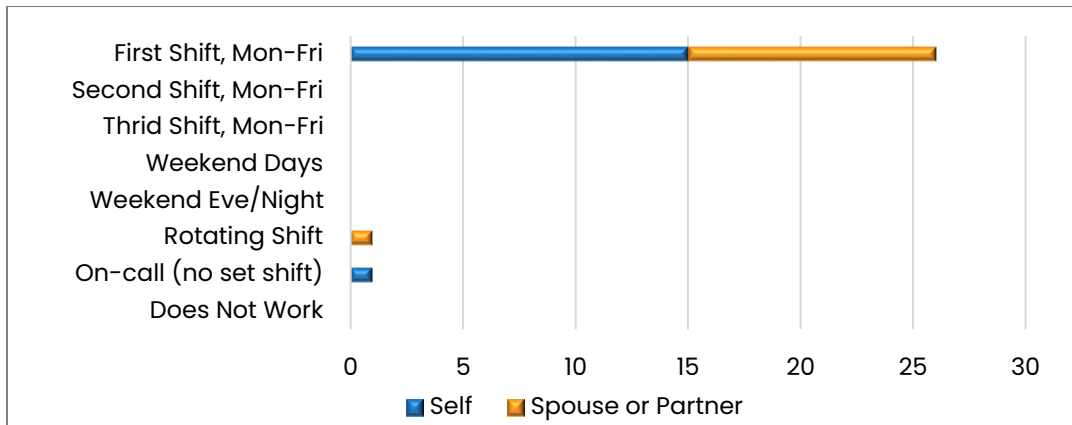
The majority of both current parents and their spouse or partner work first-shift, Monday through Friday. The next most common work schedule is rotating shift, followed by does not work.

Figure 4: Current Parent Work Schedules



Among future parents, the most popular schedules are again first-shift, Monday through Friday, followed by rotating shift and second shift. See figure on next page.

Figure 5: Future Parent Work Schedules



The most common child care related benefit offered by employers of both current and future parents was dependent care flex spending accounts. Other benefits offered included flexible work schedules if the family’s regular child care arrangement is not available, and work from home options if regular care is not available. Approximately 39% of current parents and 50% of future parents indicated neither their employer, nor their spouse’s or partner’s employer offers any of these benefits, while 6% of current parents and 13% of future parents are unsure.

Table 41: Child Care Related Benefits Offered by Employer

	Current Parents	Future Parents
Dependent Care Flex Spending Accounts	43%	31%
Financial assistance to help employees pay for child care	1%	0%
Flexible schedule if regular care is not available	16%	19%
Work from home options if regular care is not available	12%	13%
Child care information included in employee orientation	1%	6%
Child care information included in employee handbook	2%	6%
Other	3%	0%
Unsure if employer offers any of these	6%	13%
Employer does not offer any of these	39%	50%

Those that selected “other” were asked to explain. Comments received were:

- *Self-employed.*
- *Free childcare.*
- *We have none of these. My husband has had to make very serious adjustments to stay home that have negatively impacted his job because we cannot get child care part-time. Only full-time childcare seems to matter.*
- *Self-employed.*
- *He is a self-employed farmer.*

Current parents were asked if they or their spouse or partner had declined employment or withdrawn from the workforce during the last 12 months due to child care. Nine percent (9%) indicated “yes”. Comments received were:

- *Not solely due to childcare availability/quality - we wanted one parent at home more with our toddler - but it was a bit of a factor.*
- *Daycares are never open before 6:00 am or on weekends and have passed up multiple job opportunities.*
- *No childcare available or openings in my area.*
- *Could not take a different job opportunity due to one of us needing to be home to care for child.*
- *Can't take a position with better hours but less pay as it isn't feasible with the cost of daycare.*
- *On a waiting list for child care at a facility. So went with a home daycare.*
- *Not enough state funded daycare around that could put all 3 of my kids into.*
- *Not declined but have had to cut or change working hours to align with childcare availability.*
- *Wife had to go to part-time.*
- *Changed jobs from Elkader to Monona to be available when needed due to daycare closures/pickup and drop offs. I was commuting 20 minutes each way to work.*
- *Cannot work extra hours due to day care being closed after a certain time.*
- *Hours don't work with the hours the job is scheduled to start.*
- *Had to take a lower paying job because was not able to get childcare when needed.*
- *Have not been off maternity leave long enough to know if this will be an issue.*
- *On waitlists for daycare, unable to work due to having to watch my child.*

Current parents were asked, as of today are you or your spouse or partner not working (unemployed) because of child care challenges. Four percent (4%) indicated “yes”. Comments received were:

- *My spouse continues to stay at home with our toddler in part because of limited quality of childcare options in our community.*
- *Not unemployed, just less hours at the job due to available hours the home daycare can provide us.*
- *Have to find a job that will allow me to work when kids are in school and leave work when school calls to pick up sick kids. Hard to find a job willing to work with kind of schedule.*
- *Still working but had to cut hours.*
- *I work reduced hours than I typically would.*
- *I am part-time because of the daycare cost and one of 3 children goes to a grandparent because of child care cost.*

- *Currently on maternity leave and returning to work in a few weeks.*
- *Staying home to care for child. If I wanted to return to work, there are no options.*
- *On waiting lists for childcare since April 2023.*
- *It is not the reason that I am a stay-at-home parent, however before I began staying home, I had worked and used childcare for about 11 years and faced challenges sometimes in having someone to watch my child so that I could work. One challenge was when work went past 6:00 pm and most places do not watch children past 6:00 pm, but many jobs will ask you to work that late. Another was if a daycare would suddenly be closed for the day, but I still needed to go to work and had to find a relative available immediately in a rush. Another challenge was that my last employer did not include children in your sick days (sick hours were for the employee only) and gave 40 hours of PTO a year, so if my child was sick and I needed to stay home it would be taken out of my PTO. If a client canceled meeting with me and I couldn't get 40 hours in for the week, that was also taken out of those 40 hours for the entire year (I did have a client who canceled for several hours of time every so many weeks). So, I was not going to be getting any type of time off for fun unless it was a quick weekend trip until the kids got older. My previous employers did have better time off set ups, but that made me think about how it might be for some other families out there.*

Current parents were asked if child care challenges are currently limiting their or their spouse's or partner's employment (Ex. Working part-time when full-time preferred or not working within preferred field). Twenty-six percent (26%) said yes. Comments received were:

- *My spouse continues not to work partly because of limited childcare options. We don't want to send our toddler full-time to our current daycare but also can't find another good daycare option in our community.*
- *Limiting our work schedules and travel for work that is a requirement of the job.*
- *Not enough staff to cover the hours that are needed.*
- *I work part-time to cut back on daycare costs.*
- *Unable to work most weekends due to lack of childcare.*
- *I work 32 hours a week due to the expense of daycare.*
- *I work part-time so I can work from home and my one-year-old can stay home. My older son is in preschool. My husband works second shift so he can be with the baby in the morning while I work.*
- *Limited times that daycares are open due to being short-staffed, so we have to work around those hours, but still pay the same rate.*
- *From 6 days to 2.*
- *Due to limited child care options (early mornings, late evenings) in our town, I am changing jobs with more regular hours. My husband works nightshift and usually isn't*

home before I have to leave but is too early for daycare and leaves before I get home and is too late for daycare.

- My husband's ability to do things for his job has been limited to very specific hours of the day that can hinder opportunities because he has to wait for me to be home from work to do certain things pertaining to his job.*
- Not having daycare attached to the school, so I am having to make drop offs and pickups.*
- Again, I work reduced hours due to childcare.*
- We must take a day off (spouse is unpaid in this situation) when there is no childcare available.*
- Cannot work after 6:00 pm.*
- Cannot work before 7:00 am because daycares don't open early enough and there's only one daycare in Edgewood.*
- I am part-time because of the daycare cost and one of my three children goes to a grandparent because of child care cost.*
- Reliable childcare is extremely difficult to find as you hear many negative things about the current and ONLY childcare center in [my town]. Makes us EXTREMELY nervous and cautious to send our 3-month-old child to this facility but we have no other options and cannot afford to go down to a single income for our family.*
- Could be making twice the income and working in specific field of education if able to find child care.*
- We cannot both work evenings because someone has to be home before 5:00. Also, effects abilities to work weekends.*
- I am self-employed and able to pick my own hours, however I am limited to part-time availability due to childcare restraints. If I had dependable, full-time childcare I could see more clients in a week thus providing extra income for my family.*
- Working as needed when full-time is desired.*
- I love where I work but in order to even begin thinking of other jobs that may better suit my kids' school schedule or financially benefit the household, I am limited as far as daycare hours/schedules allow.*
- I'm in school full-time so I can only work until a certain time second shift because of not having child care services.*

Current parents were asked to indicate how many children were living in their household by age groups. The "Households" column of the following table shows how many parents indicated they have at least one child in each age group, while the "Children" column reflects how many total children are represented in the survey. Because some households have children in each age group, the household's column may be duplicative and therefore cannot be totaled. A total of

366 children are represented in the survey. In addition to the children represented here, 43% of current parents indicated they plan to have or adopt more children in the next 5 years.

Table 42: Children Represented in Parent Survey

	Households	Children
0 to 5 (not started Kindergarten)	154	241
5 to 12	94	125
Total	N/A	366

Twenty-four percent (24%) of current parents and 19% of future parents indicated that the availability of child care in Clayton County has impacted their decision to have or adopt children or caused them to limit the size of their family. Comments received were:

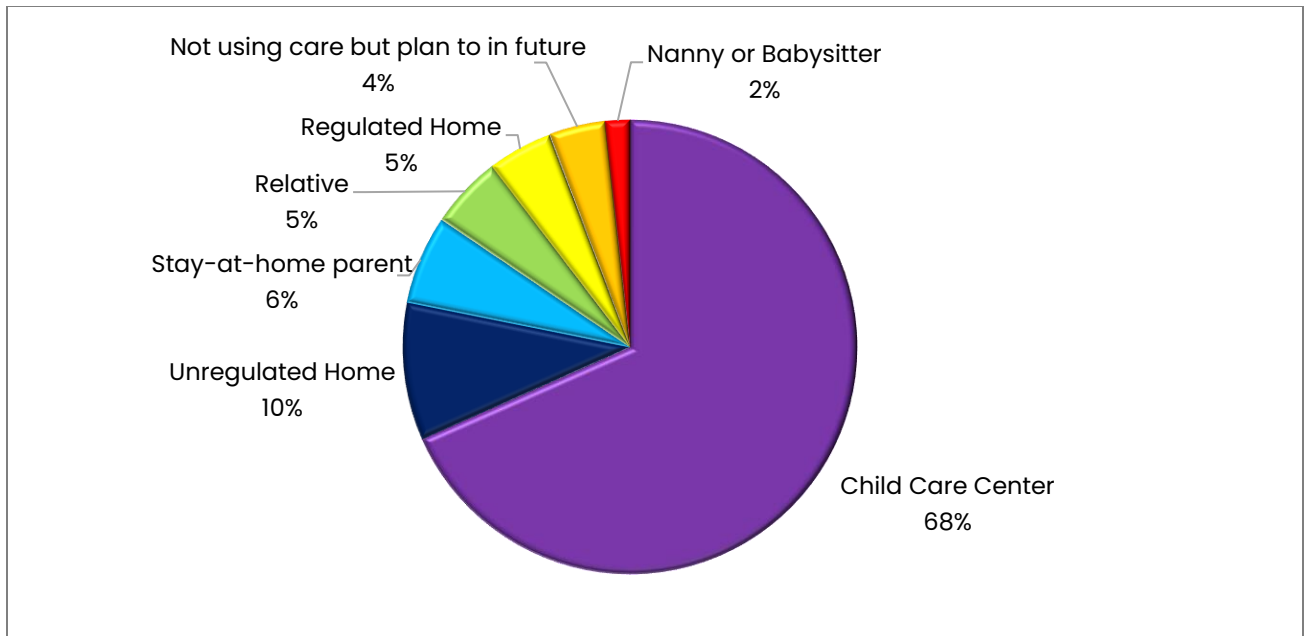
- *Limited availability gives a sense of uncertainty.*
- *We know that the likelihood of a new baby getting to go to the same facility as our older children is so limited it is certainly a factor in us choosing not to have another child.*
- *It's expensive and hard to find.*
- *The fear of a center not having availability for an infant. Not having reliable childcare or an available spot in a center is an option we cannot financially risk as both incomes are needed. An in-home daycare is an option we prefer not to explore.*
- *If we can't find child care we can't take any foster placements.*
- *Struggling as it is to find childcare for one child.*
- *Lack of space in centers and long waiting lists make it too hard to plan for care.*
- *Not a lot of openings or options.*
- *Limit family size.*
- *Finding openings for either in-home or centers seem nearly impossible within a 15-mile radius of where we live.*
- *Expense.*
- *Daycare is so expensive, if we have another kid, I will not be able to work.*
- *Cost.*
- *If childcare was easier to access and current daycare wasn't so full, I would have had another child.*
- *We have been hesitant to have another child because when we had our last, we were told the center in [town name] would provide care, and they dropped us for being part-time literally a month after my last child was born, with a weekend's notice to try to find care for the following week. It makes it difficult to have another child even though we want another one knowing that there are no viable care options.*
- *It takes one whole pay check to cover daycare for a month for one toddler...how is one supposed to afford to put multiple kids in day care?*
- *I will have children because I want them, but I am worried about finding placement.*

- *Cost more so than availability.*
- *Definitely limit ... due to no availability and my day care bill is nearly the same as my mortgage every month.*
- *The thought has crossed my mind that if we decided to have another child, I'm not sure what the daycare situation would look like.*
- *We worry about having more children, and unsure about the space and availability of licensed centers.*
- *It's so costly.*
- *Can't afford to put more kids in daycare.*
- *Struggle to figure out where we would take our future children for daycare.*
- *We haven't postponed having another child, but it is difficult to decide on having children when you do not know if your daycare will have a spot.*
- *I would say somewhat, as we might not have any more children due to this.*
- *I can't work currently because of having no daycare so I definitely can't afford more kids.*
- *Not enough staff to have open spots at center.*
- *Availability of center possibly closing a room I may need to utilize.*
- *Limited care in the surrounding area makes it difficult to have children when cannot find a center to watch them while parents are at work.*
- *It absolutely has - we watch other parents struggle to even work due to the cost of childcare being so high it's not worth working.*

Eighty-six percent (86%) of current parents indicate they are currently using some form of "outside" child care such as a child care center or home provider. In addition, 7% use a relative, while 6% are not using any form of child care. Among the 24 parents currently using a relative or not using care, all 24 indicated they are likely to use some form of outside child care in the next five years.

When asked more specific details about their primary child care setting during the last 12 months, 68% of parents indicated they are using a child care center, followed by an unregulated home 10%. See figure on next page.

Figure 6: Primary Care Setting Used During the Last 12 Months



A list of possible effects child care challenges may have on parents' jobs was presented, and parents were asked to select all that apply to their own or their spouse's or partner's job in the last 12 months. The effects experienced by at least one-quarter of parents were had to leave work early (48%), missed a day or work because provider was closed, on vacation, or not available (39%), arrived late to work (29%), and unable to work overtime (26%). Twenty-four percent (24%) of respondents indicated they experienced no problems related to work as a result of child care. See table on next page.

Table 43: Effects of Child Care Challenges on Job

	Percent of Parents
Had to leave work early	48%
Missed a day of work because provider was closed, on vacation, or not available	39%
Arrived late to work	29%
Unable to work overtime	26%
Had to supervise child while working from home	24%
Had to reduce the number of hours worked	22%
Missed a day of work because the provider did not have room or space for child	21%
Had to take child to work with me/them	20%
Unable to travel for work	15%
Unable to accept a different work schedule or shift	14%
Other (see comments below)	9%
Lower productivity	8%
Did not accept a desired job offer	5%
Received disciplinary action (not including firing)	4%
Had to change jobs to one that works with child care	4%
Quit a job	4%
Had to leave child home alone to go to work	1%
Took a job that does not fit my/their skills	1%
Got fired	0%
Experienced no problems related to work and child care	24%

Comments received from parents selecting “other” were:

- *August 2022 through August 2023. Due to lack of childcare availability at a center close to our home we were commuting out of our way for childcare. We live in Garnavillo and would drive to Monona for child care. Then commute to work in Elkader, Edgewood, or Colesburg for the day.*
- *Rely on family due to hours. Work at 5:45 [child care] doesn't open until 6:00.*
- *If I have had a sick child, they usually can stay with my parents, or I can take a day if needed.*
- *Winter Weather...school, daycare closed but still need to be at work.*
- *Couldn't work extra days because of cost of adding days to daycare bill.*
- *Left my current job to go to new job further away for consistent hours and better pay to be able to afford daycare.*
- *Had to switch to overnight shifts and not sleep to make it possible that someone was home with child and not having to call in. Forcing parent to stay awake over 24 hours.*
- *Had to find other child care for weeks at a time due to child care worker being sick and not enough help. Have had to find other child care for a day each week for months*

because child care was closed for a day due to low staffing. Had grandparent watch child and had to drive 30+ minutes to drop child off and pick up at night.

Twenty-four percent (24%) of current parents indicated that there are changes that could be made to their current child care arrangements that would allow them to perform better at work.

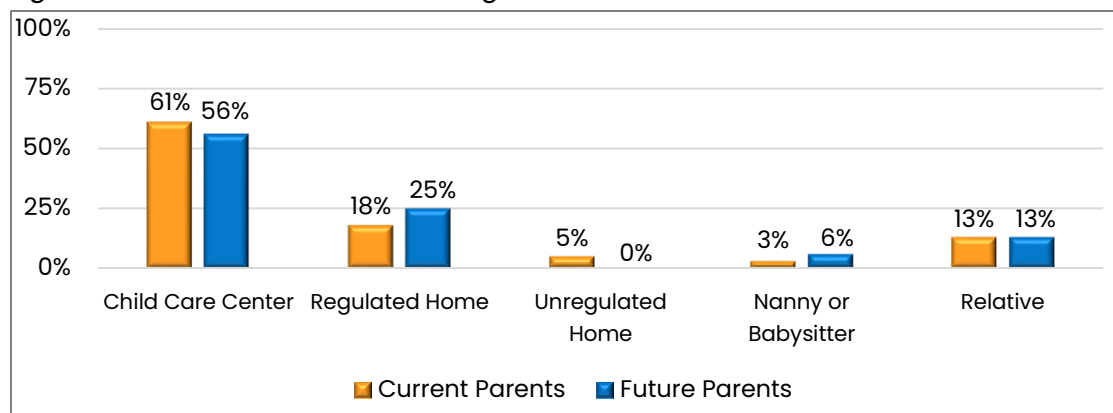
Comments received were:

- *Better employee retention. Have a tax credit or break for daycare workers that put in more than 30 hours a week.*
- *Due to being short-staffed daycare has closed early and [then] I have to leave work early.*
- *A fully staffed childcare center would allow me confidence to schedule work trips and appointments with clients.*
- *More staff and better trained staff.*
- *Start time of 5:30 am so I can be to work on time at 6:00 am.*
- *Making hours 5:30am not 6:00 am.*
- *Having a sick day daycare available.*
- *More childcare and affordable childcare.*
- *More teachers would help.*
- *Being able to depend on center hours being the same or if changes need to be made, adjustments to rates being made, as well. Pricing has been a challenge and even the availability of quality daycares that have openings for one child, let alone more than that.*
- *More state funded care centers or homes in area.*
- *Not with my current job, but previously extended evening hours would have been nice to accommodate meetings and the travel times from meetings when we both were out of town.*
- *More options in general, with more flexible hours (early mornings, later evenings).*
- *If regular child care was available I could pick up overtime or work part-time at another job like I used to prior to having a child. Due to limited child care, I have earned less income this year.*
- *Child care shouldn't be so expensive.*
- *Pick up time can become a challenge when stuck late working and in the middle of a project. Flexible pick-up time maybe?*
- *Lower costs so I can afford it 50 hours a week so I can work full-time to pay all bills.*
- *Earlier drop off times.*
- *There needs to be more daycare providers.*
- *If the childcare providers made more, they may be willing to work extended hours. Or they may be able to get more help as they are paid very low wages.*

- Better hours.
- The cost, not charging per week, not having to send out a schedule 2 weeks ahead of time and getting charged extra if we need to add a day.
- Having a before or after school (mostly after school) would help us with not needing to find daycare or leave work early.
- Longer hours.
- Open past 5:00 and on Saturdays.
- More staffing to allow the daycare to always remain open, not having to close a room down due to short staff.
- Feeling secure that staffing is good enough during the year that I won't have to make other child care arrangements at the last minute. Most of the time we are notified at 6:30 am or later that child care is unavailable for the day and that makes things very difficult.
- More GOOD daycare options.
- Family and children can be balanced.

Both current and future parents were asked, if all choices were available and you were selecting child care today, which setting would you most prefer. Among current parents, the top choices were a licensed center (61%), followed by a regulated home (18%). Among future parents, the top choice is also a licensed center (56%) followed by a regulated home (25%). Overall, 79% of all respondents (both current and future parents) prefer a child care setting that is regulated by Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Figure 7: Preferred Child Care Setting



Current parents were asked if their children are in their preferred child care setting. Overall, 74% indicated their children are in their preferred type of care. The primary reasons given by parents whose children are not in their preferred type of care were other (8%), not accepting enrollments (7%), and not able to afford (6%). See table on next page.

Table 44: Reason Children are Not in Preferred Type of Care

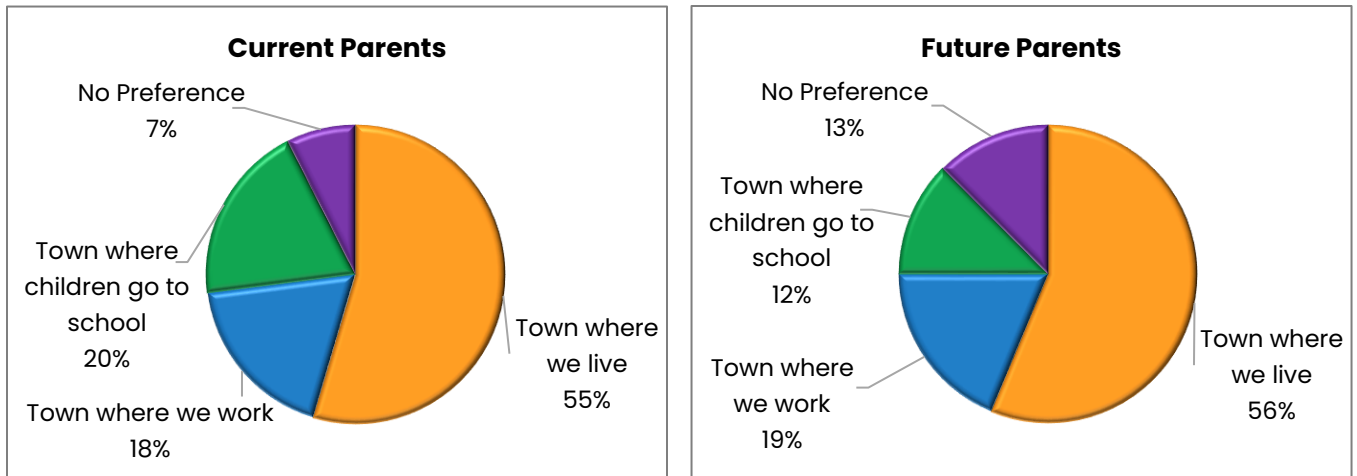
	Percent of Parents
Other	8%
Not accepting enrollments	7%
Not able to afford	6%
Not conveniently located	3%
Not open for extended or nontraditional hours	1%
My children are not the right age for preferred arrangement	1%
Transportation to and from school/preschool not available	1%
Location too far away	0%
Children are in my preferred type of care	74%

Comments from those selecting other were:

- *No teachers for our age group, multiple kids care too expensive for us.*
- *I would prefer in-home care but very limited options if any with openings.*
- *We only need care two days a week, but we have to pay for a full week.*
- *Expensive.*
- *Would love and NEED an after-school program for my school age children!*
- *I had the choice between one in-home or the center. Those were the only options and the in-home didn't open until right before we started at the center.*
- *The daycare is not currently taking care of our child as desired - not feeding on the schedule we ask and sending home in clothes that are not ours.*
- *I would like to take my child to an in-home daycare, but they don't seem to be state regulated, and children don't go outside to play as much as they should (from what I have been told), so I have stayed away from in-homes in our area.*
- *Child was enrolled in daycare at a center but has now started preschool. My parent has retired and will care for my younger child.*
- *I would prefer to be at home with our child, but we can't afford for me not to work.*

Respondents were asked their preference of proximity if they were selecting care today. Among both current and future parents, the most preferred proximity is the town where they live. The second most preferred by current parents is the town where children go to school, while the town where we work was the second most preferred by future parents. *See figure on next page.*

Figure 8: Preferred Proximity of Child Care



Parents were asked which community their current child care provider is located in, and which community they would prefer. Overall, 95% of current parents are currently using care in Clayton County, with the most popular town being Elkader (20%), followed by Garnavillo (15%), Monona (14%), and Strawberry Point (13%). If current parents were picking care today, the most preferred towns are Elkader (21%), Garnavillo (16%), Monona (15%), and Guttenberg (14%). Future parents were also asked, which community they would prefer to take their child to for care. The most popular answers were Edgewood (38%) followed by Elkader (19%) and Strawberry Point (19%).

For both current and future parents the top 4 towns where parents live and the top 4 towns where parents prefer care are the same, reinforcing the responses that both groups most prefer care in the town where they live. The table below shows a comparison of where parents live, where they currently use child care, and where they prefer to use child care. See tables on next two pages.

Table 45: Location of Child Care

	Current Parents		Future Parents
	Current Care	Preferred Care	Preferred Care
Clayton County	95%	100%	100%
Clayton	1%	2%	---
Colesburg	1%	1%	---
Edgewood	10%	9%	38%
Elgin	---	---	---
Elkader	20%	21%	19%
Elkport	---	---	---
Farmersburg	1%	---	---
Garber	---	---	---
Garnavillo	15%	16%	---
Guttenberg	11%	14%	6%
Luana	1%	1%	---
Marquette	---	2%	---
McGregor	7%	5%	6%
Monona	14%	15%	13%
North Buena Vista	---	---	---
Osterdock	---	1%	---
Postville	1%	1%	---
St. Olaf	---	1%	---
Strawberry Point	13%	13%	19%
Volga	---	1%	---
Outside Clayton County	5%	0%	0%

Table 46: Community Preferred for Child Care vs. Community of Residence

		Community Preferred for Child Care (Current and Future Parents)																			
Community of Residence (Current and Future Parents)		Clayton	Colesburg	Edgewood	Elkader	Elkport	Farmersburg	Garber	Garnavillo	Guttenberg	Luana	Marquette	McGregor	Monona	North Buena	Osterdock	St. Olaf	Strawberry Point	Volga	Total Residents	
	Clayton	3							2	1											6
	Colesburg															1					1
	Edgewood			8	1														1		10
	Elkader				20				1	1											22
	Elkport			2																	2
	Farmersburg				4				1					2							7
	Garber		1						2	1											4
	Garnavillo				1				13	1											15
	Guttenberg								5	19											24
	Luana										1			1							2
	Marquette											3									3
	McGregor								2				6	1							9
	Monona				1									19							20
	North Buena Vista																				0
	Osterdock																				0
	St. Olaf	1			2				1									1			5
	Strawberry Point				1														17	1	19
	Volga				4														1		5
	Outside County				3																3
Preferred Child Care Location	4	1	10	37	0	0	0	27	23	1	3	6	23	0	1	1	19	1		157	

Parents were asked several questions about the average number of hours of child care used per week, preferred child care schedule, and current and preferred drop-off and pick-up times. Most parents with children ages 0 to 5 use child care full-time, with 52% using 40 to 49 hours a week. Parents with school age children care part-time during the school year and full-time during the summer, with 57% using less than 10 hours per week during the school year and 30% using 40 to 49 hours a week during the summer.

Table 47: Average Hours per Week Child Care Currently Used

	Less than 10 Hours	10 to 19 Hours	20 to 29 hours	30 to 39 hours	40 to 49 hours	50 or more
Age 0 to 5 (not Kindergarten)	1%	8%	13%	20%	52%	6%
Age 5 to 12 during school year	57%	35%	4%	0%	3%	1%
Age 5 to 12 during summer	14%	13%	17%	19%	30%	6%

Currently, the most popular hour to drop-off children is from 7:00 am to 7:59 am (61%) (94 parents), followed by 6:00 am to 6:59 am (15%) (24 parents). When it comes to picking-up children, 26% (40 parents) are currently picking-up between 4:00 pm and 4:59 pm, followed by 22% (34 parents) picking-up between 5:00 pm and 5:59 pm.

Parents were also asked their preferred drop-off and pick-up times. Among current parents, the most preferred drop-off time is still 7:00 am to 7:59 am (54%) (91 parents), followed by 6:00 am to 6:59 am (19%) (32 parents). When it comes to picking-up children, the most preferred time of current parents is 5:00 pm to 5:59 pm (28%) (47 parents), followed by 4:00 pm to 4:59 pm (24%) (40 parents). In addition, 15% (16 parents) indicated their preferred pick-up time as 4:00 am to 4:59 am and 12% (20 parents) selected 5:00 am to 5:59 am. Because 84% reported their normal work schedule as first-shift and 70% reported their spouse's or partner's work schedule as first-shift, FCF suspects some of these parents intended to choose time between 4:00 pm to 5:59 pm, not 4:00 am to 4:59 a

The current versus preferred drop-off time of current parents are almost the same, however the current versus preferred pick-up time of current parents shows there are several parents that would like to pick-up their children later than they currently are. This can be seen by looking at Figure 10, where the preferred line is above the current line from 4:00 pm to 6:59 pm.

The following two figures show the current vs. preferred drop-off and pick-up times for current parents.

Figure 9: Preferred Drop-off Times, All Ages

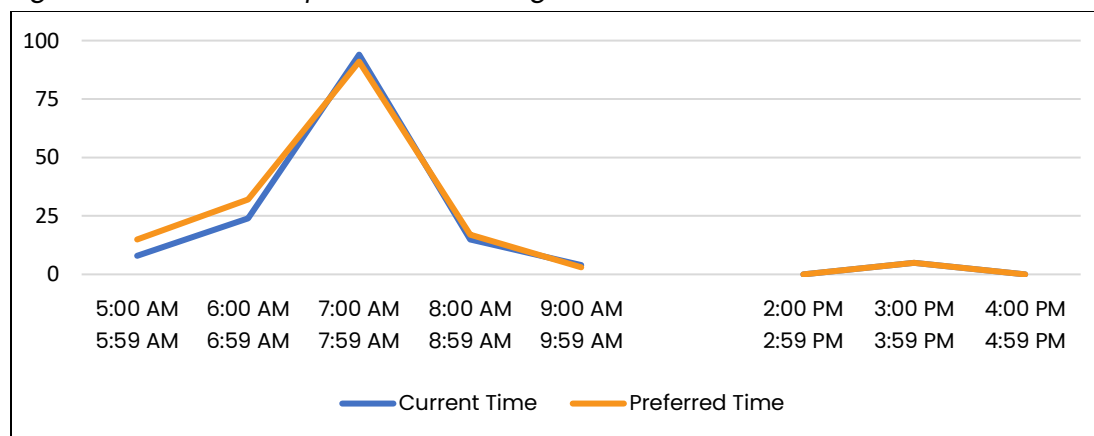
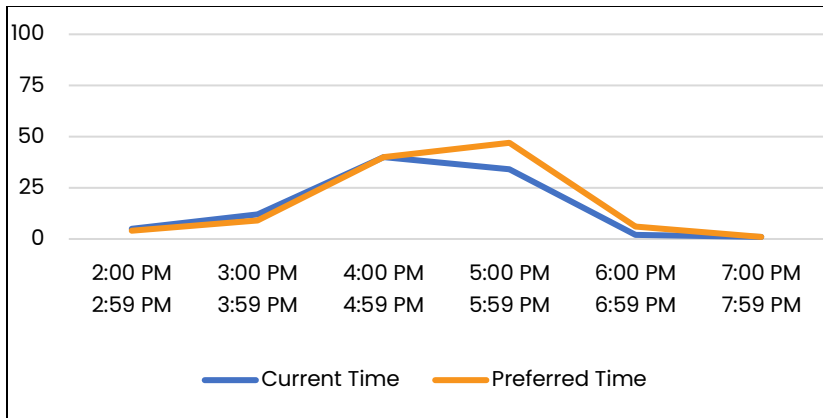


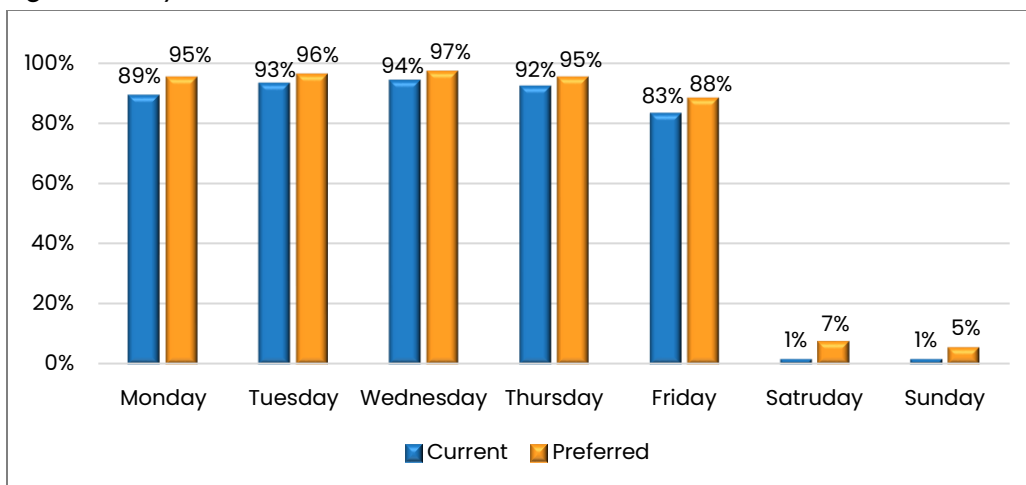
Figure 10: Preferred Pick-Up Times, All Ages



Future parents were also asked their preference related to times to drop-off and pick-up children if they were selecting care today. The most desired hour to drop-off children is 7:00 am to 7:59 am (44%) (7 parents), followed by 6:00 am to 6:59 am (25%) (4 parents). Meanwhile, the most desired hour to pick up children is 4:00 pm to 4:59 pm (31%) (5 parents), followed by 5:00 pm to 5:59 pm (19%) (3 parents). An additional 19% (3 parents) selected 4:00 am to 4:59 am. Because nearly all future parents and their spouse or partner also work first-shift, it is possible some of these individuals intended to select 4:00 pm to 4:59 pm as their preferred pick-up time.

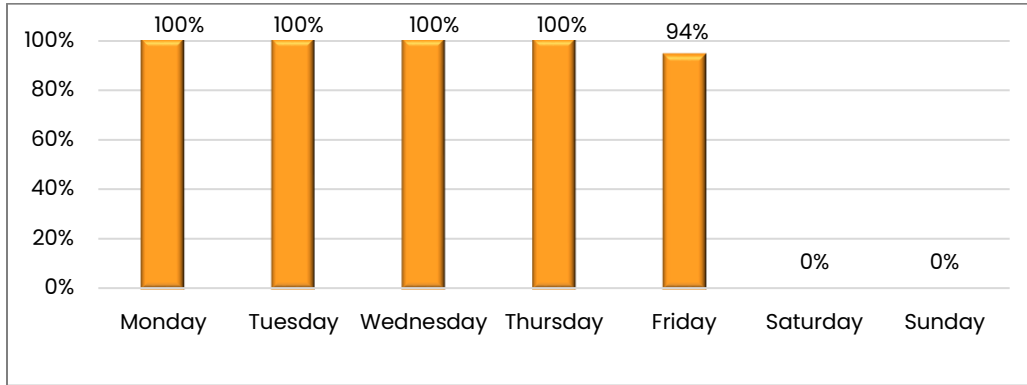
Most current parents indicated they currently use care Monday through Friday (ranging from 83% to 97% per day), while 1% use care on Saturday and 1% on Sunday. When it comes to preferred days for care, Monday through Friday is still the most preferred, ranging from 88% to 97% per day. Seven percent (7%) prefer Saturday care and 5% prefer Sunday care.

Figure 11: Days Current Parents Use Child Care vs. Prefer to Use Child Care



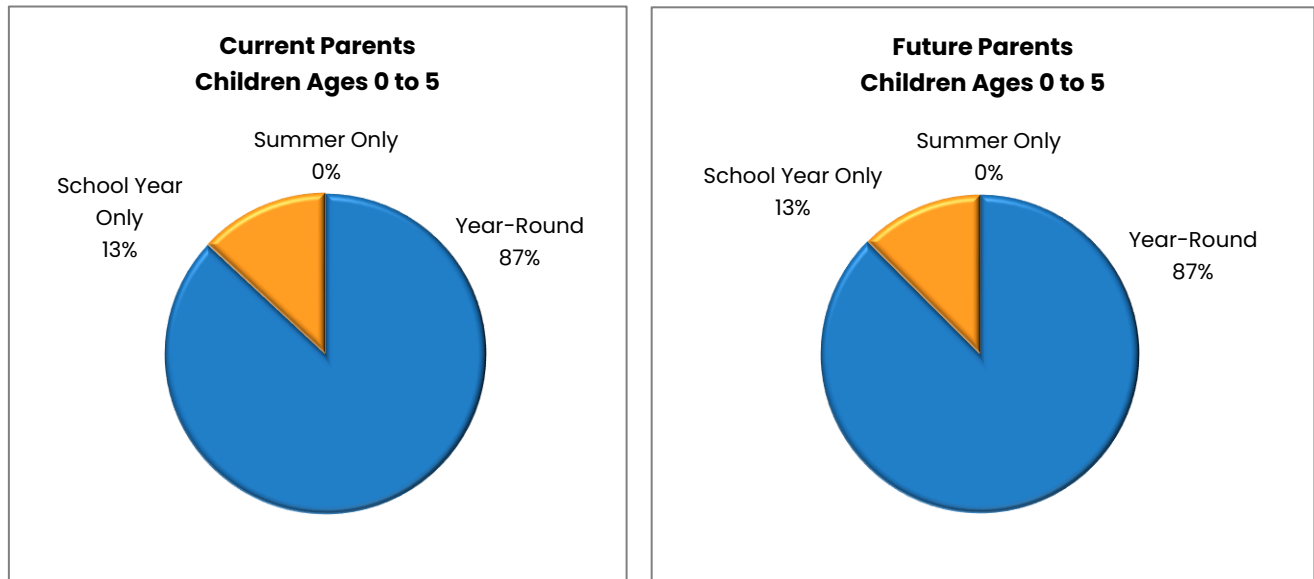
All future parents (100%) indicated they prefer to use care Monday through Thursday, and 94% also prefer care on Friday. No future parents indicated they would like to use care on Saturday or Sunday.

Figure 12: Days Future Parents Prefer to Use Child Care



When asked what their preferred time of the year would be if they were selecting child care today for ages 0 to 5, the majority of both current and future parents prefer year-round care. Among current parents 87% prefer to use child care year-round, 13% during the school year only, and 0% during the summer only. Among future parents their preferences were the same, 87% prefer year-round, while 13% prefer school year only, and 0% summer only.

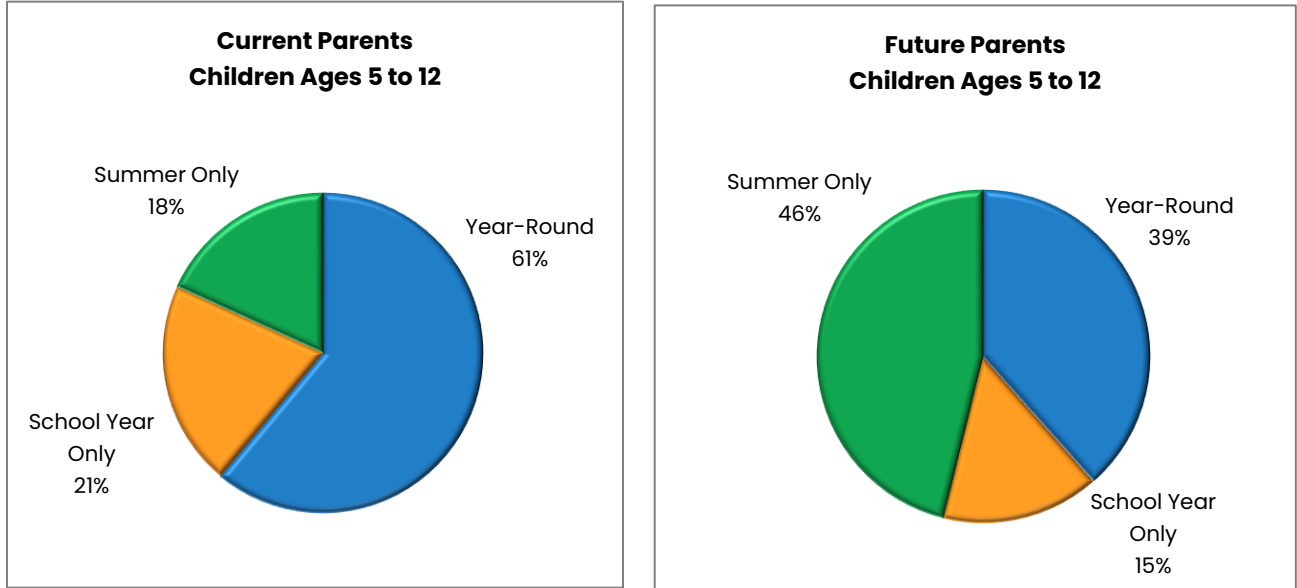
Figure 13: Time of Year Families Prefer to Use Child Care for Children Ages 0 to 5



When asked what their preferred time of the year would be if they were selecting child care today for ages 5 to 12, the majority of both current and future parents again prefer year-round care. Among current parents, 61% prefer to use child care year-round, 21% during the school year only,

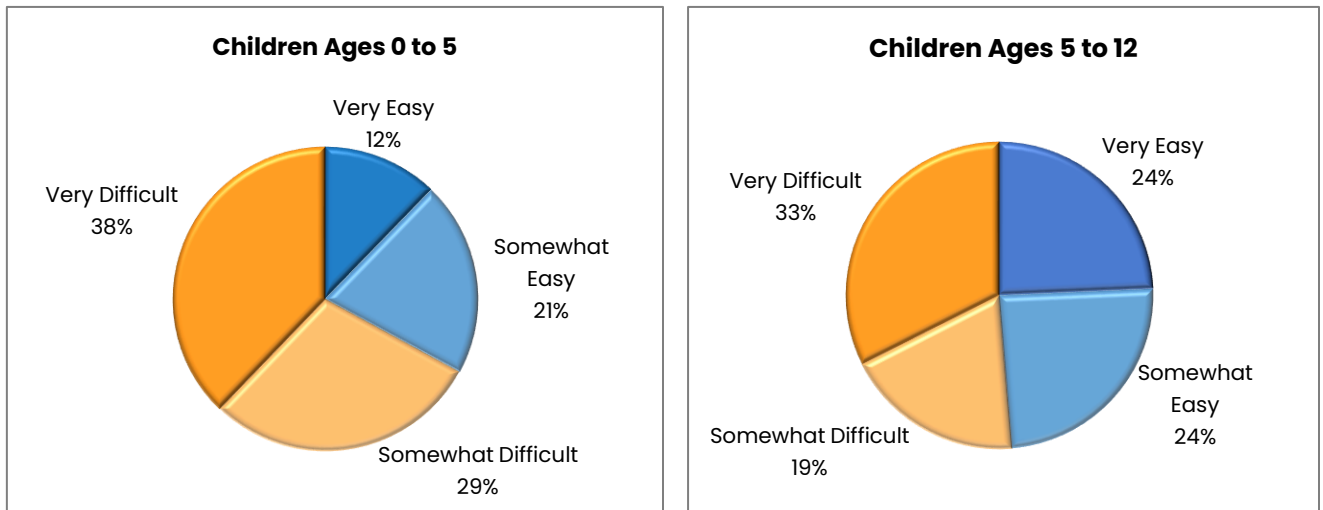
and 18% during the summer only. Among future parents, 39% prefer year-round, 15% school year only, and 46% summer only.

Figure 14: Time of Year Families Prefer to Use Child Care for Children Ages 5 to 12



Current parents were asked if they had looked for child care in the last 12 months. Among the 85 parents that looked for care for children ages 0 to 5, 67% indicated they experienced difficulty—either somewhat difficult (29%) or very difficult (38%). And among the 28 parents that looked for care for children ages 5 to 12, 52% indicated they experienced difficulty—either somewhat difficult (19%) or very difficult (33%).

Figure 15: Ability to Find Child Care During Last 12 Months



As a follow up, parents were asked, if you experienced obstacles finding child care in the last 12 months, what were they. Comments received were:

- *I have no idea how to find other daycare options in our community. The public daycare is easy to discover but outside of asking around, there is no good way to find private/alternative daycare options.*
- *Opening.*
- *Lack of availability or options to send my child.*
- *Finding a backup/drop in facility. Thankfully we have family around, but I know not everyone is that fortunate.*
- *Waiting lists.*
- *Long waitlists at center or no availability at daycare centers.*
- *Centers have open slots but no staff to fill them.*
- *Switched daycare for summer months only.*
- *No room, completely full.*
- *No openings or the cost was too high.*
- *We were initially told that [center] would not be able to take our infant for over a year, but it ended up only being a month before they hired some more teachers and space opened up. So, we feel pretty fortunate.*
- *Very limited options for childcare.*
- *Availability of services, cost.*
- *No openings at centers or in-homes. We will be moving further into Clayton County soon but will have to keep our daycare in Fayette County as there are no facilities or in-homes available.*
- *Few providers.*
- *The price of daycare.*
- *Availability.*
- *There were no openings, and the waitlist for our current daycare is over a year due to staffing.*
- *No one available, one babysitter decided to open but then closed shortly afterwards, so thankfully a second one decided to open.*
- *Not many available quality centers that had openings in a timeframe that was needed (2 years out for waiting list) and pricing was over what we could afford for some.*
- *The children's grandmother watches them because of their behavior problems.*
- *I had my daughter at a different daycare but it is closing in December, so I got her into the daycare in Strawberry Point.*
- *Only one center available and waitlist I've been on for 2 years now.*
- *I work at a childcare center. To help with ratio I have found alternative care for my children so other working families would not be impacted.*

Comments continued... *Obstacles experienced while looking for child care during the last 12 months.*

- *Have been at the same center for 3 years and we have no issues.*
- *Not many in-home daycares.*
- *Our provider was out of work due to illness/injury for a couple weeks. We called 3 different centers in 3 different communities, and none had availability for our 1 1/2-year-old at the time. We also reached out to two in-home daycares in Elkader, and they were also full. We ended up finding care 20 minutes away from our home/work at an in-home.*
- *Limited options. Longer hours.*
- *No availability.*
- *There are not many centers to choose from.*
- *Places didn't have openings and the only one that had an opening required my child to be full-time and for me to pay for full-time care when I only needed a few days.*
- *No openings.*
- *None.*
- *Uncertainty of being guaranteed a spot, [was told] "right now we have room, but when your infant is ready for child care, we can't guarantee we will have an opening, it will all depend on our staffing at that time".*
- *We only need care two days a week but have to pay for the full week.*
- *There is a waitlist everywhere.*
- *My usual provider took the summer off and so I had to find childcare between family and friends.*
- *Finding someone who could watch my children from home during the summer so that my kids could attend their sports camps and swim lessons. [Finding] someone that is old enough to drive and responsible is a challenge.*
- *The wait time is the problem, can't get in as soon as you would like.*
- *The licensed centers did not have availability for 2-5 months after moving here. Even when being put on the waitlist 2 months prior to moving. We had to miss work, rely on family members, having them miss work, and bringing my child to work with me.*
- *Hours available, drop-ins (they don't have staffing). Cost.*
- *No current obstacles but I know the waitlist is 15 families long to get into daycare center in Strawberry Point.*
- *There are hardly any child care centers available in the area. Another challenge was the cost increase at my child's daycare.*
- *Lack of openings at child care centers.*
- *Waiting lists/uncertainty.*
- *Long waitlist, with no availability.*
- *Finding available spots in a daycare that had room for our children.*

Comments continued... *Obstacles experienced while looking for child care during the last 12 months.*

- *I got lucky and there was an opening in the daycare for a 2-year-old 2 days after my daughter's birthday, but we had been waiting with grandparents babysitting for several months.*
- *We only have one child who is school aged so most daycare centers will not take. I either switch my schedule or have to find a high schooler or family member to watch.*
- *When we called and were expecting our first, we were the last for the spot and we called at 8 weeks along. With the second I called at 4 [weeks] and even with us already having a child there we were still the last spot available and possibly even delayed depending on when we deliver the baby. So, I might be finding alternative care to return to work when I plan or extend my leave to wait for the spot to be available.*
- *Weren't any openings for when I needed it.*
- *There were no full-time openings available during the hours needed. Had to go onto a waitlist and took spots when available. Had family and friends help, took kids to work when safe/able.*
- *Location, availability, cost, scheduling.*
- *Limited options for older children who need supervision.*
- *In-homes closing down, staffing at the center is inadequate to take more children so they are on a waitlist.*
- *None.*
- *Had to be on a waiting list and pay money and was unsure if we were going to have a place to send our child until the very last minute.*
- *Full, no openings.*
- *We were moving about a year ago. This meant that we had to find child care closer to our new home. We were on the waitlist at the nearest child care center for almost 2 years. Somehow, by chance we ended up not having to wait as long as we thought but it was a struggle. Not knowing when a spot would open up.*
- *Very limited options.*
- *A lot of daycares have waiting lists and not enough staffing.*
- *Long waiting list.*
- *We both work in Elkader and live near Garnavillo. [Center name] is hard to get into, we might just get into [other center] by the time we need, but other than that our options for where we are comfortable sending our child is very limited and then we would still have to add a lot of travel time to our days.*
- *Switched jobs and did job interviews until I knew daycare was secure.*
- *Lack of choices, waiting lists.*

Comments continued... *Obstacles experienced while looking for child care during the last 12 months.*

- *Staffing of the center, they had to close down a room due to staffing issues preventing childcare and thus not having childcare for me to work.*
- *All childcare is full.*
- *I haven't searched because I don't know of any other options.*
- *The price of childcare is a little higher but acceptable.*
- *The waitlist was the biggest issue.*

Despite difficulty finding care, once families find care, they are satisfied with their provider.

Overall, 87% of current parents indicated they are satisfied with their current provider, while 13% are not. Those that are not satisfied with their current provider were asked to explain. Comments received were:

- *They are short-staffed and short on resources. The quality of the help they've been able to recruit isn't always the best either.*
- *Feel very lucky to be able to get a spot.*
- *Staff is clearly burnt out and are not as empathetic towards children as they were 2-3 years ago. Their demanding work and lack of a full roster is clearly impacting their work.*
- *Inexperienced staff not trained, too many kids for staff that are there.*
- *Love that we were able to switch to [center name] from [different center].*
- *Not always available when I need to work.*
- *Yes and No. The hours are convenient, and they are flexible. The people caring for my children are doing an okay job, there is room for improvement though. As a current board member, I see the struggles facilities are facing with hiring and maintaining staff and the wage increases needed to get them to stay at the facility.*
- *Difficult change in hours and pricing.*
- *Satisfied but if there were more options, I would probably take them elsewhere.*
- *Some days, yes. Other days, no. I do feel like there are a lot of children at the center and I question the staff that work with them and their professionalism/age.*
- *Too expensive.*
- *I'm not always convinced they are in the care of the highest quality individuals. I do feel comfortable that they are safe at the center with lots of adults around, just not maybe with the best of the best at all times. I also understand the labor challenges and wage challenges that they are up against. My husband and I hope that the increase of \$500 a month that we are paying with new wage changes will bring higher quality individuals caring for our children who are excited to be with them and have a passion for caring for children. I can't talk all negatively, there are some individuals at the center who are*

EXCELLENT with the children, and we are always grateful for the days our kids get to spend time with those care providers.

- *Other than costs raised yearly.*
- *Yes, but I know that they could do better at their job with less kids/more help. Likewise, she would be amazing as a preschool teacher at a formal daycare, but the structure of our current daycare center is not up to par for more kids to join or hire the right talent to take care of and teach kids.*
- *The price is expensive and even more for early drop off or late pick-ups.*
- *For the most part I am satisfied with my child care. I wish there was more funding for child care to reduce the cost to parents. I will spend over \$20,000 in childcare fees for three kids and one was in school full-time. I know my center is also having trouble keeping staff because of the pay. It's hard to stay at a place when the gas station down the road pays more without the headache that come with being in childcare.*
- *Yes and no. They are getting burnt out from covering extra hours and I feel the children feel the effects of that.*
- *The daycare is not feeding our child as asked, will let our child go 4 ½ to 5 ½ hours without eating, sends our child home in clothes way too small and not ours, even though two outfits have been provided. Our child has been put in a seat facing away from the group with nobody by the child who is only 3 months old.*
- *Staff turnover is very high, and I don't feel the center is run well. Very expensive for the care my children are getting.*
- *Not the cleanest or most preferred environment.*
- *There is known abuse at the center, and the abuser is still employed.*

Respondents were given a list of factors that are often important to parents when choosing child care and told to select all that apply to them. The top choices among current parents were available space/timing of enrollment (80%), dependability (80%), and positive interactions between staff and children (80%). Among future parents the top choices were location (88%), dependability (81%), available space/timing (75%), and positive interactions between staff and children (75%).

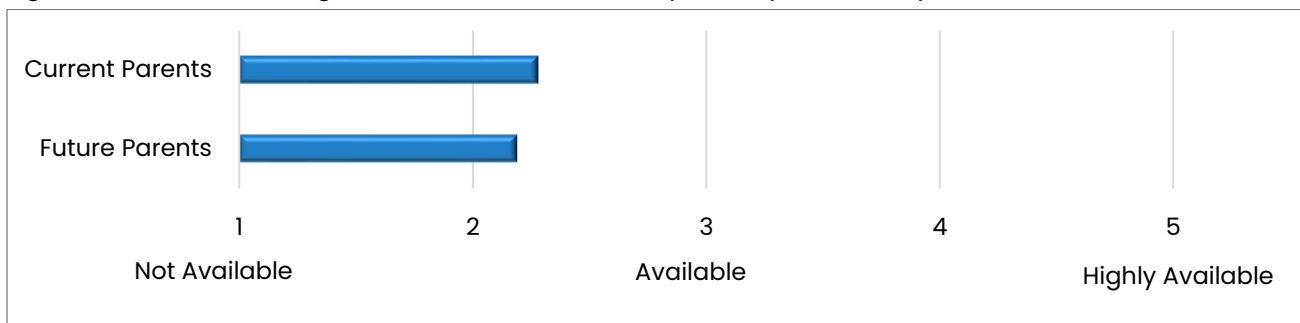
Parents were then asked to select the single factor that is most important to them. The most important factor to current parents was positive interactions between staff and children, which was selected by 32%. The overall top factor among future parents was a tie between health and safety policies (25%) and positive interactions between staff and children (25%). *See table on next page.*

Table 48: Important Factors When Selecting Child Care

	Current Parents		Future Parents	
	All Factors that are Important	Single Most Important	All Factors that are Important	Single Most Important
Available space/timing of enrollment	80%	12%	75%	13%
Care includes preschool	46%	2%	25%	---
Dependability	80%	13%	81%	6%
Drop-in or occasional care	43%	2%	31%	---
Educational curriculum used	55%	4%	56%	---
Evening or 2 nd shift care (after 6:30 pm)	11%	1%	13%	6%
Health and safety policies	59%	9%	63%	25%
Iowa Quality Rating (IQ4K/QRS)	25%	2%	31%	---
Location	73%	4%	88%	13%
Overnight or 3 rd shift care	3%	1%	0%	---
Part-time options	32%	3%	44%	---
Positive interactions between staff and children	80%	32%	75%	25%
Secured entrance	61%	3%	63%	---
Special needs care	8%	1%	31%	---
Transportation to and from school or preschool	40%	2%	31%	---
Tuition assistance or scholarships	18%	1%	31%	6%
Tuition rates or price	45%	6%	63%	6%
Upkeep or appearance of the facility and playground	64%	---	63%	---
Weekend care	9%	1%	31%	---

Parents were asked to rate the availability of child care in Clayton County on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not available, 3 available, and 5 highly available (the higher the score, the more available). The average rating among current parents was 2.28, and the average rating among future parents was 2.19.

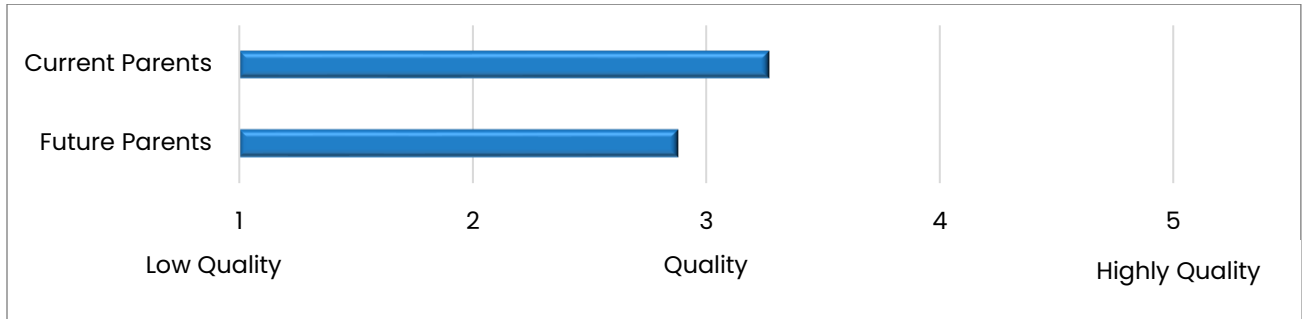
Figure 16: Parents' Ratings of Child Care Availability in Clayton County



Parents were then asked to rate the *quality* of child care in Clayton County on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being low quality, 3 quality, and 5 high quality (the higher the score, the higher quality). The

average rating among current parents was 3.27, and the average rating among future parents was 2.88.

Figure 17: Parents' Ratings of Child Care Quality in Clayton County



At the conclusion of the survey, both groups of parents were asked several open-ended questions about child care in Clayton County. Each question and the responses received are on the following pages.

What is the biggest challenge facing parents regarding child care, and what will resolve that challenge? Comments received were:

- *Finding quality childcare options – facilities that are clean, have adequate resources and interact with and support children in positive ways. Also, a resource to look for multiple childcare options.*
- *Finding good quality workers at daycare. I feel that a tax credit or tax break for daycare workers would help. That way they would have to put their time in before they get their payment.*
- *Finding daycare, we have an amazing provider but when we had our last child we had trouble finding daycare and he was 9 months old before the center we had him on a waitlist called with availability. Just need more providers, increased wages for providers without increasing child care cost to parents may help. But if you have to increase parents' cost, they won't be able to afford it as the cost is already expensive.*
- *There are very few child care centers who have openings to take in new children or families. A lot of this has been due to being short staffed. Daycare centers have difficulties attracting good employees and retaining them since they cannot pay very well. If daycare centers could afford to pay good wages, the staffing issues would be limited. Daycare rates are high and cannot increase to support the wage increase that is needed. Funding needs to be provided to sustain our local daycare centers.*
- *The staffing at centers. I believe the pay will help resolve this situation.*
- *Increased daycare rates – potential state/federal/government funding.*
- *Cost.*

Comments continued... *Biggest challenge facing parents regarding child care, and what will resolve that challenge.*

- *The cost is too much, we are forced to work extra to justify the cost.*
- *The biggest challenge is that childcare providers are not paid enough. This causes the demographic of people working in those positions to be less than desirable, if candidates can be attracted at all. The operational cost to run a childcare facility is incredible. If state dollars could be put into facilities to specifically fund wages and/or benefits packages for children, similar to public school districts, we would see a resolve to the challenge.*
- *Cost and availability. More daycare space/teachers, lower costs.*
- *Challenge: No availability or long waitlists at centers. Resolution ideas: More childcare center options. Need room and workers. Wage increases are needed for workers. Most centers don't offer benefits or insurance. I'd love to figure out how to provide this. Can we partner with school districts more to help childcare workers to qualify under their benefits? Challenge: cost for families. I have no solution as an increased rate is needed to pay workers.*
- *Quality care, both staff and facility.*
- *Hours.*
- *Increasing staffing and changing times of drop off. Making available for all shifts.*
- *Affordability & inadequate staffing. Government funding for all daycares, which includes a livable wage for all daycare employees.*
- *Availability.*
- *Waiting list is so long.*
- *More open availability and cost.*
- *Costs of the daycare center. We pay \$275 per kid per week for a center in Dubuque near my wife's work.*
- *Cost.*
- *Costs & availability.*
- *Space in childcare centers and cost of childcare. However, we also came from cities where childcare is incredibly more expensive, so it doesn't feel nearly as expensive to us, though we recognize its relative and likely feels like a real burden to others.*
- *Cost and availability.*
- *Tuition price and availability. Grants or help of some kind to help child care centers.*
- *Need more availability for children without over working current staff.*
- *The price. I pay \$365 a WEEK for two children. I can't imagine having more kids.*
- *The cost and availability of quality child care. Free child care, living wages for child care workers.*

Comments continued... *Biggest challenge facing parents regarding child care, and what will resolve that challenge.*

- *Safety concerns at local daycare. Increasing pay or benefits for daycare workers. Insure those hired have training for child care.*
- *Not enough dependable child care providers. We need more child care providers in the area. Probably more space at the centers.*
- *Availability. The challenge is finding qualified individuals that want to work in this type of setting.*
- *Availability and cost of childcare. More options for childcare assistance. More options for childcare in general.*
- *Finding dependable people to care for your children and listen to your wants and needs for them during the day. By the staff listening to what you say and keeping you up to date on their daily activities.*
- *More options - provide caregivers with benefits.*
- *Pricing and availability. There needs to be more quality centers and somehow more funding/grants to these centers to decrease the price for families and still ensure decent pay for workers.*
- *Finding a child care provider that will accept special needs children.*
- *The lack of daycares around here - most of the ones are full and do not have openings.*
- *Cost.*
- *Cost and financial burden.*
- *Not enough space or teachers for all ages of children.*
- *Not enough daycare options.*
- *More available places*
- *Price per hour. Need for state support.*
- *Access to a space. Increasing early childcare teachers' wages.*
- *Not enough room in the child care facilities due to not having enough qualified staff.*
- *Lack of workers.*
- *Cost. Location. Availability.*
- *Availability and cost.*
- *Having any available? There are no spots, no openings, and no one seems to really care about part-time families. They are clearly put second to full-time families because of the financial benefit full-time care families provide. The other issue is the quality of care. I'm not sure why anyone would think some of the treatment my children had while at the center in [town] was appropriate. For example, sending a child to nap in clothes soaked in pee and milk from lunch.*
- *Cost.*

Comments continued... *Biggest challenge facing parents regarding child care, and what will resolve that challenge.*

- *Limited options for child care. Having more in-home daycare providers would help, but many that I know who have started in the last few years didn't stick with it and/or were not dependable so that was only a very short-term fix for some parents. Also, I can think of at least 3 in-home providers in the Elkader area that got out of it in the last 5 years or so, limiting the options available. When a couple more providers retire there will be even fewer options. I don't have the answer because like I stated before many who start out as in-homes have shown themselves to not be as dependable, leaving parents back at square one. Also, some individuals hired at centers I would not feel comfortable taking care of my children. When we were seeking care, I was considering not working over having certain individuals be around my child. We are very pleased with the in-home we have as being safe, dependable, caring, clean, routine, & offers great communication about scheduling changes as well as how my children's day was. Having this level of care is exceptional but we will not settle for less and unfortunately some options in our area do not provide this level of care.*
- *Limited choices. Parents are forced to pick places with openings, not necessarily the one they would choose if space wasn't limited.*
- *Cost and availability of care - It's a vicious cycle...you need to pay providers to do a good job but then that comes at an additional cost to parents.*
- *Availability as well as good quality care, opening more centers or having more in-home providers available.*
- *More childcare centers or more providers working at childcare centers.*
- *Lack of openings or availability.*
- *Openings.*
- *Cost and "feel good" that they are in good care. That's tough. We are okay paying more hoping it helps the 'feel good' situation. We all have choices - how many kids to have, where to take them for child care, and what we choose to spend our money on - a boat or childcare. The lack of options for child care limits the choices to make as a parent.*
- *Price.*
- *The cost comparison of being a stay-at-home mom or sending to day care.*
- *Too many kids in in-home daycare creates such a toxic environment. Need to be licensed with the state which makes them charge more and parents can't afford it.*
- *Having centers where it feels safe to drop your kids off and you trust the staff there. Secure entrances, safety plans in place, communication with parents is key as well.*
- *Costs and availability.*
- *Availability and dependability.*
- *Lack of after school program for school aged children.*

Comments continued... *Biggest challenge facing parents regarding child care, and what will resolve that challenge.*

- *The biggest challenge is good, quality, reliable daycare providers where you feel your child is safe, supported, enjoying their time at daycare and with their provider. The center in our community needs a better structure to become financially stable and a reorganization of the current management structure and workforce in order to put a plan in place to hire, train, and employ the right employees (who require a higher rate of pay). The people create the environment, so I believe it starts with the people, no matter what structure you have or how much money you have.*
- *Availability, I see numerous moms asking for more information on child care providers with availability, especially first-time parents or new to the area. A list of child care providers would be helpful, and financial assistance/list of resources/grants, etc. would be great for existing childcare providers.*
- *Staffing to allow more children in each room keeping rates low while still paying a decent wage possible solutions - partnering with the local city to offer health insurance, endowment fund to offset staff costs.*
- *The biggest challenge is the availability. I would like to see more affordable licensed centers.*
- *Weekend availability.*
- *Hours- paying day care providers more so that they have more staff and availability.*
- *The biggest challenge is lack of staff in daycare settings which inhibits the ability to expand to bring more children in.*
- *There are hardly any child care options available!*
- *Expenses...hourly rate & meal costs.*
- *Most jobs start at 5:00 am and daycares don't open until 6:30 am.*
- *Keeping staffing in daycares you can trust, the cost of the rates at daycare needs to come down or more options to help out with parents having children and also working full-time or part-time.*
- *Availability, centers have long waiting lists and in-homes are few in the county. Finding funding to increase pay for center workers would be more appealing for future employment so they can take on more kids.*
- *High prices. Lower prices.*
- *No openings and long waitlists.*
- *Paying openings.*
- *Daycares having adequate and qualified staff. Pay needs to increase to attract quality employees and keep them there. Working with children is not easy. States should allocate more money to help with daycare costs.*

Comments continued... *Biggest challenge facing parents regarding child care, and what will resolve that challenge.*

- *Space, multiple young families in the county are on a long waiting list and unable to return to full-time work, thus limiting productivity at job.*
- *The rate at which daycare is going up is outpacing my paycheck and it is beginning to become a hardship for our family.*
- *Finding a care center that can take children. We struggled finding a place that had a spot available for our first child.*
- *Cost.*
- *Lack of availability and options.*
- *The biggest challenge is hours for our jobs not lining up with our son's school schedule.*
- *Open spots at daycare in your area. More daycares/bigger centers.*
- *It's the price of childcare. If there were more grants or funding out there for childcare to help offset the cost of operating the center so the parents don't have to pay the whole bill.*
- *Knowing who is watching your child and having trust with them is hard anymore. At the center they have great people, but the rates are high and the pay for good staff is lower, so they tend to leave.*
- *Not having available space for kids. And schedules that work with parents' schedules.*
- *Availability.*
- *Trusting strangers to care for our young children and being responsible. Making sure the baby is being changed regularly and fed on cue when they show they are hungry. Consoling the baby when they cry or need attention. Being kind to our older young children and assuring they feel safe when they are away from us.*
- *Available openings at reputable daycares.*
- *Childcare is expensive, but good and reliable childcare is worth the cost. It is important to have staff educated in working with children of various ages, but also different developmental challenges. I expect childcare that is a structured environment to not only play but learn in while being safe and reliable. In the center I expect more than babysitting. To resolve these challenges, I think there needs to be high enough wages but also staff education and training needs to be high priority.*
- *Safe, reliable child care options.*
- *Enough staff, quality staff, and consistent staff. Increase wages to attract the right people to take care of our children in a positive and healthy environment.*
- *There simply aren't enough spots available for those that need it!*
- *Limited childcare spots and availability. Staffing at local center is in a critical state. Centers need more resources to offer employees, without passing the costs on to parents/hourly fee.*

Comments continued... *Biggest challenge facing parents regarding child care, and what will resolve that challenge.*

- *Options for parents working outside the 9:00 to 5:00 day.*
- *The biggest challenge is not having enough daycare providers, including having enough staff at daycare centers. Maybe state-sponsored incentives would help.*
- *Access to affordable, local childcare.*
- *Thankfully we were able to get our kids in to a wonderful in-home daycare; however, if we ever were to have any issues or she decided to no longer watch children, there are no other options in the area.*
- *Availability of childcare- we were fortunate to get our first child enrolled. The 2nd child was more of a challenge, if our current daycare could not take our 2nd due soon, not sure what we'd do? There isn't anything available in our immediate area as we know others reaching out for daycare needs & knowing there is a waitlist for our current daycare.*
- *Most of Clayton County daycares are from 6:00 to 6:00. There are a lot of families in Clayton County that would benefit from overnight daycare.*
- *The fact that we have to call the center to check in on the feeding situation.*
- *Availability for kids to attend and having enough employees at the centers. Also having more or bigger centers.*
- *Child care is expensive and there are not enough options.*
- *My child is 2 and the cost has increased 4+ times since she was enrolled. It is almost too expensive.*
- *No room in daycare.*
- *Not enough daycares.*
- *Availability and quality options.*
- *The biggest challenge I have noticed is the availability of care. The care is there, it just takes forever for a spot to open. I don't know if there are just more kids in today's world needing daycare or if there is a shortage of workers. Maybe one way to resolve this challenge is to have certain employers offer daycare at their place of employment.*
- *Cost.*
- *Dependability that the center will stay open.*
- *Long waiting list due to low staff.*
- *Cost and finding enough quality staff.*
- *Staffing and higher wages. It would be nice to get [center name] associated with the local school district so we can attract more reliable staff and offer better benefits.*
- *Reliability. Costs of care. Employee pool hired at local daycares are less than stellar in some areas.*
- *The cost and openings.*

Comments continued... *Biggest challenge facing parents regarding child care, and what will resolve that challenge.*

- *Availability, quality. If positions could be filled and maintained with quality candidates. Families like having safe, warm, caring adults to care for their children who will be around long-term and when the child is grown you can point out who watched them when they were little vs. lots of different random people and some who seemed to resent if your child was ever a handful to watch. You want to feel like the childcaring adults cared about the children. My oldest is almost an adult and a few women who watched her when she was little still enjoy seeing what she's up to nowadays.*
- *Availability and cost.*
- *Lack of options, lack of staff/unable to accommodate more children. Increasing wages for child care workers.*
- *Lack of available spots caused by insufficient space and not enough employees to staff our daycares.*
- *The cost and availability of care with enough staff. With low wages in this part of the state, childcare providers are struggling to find workers at such low wages, as are many jobs. But childcare seems to be one of the worst. Trusting my child to go to a center daily, I want the best for her.*
- *The lack of qualified individuals, how stretched thin the workers are, and their lack of pay. The facilities are also hard to keep up with the price of everything rising.*
- *Availability of licensed, trustworthy providers.*
- *COST. It is unaffordable to families.*
- *Availability and tuition.*
- *Availability, number/type/location of facility options, early enough drop off times, especially for parents in manufacturing or commuting or don't have family help. It's hard to pay a daycare rate if you have to cut your work hours just to do drop off. And all the flexibility shouldn't fall on the employers. Cost. Proper staffing, management, and board members would help, and funding. Seek out and utilize available resources, team up with others to help get those things, be creative, research, seek out the resolutions.*
- *Facility being big enough to accommodate.*
- *A. Finding child care B. Child care cost. In order to keep people in the workforce (aka the women traditionally and not be stay at home mothers) we need child care availability and affordability which are very tough in today's economy.*
- *Availability - waitlists are very long in our area. Add additional child care facilities or more in-home care options. Expensive - I would think the government could help with this issue. They could provide funding just like they do for public schools.*
- *Availability and open spots for childcare.*
- *The biggest challenges are the tuition fees.*

Comments continued... *Biggest challenge facing parents regarding child care, and what will resolve that challenge.*

- *Availability, cost of care. Child care is so important, and providers deserve fair pay. But the cost of living is so high that it's hard for dual income families to afford care or afford to go to a single income and have a stay-at-home parent.*

The next question asked parents, what opportunities do you see for the future of child care in Clayton County? Comments received were:

- *Would be great to have additional educational opportunities for younger children (3-5 years). Like Head Start, Montessori, outdoor learning, or something like that.*
- *If we want a growing county, we are going to need good quality daycare centers so parents can rely on them to provide for their families.*
- *If funding for daycare centers is not available, future opportunities will be limited. Daycare centers will soon have to increase rates to a level that families will not be able to afford. This will then take employees out of our local workforce which will cause further issues. If funding is made available to daycare, they can raise staff wages and become fully staffed. This will then allow them to maximize the number of kids they can serve.*
- *I would love to see centers being fully staffed and at full occupancy for children.*
- *After school supervised "hangouts" for older school-aged children. Night and weekend daycare options.*
- *After school programs in the location of the school. Local funding to support center growth and staffing.*
- *Public dollars being allocated to public childcare centers.*
- *Better pay for employees and benefits, children's safety, lower costs for families.*
- *I'd love to see more partnerships with schools and communities specifically for school aged children. Contracting out school buses or vans to provide field trips or busing to local pools for communities that don't have one. MFL MarMac has partnered in the past with the Little Bulldog Center in Monona and Dr. Smith Center in McGregor to provide this. A thriving community, school system, and childcare work collectively. You must have all three in order to continue growing and impacting the next generation.*
- *Continue to improve Garnavillo daycare project.*
- *24-hour service.*
- *Hospitals, nursing homes adopting child care centers for health care workers would greatly assist in opening public day care for other families.*
- *To expand and be more affordable.*
- *More options would be helpful.*
- *More open availability and cost.*

Comments continued... *What opportunities do you see for the future of child care in Clayton County.*

- *There really need to be 2nd and third shift options!*
- *Lots of people sticking around and not leaving to go to big cities. More opportunities around here close to family*
- *A secondary center in Elkader, or more space available. 3-year-old preschool option in Elkader.*
- *Definitely a need for more centers and some sort of state funding.*
- *More daycares.*
- *Benefits and better wages for workers, incentives for people to get more education and training to care for children. There is an opportunity to serve many more families.*
- *There is a need for child care but there needs to be better compensation.*
- *Could look to expand possibly as childcare services option seem to be of lacking in the community.*
- *More assistance. Make it more affordable to where the teachers and sitters can still make great money but have some funding to help the cost for parents so more people will work and maybe unemployment rates will go down in the child bearing age adults.*
- *More state aid.*
- *The need for more options. Many in-home daycare in the MFL district have closed.*
- *There needs to be more daycare options in the Starmont area.*
- *Not very many available options. I am fortunate to have gotten in, but I know there is a waiting list.*
- *Increasing space to take in more children.*
- *More qualified staff for licensed daycare centers and more in-home options.*
- *We need more workers and there is room to grow and make it great. Just have to be willing to take on that roll in an everyday life setting. You get to enjoy weekends and holidays, like most people.*
- *Unfortunately, I do not know. I understand it is hard to find highly qualified individuals to work at centers mainly due to pay and it is just a vicious circle trying to provide quality childcare with limited resources.*
- *Worker wage increases to ensure qualified individuals run childcare facilities.*
- *I see the opportunity for more child care centers that are regulated. More options for in-home daycare with more regulations (child to provider ratio).*
- *Any would be great that don't suck and that take part-time. It's honestly one of the reasons we are looking at leaving the community. I'm not sure how you expect to attract anyone here if you can't provide care for children. You certainly won't be attracting any families with young children.*

Comments continued... *What opportunities do you see for the future of child care in Clayton County.*

- *I think if a new center could be put up in the Strawberry Point/Elkader area there would be a huge demand to send kids there.*
- *More centers being built with better pay for workers to keep the facilities staffed.*
- *Incentives for opening daycares with reliable/ monitored providers.*
- *There are so many people interested in quality child care for their children.*
- *Schools collaborating more with child care centers. If the school doesn't have child care built-in, how can they work together with the centers - meals, staffing, HR/admin tasks etc. Before and after school programs.*
- *Having drop-in [care that is] reasonably priced.*
- *We need a bigger facility and to pay the staff better so we can find quality employees to take care of children.*
- *Lower costs for all families and more options for primary and backup. Additionally, when staffing can't be found to staff it hurts so many in the community.*
- *If the current childcare center does not want to explore business options, I think the school should consider purchasing our current child care center and taking it under their wing, including hiring/management and curriculum/standards. Then, with that, offer a 3-year-old preschool program so we can compete with other communities and attract new families to the area.*
- *As younger families continue to make their home in our area, there will always be an opportunity for growth, and I hope more centers open their doors!*
- *Improved daycare in [town name]. Staffing people who are trustworthy, dependable and good with the kids is hard due to low pay.*
- *Growing partners with daycares - employers, city government - find a way to secure long-term staff.*
- *More day care centers are needed.*
- *I would say there are opportunities in more centers. Elkader and the surrounding areas are having more young families moving to the area, and there is a lack of licensed childcare to accommodate.*
- *More government programs to give providers a living wage.*
- *Improved facilities, new or updating. Improved assistance with paying staff. Most daycares are nonprofit.*
- *A strong daycare center.*
- *Need bigger facilities.*
- *There needs to be more available, other than unlicensed in-home providers.*
- *Hopefully more safe and affordable options.*
- *Opening facilities that are open earlier and longer.*

Comments continued... *What opportunities do you see for the future of child care in Clayton County.*

- *Hopefully more daycares having preschool that is accredited for 3-year-olds, also having more money assistance with cost of daycare.*
- *Unfortunately, opportunities seem to be declining as many have a hard time getting or retaining staff. The wages offered do not allow workers to live comfortably.*
- *Hopefully more centers.*
- *I would love to open a licensed childcare center.*
- *Increased capacity to keep Clayton County growing.*
- *No opportunities- costs too much to run a quality center. Would prefer the available option to stay home with children but can't afford to pay for healthcare.*
- *A better location for my current child care. My kids attend [center], which is [in] a busy traffic area. The building itself consists of small rooms without much room to play or move around in. They are cramped and appear cluttered. It would be nice to have a roomier and more comfortable space for young, active children to move around their environment.*
- *More after school and maybe even before school programs.*
- *Would love for the county to have grants or benefits for the families who are working in the community to encourage them to stay. There is assistance for people who work less and send their kids, but it seems like the ones who work and work jobs the county needs are the ones who make too much to qualify for any help, and then still struggle with paying the high daycare bills.*
- *Hopefully having a good amount of space for the kids.*
- *It is hard to find childcare and I believe it will continue to be a struggle. It's a financial strain as it is expensive if you use an in-home option and if you choose a childcare facility then you worry about whether your child is truly being taken care of. I see it being a continuous struggle to find adequate and reliable childcare outside of our family that we are able to trust with our children.*
- *Feel the demand is there, hoping to see new facilities open.*
- *More daycare options- needing to have the ability to pay daycare providers without having to have outrageous pricing for families. Daycare is expensive & costs will continue to rise if we aren't able to get more funding for these centers.*
- *Same as above, but daycares already now are becoming super full. In general, even more daycares with more hours would be great.*
- *Hoping to find someone who would either come to my home and get them ready and take them to school, or a place that does this to help out.*
- *Incentives for opening at-home daycare, expanding incentives to begin working at a daycare facility.*

Comments continued... *What opportunities do you see for the future of child care in Clayton County.*

- *Child care should have as much priority as schools. The first years of a child's life are so important for growth, learning and development. A successful transition from child care to school should be seamless. We are very happy with our current center and our children are now thriving, but we experienced a very poorly educated and managed center/staff prior. Two things we learned in the last 1 to 5 years. 1- the state doesn't investigate child abuse reports out of a daycare unless there are marks left on the child. 2- If there are new bruises found on a child arriving home from daycare, if the state can't determine who did it- nothing changes, and no one is aware that something is happening. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of having well-educated staff and boards, ethical practices in place. With good communication and transparency to parents. A board that is run professionally and doesn't tell parents they should have quit their job to take care of their kids, instead considers how their staff is part of the situation and solution.*
- *Increased available openings, increased wages to employ quality, reliable staff, increased financial assistance for families so they can remain in the workforce while raising a family.*
- *The county and the cities need to start helping to fund childcare or they are going to lose residents and workforce.*
- *I'd be hopeful the local center can get adequate staffing and be able to be at full capacity. Currently operating at about 70% and could take around 30 more kids if staffing was adequate.*
- *I think it will be more of an issue with not having child care access.*
- *There was recent opportunity/talk about a new center in our town but not enough people caring about the future to help make the build happen.*
- *Having the child care centers work directly with the schools, or having child care centers attached to healthcare facilities.*
- *There are multiple day care centers in different towns, and I think if they were under the same umbrella and run the same way it would be more efficient.*
- *Many grants are currently available, new potential space in Guttenberg (community resource center).*
- *I see the opportunity to expand our childcare centers, but we also need to staff those places.*
- *More educational programs.*
- *Availability is key to growing our community. People will be more likely to live, work, and shop here if they have childcare available.*
- *Expanded assistance for cost and additional options.*

Comments continued... *What opportunities do you see for the future of child care in Clayton County.*

- *New daycare center.*
- *In-home daycare providers may dwindle due to age. While daycares in some towns are not self-sustainable and never have been. Plus, as mentioned before the quality of employees is concerning.*
- *More scholarships for families for childcare.*
- *If centers/daycares could provide better wages, including benefits and insurance, without making the weekly cost ridiculous, it would be a game changer. Then centers could be fully staffed, employees/staff might be more reliable, and all available spots for kiddos could be filled.*
- *I wish Guttenberg could get a new daycare center with good people running it.*

The final question asked parents to share any additional comments they have about child care in Clayton County. Comments received were:

- *Higher wages and benefits for workers and larger facility.*
- *We are facing a childcare crisis across the state and right here in Clayton County. We must act now to preserve the childcare centers that we do have. This directly impacts our local workforce and in turn affects our local economy. It seems all daycare centers are facing the same issues in our county. It is time that our centers and their boards & directors team up and work together to find a solution.*
- *Garnavillo Community Daycare is appreciated beyond measure!*
- *Child care cost in today's society is expensive, and most of the centers aren't price gouging they're trying have competitive wages for their staff so they can maintain and or recruit better staff. Child care is not like many other businesses. When a business wants to get more income with the same staff it can go to overtime and put more production out. Child care has ratios it needs to follow, therefore the only way for the center to increase revenue is to raise rates, which has put a tremendous hurt on the parents the last 3 years with the dramatic inflation costs. I think if we want to continue to keep people working in the workforce the state needs to come up with better incentives to help assist child care centers, HHS licensed especially.*
- *If there's any way to increase pay in childcare centers without increasing parents' cost for care, this should be looked into. I feel so blessed to live in Garnavillo and to have my kids go to the daycare center in town.*
- *Thank you for taking time to investigate this issue. The community & parents thank you!*
- *Be nice to get more in-home daycare, struggling to have no daycare, work a 12-hour shift, and have to stay up all day to watch your children,*

Comments continued... Share any additional comments they have about child care in Clayton County.

- Availability and quality of care are the two biggest priorities to the childcare industry in Clayton County. The only resolve to that is to enhance compensation and benefits packages for facilities to attract and retain the right people in the right positions.
- Need more advertising of what is available.
- Seems that Garnavillo has a nice facility now, but I hear that they're booked out for the next 6 months. We live in [different town] and a better care facility there would be nice.
- Staff members need to be paid more so facilities can retain their employees and they become quality employees. There should also be paid tuition for those wanting to further their career and become coordinators or directors of centers.
- The rates are insane. I understand employees have to be paid but there has to be some state assistance to help with these rates.
- Safety at current daycare in [town] is my biggest concern. I do not trust the facility.
- It's a challenge to try and improve the childcare programs. We are happy and thankful for those that are at the daycare as we feel they do a fantastic job.
- No real stability of childcare if you have multiple children, part-time is not even available in our center last time I checked. Just quit checking after a while of no's. I think if we ever got in, we'd use full-time.
- I feel really lucky that I have a flexible job schedule and a daycare center that has staff that has a lot of experience.
- Overall, we just need more workers. I think the [number of] people not wanting to work is hurting the country as a whole. Everyone needs childcare. Not everyone has the luxury of leaving their kids with family or working from home.
- My daughter is unable to attend 3-year-old preschool because the daycare center can't find a teacher.
- We need more places and more flexibility.
- My current provider is licensed and does such a wonderful job. There aren't many in the area like that.
- My children have been at 2 different centers and had in-home babysitters in the summer. When they switched to Garnavillo Daycare they thrived! Staff there is wonderful, constantly communicating and my kids feel safe and cared for. They also do a great job teaching the kids, not just having them watch TV.
- Centers need more assistance to be able to draw more staffing in. If centers were able to offer some sort of insurance benefit, I think it would help tremendously.
- There seems to be a lack of at-home providers, which tends to be more personable and cheaper than facilities.

Comments continued... Share any additional comments they have about child care in Clayton County.

- *I'm disgusted by the current state of care in Clayton County. There are families in need and nothing is being done to help them. In my community and workplace people are being forced to drive upwards of 30 minutes one way for care so they can work. And the options that are available aren't great. Oh, you have an in-home? Great! But you aren't certified, have large dogs, and won't do part-time care. Awesome, that does nothing for my family. The quality here as well is an issue. The [center name] is full of employees who can't seem to use logic or spell. Why am I trusting someone who comes across as completely uneducated to watch my children? Probably because it was the only option available, before even that was taken away. Maybe one of the issues the childcare center is having with retaining families is the way they treat them. We have been dropped, not once, but twice, with 3 day's notice to find other care, which quite frankly, doesn't exist. Maybe consider a systematic change? Maybe a different director who is less concerned with being on a power trip and more concerned with treating families in a way that shows she actually cares about them or their children.*
- *I have mentioned it in some answers above but adding more licensed centers in the area. When I was moving here, I put my child on the list 3 months before moving here, and called monthly to check where we were at. I was told a certain time, but they kept pushing it back. Then they took our name off the list altogether.*
- *When I was 5 weeks pregnant with my son, I was placed on a waitlist that told me he wouldn't be able to get in to the center in my hometown until he was 12+ months old. He had to go to an in-home daycare that was 30 minutes away from our home and a 10-mile drive past where I worked at the time. We were able to get him into the center in our hometown when he was 7 months old.*
- *It is extremely concerning to us as parents to a 3-month-old baby, we hear MORE negative comments about the [center name] than good feedback. We are putting our trust in complete strangers to care for our children more than we see them in a week's time. It makes me sick to my stomach thinking our child will not be adequately taken care of.*
- *Hard to find.*
- *It's lacking, there needs to be funding in Clayton County for daycares. Allowing them to hire quality staff at better rates of payment without continuing to raise childcare costs. Having to constantly fundraise for the daycare & increased costs for families is not easy. Funding is a major issue I see in our area to be able to provide a quality, educational daycare experience for our children.*

Comments continued... Share any additional comments they have about child care in Clayton County.

- *I would NEVER take my child to the [center name], the director starts a lot of arguments with parents and workers. The daycare in [different town] is however where we go on early out days and the staff is wonderful.*
- *I take my child to a daycare center that is run and employs family members of the person running the facility - not sure if that is why turnover is so high.*
- *We are very lucky to have such excellent care close to home. I know not everyone can afford or have access to that! We will continue to support child care in Clayton County as long as we can!*
- *What I would like to see is the availability of quality occasional daycare. I enjoy being a stay-at-home parent but would find it beneficial if my youngest who won't be in school for a few years yet could attend somewhere for socialization on occasion vs. play dates and preschool being it.*
- *Happy with our in-home provider where my child has and currently receives love and appropriate attention. This is what I appreciate while they're developing and learning to grow.*
- *The center we currently use is fabulous. There are a few gals that have been there since our child started. But the staff is always changing, and they struggle to find workers. When looking at childcare options, as someone not originally from this area, I didn't know of any home or private daycares. Just the centers that are more known. After hearing of struggles and shortages, we had our child registered and a spot reserved long before she was born. I think that was our saving grace, otherwise I wouldn't have known what to do. A centralized spot regarding all child care options and current availability within the county would be wonderful.*
- *We go to the Garnavillo daycare and love it. It's an amazing place, and the people are great. I really wish every daycare center could be like they are!*

CHILD CARE GAP ANALYSIS

Calculating the gap in a child care market takes into consideration multiple factors, and as solutions to address this gap are considered, it must be kept in mind that not all families will utilize child care, and those that do will have a variety of needs with some children attending full-time while others attend only part-time and therefore may share a space. If there were exactly one space for each child, some spaces would not be utilized, or would be utilized in a manner that would not allow the child care provider to maintain a sustainable business model.

The following summary of the supply and demand provides an estimation of the gap between the number of children likely to use regulated child care and the number of spaces available in programs currently regulated by Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for Clayton County.

According to the US Census Bureau there are 2,481 children ages 0 to 11 in Clayton County. Of those, First Children’s Finance (FCF) estimates 1,973 have all parents working. If it is assumed these families are represented by responses of the current parents that participated in the child care needs survey, then 79% or approximately 1,559 of the children are from families who prefer and are likely to use an HHS regulated child care setting. According to Iowa HHS, there are 581 regulated spaces in Clayton County, of which, 581 are available year-round. There are enough spaces to serve approximately 37% of the children whose parents need full-time, year-round care in order to work. That means there is a shortage of 975 total spaces: 151 spaces for children ages 0 to 2, 79 spaces for preschool age children, 745 spaces for school age children during the school year, and 716 spaces for the school age children during the summer months.

The following table shows the number of children likely to use HHS regulated care versus the number of spaces available within HHS regulated child care programs in Clayton County.

Table 49: Estimated Child Care Gap in Clayton County

	Children w/All Parents Working	Likely to Use Regulated Care	Total Capacity	Child Care Gap	Year-Round Capacity	Child Care Gap
Age 0 to 2	504	398	247	-151	247	-151
Age 3 to 4	302	239	160	-79	160	-79
Age 5 to 11	1,167	922	206	-716	177	-745
Total	1,973	1,559	613	-946	581	-975

In Clayton County there is a need for more regulated child care spaces. The majority of parents indicated a desire for child care year-round, Monday through Friday. The largest group indicated they prefer to be able to drop their child off 7:00 am to 7:59 am and to pick them up 5:00 to 5:59

pm. When selecting care, the most important factor to current parents was positive interactions between staff and children. Parents prefer care within a licensed center, in the town where they live. Overall, 79% prefer to enroll their children in an Iowa HHS regulated setting—either a licensed center or registered child development home.

The following pages contain a summary of the number of children and the HHS regulated child care supply for each incorporated city that sits at least partially within Clayton County. Data included in the summary for each community was collected and calculated separately from Clayton County child care gap analysis. Each summary includes all data from within the city limits, even if those boundaries extend outside of Clayton County. Unincorporated areas of Clayton County are not included in the community summaries.

Summary of Child Care in Clayton

According to the US Census Bureau, there are no children ages 0 to 11 in the city limits of Clayton.

According to preferences among all parents completing the child care needs survey, 2% of current parents and 0% of future parents prefer care in Clayton, regardless of where they live. Among those that completed the survey and indicated they live in Clayton, most prefer care in Clayton, while the remainder prefer Garnavillo or Guttenberg.

There are no regulated child care providers in Clayton.

Table 50: Clayton Child Care Supply and Demand

Children	Total Children	Children w/All Parents Working	Likely to Use Regulated Child Care
Age 0 to 2	0	---	---
Age 3 to 4	0	---	---
Age 5 to 11	0	---	---
Total children	0	---	---
HHS Regulated Providers			
	Ages Served	Total Capacity	Year-Round Capacity
N/A	---	---	---
Total child care spaces	---	---	---

Summary of Child Care in Edgewood

The community of Edgewood sits primarily in Clayton County, with a portion also in Delaware County. According to the US Census Bureau, 100% of families with children ages 0 to 5, and 100% of families with children ages 6 to 17 in the city limits of Edgewood, have all parents in the labor force. When looking at children that are in the age range most likely to use child care, (ages 0 to 11), FCF estimates approximately 88 children have all parents working. Taking into consideration parent preferences shared through the child care needs survey, FCF estimates 70 of those are likely to use regulated child care.

According to preferences among all parents completing the child care needs survey, 9% of current parents and 38% of future parents prefer care in Edgewood, regardless of where they live. Among those that completed the survey and indicated they live in Edgewood, most prefer care in Edgewood, while the remainder prefer Elkader or Strawberry Point.

There is 1 HHS regulated child care provider that serves infants through school age children, with a maximum capacity of 76 spaces, which are available year-round.

Table 51: Edgewood Child Care Supply and Demand

Children	Total Children	Children w/All Parents Working	Likely to Use Regulated Child Care
Age 0 to 2	28	28	22
Age 3 to 4	26	26	21
Age 5 to 11	34	34	27
Total children	88	88	70
HHS Regulated Providers			
	Ages Served	Total Capacity	Year-Round Capacity
Kinderwood Child Care Center	0 to 12	76	76
Total child care spaces	---	76	76

Summary of Child Care in Elkader

According to the US Census Bureau, 87% of families with children ages 0 to 5, and 100% of families with children ages 6 to 17 in the city limits of Elkader, have all parents in the labor force. When looking at children that are in the age range most likely to use child care, (ages 0 to 11), FCF estimates approximately 188 children have all parents working. Taking into consideration parent preferences shared through the child care needs survey, FCF estimates 148 of those are likely to use regulated child care.

According to preferences among all parents completing the child care needs survey, 21% of current parents 19% of future parents prefer care in Elkader, regardless of where they live. Among those that completed the survey and indicated they live in Elkader, nearly all prefer care in Elkader, while the remainder prefer Garnavillo or Guttenberg.

There is 1 HHS regulated child care program that serves infants through school age children. That provider has a maximum capacity of 100 spaces, which are available year-round. Separately there are 2 programs operated by Central Community School District which are exempt from licensing by HHS. While these programs are valuable to many families, they do not provide full-time, year-round child care.

Table 52: Elkader Child Care Supply and Demand

Children	Total Children	Children w/All Parents Working	Likely to Use Regulated Child Care
Age 0 to 2	37	32	25
Age 3 to 4	26	23	18
Age 5 to 11	137	133	105
Total children	200	188	148
HHS Regulated Providers			
	Ages Served	Total Capacity	Year-Round Capacity
Elkader Childcare and Learning Center	0 to 12	100	100
Total child care spaces	---	100	100

Summary of Child Care in Elkport

According to the US Census Bureau, there are no children ages 0 to 11 in the city limits of Elkport.

According to preferences among all parents completing the child care needs survey, no current or future parents indicated that they prefer care in Elkport. Among those that completed the survey and indicated they live in Elkport, all prefer care in Edgewood.

There are no HHS regulated child care providers in Elkport.

Table 53: Elkport Child Care Supply and Demand

Children	Total Children	Children w/All Parents Working	Likely to Use Regulated Child Care
Age 0 to 2	0	---	---
Age 3 to 4	0	---	---
Age 5 to 11	0	---	---
Total children	0	---	---
HHS Regulated Providers			
	Ages Served	Total Capacity	Year-Round Capacity
N/A	---	---	---
Total child care spaces	---	---	---

Summary of Child Care in Farmersburg

According to the US Census Bureau, 80% of families with children ages 0 to 5, and 74% of families with children ages 6 to 17 in the city limits of Farmersburg, have all parents in the labor force. When looking at children that are in the age range most likely to use child care, (ages 0 to 11), FCF estimates approximately 64 children have all parents working. Taking into consideration parent preferences shared through the child care needs survey, FCF estimates 50 of those are likely to use regulated child care.

According to preferences among all parents completing the child care needs survey, no current or future parents indicated they prefer care in Farmersburg. Among those that completed the survey and indicated they live in Farmersburg about half prefer care in Elkader, while the remainder prefer Garnavillo or Monona.

There are no HHS regulated child care providers in Farmersburg.

Table 54: Farmersburg Child Care Supply and Demand

Children	Total Children	Children w/All Parents Working	Likely to Use Regulated Child Care
Age 0 to 2	15	9	7
Age 3 to 4	6	4	3
Age 5 to 11	64	51	40
Total children	85	64	50
HHS Regulated Providers	Ages Served	Total Capacity	Year-Round Capacity
N/A	---	---	---
Total child care spaces	---	---	---

Summary of Child Care in Garber

According to the US Census Bureau, 100% of families with children ages 0 to 5, and 100% of families with children ages 6 to 17 in the city limits of Garber, have all parents in the labor force. When looking at children that are in the age range most likely to use child care, (ages 0 to 11), FCF estimates approximately 5 children have all parents working. Taking into consideration parent preferences shared through the child care needs survey, FCF estimates 3 of those are likely to use regulated child care.

According to preferences among all parents completing the child care needs survey, no current or future parents indicated they prefer care in Garber. Among those that completed the survey and indicated they live in Garber about half prefer care in Garnavillo, while the remainder prefer Colesburg or Guttenberg.

There are no HHS regulated child care providers in Garber.

Table 55: Garber Child Care Supply and Demand

Children	Total Children	Children w/All Parents Working	Likely to Use Regulated Child Care
Age 0 to 2	7	2	1
Age 3 to 4	1	1	1
Age 5 to 11	5	2	1
Total children	13	5	3
HHS Regulated Providers	Ages Served	Total Capacity	Year-Round Capacity
N/A	---	---	---
Total child care spaces	---	---	---

Summary of Child Care in Garnavillo

According to the US Census Bureau, 100% of families with children ages 0 to 5, and 72% of families with children ages 6 to 17 in the city limits of Garnavillo, have all parents in the labor force. When looking at children that are in the age range most likely to use child care, (ages 0 to 11), FCF estimates approximately 145 children have all parents working. Taking into consideration parent preferences shared through the child care needs survey, FCF estimates 115 of those are likely to use regulated child care.

According to preferences among all parents completing the child care needs survey, 16% of current parents and 0% of future parents prefer care in Garnavillo, regardless of where they live. Among those that completed the survey and indicated they live in Garnavillo almost all prefer care in Garnavillo, while the remainder prefer Elkader or Guttenberg.

There is 1 HHS regulated child care program that serves infants through school age children. That provider has a maximum capacity of 74 spaces which are available year-round.

Table 56: Garnavillo Child Care Supply and Demand

Children	Total Children	Children w/All Parents Working	Likely to Use Regulated Child Care
Age 0 to 2	42	40	32
Age 3 to 4	15	14	11
Age 5 to 11	103	91	72
Total children	160	145	115
HHS Regulated Providers			
	Ages Served	Total Capacity	Year-Round Capacity
Garnavillo Community Day Care	0 to 12	74	74
Total child care spaces	---	74	74

Summary of Child Care in Guttenberg

According to the US Census Bureau, 100% of families with children ages 0 to 5, and 100% of families with children ages 6 to 17 in the city limits of Guttenberg, have all parents in the labor force. When looking at children that are in the age range most likely to use child care, (ages 0 to 11), FCF estimates approximately 110 children ages 0 to 11 have all parents working. Taking into consideration parent preferences shared through the child care needs survey, FCF estimates 87 of those are likely to use regulated child care.

According to preferences among all parents completing the child care needs survey, 14% of current parents and 6% of future parents prefer care in Guttenberg, regardless of where they live. Among those that completed the survey and indicated they live in Guttenberg most prefer care in Guttenberg, while the remainder prefer Garnavillo.

There are 3 HHS regulated child care programs that serve infants through school age children. Those providers have a collective maximum capacity of 83 spaces, which are available year-round. Separately there are 3 programs operated by local schools which are exempt from licensing by HHS. While these programs are valuable to many families, they do not provide full-time, year-round child care.

Table 57: Guttenberg Child Care Supply and Demand

Children	Total Children	Children w/All Parents Working	Likely to Use Regulated Child Care
Age 0 to 2	21	21	17
Age 3 to 4	17	17	13
Age 5 to 11	72	72	57
Total children	110	110	87
HHS Regulated Providers			
	Ages Served	Total Capacity	Year-Round Capacity
Kids Kampus Community Childcare	0 to 12	47	47
NEICAC- Guttenberg Head Start	3 to 5	20	20
Wanda Lacy- Registered Home	0 to 12	16	16
Total child care spaces	---	83	83

Summary of Child Care in Luana

According to the US Census Bureau, 89% of families with children ages 0 to 5, and 74% of families with children ages 6 to 17 in the city limits of Luana, have all parents in the labor force. When looking at children that are in the age range most likely to use child care, (ages 0 to 11), FCF estimates approximately 37 children have all parents working. Taking into consideration parent preferences shared through the child care needs survey, FCF estimates 34 of those are likely to use regulated child care.

According to preferences among all parents completing the child care needs survey, 1% of current parents and 0% of future parents prefer care in Luana, regardless of where they live. Those that completed the survey and indicated they live in Luana are split preferring care equally in Luana and Monona.

There is 1 HHS regulated child care provider that serves children up to age 12. That provider has a maximum capacity of 12.

Table 58: Luana Child Care Supply and Demand

Children	Total Children	Children w/All Parents Working	Likely to Use Regulated Child Care
Age 0 to 2	23	26	26
Age 3 to 4	9	3	2
Age 5 to 11	11	8	6
Total children	43	37	34
HHS Regulated Providers			
	Ages Served	Total Capacity	Year-Round Capacity
Kristy Novey- Registered Home	0 to 12	12	12
Total child care spaces	---	12	12

Summary of Child Care in Marquette

According to the US Census Bureau, 75% of families with children ages 0 to 5, and 100% of families with children ages 6 to 17 in the city limits of Marquette, have all parents in the labor force. When looking at children that are in the age range most likely to use child care, (ages 0 to 11), FCF estimates approximately 34 children have all parents working. Taking into consideration parent preferences shared through the child care needs survey, FCF estimates 27 of those are likely to use regulated child care.

According to preferences among all parents completing the child care needs survey, 2% of current parents and 0% of future parents prefer care in Marquette, regardless of where they live. Among those that completed the survey and indicated they live in Marquette all indicated they prefer care in Marquette.

There are currently no HHS regulated child care providers.

Table 59: Marquette Child Care Supply and Demand

Children	Total Children	Children w/All Parents Working	Likely to Use Regulated Child Care
Age 0 to 2	5	4	3
Age 3 to 4	13	10	8
Age 5 to 11	20	20	16
Total children	38	34	27
HHS Regulated Providers			
	Ages Served	Total Capacity	Year-Round Capacity
N/A	---	---	---
Total child care spaces	---	---	---

Summary of Child Care in McGregor

According to the US Census Bureau, 100% of families with children ages 0 to 5, and 100% of families with children ages 6 to 17 in the city limits of McGregor, have all parents in the labor force. When looking at children that are in the age range most likely to use child care, (ages 0 to 11), FCF estimates approximately 95 children have all parents working. Taking into consideration parent preferences shared through the child care needs survey, FCF estimates 75 of those are likely to use regulated child care.

According to preferences among all parents completing the child care needs survey, 5% of current parents and 6% of future parents prefer care in McGregor, regardless of where they live. Among those that completed the survey and indicated they live in McGregor most prefer care in McGregor, while the remainder prefer Garnavillo or Monona.

There are 3 HHS regulated child care providers, with a collective maximum capacity of 79 spaces. Of those spaces, 50 are available during the school year and 79 during the summer when one of the programs operates a second location for school age care.

Table 60: McGregor Child Care Supply and Demand

Children	Total Children	Children w/All Parents Working	Likely to Use Regulated Child Care
Age 0 to 2	10	10	8
Age 3 to 4	9	9	7
Age 5 to 11	76	76	60
Total children	95	95	75
HHS Regulated Providers			
	Ages Served	Total Capacity	Year-Round Capacity
Debra Mason, Registered Home	0 to 12	12	12
Dr. Clifford C. Smith Childcare Center	0 to 12	38	38
Dr. Smith School Age Summer Program	5 to 12	29	0
Total child care spaces	---	79	50

Summary of Child Care in Monona

According to the US Census Bureau, 81% of families with children ages 0 to 5, and 100% of families with children ages 6 to 17 in the city limits of Monona, have all parents in the labor force. When looking at children that are in the age range most likely to use child care, (ages 0 to 11), FCF estimates approximately 243 children have all parents working. Taking into consideration parent preferences shared through the child care needs survey, FCF estimates 192 of those are likely to use regulated child care.

According to preferences among all parents completing the child care needs survey, 15% of current parents and 13% of future parents prefer care in Monona, regardless of where they live. Among those that completed the survey and indicated they live in Monona almost all prefer care in Monona, while the remainder prefer Elkader.

There are 3 HHS regulated child care providers with a collective capacity of 99. One of the programs, Monona Head Start, is an income-based preschool program for children ages 3 to 5 which may not be accessible to all families in the community.

Table 61: Monona Child Care Supply and Demand

Children	Total Children	Children w/All Parents Working	Likely to Use Regulated Child Care
Age 0 to 2	58	47	37
Age 3 to 4	49	40	32
Age 5 to 11	161	156	123
Total children	268	243	192
HHS Regulated Providers			
	Ages Served	Total Capacity	Year-Round Capacity
Little Bulldog Child Care	0 to 12	67	67
Mary Biedermann- Registered Home	0 to 12	12	12
NEICAC- Monona Head Start	3 to 5	20	20
Total child care spaces	---	99	99

Summary of Child Care in North Buena Vista

According to the US Census Bureau, 100% of families with children ages 0 to 5, and 100% of families with children ages 6 to 17 in the city limits of North Buena Vista, have all parents in the labor force. When looking at children that are in the age range most likely to use child care, (ages 0 to 11), FCF estimates approximately 12 children have all parents working. Taking into consideration parent preferences shared through the child care needs survey, FCF estimates 9 of those are likely to use regulated child care.

According to preferences among all parents completing the child care needs survey, no current or future parents indicated they prefer care in North Buena Vista. Among those that completed the survey none indicated they live in North Buena Vista.

There are currently no HHS regulated child care providers.

Table 62: North Buena Vista Child Care Supply and Demand

Children	Total Children	Children w/All Parents Working	Likely to Use Regulated Child Care
Age 0 to 2	4	4	3
Age 3 to 4	3	3	2
Age 5 to 11	5	5	4
Total children	12	12	9
HHS Regulated Providers			
	Ages Served	Total Capacity	Year-Round Capacity
N/A	---	---	---
Total child care spaces	---	---	---

Summary of Child Care in Osterdock

According to the US Census Bureau, 100% of families with children ages 0 to 5, and 29% of families with children ages 6 to 17 in the city limits of Osterdock, have all parents in the labor force. When looking at children that are in the age range most likely to use child care, (ages 0 to 11), FCF estimates approximately 20 children have all parents working. Taking into consideration parent preferences shared through the child care needs survey, FCF estimates 15 of those are likely to use regulated child care.

According to preferences among all parents completing the child care needs survey, 1% of current parents and 0% of future parents prefer care in Osterdock, regardless of where they live. Among those that completed the survey no one indicated they live in Osterdock.

There are currently no HHS regulated child care providers.

Table 63: Osterdock Child Care Supply and Demand

Children	Total Children	Children w/All Parents Working	Likely to Use Regulated Child Care
Age 0 to 2	7	7	6
Age 3 to 4	11	11	7
Age 5 to 11	3	2	2
Total children	21	20	15
HHS Regulated Providers	Ages Served	Total Capacity	Year-Round Capacity
N/A	---	---	---
Total child care spaces	---	---	---

Summary of Child Care in Postville

The community of Postville sits primarily in Allamakee County, with a portion also in Clayton County. According to the US Census Bureau, 46% of families with children ages 0 to 5, and 64% of families with children ages 6 to 17 in the city limits of Postville, have all parents in the labor force. When looking at children that are in the age range most likely to use child care, (ages 0 to 11), FCF estimates approximately 371 children have all parents working. Taking into consideration parent preferences shared through the child care needs survey, FCF estimates 293 of those are likely to use regulated child care.

According to preferences among all parents completing the child care needs survey, 1% of current parents and 0% of future parents prefer care in Postville, regardless of where they live. Among those that completed the survey no one indicated they live in Postville.

There are 4 HHS regulated child care providers serving infants through school age children. Those providers have a collective capacity of 154 spaces. One of the programs, Postville Head Start, is an income-based preschool program for children ages 3 to 5 which may not be accessible to all families in the community.

Table 64: Postville Child Care Supply and Demand

Children	Total Children	Children w/All Parents Working	Likely to Use Regulated Child Care
Age 0 to 2	115	53	42
Age 3 to 4	144	66	52
Age 5 to 11	419	252	199
Total children	678	371	293
HHS Regulated Providers	Ages Served	Total Capacity	Year-Round Capacity
NEICAC- Postville Head Start	3 to 5	50	50
Postville Childcare Services, Inc.	0 to 12	80	80
Robin Kjosa, Registered Home	0 to 12	12	12
Sarah Flores, Registered Home	0 to 12	12	12
Total child care spaces	---	154	154

Summary of Child Care in St. Olaf

According to the US Census Bureau, 87% of families with children ages 0 to 5, and 70% of families with children ages 6 to 17 in the city limits of St. Olaf, have all parents in the labor force. When looking at children that are in the age range most likely to use child care, (ages 0 to 11), FCF estimates approximately 27 children have all parents working. Taking into consideration parent preferences shared through the child care needs survey, FCF estimates 21 of those are likely to use regulated child care.

According to preferences among all parents completing the child care needs survey, 1% of current parents and 0% of future parents prefer care in St. Olaf, regardless of where they live. Among those that completed the survey and indicated they live in St. Olaf most prefer care in Elkader, while the remainder prefer St. Olaf, Clayton, or Garnavillo.

There are currently no HHS regulated child care providers.

Table 65: St. Olaf Child Care Supply and Demand

Children	Total Children	Children w/All Parents Working	Likely to Use Regulated Child Care
Age 0 to 2	11	10	8
Age 3 to 4	4	3	2
Age 5 to 11	20	14	11
Total children	35	27	21
HHS Regulated Providers			
	Ages Served	Total Capacity	Year-Round Capacity
N/A	---	---	---
Total child care spaces	---	---	---

Summary of Child Care in Strawberry Point

According to the US Census Bureau, 83% of families with children ages 0 to 5, and 84% of families with children ages 6 to 17 in the city limits of Strawberry Point, have all parents in the labor force. When looking at children that are in the age range most likely to use child care, (ages 0 to 11), FCF estimates approximately 226 children have all parents working. Taking into consideration parent preferences shared through the child care needs survey, FCF estimates 179 of those are likely to use regulated child care.

According to preferences among all parents completing the child care needs survey, 13% of current parents and 19% of future parents prefer care in Strawberry Point, regardless of where they live. Among those that completed the survey and indicated they live in Strawberry Point most prefer care in Strawberry Point, while the remainder prefer Elkader or Volga.

There is 1 HHS regulated child care provider that serves infants through school age children. That provider has a capacity of 70 spaces, which are available year-round.

Table 66: Strawberry Point Child Care Supply and Demand

Children	Total Children	Children w/All Parents Working	Likely to Use Regulated Child Care
Age 0 to 2	72	60	47
Age 3 to 4	31	26	21
Age 5 to 11	168	140	111
Total children	271	226	179
HHS Regulated Providers	Ages Served	Total Capacity	Year-Round Capacity
Berry Tender Child Care	0 to 12	70	70
Total child care spaces	---	70	70

Summary of Child Care in Volga

According to the US Census Bureau, 42% of families with children ages 0 to 5, and 63% of families with children ages 6 to 17 in the city limits of Volga, have all parents in the labor force. When looking at children that are in the age range most likely to use child care, (ages 0 to 11), FCF estimates approximately 12 children have all parents working. Taking into consideration parent preferences shared through the child care needs survey, FCF estimates 9 of those are likely to use regulated child care.

According to preferences among all parents completing the child care needs survey, 1% of current parents and 0% of future parents prefer care in Volga, regardless of where they live. Among those that completed the survey and indicated they live in Volga most prefer care in Elkader, while the remainder prefer Strawberry Point.

There are currently no HHS regulated child care providers.

Table 67: Volga Child Care Supply and Demand

Children	Total Children	Children w/All Parents Working	Likely to Use Regulated Child Care
Age 0 to 2	9	4	3
Age 3 to 4	10	4	3
Age 5 to 11	7	4	3
Total children	26	12	9
HHS Regulated Providers			
	Ages Served	Total Capacity	Year-Round Capacity
N/A	---	---	---
Total child care spaces	---	---	---

KEY FINDINGS

These key findings are based on research and conditions of the child care market in Clayton County as of November 2023. If the community or the child care environment changes significantly, these key findings may be affected.

Finding 1: The Percentage of Families with All Parents in the Labor Force is Increasing

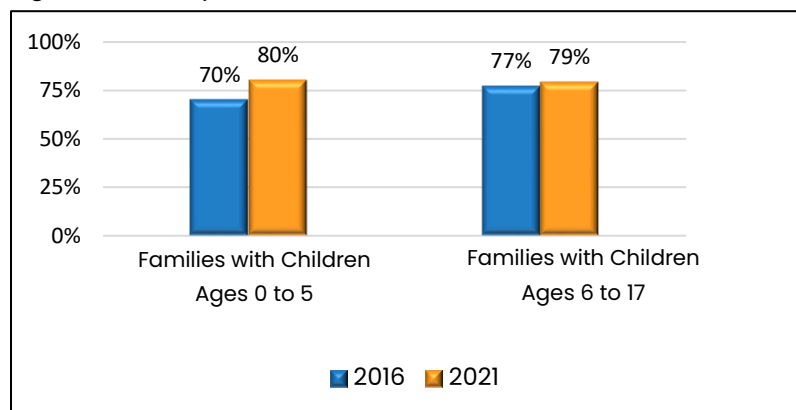
According to the US Census Bureau the percentage of families with all parents in the labor force has been increasing. All parents in the labor force means if a family is headed by a couple, both parents are working and if it is headed by a single parent that parent is working. With more parents working, it is reasonable to assume this would create an increased demand for child care.

As of 2021, 80% of families with children ages 0 to 5, and 79% of families with children ages 6 to 17 living in Clayton County have all parents in the labor force. In 2016, those percentages were 70% and 77% respectively.

Figure 18: Families with All Parents in the Labor Force, 2021



Figure 19: Comparison of Families with All Parents in the Labor Force



The number of households with all parents in the labor force varies by individual community, and by ages of children in the home. In the communities where there are children, the households with children ages 0 to 5 that have all parents in the labor force, varies from a low of 34% in Garber, to a high of 100% in 5 different communities, while the households with children ages 6 to 17 ranges from a low of 29% in Osterdock to a high of 100% in 8 different communities.

Table 68: Percentage of Households with All Parents Working

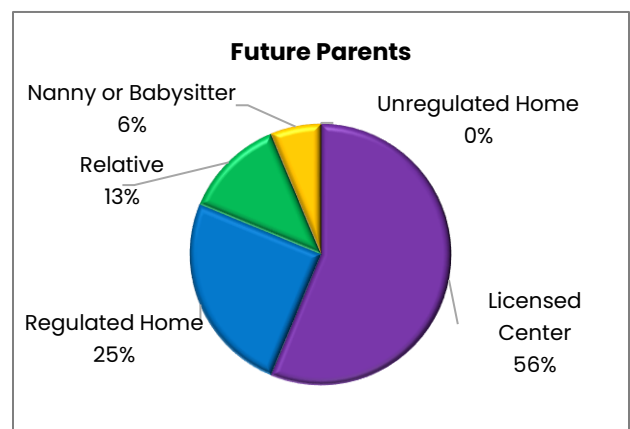
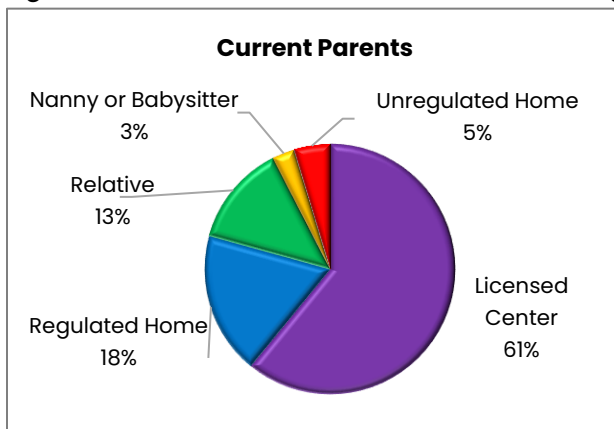
Community	Families With Children Ages 0 to 5	Families With Children Ages 6 to 17
Clayton	---	---
Edgewood	100%	100%
Elkader	87%	100%
Elkport	---	---
Farmersburg	59%	84%
Garber	34%	100%
Garnavillo	96%	87%
Guttenberg	100%	100%
Luana	89%	74%

Community	Families With Children Ages 0 to 5	Families With Children Ages 6 to 17
Marquette	75%	100%
McGregor	100%	100%
Monona	81%	100%
North Buena Vista	100%	100%
Osterdock	100%	29%
Postville	46%	64%
St. Olaf	87%	70%
Strawberry Point	83%	84%
Volga	42%	63%

Finding 2: Parents Want Center-Based Child Care that is Available Full-Time and Year-Round

Through the child care needs surveys completed by parents in September and October of 2023, parents were asked several questions about their child care needs and preferences. The most preferred child care arrangement chosen by both current and future parents was a licensed child care center, followed by registered child development home. Overall, 79% of parents (both current parents and future parents combined) prefer a setting that is regulated by Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), either a licensed center or a registered home.

Figure 20: Parents' Preferred Child Care Setting



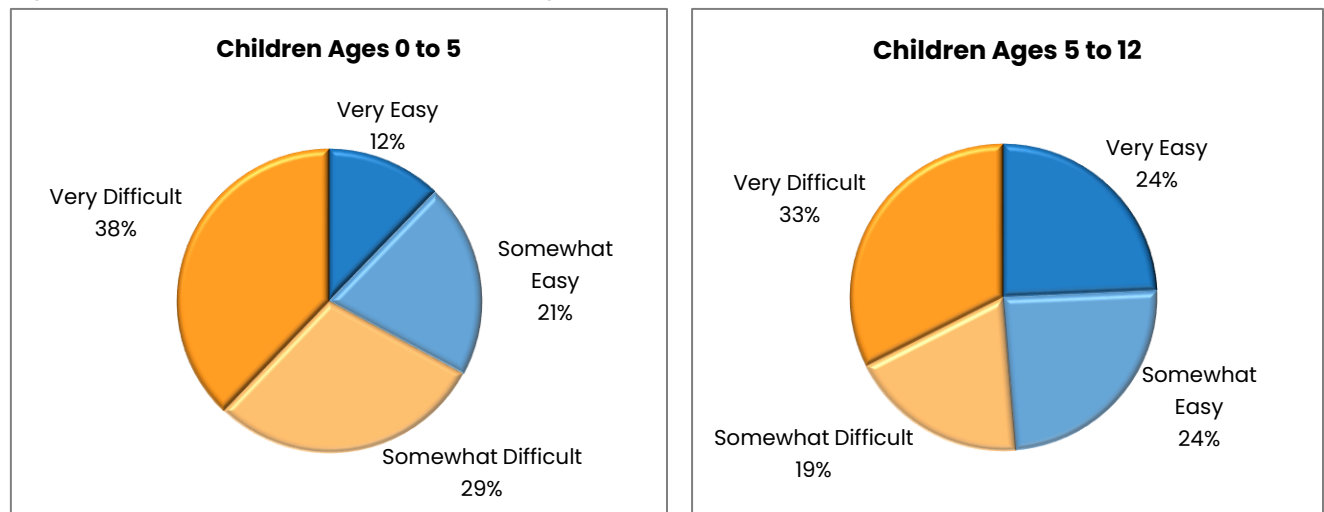
When asked if they were selecting child care today, parents indicated they would prefer to drop-off between 7:00 am and 7:59 am (54%) and pick up between 5:00 pm and 5:59 pm (28%) or 4:00 pm and 4:59 pm (24%), Monday through Friday (88%-97% per day). Separately parents were asked when they prefer to use care based on the age of their children. A majority of current parents prefer year-round care for their children, regardless of age. Among future parents, the majority prefers year-round care for children ages 0 to 5, but anticipate using child care only during the summer when their children are age 5 to 12.

Finding 3: Parents that Look for Child Care are Having Difficulty

Current parents were asked if they had looked for child care in the last 12 months. Eighty-five (85) parents indicated they had looked for care for children ages 0 to 5, and 28 parents indicated they had looked for care for children ages 5 to 12. Among those looking for care for ages 0 to 5, 67% indicated they experienced some level of difficulty—either somewhat difficult (29%) or very difficult (38%). And among the those that looked for care for ages 5 to 12, 52% indicated they experienced some level of difficulty—either somewhat difficult (19%) or very difficult (33%).

Obstacles named by parents were almost exclusively related to preferred providers not having any openings and their children being placed on a waitlist.

Figure 21: Ability to Find Child Care During Last 12 Months



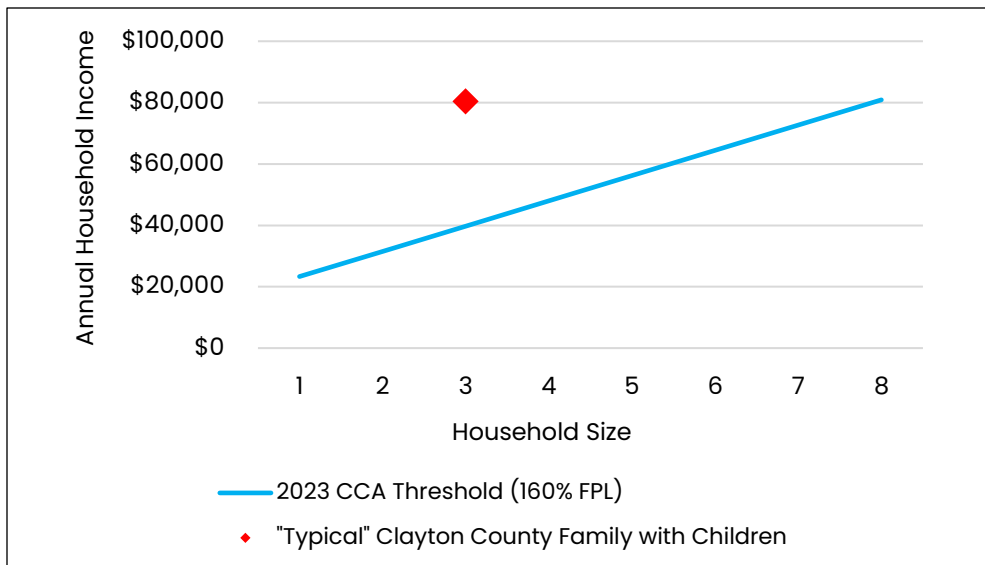
Finding 4: Median Family Income is Higher than the Child Care Assistance Threshold

The median annual income for families in Clayton County with children under the age of 18 is \$80,392. To be eligible to initially qualify for tuition assistance under the Iowa Child Care Assistance (CCA) program a family’s income must not exceed 160% of Federal Poverty Level (FPL), or 200% if they have a child with special needs. Once approved a family’s income is checked annually, and they continue to be eligible if their income does not exceed 225% of FPL.

According to the federally determined poverty threshold that went into effect January 2023, 160% FPL for a household of 3 is \$39,776, and for a household of 4 it is \$48,000. And when it comes to families that are already approved for CCA, they would exceed the income limit if their household income is over \$55,935 for a household of 3, and \$67,500 for a household of 4. While many households with children in Clayton County exceed these incomes, comments provided through the child care needs survey indicate some families still struggle to pay for child care expenses out of pocket.

The following figure plots the median income of households with children under 18 within Clayton County using the family size of 3 (rounding the average of 2.84). The diagonal line shows 160% FPL by household size. The gap between the median income for a family with children in the area (\$80,392) and 160% FPL for a family of 3 (\$39,776) is easily visible by comparing the red diamond which represents the local median family income and the blue line directly below the diamond which represents 160% FPL for a household of 3.

Figure 22: Child Care Assistance Thresholds vs. Median Income of Families with Children

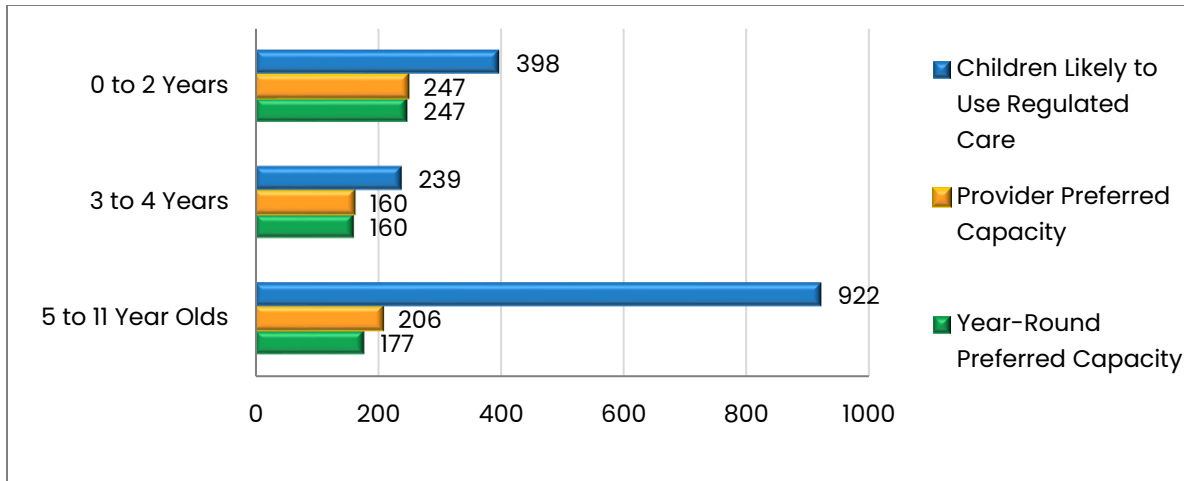


Finding 5: There is a Shortage of Child Care Spaces Among All Age Groups

There are an estimated 2,481 children ages 0 to 11 living in Clayton County. Based on the percentage of families that have all parents working, and parents’ preferences of child care settings, First Children’s Finance estimates 1,559 children are from families who prefer and are likely to use an Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) regulated child care setting. According to Iowa HHS, there are 613 regulated spaces of which 581 are available year-round plus an additional 32 spaces that are available during the summer only. There are enough spaces to serve approximately 37% of the children whose parents need full-time, year-round care in order to work. That means the child care gap could be as high as 975 spaces. When

broken down by age group, it can be determined there is a shortage of 151 spaces for children ages 0 to 2, a shortage of 79 spaces for ages 3 and 4, and a shortage of 745 spaces for school age children during the school year, and 716 spaces for school age children during the summer.

Figure 23: Children Like to Use Regulated Care vs. Regulated Child Care Spaces



Finding 6: Over One-Quarter of Parents are Experiencing Limited Employment Due to Child Care Challenges

Through the child care needs survey conducted as part of this study, parents were asked if child care challenges are currently limiting their or their spouse's or partner's employment (ex. working part-time when full-time preferred, or not working within preferred field). Twenty-six percent (26%) answered yes. Those parents were asked to explain, some of the comments received were:

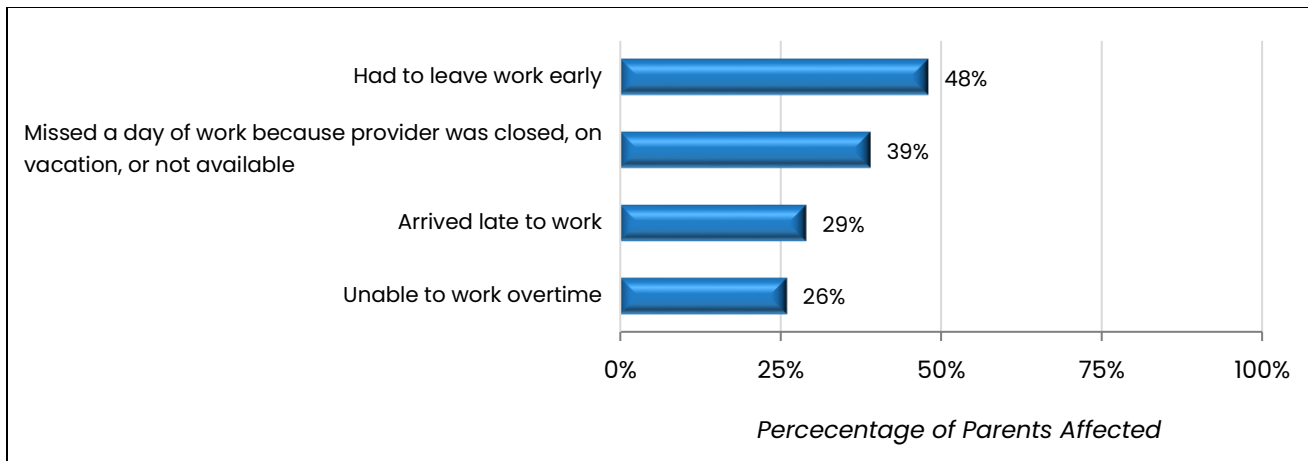
- *I work part-time so I can work from home and my one-year-old can stay home. My older son is in preschool. My husband works second shift so he can be with the baby in the morning while I work.*
- *Limited times that daycares are open due to being short-staffed, so we have to work around those hours, but still pay the same rate.*
- *My husband's ability to do things for his job has been limited to very specific hours of the day that can hinder opportunities because he has to wait for me to be home from work to do certain things pertaining to his job.*
- *I work reduced hours due to childcare.*
- *Cannot work before 7:00 am because daycares don't open early enough and there's only one daycare in Edgewood.*
- *Could be making twice the income and working in specific field of education if able to find child care.*
- *We cannot both work evenings because someone has to be home before 5:00. Also, effects abilities to work weekends.*

- *I am self-employed and able to pick my own hours, however I am limited to part-time availability due to childcare restraints. If I had dependable, full-time childcare I could see more clients in a week thus providing extra income for my family.*
- *Working as needed when full-time is desired.*

Finding 7: Parents Indicate Child Care Challenges are Affecting their Job

Over the last 12 months, parents have experienced child care challenges that have in turn affected their job. The adverse effects experienced by at least one-quarter of the parents that participated in the child care needs survey were: had to leave work early (48%), missed a day of work because provider was closed, on vacation, or not available (39%), arrived late to work (29%), and unable to work overtime (26%).

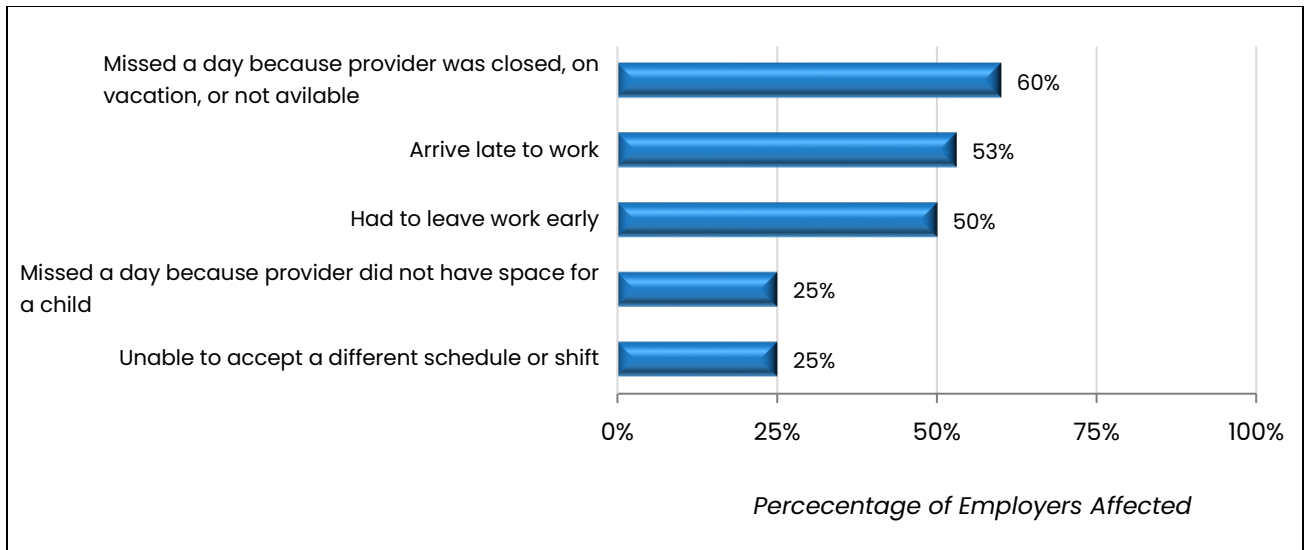
Figure 24: Most Common Effects of Child Care Challenges Reported by Parents



Finding 8: Local Businesses Indicate Child Care Challenges are Affecting their Employees

Over the last 12 months, employers have been impacted by the adverse effects their employees experienced because of child care challenges. The effects experienced by at least one-quarter of employers were, employees missing at least one day of work because their child care provider was closed, sick, or on vacation which was experienced by 60% of employers, employees arriving late to work which was experienced by 53% of employers, employees having to leave work early which was experienced by 50% of employers, employees missed at least one day of work because the child care provider did not have room or a space for a child which was experienced by 25% of employers, and employees were unable to accept a different schedule of shift which was also experienced by 25% of employers. See figure on next page.

Figure 25: Most Common Effects of Child Care Challenges in the Last 12 Months



Finding 9: Child Care Providers are Willing to Expand

Child care providers that participated in the child care needs survey were asked about their willingness to expand and serve more children. Six (6) centers and 1 home said yes. Providers were asked to explain how they could expand if they answered yes. Comments received were all from centers:

- *We would expand if we had grant funding to expand our building and we were sure we could staff more classrooms.*
- *There are more rooms in our building, although they would need renovated to be approved for care. (water added, flooring, windows)*
- *Due to our limited space and not enough funding, it would be a great opportunity to be able to build a second location that would allow more capacity to hold more children. Unfortunately, we've expanded all that the ground will allow.*
- *It would be great for our community if we were able to expand and provide quality care for more children at an affordable rate.*

Providers were asked to be more specific as to the support they would need in order to be able to expand to serve more children. The responses indicated most child care programs would need funding for new or larger facilities, to possibly relocate, help recruiting more staff, and finding ways to pay better wages to keep staff.