

# The Status of Child Care in Independence, Iowa

May 6, 2024

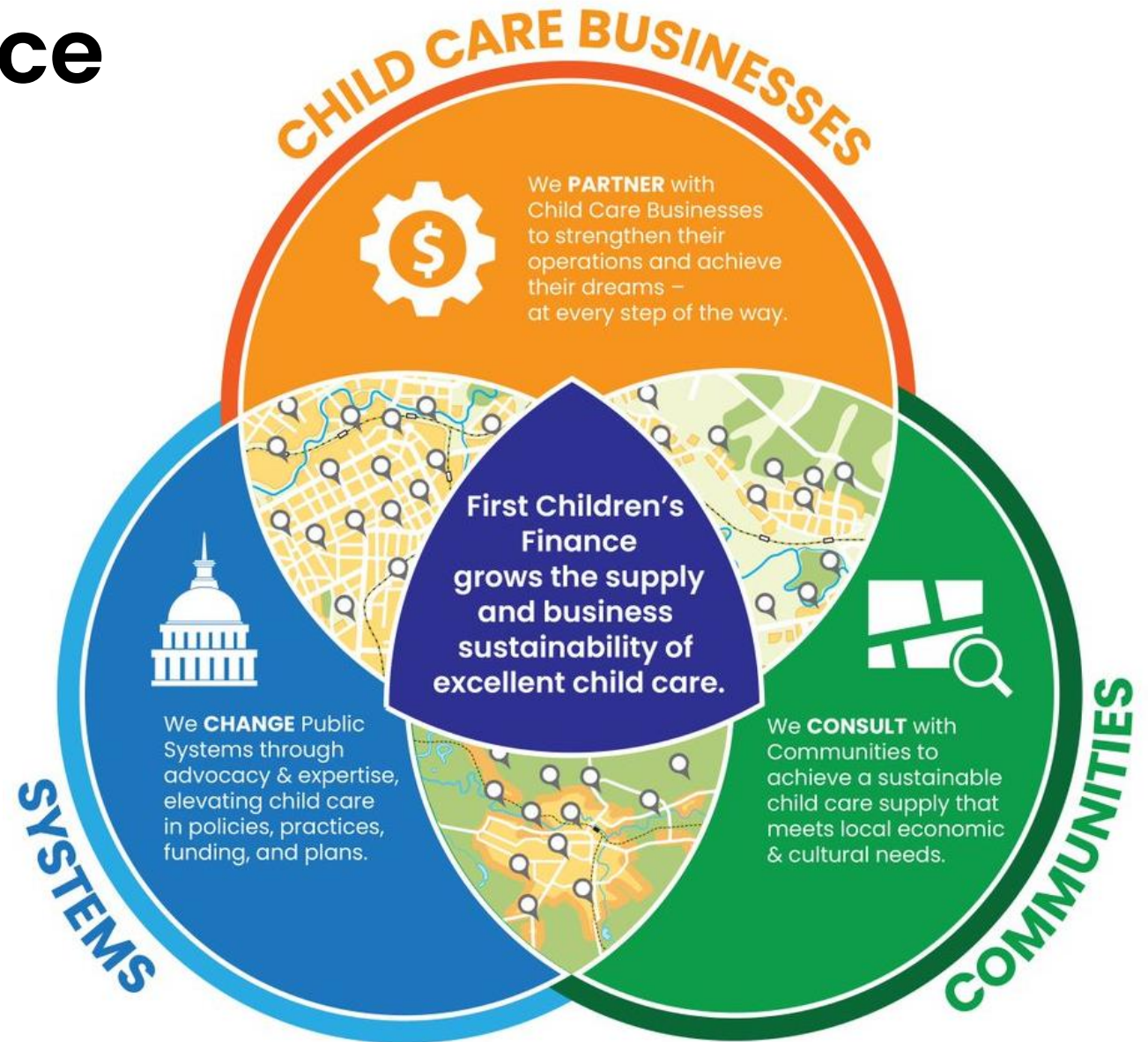


# First Children's Finance

National nonprofit organization established 1991, serving Iowa since 2006.

Staff experience and expertise in business, economic development, and child care.

Significant support from Iowa Department of Health and Human Services, Northwest Area Foundation, and USDA-Rural Development.





# Project Steering Committee

**Brad Bleichner**, Mayor of Independence

**Carrie Mattson**, Geater Machine & Manufacturing

**Cynthia Phillips**, Independence Community School District

**Kathryn Jensen**, Independence City Council

**Kay Reidy**, Independence Community School District

**Kelly Walton**, Kidsville Early Learning Center

**Kevin Jimmerson**, Independence Mental Health Institute

**Lisa Kremer**, Buchanan County Economic Development

**Lisa Wood**, Child Care Resource & Referral

**Maria Drilling**, Independence Premium Foods

**Mary Janssen**, Child Care Resource & Referral

**Matt Schmitz**, City of Independence

**Melissa Trumbauer**, Geater Machine & Manufacturing

**Michelle McBride**, Buchanan County Health Center

**Molly Hocken**, Community Volunteer

**Nikki Barth**, Independence Chamber of Commerce

**Tyler Rassmussen**, EPM Iowa Real Estate



# Project Funders and Partners

*This project was made possible in part through a Rural Child Care Market Study grant received by City of Independence through the Empower Rural Iowa initiative, a program administered by Center for Rural Revitalization, a division of Iowa Economic Development Authority.*



# Project Components

Child Care Market Analysis

Strategic Plan for Child Care

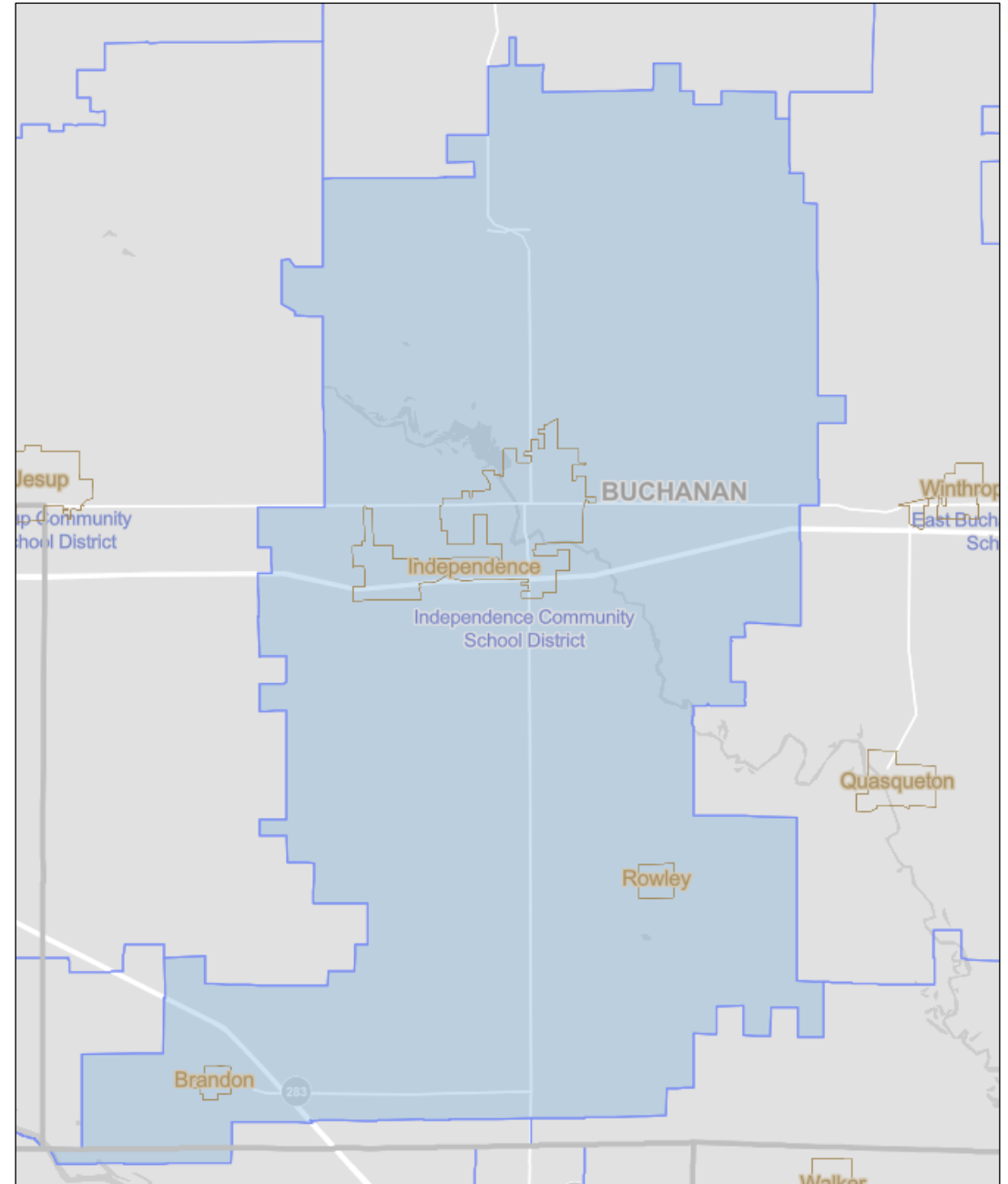
# Market Area

## Demographic Research

Boundaries of the Independence Community School District

## Parent Survey Respondents

Any parent that is currently using, or that would prefer to use, child care in Independence regardless of where they live.





# Market Area Snapshot

Independence area total population increased, while number of children ages 0 to 11 decreased over last 10 years.

- As of 2022 total population is 9,148 (+267 since 2012)
- As of 2021 there are 1,153 children (-193 since 2012)

Largest industry for employment is manufacturing.

Average weekly wage for manufacturing is \$1,113.

Total regulated child care spaces in Buchanan County has decreased over last 5 years (net change -74 spaces).



# Child Care Market Analysis

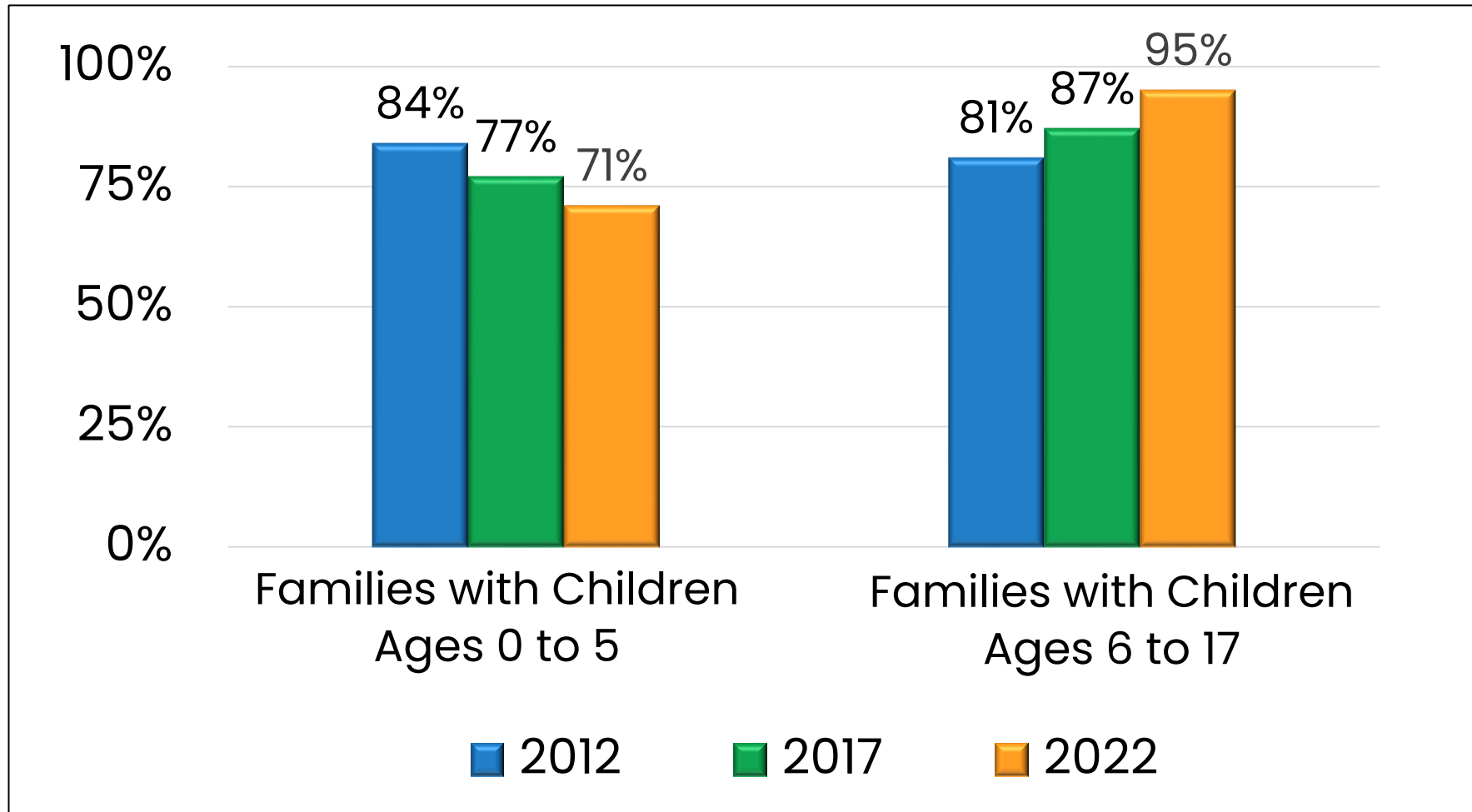




# Key Findings

1. The percentage of families with young children and all parents in the labor force is declining.
2. Parents are having difficulty finding child care.
3. Parents indicate child care challenges are affecting their job.
4. There is a shortage of child care spaces among all age groups.
5. Parents want center-based child care.
6. Median income of families with children is higher than the Child Care Assistance (CCA) threshold.
7. Child care centers are willing to expand.
8. Few employers are currently impacted by child care.
9. Some employers are willing to donate or make a contribution for child care.

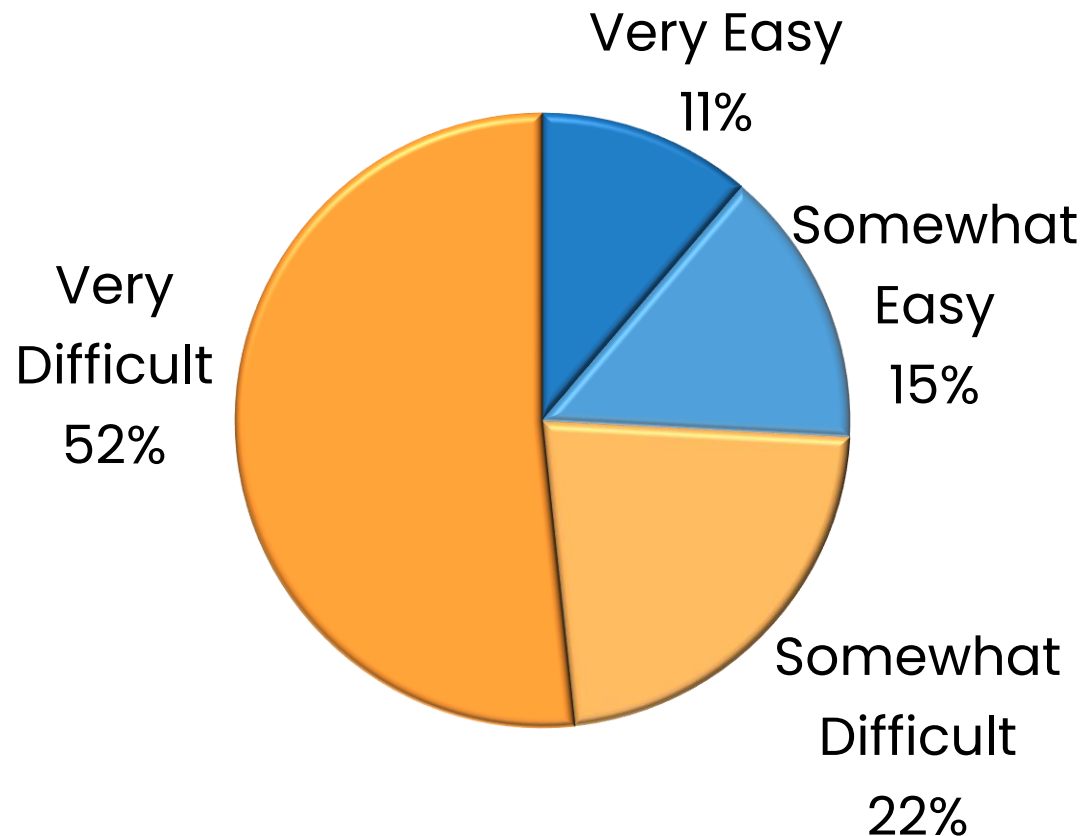
# Finding 1: The percentage of families with young children and all parents in the labor force is declining.



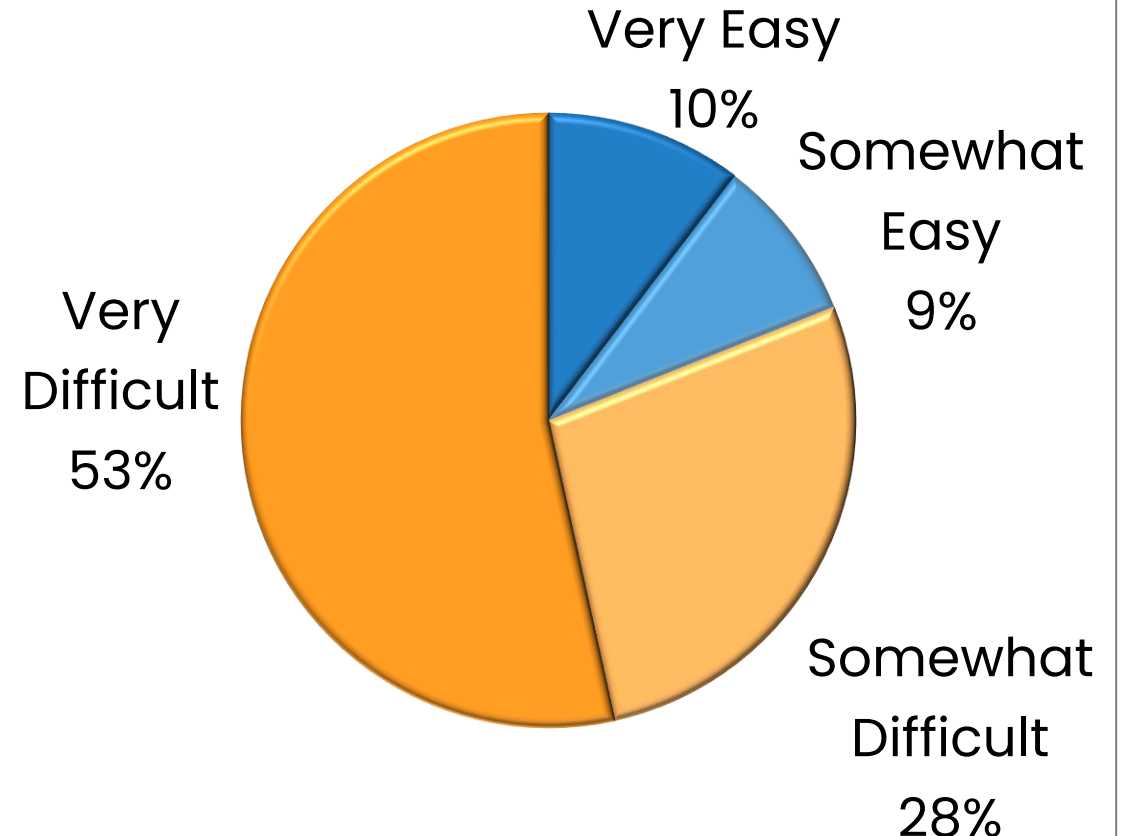


## Finding 2: Parents are having difficulty finding child care.

**Children Ages 0 to 5**



**Children Ages 5 to 12**



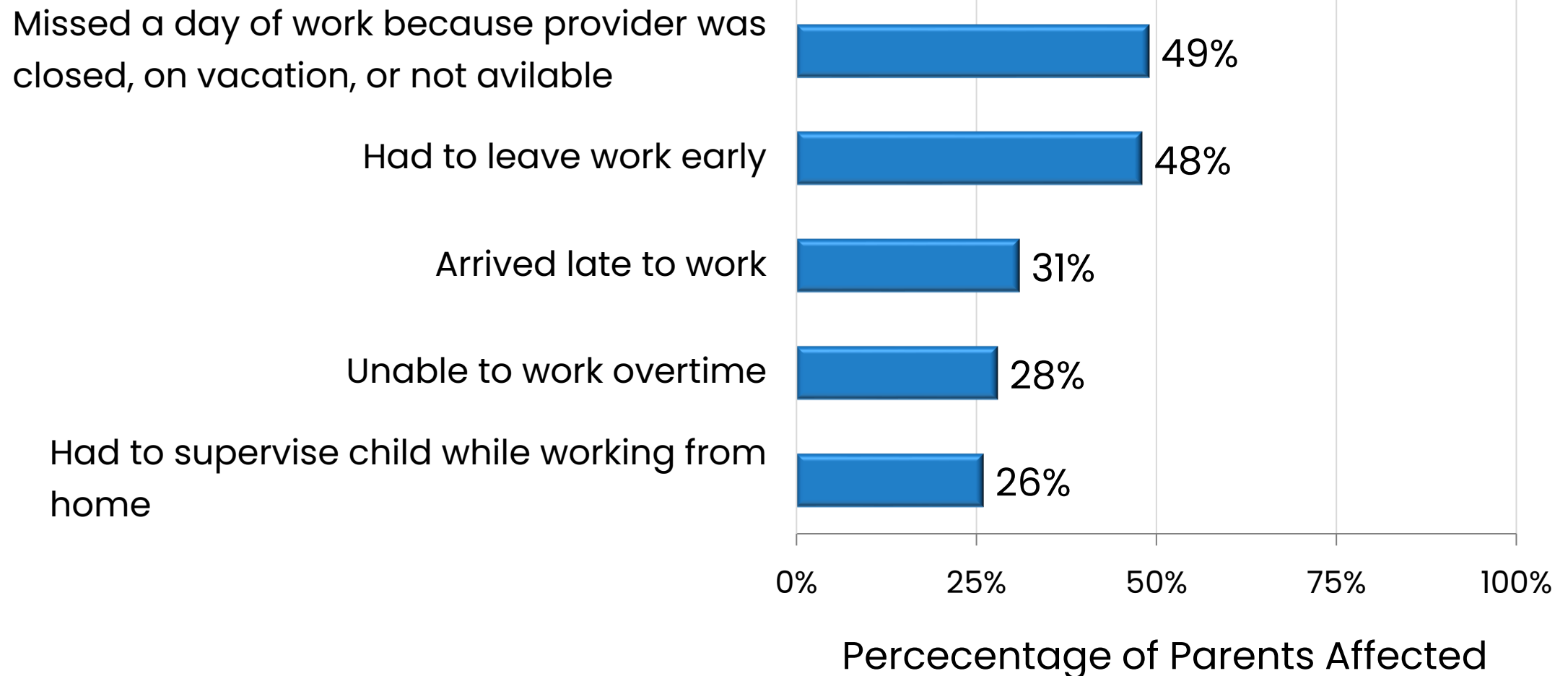


# Obstacles Experienced by Parents

- *Everywhere had a waitlist. We chose an in-home provider (we were not completely excited about) because they were the only ones that did not have a waitlist.*
- *Few spots are available for infants.*
- *Finding childcare with spots open yet affordable.*
- *Summer child care.*
- *Lack of openings in high quality setting.*
- *Finding a provider that transfers to and from school.*

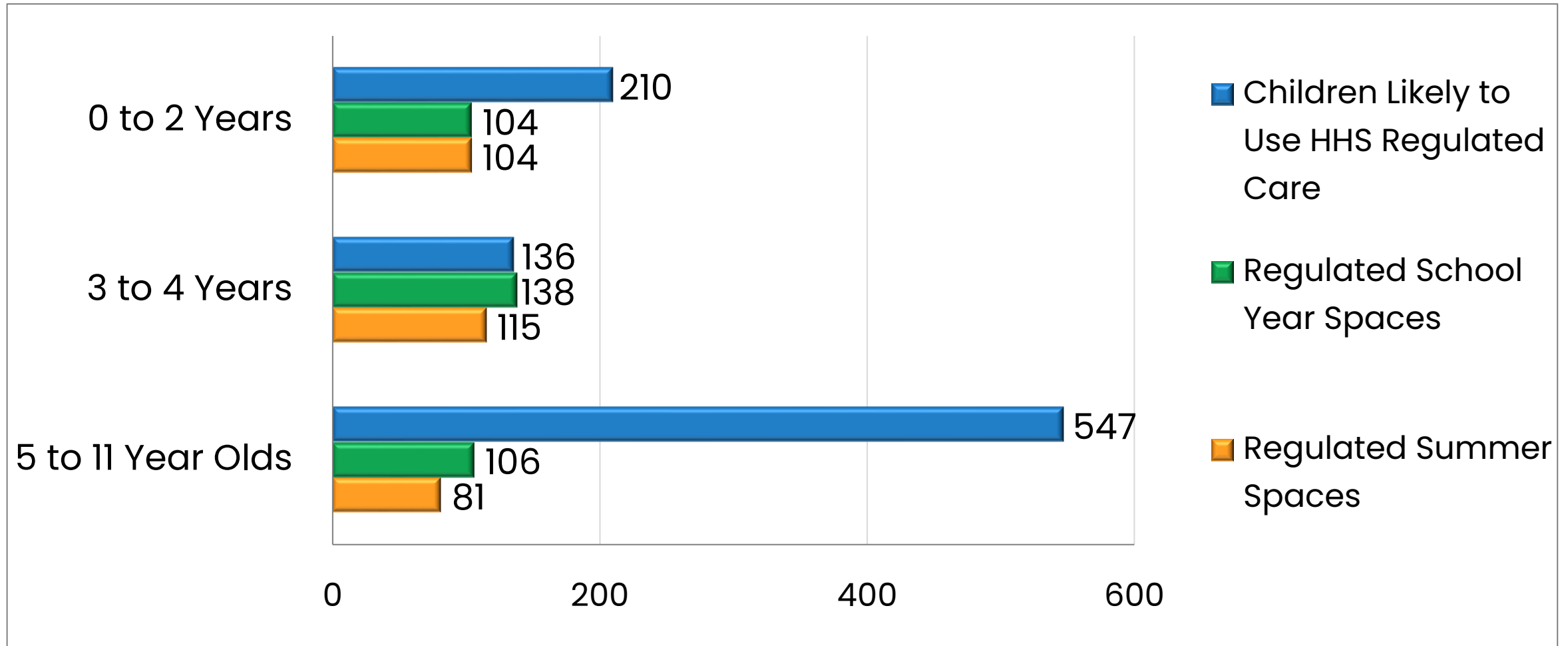


# Finding 3: Parents indicate child care challenges are affecting their job.





## Finding 4: There is a shortage of child care spaces among all age groups.





# Child Care Gap Analysis

|             | Likely to Use<br>Regulated Care | School Year<br>Spaces | School Year<br>Gap | Summer<br>Spaces | Summer<br>Gap |
|-------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Age 0 to 2  | 210                             | 104                   | -106               | 104              | -106          |
| Age 3 to 4  | 136                             | 138                   | +2                 | 115              | -21           |
| Age 5 to 11 | 547                             | 106                   | -441               | 81               | -466          |
| Total       | 893                             | 348                   | -545               | 300              | -593          |



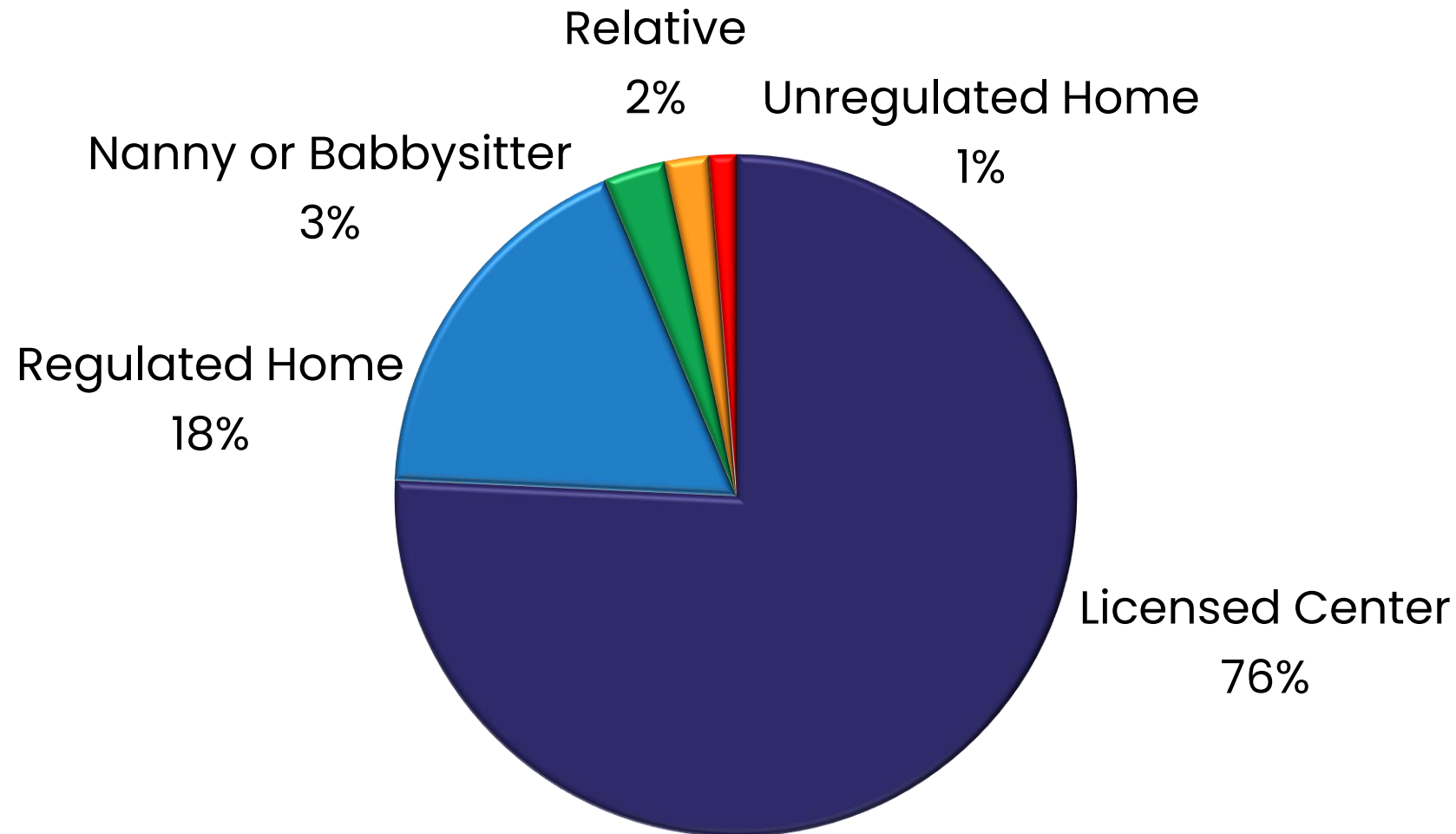
# How is the Gap Covered Today?

- Legal Unregulated Care
- Unemployment
- Under-employment
- Family, Friends, & Neighbors
- Out of Area Care





## Finding 5: Parents want center-based child care.

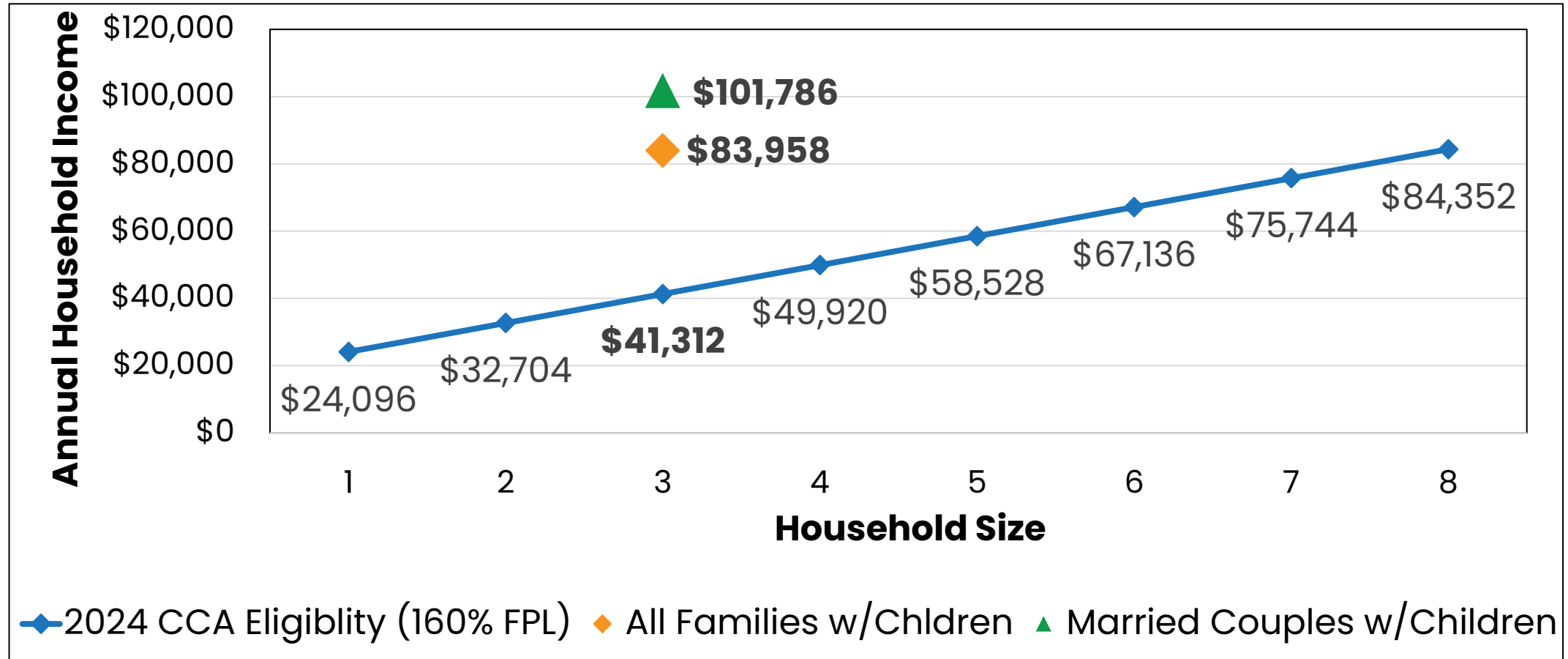




# Parents also want...

- Drop-off between 7:00 am and 7:59 am (47%)
- Pick-up between 4:00 pm and 4:59 pm (37%)
- Monday through Friday (90%–96% per day)
- Year-round care
  - Ages 0 to 5 (not in Kindergarten) (83%)
  - Ages 5 to 12 (61%)

# Finding 6: Median income of families with children is higher than the Child Care Assistance (CCA) threshold.



Note: Income data from US Census Bureau, CCA threshold calculated by FCF using data from US Department of Health & Human Services.



# Finding 7: Child care centers are willing to expand.

3 out of 4 child care centers willing to expand to serve more children if the opportunity were presented

- *We would need to expand our building or find a new site to relocate to.*
- *We wish to offer full day preschool so parents wouldn't need to transport kids in the middle of the day. Or we wish we would have transportation. We wish we could have enough kids in morning and afternoon to have two sections of preschool.*
- *We could add on to our building.*



## **Finding 8: Few employers are currently impacted by child care.**

- Does your business have any challenges related to productivity because of employees' child care challenges?
- Does your business have any challenges related to absenteeism because of employees' child care challenges?
- Has your business had difficulty hiring due to child care options or challenges in the area?

For each question, only 1 employer (the same employer) answered yes.



# Comments from all employers

- *None reported, however, we know the possibility exists.*
- *If they are we are not aware this is why they are calling as they do not say it is directly because of childcare.*
- *We list hours of operations and disclose in the interview process what hours are to be expected.*
- *Our most recent applicants do not have young children. I imagine that daycare hours would be a challenge with our 10-hour day schedule for prospective employees.*



## **Finding 9: Some employers are willing to donate or make a contribution for child care.**

Employers are willing to make a donation or financial contribution for:

- Build, remodel, or expand a child care center (3 employers)
- Scholarships for their own employees (3 employers)
- Scholarships for all children (2 employers)
- Pay the tuition of a vacant slot in order to reserve or hold that slot for an employee who takes over payment (2 employers)
- Pay a portion (but not all) of the wages of a child care center director (2 employers)
- General operation of a child care program (2 employers)



# Strategic Plan for Child Care





# VISION FOR CHILD CARE

***Independence will continue to be a thriving community with accessible, quality child care choices that allow employers to attract and retain workforce.***



# CHILD CARE GOALS AND STRATEGIES



## GOAL 1

Support the efforts of child care businesses to be sustainable by facilitating partnerships and providing access to business resources.



## GOAL 2

Maintain the existing supply of regulated child care and add a minimum of 50 new regulated spaces by 2029.

**Goal 1: Support the efforts of child care businesses to be sustainable by facilitating partnerships and providing access to business resources.**

Strategy 1- The Child Care Steering Committee will facilitate partnerships between child care centers and local businesses.





**Goal 1: Support the efforts of child care businesses to be sustainable by facilitating partnerships and providing access to business resources.**

Strategy 2- The Child Care Steering Committee will provide a local connection to regional and statewide business resources and supports for both existing and prospective child care providers.





## **Goal 2: Maintain the existing supply of regulated child care and add a minimum of 50 new regulated spaces by 2029.**

Strategy 1– The Child Care Steering Committee will identify viable locations for an Iowa Department of Health and Human Services licensed child care center.

### **Options that will be explored:**

- Vacant lots to build a new facility.
- Remodel and expand the former Starlight Cinema building.
- Add an addition to an already operating child care facility.
- Other existing buildings not currently used for child care.





## **Goal 2: Maintain the existing supply of regulated child care and add a minimum of 50 new regulated spaces by 2029.**



Strategy 2– The City of Independence and the Child Care Steering Committee will inform the community of the need for more regulated child care spaces, and the efforts made toward exploring options to increase the number of spaces available.

Strategy 3– The City of Independence, through an RFP process, will identify an entity to operate an Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) licensed child care center in the former Starlight Cinema building.



**Goal 2: Maintain the existing supply of regulated child care and add a minimum of 50 new regulated spaces by 2029.**



Strategy 4- The Child Care Steering Committee will develop and implement a campaign to attract additional child care providers.



# Putting This Plan Into Use Next Steps







# First Children's Finance

Iowa Regional Office Connections

Web: [www.FirstChildrensFinance.org](http://www.FirstChildrensFinance.org)

Email: [InfoIA@FirstChildrensFinance.org](mailto:InfoIA@FirstChildrensFinance.org)

Social: [www.facebook.com/FirstChildrensFinanceIowa](https://www.facebook.com/FirstChildrensFinanceIowa)