

# **Child Care Market Analysis**

**Independence, Iowa**

**January 2024**



**First Children's Finance**

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**January 2024**

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City of Independence

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## INTRODUCTION

In 2023, First Children's Finance was commissioned by City of Independence 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 of the child care market of Independence, Iowa.

The data in this report has been collected from three original surveys developed by First Children's Finance along with data provided 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

Based on First Children's Finance's analysis, it can be concluded that the families in the Independence area have varying needs and preferences, and the current child care options are not meeting the needs of all parents.

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 the boundaries of the Independence Community School District, which includes communities of Independence, Brandon, and Rowley, as well as the adjacent unincorporated areas around those communities. The market area is located in Buchanan County, which is located in northeast Iowa.

The US Census Bureau estimates that in the Independence Community School District (CSD) boundaries, the total population has increased while the number of children ages 0 to 11 has decreased over the last 10 years. The total population as of 2022 is 9,148 and the total number of children ages 0 to 11 is 1,153. Taking into consideration the data collected through this study, First Children's Finance estimates there are 893 children whose families 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 the Independence CSD area, the average family size is 2.94 people and the median income for families with children under the age of 18 is \$83,958 per year and the median income for a married couple with children is \$101,786. According to Iowa Workforce Development, as of Quarter 1 of 2023, there was an average of 6,783 people employed by companies in Buchanan County, and the average weekly wage among those workers was \$885. The industry that employs the most people is manufacturing and the average weekly wage in that industry was \$1,113.

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. A total of 231 individuals reported they currently have children ages 12 or younger, this group is referred to as "current parents". Another 8 individuals reported they do not currently have children but do plan to have or adopt in the next 5 years, this group is referred to as "future parents". Using the most popular responses, a current parent would be described as married (87%) and living in the boundaries of the Independence Community School District (91%). They work first-shift Monday through Friday (81%) in Independence (65%), and the nature of their job is health care & social assistance (28%). Their spouse also works first-shift Monday through Friday (83%) outside of Independence (56%), and the nature of their job is manufacturing (22%). They currently use child care in Independence (89%), 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 (79%).

Using the most popular responses, a future parent would be described as married (63%) and living in the boundaries of the Independence Community School District (100%). They work first-



shift Monday through Friday (75%) in Independence (88%), and the nature of their job is either finance & insurance (38%) or health care & social assistance (38%). Their spouse also works first-shift Monday through Friday (80%) in Independence (100%), and the nature of their job is manufacturing (20%).

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 families' 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 the Independence area 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 is a licensed child care center.

Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) data shows that as of January 2024 there are 348 spaces within 9 HHS regulated child care programs in Independence. There are 4 HHS licensed centers and preschools (284 licensed spaces) and 5 registered child development homes (64 spaces). Two (2) of the 4 centers operate year-round while the other 2 operate school year only. One (1) of the registered child care homes operates 7-days a week during the day, while another operates 24-hours a day, 7-days a week.

Participants in the child care needs survey confirmed there is a shortage of child care spaces. When asked if they had difficulty finding child care, 74% of parents with children ages 0 to 5 (not in kindergarten) that had looked for care in the last 12 months and 81% of those with children ages 5 to 12 (school age children) that had looked for care in the last 12 months indicated they had difficulty. When asked what challenges they had faced, the majority of parents named an obstacle related to not being able to get a space in the program or setting they prefer.

### **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 Young Children and All Parents in the Labor Force is Declining**

According to data from the US Census Bureau the percentage of families that have children ages 0 to 5 and that have all parents in the labor force has been decreasing over the last 10 years. As of 2022, 71% of families with children ages 0 to 5, and 95% of families with children ages 6 to 17 living in the Independence Community School District (CSD) area have all parents in the labor force. Five years ago in 2017, those numbers were 77% and 87% respectively, and in 2012 they were 84% and 81%.

### **Finding 2: Parents are Having Difficulty Finding Child Care**

Among parents that had looked for care in the last 12 months for their children ages 0 to 5, 74% indicated they experienced some level of difficulty—either somewhat difficult (22%) or very difficult (52%). And among those that looked for care for ages 5 to 12, 81% indicated they experienced some level of difficulty—either somewhat difficult (28%) or very difficult (53%).

### **Finding 3: 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 25% of parents that participated in the child care needs survey were: missed a day of work because the provider was closed, on vacation, or not available (49%), had to leave work early (48%), arrived late to work (31%), unable to work overtime (28%), and had to supervise child while working from home (26%).

### **Finding 4: There is a Shortage of Spaces Among All Age Groups**

There are 1,153 children ages 0 to 11 in the Independence Community School District (CSD) boundaries. Of those, First Children's Finance (FCF) estimates 960 have all parents working and 893 of those are from families who prefer to use Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) regulated child care. As of May 2024, there will be 332 regulated spaces in Independence, of which 332 will be available during the school year and 300 will be available during the summer. The *Child Care Gap Analysis* shows there will be a shortage of 545 spaces during the school year and a shortage of 593 spaces during the summer. This gap may be worsened by families that live in other communities but prefer regulated child care in Independence.

### **Finding 5: Parents Want Center-Based Child Care**

The most preferred child care arrangement chosen by both current and future parents through the child care needs survey was a licensed child care center, which is preferred by 76% of all respondents. There are currently 284 spaces within licensed centers (which also includes preschools), and after May 2024 that number will drop to 268, of which 220 will be available year-round.

**Finding 6: Median Income of Families with Children is Higher than the Child Care Assistance Threshold**

The median income for families with children under the age of 18 in the Independence Community School District (CSD) is \$83,958, and that income jumps to \$101,786 for married couples with children under the age of 18. According to the federally determined poverty level that went into effect January 2024, 160% FPL, the threshold a family's income cannot exceed to qualify for child care assistance, is \$41,312 for a household of 3, and \$49,920 for a household of 4.

**Finding 7: Child Care Centers are Willing to Expand**

All 4 of the licensed centers in Independence participated in the child care needs survey and at the time of the survey (October 2023), 3 of the 4 indicated they would expand if they had the opportunity. In order to expand those centers indicated they would need assistance with finding staff and funding for the expansions.

**Finding 8— Few Employers are Currently Impacted by Child Care**

Through the child care needs survey employers were asked if their business has any challenges related to productivity, absenteeism, or has had difficulty hiring due to child care options or challenges in the area. For each question, only 1 employer (the same employer) answered yes.

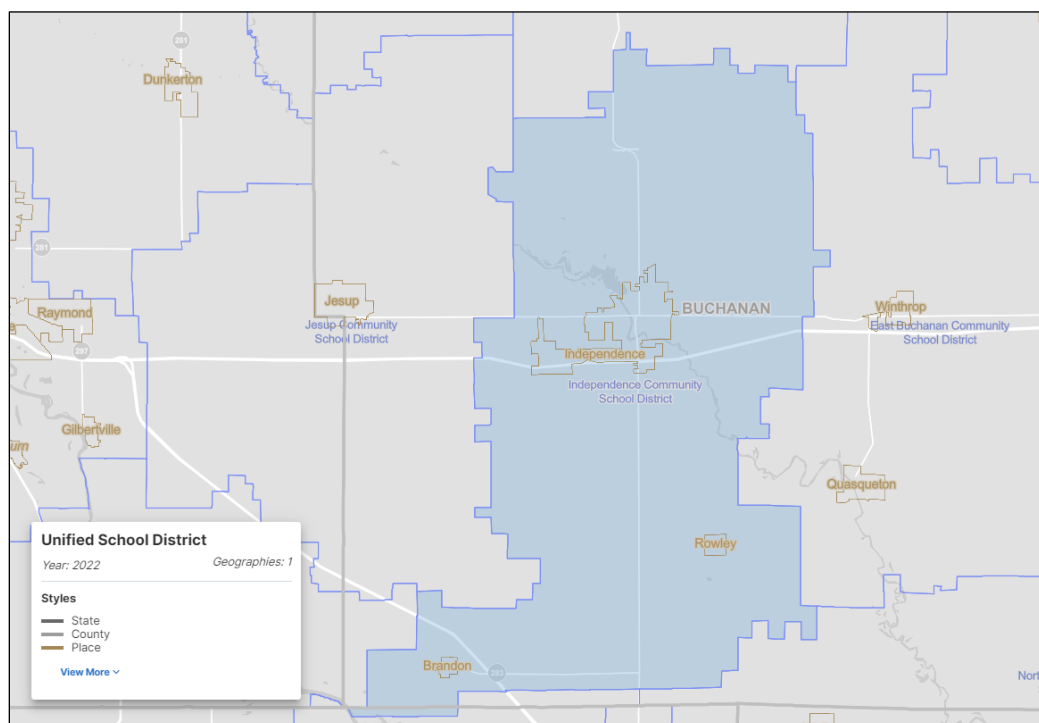
**Finding 9—Some Employers are Willing to Donate or Make a Contribution to Child Care**

Employers that participated in the child care needs survey indicated their business is willing to assist in addressing the child care shortage and/or support child care businesses through various actions. The top ways employers are willing to help are to make a donation or financial contribution to build, remodel, or expand a child care center, or to make a donation or financial contribution for child care scholarships for their own employees.

## MARKET DESCRIPTION

### Market Area

For the purpose of this *Child Care Market Analysis* the market area is defined as the Independence Community School District (CSD), which includes the communities of Brandon, Independence, and Rowley, as well as the unincorporated areas adjacent to these cities.



Note: Map from US Census Bureau (2022)

## Population and Demographics

### Population

According to the US Census Bureau, as of 2022 the population of the market area (Independence CSD) is 9,148. This is a net change of +267 since 2012 when the population was 8,881. During the same time period, the city limits of Independence and Rowley each also saw a positive net change or increase in population.

Table 1: Population Change

	2012	2022	Net Change
<b>Independence CSD</b>	<b>8,881</b>	<b>9,148</b>	<b>+267</b>
Brandon city limits	353	348	-5
Independence city limits	5,988	6,106	+118
Rowley city limits	289	353	+64

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2012, 2022)

## Fertility

Fertility reflects how many women give birth each year and it may be helpful to give an estimate of how many babies are born each year. It must however be recognized that a single birth may result in more than one child, and there are circumstances where the new born child may not live within the community after the birth. As of 2022 there were 1,922 women age 16 to 50 living in the Independence CSD. The US Census Bureau estimates that 129 (7%) of them gave birth in the prior 12-month period. Overall, 4% were both in the labor force and gave birth. The overall percentage of women in Independence that gave birth and that are in the labor force was very similar at 3%. In Brandon and in Rowley the percentage of women both giving birth and in the labor force was higher at 6% in Brandon and 100% in Rowley.

Table 2: Fertility by Community

	Women 16–50	Gave Birth	% Gave Birth	Gave Birth and In Labor Force	% Gave Birth and in Labor Force
<b>Independence CSD</b>	<b>1,922</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>4%</b>
Brandon city limits	89	6	7%	5	6%
Independence city limits	1,343	99	7%	42	3%
Rowley city limits	88	9	10%	9	100%

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2022)

## Children Ages 0 to 11

Within the Independence CSD as of 2012 there were 1,346 children ages 0 to 11 and in 2022 there were 1,153, a net change of -193. Among the communities within the district Independence and Rowley each experienced a net decrease in the number of children ages 0 to 12 from 2012 to 2022. The loss in Independence was the largest at -225. Brandon was the only community that experienced a net increase.

Table 3: Population Ages 0 to 11

	2012	2022	Net Change
<b>Independence CSD</b>			
Age 0 to 5	749	567	-182
Age 6 to 11	597	586	-11
<b>Total Ages 0 to 11</b>	<b>1,346</b>	<b>1,153</b>	<b>-193</b>
<b>Brandon city limits</b>			
Age 0 to 5	23	19	-4
Age 6 to 11	34	44	+10
<b>Total Ages 0 to 11</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>+6</b>

	2012	2022	Net Change
<b>Independence city limits</b>			
Age 0 to 5	574	391	-183
Age 6 to 11	392	350	-42
<b>Total Ages 0 to 11</b>	<b>966</b>	<b>741</b>	<b>-225</b>
<b>Rowley city limits</b>			
Age 0 to 5	32	14	-18
Age 6 to 11	41	8	-33
<b>Total Ages 0 to 11</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>-51</b>

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2012, 2022)

## Race

Being aware of the racial composition of the community can help child care owners and operators provide child care that is inclusive and welcoming to all families. Within the Independence CSD 97.9% of the population identifies as one race, while 2.1% is two or more races. The majority of residents are White (96.1%), followed by two or more races (2.1%), and Black or African American (1.6%). Among the individual communities, these percentages look very similar.

Table 4: Race

	Independence CSD		Brandon city limits		Independence city limits		Rowley city limits	
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>9,148</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>6,106</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>One Race</b>	<b>8,955</b>	<b>97.9%</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>98.2%</b>	<b>5,938</b>	<b>97.3%</b>	<b>352</b>	<b>99.8%</b>
White	8,796	96.1%	339	97.4%	5,794	94.9%	350	99.2%
Black or African American	147	1.6%	3	0.8%	134	2.2%	2	0.6%
American Indian or Alaska Native	8	0.1%	0	---	6	0.1%	0	---
Asian	0	---	0	---	0	---	0	---
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	---	0	---	0	---	0	---
Some Other Race	4	0.1%	0	---	4	0.1%	0	---
<b>Two or More Races</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>2.1%</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>2.7%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.2%</b>

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2022)

## Hispanic or Latino

Being aware of the cultures within the community can help child care owners and operators create an inclusive child care program that recognizes and welcomes families from different cultures. As of 2022, 3.2% of the residents in the Independence CSD are Hispanic or Latino, with the largest group being Mexican (2.3%).

Table 5: Hispanic or Latino Origin by Specific Origin

	Independence CSD		Brandon city limits		Independence city limits		Rowley city limits	
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>9,148</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>6,106</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Hispanic or Latino (of any race)</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>3.2%</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>7.5%</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>4.5%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>
Mexican	216	2.3%	26	7.5%	190	3.1%	0	---
Puerto Rican	0	---	0	---	0	---	0	---
Cuban	0	---	0	---	0	---	0	---
Dominican	0	---	0	---	0	---	0	---
Honduran	4	0.1%	0	---	4	0.1%	0	---
Salvadorian	68	0.7%	0	---	68	1.1%	0	---
Columbian	13	0.1%	0	---	13	0.2%	0	---
Other Hispanic or Latino	0	---	0	---	0	---	0	---

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2022)

It can be helpful to look the languages families speak at home to determine if there may be barriers for parents that do not speak English. In the Independence CSD 2.6% of residents speak a language other than English at home. After English, the most common language spoken at home is Spanish with 2.4%. Among the 225 residents in the school district that speak a language other than English at home, 68% also speak English very well. Nearly all residents in the school district that speak a language other than English at home live in the community of Independence, with 204 of the 225 living there. The community of Brandon has 1 resident that speaks Spanish, and Rowley has no residents that speak a language other than English.

Table 6: Primary Language Spoken at Home

	Independence CSD		Brandon city limits		Independence city limits		Rowley city limits	
Population Age 5 and older	8,624	100%	329	100%	5,746	100%	339	100%
Speaks Only English	8,399	97.4%	328	100%	5,542	95.5%	339	100%
Speaks Language Other than English	225	2.6%	1	<1%	204	3.5%	0	0%
Spanish or Spanish Creole	203	2.4%	1	<1%	182	3.1%	---	---
Other Indo-European Language	16	0.2%	---	---	16	0.3%	---	---
Asian and Pacific Islander Languages	0	0.0%	---	---	0	0.0%	---	---
Other Languages	6	0.1%	---	---	6	0.1%	---	---
Speaks Language Other than English	225	100%	1	100%	204	100%	---	---
Speaks English Very Well	153	68%	1	100%	132	65%	---	---
Speaks English Less than Very Well	72	32%	---	---	72	35%	---	---

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2022)

### **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, in the Independence CSD just under one-third (31.6%) 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, that percentage nearly doubles to 60.7%. *See table on next page.*

Table 7: Educational Attainment

	Independence CSD		Brandon city limits		Independence city limits		Rowley city limits	
<b>Total Population 18-24</b>	<b>655</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>432</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100%</b>
Less than High School	161	24.6%	14	30.4%	121	28.0%	11	15.7%
High School Graduate, or equivalent	309	47.2%	8	17.4%	211	48.8%	27	38.6%
Some College or Associate's Degree	124	18.9%	24	52.2%	78	18.1%	8	11.4%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	61	9.3%	0	---	22	5.1%	24	34.3%
<b>Total Population age 25+</b>	<b>6,534</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>4,295</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>100%</b>
Less than High School	242	3.7%	27	12.9%	196	4.6%	8	3.5%
High School Graduate, or equivalent	2,328	35.6%	93	44.5%	1,559	36.3%	84	36.7%
Some College, No Degree	1,616	24.7%	40	19.1%	1,050	24.4%	48	21.0%
Associate's Degree	755	11.6%	30	14.4%	457	10.6%	40	17.5%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	1,593	24.4%	19	9.1%	1,033	24.1%	49	21.4%

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2022)

## Working Families

As of 2022 there are 3,853 households in the Independence Community School District (CSD), of which 2,373 are family households, and 1,016 of those have children under the age of 18. The average household size is 2.32 persons, while the average family household size is 2.94 persons. Nearly two-thirds (62%) of all households are family households, while just over one-quarter (26%) of all households have children under the age of 18.

The median income<sup>1</sup> for all households is \$72,177, while the median income of families is \$87,614, and \$83,958 for families with children under the age of 18. When it comes to parents in the workforce, 71% of families with children ages 0 to 5 and 95% of families with children ages 6 to 17 have all parents working. All parents working means if there are two parents in the home they both work, or if there is a single parent that parent is working. *See table on next page.*

<sup>1</sup> 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.



Table 8: Household Types and Characteristics

	Independence CSD	Brandon city limits	Independence city limits	Rowley city limits
Total Households	3,853	126	2,641	124
Average household size	2.32	2.76	2.26	2.85
Median household income	\$72,177	\$58,750	\$63,042	\$59,167
Family Households	2,373	73	1,452	91
Average family size	2.94	3.79	3.02	3.2
Median family income	\$87,614	\$67,321	\$86,484	\$75,893
Family Households w/children under 18	1,016	35	733	35
<i>Married couples</i>	704	23	463	20
<i>Male householder (no spouse present)</i>	97	0	90	7
<i>Female householder (no spouse present)</i>	215	12	180	8
Median income for families w/children under 18	\$83,958	\$78,750	\$80,365	---
<i>Median family income married couples</i>	\$101,786	\$104,375	\$99,479	\$113,750
<i>Median family income male (no spouse present)</i>	\$41,042	---	\$41,333	---
<i>Median family income female (no spouse present)</i>	\$23,011	\$24,000	\$19,659	---
Households w/children ages 0 to 5	558	19	391	14
Number with all parents working	395	16	246	10
Percent with all parents working	71%	84%	63%	71%
Households w/children ages 6 to 17	1,360	73	975	39
Number with all parents working	1,296	67	937	31
Percent with all parents working	95%	92%	96%	80%

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2022)

## 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 November 2023 the total labor force (residents age 16 or older that are choosing to participate in the workforce) living in Buchanan County was 11,280 (data by individual cities or school district boundaries is not available). Of those, 10,990 are employed, while 290 (2.6%) were unemployed. In comparison, in November 2018 the total labor force was 11,420 with 11,210 employed, and 210 (1.8%) unemployed. This data indicates there are 140 fewer workers living in Buchanan County than there were 5 years ago.

### **Place of Work and Time Leaving Home**

According to the US Census Bureau as of 2022, there is a total of 4,754 workers age 16 and over in the Independence CSD, of those 64.9% work in the county where they live, 34.3% work outside the county but within Iowa, and 0.8% work out of state. The most popular hour for residents to leave home to go to work is 7:00 am to 7:59 am (27.5%), and the mean travel time is 20.9 minutes.

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

	<b>Independence CSD</b>	<b>Brandon city limits</b>	<b>Independence city limits</b>	<b>Rowley city limits</b>
Total workers 16 years and over	4,754	184	3,077	198
Workers who worked from home	7.7%	2.2%	6.0%	12.1%
<i>Time leaving home to go to work</i>				
12:00 am to 4:59 am	6.0%	3.9%	7.1%	3.4%
5:00 am to 5:29 am	5.8%	6.7%	7.5%	9.2%
5:30 am to 5:59 am	12.4%	17.2%	11.7%	5.7%
6:00 am to 6:29 am	7.0%	11.1%	7.0%	13.2%
6:30 am to 6:59 am	9.3%	5.6%	10.4%	11.5%
7:00 am to 7:29 am	15.4%	8.9%	9.1%	6.3%
7:30 am to 7:59 am	12.1%	10.6%	16.3%	5.2%
8:00 am. to 8:29 am	9.6%	6.1%	9.8%	13.8%
8:30 am to 8:59 am	3.0%	1.7%	2.2%	12.1%
9:00 am to 11:59 pm	19.4%	23.3%	18.9%	19.5%
Mean travel time (minutes)	20.9 mins.	23.2 mins.	20.3 mins.	20.2 mins.
<i>Place of Work</i>				
Within county of residence	64.9%	42.4%	66.0%	75.8%
Outside county of residence	34.3%	57.6%	32.8%	24.2%
Outside Iowa	0.8%	0.0%	1.2%	0.0%

*Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2022)*

### **Employees and Wages**

According to Iowa Workforce Development, as of Quarter 2 of 2023, there is an average 6,783 people employed by companies located in Buchanan County, and the average weekly wage of those working at these companies is \$885. Of all the industries based in Buchanan County, the industry that employs the most people on average is manufacturing (1,515), followed by health care & social assistance (1,092). Average wages range from a low of \$265 per week for accommodations & food service, to a high of \$2,798 per week for management of companies. See table on next page.

Table 10: Employees and Wages for Buchanan County

	Q1 2023		
	Total Locations	Average Employment	Avg. Wk. Wage
Accommodations & Food Service	35	393	\$265
Administrative & Waste Management	24	91	\$1,071
Agriculture, Fishing & Hunting	34	211	\$897
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	8	44	\$275
Construction	79	465	\$972
Educational Services	26	720	\$776
Finance & Insurance	36	214	\$1,250
Health Care & Social Assistance	71	1,092	\$879
Information	11	58	\$1,418
Management of Companies	4	6	\$2,798
Manufacturing	41	1,515	\$1,113
Mining, Quarrying, & Oil & Gas	4	11	\$1,441
Other Services (except Public Admin)	26	92	\$611
Professional, Scientific, Technical	30	132	\$1,088
Public Administration	30	347	\$811
Real Estate, Rental, Leasing	11	14	\$806
Retail Trade	70	891	\$565
Transportation & Warehousing	48	236	\$1,063
Utilities	4	21	\$1,695
Wholesale Trade	37	230	\$1,215
<b>Total</b>	<b>629</b>	<b>6,783</b>	<b>\$885</b>

Note: Data from Iowa Workforce Development (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 Workers<sup>2</sup>, Education and Childcare Administrators, Preschool and Daycare<sup>3</sup>, or Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education<sup>4</sup>. See table on next page.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

Table 11: Northeast Iowa Local Workforce Area Childcare and Preschool Workforce

	<b>Total Employment in LWA</b>	<b>Total Jobs Statewide</b>	<b>Entry Wage</b>	<b>Mean Wage</b>	<b>Experienced Wage</b>
Childcare Workers	1,010	5,250	\$8.50	\$10.45	\$11.42
Education & Childcare Admin, Preschool & Daycare	190	1,170	\$14.21	\$20.21	\$23.20
Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	890	5,370	\$9.74	\$15.10	\$17.78

Note: Data from Iowa Workforce Development (2022)

According to Iowa Wage Report Data from Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) for Northeast Iowa Local Workforce Area<sup>5</sup> for 2022, the entry wage<sup>6</sup> for Childcare Workers in the region is \$8.50 per hour, while the mean<sup>7</sup> wage is \$10.45 per hour and experienced wage<sup>8</sup> is \$11.42 per hour. There are 1,010 of these workers in the area, and 5,250 across the state.

For Education and Childcare Administrators, Preschool and Daycare in the workforce region, the entry wage is \$14.21 per hour, the mean wage \$20.21 per hour, and experienced wage \$23.20 per hour. There are 190 of these workers in the area, and 1,170 across the state.

For Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education, the entry wage in the area is \$9.74 per hour, the mean wage \$15.10 per hour, and experienced wage \$17.78 per hour. There are 890 of these workers in the area, and 5,370 across the state.

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<sup>5</sup> Northeast Iowa Local Workforce Area- Aggregate data for the counties of Allamakee, Black Hawk, Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Cerro Gordo, Chickasaw, Clayton, Delaware, Dubuque, Fayette, Floyd, Franklin, Grundy, Hancock, Howard, Mitchell, Winnebago, Winneshiek, Worth.

<sup>6</sup> Entry Wage is the average of the lowest third of reported wages for the occupation.

<sup>7</sup> Mean Wages is the average wage and is computed by dividing the estimated total wage for an occupation by its weighted employment.

<sup>8</sup> 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 Pair
  - 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 Services<sup>9</sup>***

In Iowa, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) 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 23 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 after that. A licensed center may apply for a Child Care Assistance<sup>10</sup> Provider Agreement and may participate in the voluntary Iowa Quality for Kids (IQ4K) quality rating system<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Information in this section adapted from “Child Care Overview”. Iowa Department of Health and Human Services. <https://hhs.iowa.gov/childcare/overview>.

<sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> 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

### *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 ChildNet<sup>12</sup> program and IQ4K.

### *Child Care Homes*

Child Care homes can care for 5 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.

*See table starting on next page for a side-by-side comparison of child care provider requirements.*

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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.

<sup>12</sup> 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 (1 provider)	Child Development Home C2 (2 providers)	Licensed Center
State Regulated	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Maximum Capacity <sup>13</sup>	6	6	8	12	8	16	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	Lead teacher 18 years
Iowa child abuse registry check <sup>14</sup>		•	•	•	•	•	•
Iowa criminal records check <sup>7</sup>		•	•	•	•	•	•
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.

<sup>13</sup> A home provider's own children are included in their legal capacity. Their school-age children are not unless they are being home-schooled.

<sup>14</sup> Iowa child abuse registry and Iowa criminal records checks are required for all household members age 14 and older.

	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 (1 provider)	Child Development Home C2 (2 providers)	Licensed Center
Emergency Preparedness Response Training		•	•	•	•	•	•
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 1:7; 3-year-olds 1:10; 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.

### ***Legal Unregulated Care in Iowa***

In Iowa, parents may choose “family, friend, or neighbor care” or another 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 above.

### ***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%. During that same time, across Child Care Resource & Referral of Northeast Iowa (Region 2)<sup>15</sup> the total number of child care programs declined by 22%, while the number of child care spaces declined by 1% (208 fewer spaces), and the total number of children ages 0 to 5 declined by 3% (1,164 fewer children).

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<sup>15</sup> 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.

## Buchanan County Early Care and Education Supply

According to Child Care Resource & Referral data, from 2017 to 2022 Buchanan County experienced a net decrease of 74 regulated child care spaces (historical data is not available for individual communities). The lost spaces were among licensed centers (-22) and child care homes (-68). During the that time, there was a net increase in spaces within registered child development homes (+16).

Table 13: Programs and Spaces in Buchanan County

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Net Change
<b>Total Programs</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>-13</b>
HHS Centers & Preschools	8	9	9	9	9	9	<b>+1</b>
Dept. of Ed. Programs	2	2	2	2	2	2	---
Registered Child Dvpmt. Homes	11	9	13	12	10	11	---
Child Care Homes	16	14	9	0	0	2	<b>-14</b>
<b>Total Spaces</b>	<b>873</b>	<b>863</b>	<b>870</b>	<b>787</b>	<b>779</b>	<b>799</b>	<b>-74</b>
HHS Centers & Preschools	633	649	649	611	611	611	<b>-22</b>
Dept. of Ed. Programs	40	40	40	40	40	40	---
Registered Child Dvpmt. Homes	120	104	136	136	128	136	<b>+16</b>
Child Care Homes	80	70	45	0	0	12	<b>-68</b>

Note: Data from Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral.

Iowa HHS data shows that as of January 2024, there are 9 HHS regulated programs with a collective capacity of 348 spaces within the market area. Those child care programs breakdown as follows:

- Licensed Child Care Centers and Preschools- There are 4 licensed child care centers and preschools, which account for 284 spaces.
- Registered Child Development Homes- There are 5 registered child development homes, which account for 64 spaces.
- Child Care Homes- There are no child care homes.

The following table shows the child care programs tracked by HHS within Independence, there are no regulated programs located in either Brandon or Rowley, the other communities within the school district boundaries. It is possible there are additional home providers or school-based programs not listed because they are not regulated by HHS, comparable data is not available for those programs.

*Table 14: HHS Licensed Centers and Preschools in Independence, January 2024*

<b>Program Name</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>HHS Capacity</b>	<b>Child Care Assistance</b>	<b>IQ4K Level</b>	<b>Ages</b>	<b>Year-Round</b>
Immanuel Lutheran Wee Care Preschool, Independence	8:15 am–11:15 am Mon–Thurs	16	No	4	3 yrs.	No
Kidsville Early Learning Center, Independence	6:00 am– 6:00 pm Mon–Fri	145	Yes	---	0–12 yrs.	Yes
Moser Preschool and Daycare, Independence	5:30 am– 5:30 pm Mon–Fri	75	Yes	2	0–12 yrs.	Yes
St. John School, Independence	7:00 am– 6:00 pm Mon–Fri	48	Yes	3	3–12 yrs.	No

*Note: Data from Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (2024)*

*Table 15: HHS Registered Child Development Homes in Independence, January 2024*

<b>Program Name &amp; Type</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>HHS Capacity</b>	<b>Child Care Assistance</b>	<b>IQ4K Level</b>
Candace Turner (Level B), Independence	6:00 am– 5:30 pm Mon–Fri	12	Yes	1
Cynthia Michaels (Level B), Independence	24-hours/day 7 days/week	12	Yes	---
Jennifer Fisher (Level C2), Independence	7:00 am– 4:30 pm 7 days/week	16	Yes	---
Melody Barker (Level A), Independence	7:00 am – 5:00 pm Mon–Fri	8	Yes	---
Sarah Horn and Deanna Armstead (Level C2), Independence	6:30 am– 5:30 pm Mon–Fri	16	Yes	---

*Note: Data from Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (2024)*

Residents of the market area are served by 1 public school district, Independence Community School District and 1 private school, St. John Elementary School. The Independence Community School District (CSD) is based out of Independence, and all buildings are located in Independence. The district also serves the communities of Brandon and Rowley. There are 3 buildings for preschool through 6th grade, and one building for middle school and high school. The Early Childhood Center houses preschool, East Elementary houses Kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, and West Elementary houses grades 3 through 6. Certified enrollment for the 2022-2023 school year was 1,380 students, with 718 of those being elementary (PK-6th).

St. John Elementary School is a private school based out of Independence, that serves PK through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Certified enrollment for the 2022-2023 school year was 168 students, with 137 of those being in PK through 6<sup>th</sup> grade. St. John also offers before and after school care for students enrolled in Pre-K (age 3) and older during the school year. The program accommodates up to 48 children from 7:00 am until school starts, and from school dismissal until 6:00 pm. The before and after school care, along with three-year-old preschool, is regulated by Iowa HHS.

Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program (SWVPP) is available through Independence Community School District. According to certified enrollment numbers reported to the Iowa Department of Education for the 2022-2023 school year, there were a total of 116 students enrolled in SWVPP. The district operates their own SWVPP program and has community partner agreements with 4 other organizations to offer SWVPP. The community partners are Immanuel Lutheran Wee Care Preschool, Kidsville Early Learning Center, Moser Preschool and Daycare, and St. John Elementary School.

*Table 16: Statewide Voluntary Preschool Enrollments*

<b>School District/Community Partner</b>	<b>2022-2023 Enrollment</b>
Independence Community School District	39
Immanuel Lutheran Wee Care Preschool	11
Kidsville Early Learning Center	22
Moser Preschool and Daycare	22
St. John Elementary	22

*Note: Data from Iowa Department of Education (2023)*

## Local Price Point

Over the last 5 years, the average weekly tuition rates for care within a licensed center within Buchanan County has increased for ages two and up, while it has fluctuated for infants and toddlers. 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, providers no longer reporting their tuition rates if they stop accepting child care assistance, or

homes that let their registration expire and no longer report their tuition to HHS (centers cannot let their license expire or the license will be revoked). When comparing rates, it is important to note that some providers charge tuition that is all-inclusive, while others may charge separate fees, 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.

According to Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral, as of July 2022, the average weekly tuition for care in a licensed center in Buchanan County ranged from a low of \$138.15 for school age care, to a high of \$161.55 for infant and toddler care. Before & after school care averaged \$65.80.

*Table 17: Average Weekly Tuition Rates of Licensed Centers, Buchanan County*

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Infant	\$147.60	\$160.65	\$157.95	\$154.80	\$157.05	\$161.55
Toddler	\$147.60	\$160.65	\$157.95	\$154.80	\$157.05	\$161.55
Two-Year-Old	\$135.90	\$112.57	\$147.60	\$148.05	\$149.85	\$153.90
Three-Year-Old	\$132.30	\$112.57	\$144.90	\$145.80	\$145.80	\$145.80
Four- & Five-Year-Old	\$130.05	\$112.57	\$144.00	\$145.80	\$145.80	\$145.80
School-Age (full time)	\$126.45	\$102.57	\$126.90	\$135.90	\$135.45	\$138.15
Before & After School	\$48.10	\$59.00	\$51.20	\$62.60	\$61.20	\$65.80

*Note: Data from Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral.*

Over the last 5 years, the average weekly tuition for care in a registered home in Buchanan County has increased, after a significant drop in 2018. As of July 2022, average weekly tuition ranged from a low of \$137.25 for age two and older, to a high of \$148.50 for infant care. Before & after school care averaged \$61.00.

*Table 18: Average Weekly Tuition at Registered Homes, Buchanan County*

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Infant	\$132.30	\$112.57	\$130.28	\$136.80	\$138.60	\$148.50
Toddler	\$132.30	\$112.57	\$130.28	\$136.80	\$138.60	\$140.85
Two-Year-Old	\$132.30	\$112.57	\$130.28	\$136.80	\$138.60	\$137.25
Three-Year-Old	\$132.30	\$112.57	\$130.28	\$136.80	\$138.60	\$137.25
Four- & Five-Year-Old	\$135.90	\$112.57	\$130.28	\$136.80	\$138.60	\$137.25
School-Age (full time)	\$135.90	\$102.57	\$132.90	\$136.80	\$138.60	\$137.25
Before & After School	\$60.40	\$59.00	\$63.80	\$60.80	\$61.60	\$61.00

*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 child development homes varies from county to county. The following data is the most up to date available, therefore it may be slightly different than the annual data for Buchanan County in the previous section.

When it comes to average weekly tuition for care in a licensed center as of January 2024, Linn County has the highest average for infants through full-time school age care, while Delaware County has the highest average for before & after school care. In contrast, Benton County has the lowest average for all ages for full-time, while Buchanan County has the lowest average for before & after school care.

*Table 19: Average Weekly Tuition at Licensed Centers in Surrounding Counties*

	<b>Buchanan</b>	<b>Benton</b>	<b>Black Hawk</b>	<b>Clayton</b>	<b>Delaware</b>	<b>Fayette</b>	<b>Linn</b>
Infant	\$176.63	\$172.50	\$210.94	\$184.30	\$191.65	\$191.88	\$247.30
Toddler	\$176.63	\$172.50	\$209.26	\$184.30	\$191.65	\$190.21	\$243.23
Two-Year-Old	\$171.88	\$160.25	\$188.65	\$187.70	\$187.92	\$179.17	\$225.92
Three-Year-Old	\$151.79	\$133.84	\$174.21	\$164.40	\$184.58	\$168.13	\$188.30
Four- & Five-Year-Old	\$153.63	\$142.05	\$176.96	\$162.50	\$182.50	\$165.75	\$186.43
Full-time School Age	\$147.50	\$124.75	\$149.76	\$152.67	\$161.67	\$157.75	\$164.70
Before & After School	\$57.00	\$60.00	\$86.87	\$60.00	\$202.50	\$168.75	\$112.42
Total HHS Centers	9	10	72	8	9	9	126
Spaces w/in Centers	643	680	5,692	395	459	598	14,113

*Note: Data from Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral, as of 1/16/24*

When it comes to average weekly tuition for care in a registered home, Blach Hawk County has the highest average for infants through four- & five-year-old, while Fayette County has the highest for full-time school age care plus before & after school care. In contrast, Clayton County has the lowest average for infants through three-year-old, while Benton County has the lowest for full-time school age care plus full-time school age care. Rates could not be reported for Delaware County due to confidentiality, there is only one registered home.

*Table 20: Average Weekly Tuition at Registered Homes in Surrounding Counties*

	<b>Buchanan</b>	<b>Benton</b>	<b>Black Hawk</b>	<b>Clayton</b>	<b>Delaware</b>	<b>Fayette</b>	<b>Linn</b>
Infant	\$155.94	\$147.50	\$162.41	\$145.63	N/A	\$160.00	\$150.22
Toddler	\$155.94	\$146.25	\$160.38	\$145.63	N/A	\$160.00	\$151.25
Two-Year-Old	\$152.81	\$145.42	\$160.48	\$1440.00	N/A	\$158.59	\$148.84
Three-Year-Old	\$152.81	\$144.58	\$158.92	\$1440.00	N/A	\$158.59	\$146.92
Four- & Five-Year-Old	\$153.21	\$137.73	\$160.50	\$1440.00	N/A	\$170.21	\$149.18
Full-time School Age	\$155.36	\$115.00	\$150.36	\$1440.00	N/A	\$160.36	\$136.72
Before & After School	\$150.00	\$60.00	\$99.83	N/A	N/A	\$151.88	\$77.29
Total Registered Homes	8	13	113	5	1	8	98
Spaces w/in Reg. Homes	100	152	1,244	60	8	92	1,012

*Note: Data from Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral, as of 1/16/24*

## 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. As of July 1, 2023, the income eligibility limit for those initially applying for CCA is 160% of Federal Poverty Level (FPL), or 200% if they have a child with special needs. According to the federally determined poverty threshold that went into effect as of January 2024, 160% of FPL is equivalent to \$41,312 for a household of 3, and \$49,920 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 \$58,095 for a household of 3, and \$70,200 for a household of 4.<sup>16</sup>

Reimbursements to the provider 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 10 units (2 half-day units, for 5 days) or less, 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 rate based on whether or not the provider participates in the IQ4K quality rating system (QRS). At this time, 8 of the 9 HHS regulated child care programs in Independence accept child care assistance, and of those 8 programs, 2 centers and 1 home participate in QRS/IQ4K allowing them to be reimbursed in some cases at a higher rate than programs that do not participate.

The following table shows the maximum amount child care providers can be reimbursed. These rates went into effect March 1, 2023. *See table on next page.*

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<sup>16</sup> Starting July 5, 2023, HHS implemented a one-year pilot program which allows the child care workforce to apply for Child Care Assistance (CCA) for their own children even if they are over the family income limit, as long as they meet all other CCA eligibility criteria, and the child will be cared for by someone other than the parent/guardian if approved.

Table 2i: Half-Day Maximum CCA Reimbursement Rates

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
<b>Licensed Centers</b>								
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
<b>Child Development Home A or B</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
<b>Child Development Home C</b>								
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
<b>Child Care Homes (not registered)</b>								
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 September 2023, three electronic surveys developed by First Children's Finance were distributed for the purpose of determining how child care affects employers and parents, as well as to gain insight from child care providers about the current challenges and opportunities they are experiencing. To ensure there were no biases and to maintain confidentiality, surveys were distributed electronically and then collected and analyzed by First Children's Finance. 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 9 companies participated in the employer survey. Employers indicated their companies represent the following industries: Educational Services; Finance & Insurance; Manufacturing; Professional, Scientific & Technical; and Other Services.

Collectively they employ 951 individuals, with 759 of those working at or reporting to their Independence location. Of those working or reporting to their Independence location, 693 are full-time and 66 part-time. There are 101 full-time and 0 part-time vacant positions at their Independence locations.

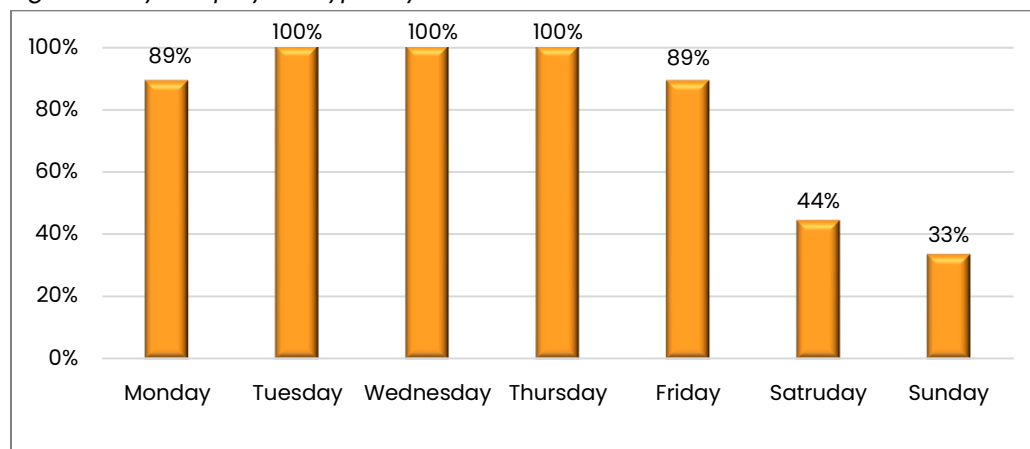
Table 22: Employees & Vacant Positions at Independence Locations

	Full-Time Employees	Part-Time Employees	Total Employees	Full-Time Vacancies	Part-Time Vacancies	Total Vacancies
First Shift (days)	534	39	573	41	0	41
Second Shift (evenings)	93	21	114	36	0	36
Third Shift (overnight)	21	0	21	24	0	24
Rotating Shift	45	6	51	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>693</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>759</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>101</b>

In a separate question, employers were asked how many new positions they plan to add at their Independence location in the next 3 years. Sixty-seven percent (67%) report they do plan to collectively add 199 positions. Most of those, 4 employers, plan to add less than 10 positions, while 1 plans to add 80, and 1 plans to add 100.

When asked which days of the week their employees typically work, 1 indicated they operate Monday through Thursday, 3 indicated they operate Monday through Friday, 2 operate Monday through Saturday, 1 operates Tuesday through Friday plus Sunday, and 2 operate Monday through Sunday (7 days).

Figure 1: Days Employees Typically Work



When it comes to hours of operation the largest group, 56% (5 employers), operate first shift on the days they do operate. Hours of operation vary among employers, but all occur between 6:00 am and 6:00 pm. Thirty-three percent (33%) (3 employers) operate 24-hours, with 1 operating Monday through Friday (weekdays) and 2 operating Monday through Sunday (7 days). The remaining 11% (1 employer) operate first and second shift Monday through Friday.

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

- 7:00 am to 2:30 pm, 3:00 pm to 10:30 pm, and 10:00 pm to 6:30 am.
- 7:30 am to 3:30 pm Monday through Friday, and 2:00 pm to 10:00 pm Monday through Friday.
- First shift- 6:00 am to 4:30 pm, second shift- 4:30 pm to 2:30 am, third shift- 8:00 pm to 6:00 am. Weekend shift- 6:00 am to 6:00 pm Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.
- One employer gave 25 different schedules, which can be summarized as the following:  
Day shifts- start between 4:40 am and 10:00 am, and end between 2:30 pm and 6:00 pm.  
Evening shifts- start between 12:00 pm and 5:30 pm, and end between 9:00 pm and 2:00 am.  
Overnight shifts- start between 7:45 pm and 3:00 am, and end between 5:00 am and 12:00 pm.

Twenty-two percent (22%) of employers indicated there are sometimes changes or fluctuations in their hours or days of operations. Comments received about schedule fluctuations were:

- *Holidays, slow volumes.*
- *Depending on the amount of [product] coming in, we may need to reduce hours to 6 hours a day, altering schedules by 2 hours at start or end times during hot weather.*

Employers were asked what percentage of their employees are female. Overall, employers were spread out, with the largest group, 33%, indicating their workforce is 0% to 25% female.

*Table 23: Composition of Workforce*

	<b>Percent of Employers</b>
Female 0% to 25%	33%
Female 26% to 50%	22%
Female 51% to 75%	22%
Female 76% to 100%	22%

Employers were asked to estimate the percentage of employees who report to their Independence location that have children age 12 or younger. Forty-four percent (44%) reported less than one-quarter of their employees have children, while 56% reported between one-quarter and one-half of their employees have children.

*Table 24: Percentage of Employees with Children*

	<b>Percent of Employers</b>
0% to 25% have children	44%
26% to 50% have children	56%
51% to 75% have children	0%
76% to 100% have children	0%

Employers were asked to estimate the percentage of their workforce that works in Independence also lives within Independence. The majority reported that more than half of their workforce lives in Independence. Eleven percent (11%) reported up to one-quarter of their workforce lives in Independence, 33% reported between one-quarter and one-half, 44% reported one-half to three-quarters, and 11% reported more than three-quarters.

*Table 25: Percent of Employees Living in Independence*

	<b>Percent of Employers</b>
0% to 25% work in and live in Independence	11%
26% to 50% work in and live in Independence	33%
51% to 75% work in and live in Independence	44%
76% to 100% work in and live in Independence	11%

Thirty-three percent (33%) 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 6 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, 11% of employers indicated they had challenges related to productivity due to employee's child care challenges, while 33% were unsure, and 56% said they did not. Comments received were:

- *None reported, however, we know the possibility exists.*
- *With our need to have people work on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> shift, daycares are not open typically after 6:00 pm, or are not open overnight to accommodate them (if single parents).*

When asked about absenteeism due to employee's child care challenges, 11% of employers indicated they had experienced challenges, while 44% were unsure, and 44% had not. Comments received were:

- *None reported to Human Resources.*
- *If they are, we are not aware that is why they are calling in, as they do not say it is directly because of childcare.*
- *During bad weather or non-school days related to bad weather several daycares close so our employees need to leave work early or not come in at all.*

In a separate question, 11% of employers indicated they had experienced difficulty hiring due to child care options or challenges in the area, 33% were unsure, and 56% had not. Comments received were:

- *We list hours of operations and disclose in the interview process what hours are to be expected.*
- *Lack of day care options in the area.*
- *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.*

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 challenges that were indicated by at least one-quarter of the employers were employees arrived late to work (44%), missed a day of work because their child care provider was closed, on vacation, or not available (33%), and had to leave work early (33%). Overall, 44% indicated their employees experienced no issues related to work and child care. *See table on next page.*

Table 26: 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	33%
Missed a day of work because their provider did not have room or space for a child	22%
Did not accept a desired job offer	22%
Arrived late to work	44%
Had to leave work early	33%
Unable to work overtime	11%
Unable to travel for work	0%
Lower productivity	0%
Unable to accept a different work schedule or shift	22%
Have had to reduce the number of hours worked	22%
Received disciplinary action (not including firing)	11%
Quit a job	11%
Got fired	11%
Had to change jobs to one that works with their child care arrangement	11%
Took a job that does not fit their skills	0%
Had to leave their child home alone to go to work	22%
Had to bring their child to work with them	11%
Other	0%
Our employees experienced no issues related to work and child care	44%

Employers were asked if their company currently offered any child care related benefits to their employees (they were asked to select all that apply). The majority of employers (78%) indicated they offer dependent care flex spending accounts, while 0% indicated they offer financial assistance to help employees pay for child care, both of these typically result in some costs for the employer to pay an entity to administer the program. Twenty-two percent (22%) indicated they do not offer either benefit.

Table 27: Child Care Related Benefits Currently Offered

	Percent of Employers
Dependent Care Flex Spending Accounts	78%
Financial assistance to help employees pay for child care	0%
None of the above	22%

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

- *Financial component of benefit offering and number who would utilize the benefit.*

- *The only employees besides [specific position] work part-time or flex shifts-childcare is not an issue.*

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 apply). The benefits on this list typically do not result in the employer incurring additional costs. If an employee's regular child care arrangement is not available, 44% of employers said they offer flexible schedules while 33% of employees said they offer work-from-home options. None of the employers provide employees with child care information in employee orientation, or the employee handbook. Overall, the majority, 56%, indicated they offer none of the benefits listed.

*Table 28: Non-Financial Child Care Related Benefits Offered*

	<b>Percent of Employers</b>
Child care information is included in employee orientation	0%
Child care information is included in an employee handbook	0%
Flexible schedules if their regular child care arrangement is not available	44%
Work-from-home options if their regular child care arrangement is not available	33%
None of the above	56%

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

- *Childcare information not provided to employer to handout to new employees.*
- *Manufacturing is dependent on people being present.*
- *I let people know where to go if child care is needed, however, we usually lose applicants because we don't have 1<sup>st</sup> shift opportunities.*
- *Manufacturing doesn't really allow for flexibility in location or time.*

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

- *Pay for a spot or spots for eligible employees.*
- *Flexibility in changing shifts if necessary.*

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 two most popular responses with 33% each were donation or financial contribution to build, remodel, or expand a child care center and none of the above. The second most popular responses were annual donation or financial contribution

for a portion (but not all) of the wages of a child care center director and other. Those selecting other were asked to specify. Comments received from those indicating “other” were:

- *Unknown.*
- *We have discussed before/after school building use but it has not been voted in.*

*Table 29: Child Care Solutions Employers are Willing to Consider*

	<b>Percent of Employers</b>
Provide space for on-site for a child care center (owned & operated by another entity)	11%
Own and operate a child care center (either on-site or off-site)	0%
Provide a significant donation or financial contribution as match for a grant application	11%
Donation or financial contribution for build, remodel, or expand a child care center	33%
Donate land or provide a financial contribution to purchase land to build a larger child care center	11%
Directly employ the Center Director (paying wages and benefits) in order to help reduce operating costs	11%
Annual donation or financial contribution to a child care center that is equal to the wages of a child care center director	11%
Annual donation or financial contribution for a portion (but not all) of the wages of a child care center director	22%
Other (see comments below)	22%
None of the above	33%

Next employers were given another list of 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, 33%, indicated “other”. Comments to explain other were all related to being unsure or not knowing specifically at this time.

*Table 30: Ways that Employers are Willing to Support Child Care Businesses*

	<b>Percent of Employers</b>
Appoint an employee to serve on the Board of Directors of a child care program	22%
Provide child care providers access to purchase supplies through our company to take advantage of bulk pricing or discounts	22%
Provide in-kind services to reduce expenses of a child care program (ex. bookkeeping, payroll, maintenance, cleaning, etc.)	11%
Donation or financial contribution for the operation of a child care program	22%
Donation or financial contribution for child care scholarships for your employees	22%
Donation or financial contribution for child care scholarships for all children	22%
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 employee taking over payment upon enrolling)	22%
Other	33%
None of the above	22%

Comments received from those indicating “other” were:

- *Unknown.*
- *Not sure at this time.*
- *This would have to be on a case-by-case basis and voted on by our session.*

Employers were asked what they think is the biggest challenge facing parents in regard to child care, and what will resolve that challenge. Comments received were:

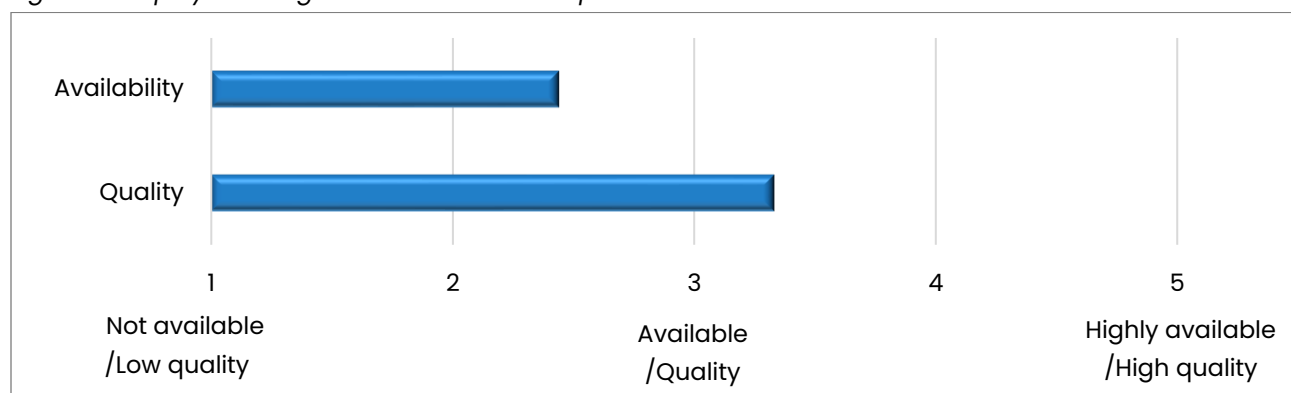
- *Finding care that is suitable for their individual needs.*
- *Cost and availability of child care.*
- *For [us] specifically, it is the fact that we run a 7-day a week operation and our employees are required to work on weekends and holidays as scheduled.*
- *There are not enough child care providers in Independence. While our business is not currently affected, my local friends with children often complain about this, specifically the lack of space at [center]. Funding would be the biggest key.*

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

- *How many children are without care or having to use friends/family or alternatives?*
- *Add a daycare at a reasonable price.*
- *More than 2 child care centers. Child care that is open late nights or over nights.*
- *Funding to expand Kidsville and to pay daycare employees a higher wage to reduce turnover and attract applicants.*

Employers were asked to rate the *availability* of child care in Independence 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 2.44. Employers were then asked to rate the *quality* of child care in Independence 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 3.33.

Figure 2: Employer Ratings of Child Care in Independence





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

- *At our Independence branch, we currently only have one employee (lives outside of Independence) that utilizes child care provided by a relative also outside of Independence, therefore I do not have data on availability or quality of child care in Independence as it affects our local business.*
- *From what I have heard, the 2 child care centers in town offer great care for the little ones, there just isn't enough room for more OR enough people to care for the children.*

The final question asked employers to provide any additional thoughts about the supply of child care in Independence. Comments received were:

- *Since we don't have employer it's a guess on our end of what we have got needs. I know many bring their kids to Indee for school from other towns... Oelwein for example.*
- *It seems like a lot of in-home daycares don't last long. I hope that they will reach out to you with their feedback so they can be supported as well.*

## Child Care Provider Survey Results

A total of 8 child care providers completed the survey. All 8 are located in the 50644-zip code. Four (4) home-based providers and 4 child care centers are represented. The centers are licensed, and all 4 home providers are registered child development homes with the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Providers answered questions about the length of time they have been providing care, and how much longer they plan to provide care (home providers only). Two (2) of the centers have been operating for over 20 years while the other 2 have been operating between 10 years and 19 years. Three (3) of the home providers indicated they have been in operation between 10 and 19 years, while 1 has been in operating 1 to 4 years. Two (2) home providers indicate they intend to continue providing child care for an additional 5 or more years, while 1 intends to provide care for 4 more years, and 1 intends to provide care for 3 more years.

*Table 31: Years Child Care Business Has Been in Operation*

	<b>20+ years</b>	<b>10 to 19 years</b>	<b>5 to 9 years</b>	<b>1 to 4 years</b>	<b>Less than 1 year</b>
Licensed Center/Preschool	2	2	---	---	---
Registered Homes	---	3	---	1	---
Unregistered Homes	---	---	---	---	---

The providers that participated reported they collectively have 319 children enrolled, 171 full-time and 148 part-time. Although 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 having enough staff to use all classrooms, or large spaces like multi-purpose rooms in centers counted in the total license that do not work well for use as a classroom on a regular basis.

The center reported they prefer to operate at a capacity that is different than the maximum they are allowed by HHS. Based on the capacity self-reported by the centers, they have combined legal capacity is 286 children, while their preferred capacity is 296, and they currently have 271 children enrolled. Based on the registration levels reported by the providers, FCF has determined the registered homes have a combined legal capacity of 48 children, while they self-reported their combined preferred capacity is 40, and they have 48 children enrolled. *See table on next page.*

Table 32: Participating Programs by Type

	<b>Total Providers</b>	<b>Legal Capacity</b>	<b>Preferred Capacity</b>	<b>Full-Time Enrollment<sup>17</sup></b>	<b>Part-Time Enrollment</b>	<b>Total Enrollment</b>
Licensed Center/Preschool	4	286	296	133	138	271
Registered Homes	4	48	40	38	10	48
Unregistered Homes	0	---	---	---	---	---
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>319</b>

The centers reported they have 59 employees, 32 full-time (36 hours per week or more) and 27 part-time (35 hours per week or less). During the previous 12 months, 12 full-time and 22 part-time employees left (voluntarily or involuntarily), and currently there are 6 vacant positions, 3 full-time and 3 part-time. When asked how hiring staff had been over the last 12 months, 50% (2 centers) indicated it was somewhat easy and 50% (2 centers) indicated it was very difficult. There was space to allow centers to explain, no comments were received.

The registered home providers indicated they have 3 staff or assistants, 2 full-time (36 hours per week or more) and 1 part-time (35 hours per week or less). During the previous 12 months they did not have any staff or assistants leave, and currently there are no vacant positions. When asked how hiring staff had been over the last 12 months, all 4 registered homes indicated they have not tried to hire staff or assistants during the past 12 months.

Table 33: Employees & Vacant Positions at Independence Locations

	<b>Full-Time Employees</b>	<b>Part-Time Employees</b>	<b>Total Employees</b>	<b>Full-Time Vacancies</b>	<b>Part-Time Vacancies</b>	<b>Total Vacancies</b>
Licensed Center/Preschool	32	27	<b>59</b>	3	3	<b>6</b>
Registered Homes	2	1	<b>3</b>	0	0	<b>0</b>
Unregistered Homes	---	---	---	---	---	---
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>

When asked if they had to limit enrollment or close a classroom due to not having enough staff during the last 12 months, 1 center and 1 home indicated yes. Comments received were:

- *We had to cut half our school age program for summer time because of no staff. We also limited our toddler and infant room.*
- *Limited enrollments to help keep my current co-provider. We've needed to scale back numbers due to behaviors of children.*

<sup>17</sup> It is possible for a child care program to have more children enrolled than what their capacity allows due to varying attendance schedules of the children.

When asked if they had turned away families or put them on a waitlist due to lack of openings during the last 12 months, 75% of the providers (2 centers and all 4 homes) indicated yes.

Comments received were:

- *I have turned away infants to school age. School age because they need transportation, and I can't do that. My next spots open are already filled.*
- *Usually, infants because we choose to not have as many to prevent burn-out. But also like four 3-year-olds.*
- *Three newborns, I am currently full in infants and toddlers. I will not have room in the near future as I only want to care for 4 children total.*
- *I constantly get calls asking for Infant or school age care.*
- *We don't anticipate any openings. We receive several calls a week from families looking for care from here or even wanting care from out of town looking to move to town. Our wait list is approximately 180+ kids. At this point in time, we also don't offer to put parents on the wait list unless they request it.*
- *Infant and school age due to staffing issues.*

All 8 providers operate between the hours of 5:00 am and 6:00 pm (exact hours for each program vary), Monday through Friday. None of the programs provide care for what are considered extended hours (after 6:30 pm) or weekends. Fifty percent (50%) operate year-round, while 50% operate during the school year. The programs that close down over the summer months collectively offer 88 spaces.

Providers were asked when parents contact you about child care, which factor is most important to them, and were asked to select one from a multiple-choice list. Seventy-five percent (75%) indicated it was available space or timing of enrollment, while 13% indicated it was second shift or event care, and 13% indicated it was transportation to/from school or preschool. *See table on next page.*

Table 34: Factor Most Important to Parents Inquiring About Care

	Number of Providers	Percent of Providers
Available space/timing of enrollment	6	75%
Care includes preschool	---	---
Dependable staff or provider	---	---
Drop-in or occasional care	---	---
Educational curriculum used	---	---
Health and safety policies	---	---
Iowa Quality for Kids (IQ4K) quality rating improvement system	---	---
Location	---	---
Part-time options	---	---
Positive interactions between staff and children	---	---
Second shift/evening care	1	13%
Secured entrance	---	---
Special needs care	---	---
Third shift/overnight care	---	---
Transportation to and from school or preschool	1	13%
Tuition assistance or scholarships	---	---
Tuition rates or price	---	---
Upkeep or appearance of the facility and playground	---	---
Weekend care	---	---

Many providers will participate in programs that 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 participating in or at least aware of almost every program listed. The homes also are participating in or aware of many of the programs. The programs with the most indicating they are not familiar with are either new or are not typically useful to home providers.

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)	3 centers	1 center	---
	3 homes	1 home	---
Iowa Child Care Assistance Program (CCA)	3 centers	1 center	---
	3 homes	1 home	---
Child Care Assistance (CCA) Pilot Program for Child Care Workforce	1 center	2 centers	1 center
	2 homes	1 home	1 home
Agreement with school to provider Universal Preschool (4-year-old preschool)	4 centers	---	---
	---	3 homes	1 home

As a follow up, providers were asked about additional programs involving quality improvement, technology and education are also available. The centers were either participating in or aware of

all of the programs listed. All centers indicated they are a current or past participant or aware of all programs listed, with the exception of 1 newer program. Homes were also participating in or at least aware of most programs.

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

	<b>Current or Past Participant</b>	<b>Aware of, But Never Participated</b>	<b>Not Familiar With/Not Heard Of</b>
Iowa Quality for Kids (IQ4K) quality rating improvement system	4 centers 2 homes	--- 2 homes	--- ---
TEACH Scholarship Program	4 centers 2 homes	--- 2 homes	--- ---
Child Care WAGE\$® salary supplement	4 centers ---	--- 4 homes	--- ---
FieldPrint Fingerprinting	1 center 2 homes	3 centers 1 home	--- 1 home
Current opportunity for HHS funded monthly subscription fees for either Playground or brightwheel	1 center ---	2 centers 3 homes	1 center 1 home

Child care providers were also asked how many children enrolled 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. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the programs (4 centers and 2 homes) indicated they do have enrollments, that are receiving or eligible for some form of financial assistance related to child care. Collectively they reported 64 total children of which 72% are enrolled full-time.

Providers were asked a series of open-ended questions about being a child care provider, what they see for the future of child care, and any other comments they have about child care. Each of these questions and responses are shared below.

Providers were asked if they had the opportunity, would they wish to expand their current child care program to serve more children. Three (3) centers said yes, while no homes said yes. Respondents were asked to explain how they would expand.

Comments received from those answering yes were:

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

Comments received from those answering no were:

- We serve the school.
- I'm lacking the space to add more children.
- Doesn't seem to be enough people looking for jobs so dependable help would be hard to find. The extra bookwork involved would be a hassle.

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:

- *Additional staff.*
- *Financial support for renovations. We survive each month on our own budget but having an additional loan hovering over us will get difficult.*
- *Staffing and finances.*

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

- *Funding and staffing and space.*
- *Staffing does concern me, but we are currently sitting well with staff, and I have hope this barrier is getting better. Again, its financials off needing additional space.*
- *Staffing and finances.*
- *My biggest barrier is space in my home.*
- *Childcare burnout. I tried taking more but it caused more stress for us with children's behavior.*
- *Would need a bigger location and dependable employees.*

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

- *Supplies needed...cribs, changing table, toys, etc.*
- *Having help to run it.*
- *Finding reliable quality applicants.*
- *Funding and initiative.*
- *We would not start a new one.*
- *Supports.*

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

- *More volunteers.*
- *We need donated services or financial donations. Our program is a nonprofit and we only charge what we need to do to survive as we want to be money conscious for*

*parents. I have many maintenance needs and no manpower on staff, and administrative needs with limited administration staff (payroll - accounting).*

- Schools provide more transportation options. If I am at my full capacity, I cannot transport any children. No busing options for preschoolers is also a problem.*
- More help with the cost of food.*
- A big help would be for the school to provide bus service within a block from my program for preschool and school age.*

What challenges do you see in the future for child care in Independence? Comments received were:

- No availability and costs are rising, and people can't afford it. And they can't retain staff as it is.*
- Not available.*
- We need more open spots.*
- Staffing and finances for better wages.*
- I think the biggest thing is just finding new providers that stay providers and don't quit soon after starting.*
- People don't stick with it because the stress of families expecting too much out of us and not wanting to pay us more. It's expensive to run.*
- Lack of quality reliable applicants for a center. Home day cares can't take on the load (number of children) that a center could and the amount of young infants waiting to get in to a daycare keeps growing.*
- Transportation...providers are getting away from transporting kids and school age care.*

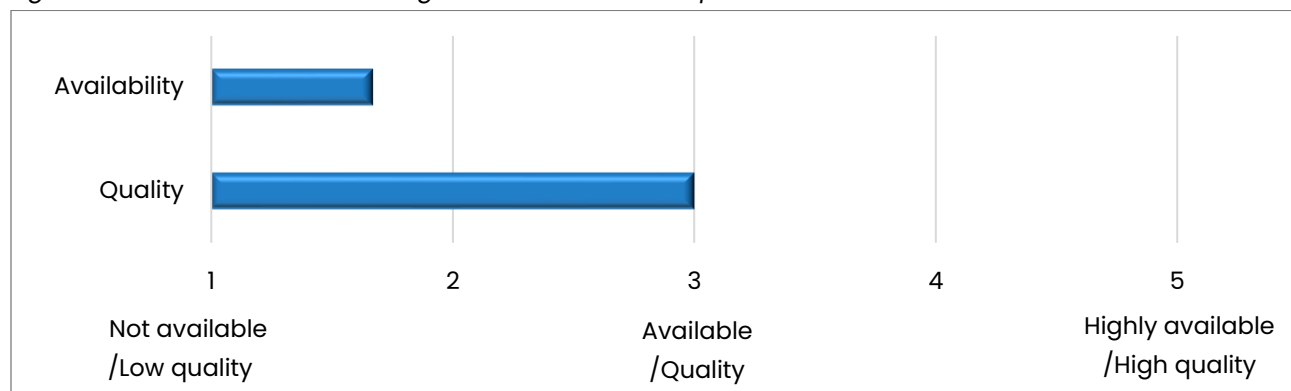
What opportunities do you see in the future for child care in Independence? Comments received were:

- More assistance available.*
- We need more home daycares and center-based daycare providers. This will bring more employees and employers into our city. I also work in real estate and one of the many topics we run into while showing homes to new prospective community members is - is there available childcare?*
- Not sure.*
- Really hard to say. Without another large daycare facility, home daycare providers would have to take on more and the quality may decrease due to having a larger group. I also know of 3 home daycare providers that quit this year and went back to the workforce. Taking on more children could lead to more providers quitting. Maybe a partnership with some of the larger companies in town would be an opportunity to add more centers.*



Child care providers were asked to rank the *availability* of child care in Independence on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not available, 3 adequate, and 5 highly available (the higher the score, the more available). The weighted average was 1.63. Providers were then asked to rank the *quality* of child care in Independence 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 weighted average was 2.75.

Figure 3: Child Care Provider Ratings of Child Care in Independence



The final question allowed providers to share any additional comments they had about child care in Independence. No comments were received.

## Parent Survey Results

A total of 408 individuals accessed the parent survey. To assure that results reflect data that will be most useful to the community to address child care challenges in Independence, the surveys were filtered and only the responses of those that currently have children ages 12 or younger or plan to have or adopt children in the next 5 years, that indicated that if selecting child care today Independence is their preferred location, and that completed and submitted their survey are reflected in this report. Surveys that were not included were because either the individual does not have children, they indicated they do not wish to use child care (such as those that have a stay-at-home parent) or they do not have children and do not plan to have or adopt in the next five years. Also not included due to the possibility of duplication are surveys that were started but not completed and submitted.

The following results reflect surveys from 231 individuals that have children ages 12 or younger and are currently using or would prefer to use child care in Independence, this group is referred to as “current parents”. Also included are the surveys from 8 individuals that do not currently have children but do plan to have or adopt 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 their future or preferred child care use, while future parents completed only questions about their anticipated future child care use. 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 (87%) and living in the boundaries of the Independence Community School District (91%). They work first-shift Monday through Friday (81%) in Independence (65%), and the nature of their job is health care & social assistance (28%). Their spouse also works first-shift Monday through Friday (83%) outside of Independence (56%), and the nature of their job is manufacturing (22%). They currently use child care in Independence (89%), 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 (79%).

Using the most popular responses, a future parent would be described as married (63%) and living in the boundaries of the Independence Community School District (100%). They work first-shift Monday through Friday (75%) in Independence (88%), and the nature of their job is either finance & insurance (38%) or health care & social assistance (38%). Their spouse also works first-shift Monday through Friday (80%) in Independence (100%), and the nature of their job is manufacturing (20%).

Parents were asked if they live in the boundaries of the Independence Community School District, 91% of current parents and 100% of future parents indicated yes. Those that indicated no were asked to specify where. The following table shows the parents that indicated they live within the Independence CSD and outside, and a breakdown of where within or outside the district.

Table 37: Parents' Place of Residence

	<b>Current Parents</b>	<b>Future Parents</b>
<b>Within Independence CSD</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<i>Independence (50644 zip code)</i>	84%	100%
<i>Brandon (52210 zip code)</i>	2%	0%
<i>Hazleton (50641 zip code)</i>	0%	0%
<i>Quasqueton (52326 zip code)</i>	0%	0%
<i>Rowley (52329 zip code)</i>	4%	0%
<i>Walker (52352 zip code)</i>	0%	0%
<b>Outside Independence CSD</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>0%</b>
<i>Arlington (50606 zip code)</i>	0%	0%
<i>Cedar Rapids (52403 zip code)</i>	0%	0%
<i>Coggon (52218 zip code)</i>	0%	0%
<i>Delhi (52223 zip code)</i>	0%	0%
<i>Hazleton (50641 zip code)</i>	0%	0%
<i>Jesup (50648 zip code)</i>	0%	0%
<i>La Porte City (50651 zip code)</i>	0%	0%
<i>Lamont (50650 zip code)</i>	0%	0%
<i>Manchester (52057 zip code)</i>	1%	0%
<i>Maynard (50655 zip code)</i>	0%	0%
<i>Oelwein (50662 zip code)</i>	1%	0%
<i>Quasqueton (50644 zip code)</i>	1%	0%
<i>Winthrop (50682 zip code)</i>	2%	0%

Parents that live outside of the Independence CSD were asked if the availability of child care in Independence has influenced their decision to live elsewhere. Sixteen percent (16%) (6 parents) indicated yes. Comments received were:

- *However, it does make the Independence area less appealing when it is nearly impossible to get into Kidsville and there is no after school program once kids start school. Every Friday being an early out for school aged kids coupled with all of the other early dismissals makes it difficult on those that have both parents working. An after-school program would be a game changer.*
- *We have contemplated moving to Independence but are aware of the lack of child care available, which has been a large factor in our decision to stay put for now.*

Comments continued... Has the availability of child care in Independence influenced your decision to live elsewhere?

- *I live on a family farm but work in Independence and need to have the ability to lessen the amount of hours required for daycare by having my children in daycare where I work.*
- *Finding childcare since moving to this area has been a challenge. We have been on the waitlist for Kidsville Daycare center for over a year and a half. It has been especially challenging to find after school childcare that would provide transportation from school to daycare as my husband and I both work full time and cannot leave work to pick up our oldest.*
- *I had to keep my daughter in Cedar Rapids due to being on a waiting list for over a year for childcare. None were available that take State CCA.*

In a separate question, parents were asked if their children are enrolled in or are most likely to be enrolled in the Independence Community School District when they are old enough. The majority of current parents (93%) and all future parents (100%) answered yes. Parents that answered no, were asked to name the district.

Table 38: School District Where Children Are Enrolled

	<b>Current Parents</b>	<b>Future Parents</b>
Independence Community School District	93%	100%
East Buchanan CSD	2%	0%
Jesup CSD	2%	0%
Oelwein CSD	<1%	0%
St. John Catholic School, Independence	<1%	0%
Union CSD	<1%	0%
Wapsie Valley CSD	<1%	0%
West Central CSD	<1%	0%
West Delaware CSD	1%	0%

The most common industry or occupational nature for the parent who completed the survey (self) was health care & social assistance (25%). The most common occupation among the spouses or partners for current parents was professional, scientific, & technical (15%). When it comes to future parents, the most common industry or occupational nature for the parent who completed the survey (self) was a tie between finance & insurance (38%) and health care & social assistance (38%). The most common occupation among the spouses or partners for future parents was utilities (40%). See table on next page.

Table 39: Nature of Job or Occupation

	Current Parents		Future Parents	
	Self	Spouse or Partner	Self	Spouse or Partner
Accommodations & Food Service	2%	3%	0%	0%
Administrative & Waste Management	1%	1%	0%	0%
Agriculture, Fishing, Hunting	3%	5%	0%	20%
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	0%	0%	0%	0%
Construction	3%	11%	13%	0%
Educational Services	15%	7%	13%	0%
Finance & Insurance	7%	8%	38%	0%
Health Care & Social Assistance	28%	9%	38%	0%
Information	0%	1%	0%	0%
Management of Companies	2%	3%	0%	0%
Manufacturing	14%	22%	0%	20%
Mining, Quarrying, & Oil & Gas	0%	0%	0%	0%
Professional, Scientific & Technical	2%	6%	0%	0%
Public Administration	1%	1%	0%	0%
Real Estate, Rental, Leasing	2%	1%	0%	0%
Retail Trade	2%	2%	0%	0%
Transportation & Warehousing	1%	5%	0%	0%
Utilities	1%	2%	0%	40%
Wholesale Trade	0%	1%	0%	0%
Other Services	13%	14%	0%	20%
Do not work	4%	3%	0%	0%

In a separate question, parents were asked where their job is located, or where they do most of their work. Among current parents, for the individual completing the survey (self) the most popular location is Independence (65%), followed by Waterloo (9%). For the spouse or partner of current parents the most popular location is again Independence (45%), followed by Cedar Rapids (13%). When it comes to future parents for the individual completing the survey (self) the most popular location is Independence (88%), followed by Waterloo (13%). For the spouse or partner of future parents 100% work in Independence. *See table on next page.*

Table 40: Town Where Job is Located

Town	Current Parents		Future Parents	
	Self	Spouse/ Partner	Self	Spouse/ Partner
Independence	65%	45%	88%	100%
Brandon	<1%	1%	0%	0%
Cedar Falls	4%	9%	0%	0%
Cedar Rapids	7%	13%	0%	0%
Center Point	<1%	1%	0%	0%
Dubuque	0%	1%	0%	0%
Dyersville	0%	1%	0%	0%
Elkader	<1%	0%	0%	0%
Evansdale	<1%	1%	0%	0%
Fairbank	<1%	1%	0%	0%
Fayette	<1%	0%	0%	0%
Hazelton	1%	1%	0%	0%
Hiawatha	<1%	0%	0%	0%
Iowa City	<1%	0%	0%	0%
Jesup	2%	2%	0%	0%
La Porte City	0%	1%	0%	0%
Manchester	3%	2%	0%	0%
Middle Amana	0%	1%	0%	0%
Oelwein	2%	4%	0%	0%
Rowley	1%	1%	0%	0%
Urbana	<1%	1%	0%	0%
Vinton	1%	0%	0%	0%
Walker	<1%	0%	0%	0%
Waterloo	9%	10%	13%	0%
Winthrop	0%	1%	0%	0%
Black Hawk County	<1%	1%	0%	0%
Delaware County	<1%	1%	0%	0%
Eastern Iowa	<1%	0%	0%	0%
Across United States	<1%	0%	0%	0%
Travels all over	0%	6%	0%	0%
Other, not specified	0%	1%	0%	0%

The majority of current parents and their spouse or partner work first-shift, Monday through Friday. For the individual completing the survey (self) 81% work first-shift, Monday through Friday, while 83% indicate their spouse or partner also work first-shift, Monday through Friday. The next most common schedule is rotating shift for both self and their spouse or partner. For future parents, the most common shift for the individual completing the survey (self) 75% work first-shift, Monday through Friday, while 80% indicated their spouse or partner also works first-shift,

Monday through Friday. The next most common schedule for self is rotating shift and for the spouse or partner it is on-call or as needed.

Figure 4: Current Parent Work Schedules

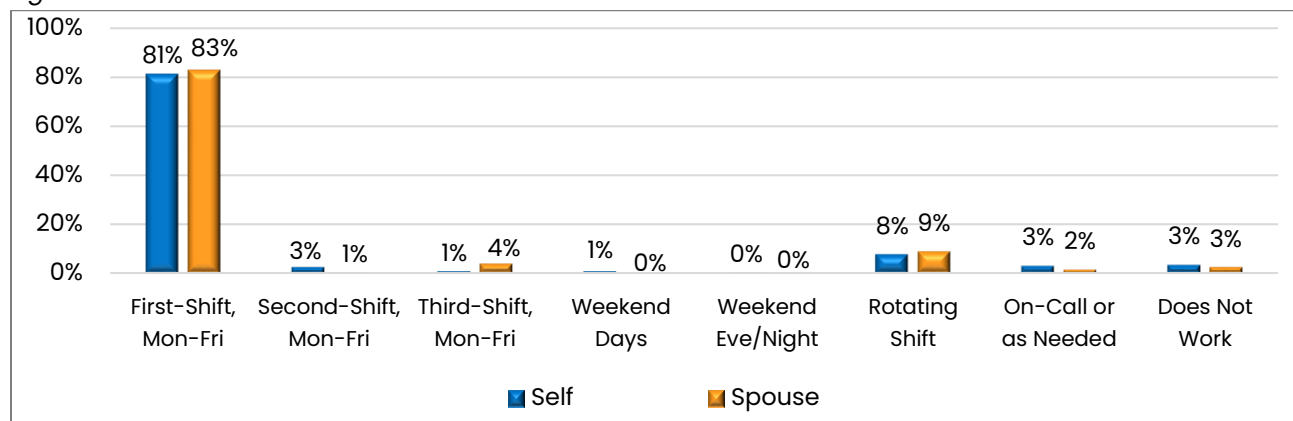
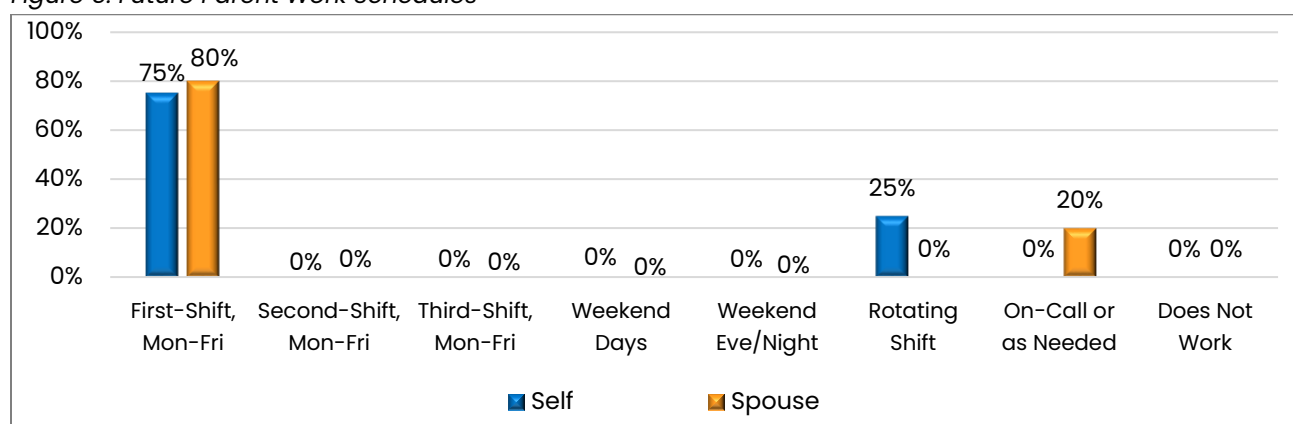


Figure 5: Future Parent Work Schedules



The most common child care related benefit offered by employers of current parents is dependent care flex spending accounts (40%), while the most common for future parents is work from home options if their regular child care arrangement is not available (25%). Approximately 9% of current parents and 63% of future parents indicated they are unsure what benefits their or their spouse's or partner's employer offers, while 43% of current parents and 13% of future parents indicated neither their employer nor their spouse's or partner's employer offers any of these benefits. See table on next page.

Table 41: Child Care Related Benefits Offered by Employer

	Current Parents	Future Parents
Dependent Care Flex Spending Accounts	40%	13%
Financial assistance or scholarships to help pay for child care	0%	0%
Flexible schedule if your regular arrangement is not available	13%	0%
Work from home options if your regular arrangement is not available	10%	25%
Child care information included in employee orientation	0%	0%
Child care information included in employee handbook	1%	0%
Other	3%	0%
Unsure if employer offers any of these	9%	63%
Employer does not offer any of these	43%	13%

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

- *Makes her own schedule.*
- *I do not work and I need daycare to work.*
- *I work in daycare and childcare is free, I bring them with me to work.*
- *Retired.*
- *Stays at home.*
- *Does not offer child care.*

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. Seventeen percent (17%) (40 parents) said yes. Comments received were:

- *No, but it's a constant tug of war battle. Our provider takes a lot of days off.*
- *We are... able to make our own schedule but due to child care unavailability one parent has extremely limited availability and has to decline clients often.*
- *Had to go back to part time after leaving [employer] and can't afford childcare at the time until I find another factory.*
- *I am unable to work due to not having reliable childcare.*
- *Childcare is only offered Monday through Friday, 6:00 am to 6:00 pm. Me and my spouse work jobs requiring work outside of these dates and times.*
- *Work different shifts so we don't have to worry about anyone but relatives because we can't find daycare.*
- *Had to drop out of final year of college and was already accepted into a medical college for the following year.*
- *I need a better job but worry about being able to find and pay for child care. Most well-paying jobs I can get are 2nd or 3rd shift.*
- *Unable to find daycare prior to 6:00 am or after 6:00 pm.*
- *I've turned down opportunities.*



Comments continued... Have you or your spouse or partner declined employment or withdrawn from the workforce during the last 12 months due to child care?

- *Wife stays at home with kids and cannot take a job.*
- *One adult did over a year of stay-at-home child care due to availability and waiting to find job with scheduling flexibility.*
- *Had to move my work schedule to weekend due to not being able to afford child care and finding a center or in-home with 2 open spots.*
- *Childcare is difficult to maintain and turned down a job opportunity that required more need for childcare.*
- *Can't afford daycare so cut hours at work.*
- *As an educator, I was hired for a summertime position. I didn't have reliable childcare, so I had to decline the position.*
- *When my mom is ill, has appts, or out of town, I have to take off work to watch my daughter who is 5.*
- *Currently my husband works from home, but if he didn't, which where he works could change, we wouldn't have childcare. I might have to stop working on certain days to pick kids up and drop them off. Also, would have to watch after school as well.*
- *I stay home because we are unable to find reliable child care.*
- *I had to shorten my working hours due to child care.*
- *My son had to attend a daycare in Black Hawk County as there were not enough spots in the daycare that open early enough for me to drive to my job and home. When people commute 30 plus minutes they can't go to in-homes and there is no room in the 2 daycare centers we have.*
- *Became a stay-at-home mom during the week & work weekends due to childcare prices/availability in our area. My partner is able to be home to help on occasion but not regularly.*
- *We've declined work for her the past 4 years until our daughter was able to have surgery. My spouse will return to work soon.*
- *Not making enough to afford 2 kids in daycare.*
- *We were unable to find a place that accepted CCA and was QUALITY for over a year.*
- *It was close until we found other arrangements.*
- *Can't afford to send both kids to daycare so wife quit her job to be with the kids.*

Parents were asked, as of today if they or their spouse or partner is not working (unemployed) because of child care challenges. Six percent (6%) (14 parents) said yes. Comments received were:

- *I wish to work and would love to find childcare for my kids that is reliable so I can be a dependable employee.*
- *Expense, time of day that child care is offered, dates that child care is offered, etc. Childcare is only offered to us, Monday - Friday 6:00 am - 6:00 pm.*
- *Cannot finish Degree or clinicals due to no available childcare.*
- *Too expensive.*
- *I cannot afford childcare for 1 kid full time and 2 other kids part time after school. We do not qualify for help from the state for childcare assistance.*
- *We haven't been able to find reliable child care.*
- *Not enough options, not enough availability at places we like.*
- *Too expensive, but don't qualify for assistance with husband's income.*
- *Can't afford to send both kids to daycare so wife quit her job to be with the kids.*

Parents were asked, as of today are child care challenges limiting their or their spouse's or partner's employment (Ex. Working part-time when full-time preferred or not working within preferred field). Thirty-two percent (32%) (75 parents) said yes. Comments received were:

- *I am only working part time instead of full time due to childcare drop off/pick up times conflicting with my work schedule.*
- *I had to change jobs.*
- *Spouse has wanted to find another type of employment with full time hours but has not been able to due to not being able to find childcare.*
- *Provider takes a lot of time off.*
- *I can only work part time because I have to have family watch my son and they work also.*
- *I am unable to get childcare, so I am unable to work.*
- *My spouse works part-time to stay home and watch our children due to childcare date and time restrictions, as well as childcare cost making working less realistic.*
- *Not being able to work in desired field due to childcare availability and restraints.*
- *We have to pick up before 5:00 pm. We both work until 5:00 so he takes the cut.*
- *Trying to find a job closer to home with less of a commute so we can pay less childcare.*
- *I work PRN and some days daycare is not available on the days I want to pick up.*
- *My 11-year-old rides bus home with my 6-year-old because there isn't enough room for him in a center.*
- *I work in daycare specifically for the child care. I would be happy making more with almost any other company.*

Comments continued... As of today are child care challenges limiting their or their spouse's or partner's employment?

- *Often have to use time off/unpaid time to stay home with kids when care is unavailable. We have no other childcare option.*
- *Can only find part time that will allow me to get child to and from school during 1st shift hours.*
- *When kids are sick they cannot go to the center due to state regulations. And no back up wants to take them when sick (leading to work missed).*
- *Somewhat. My job has a traditional schedule some days, but the schedule can change at any time making it extremely hard to provide an accurate childcare schedule in advance. Our child has grandparents in the area, which helps, but if there was a provider that offered flexibility to adjust day-off, that would be great. That said, I understand this could be a problem with staffing.*
- *Can't work the times I'm needed due to child care costing/opening.*
- *One adult is doing very limited part time hours that revolve around school and childcare availability and working where that can work instead of preferred field and pay rate.*
- *Working weekends.*
- *If we were able to get more childcare we would be able to pick up more shifts.*
- *Staying at home full time and assisting my husband with our ... business however I can without having childcare. Been on the waitlist at Kidsville for 1 ½ years.*
- *Does not allow for a second job.*
- *Working part time when needing full time.*
- *No child care to apply at other jobs and work various hours or even over time.*
- *I am unable to afford to go to work because of the cost of daycare and we don't qualify for help from the state for daycare assistance.*
- *When my current daycare is closed, I do not have a backup daycare.*
- *I can't work more than part time due to lack of child care.*
- *No but it is something we have discussed based on how challenging our current arrangement is.*
- *Not working as many hours as we should because of childcare and school hours.*
- *There are 2 centers in town and they are full. In-home day care are open for limited hours and not enough time to travel outside Independence and back.*
- *It's not worth working when more than half of your check goes to daycare. It makes more sense for me to stay home.*
- *Stay at home mom during the week to care for children and working part-time on the weekend while partner is home to care for children.*

Comments continued... As of today are child care challenges limiting their or their spouse's or partner's employment?

- *Spouse unable to take a promotion due to no childcare during the hours needed for the promotion with my nurse hours, and promotion not enough to allow me to quit but they might when my spouse returns to work. We will see.*
- *I would get a better paying job that would help out but the job I currently have works with me so I can meet the needs of the children.*
- *I work part time from home to be available before school and after school due to lack of daycare options in this area.*
- *Frequent call-ins/leaving work early/starting work late due to child care needs or transportation for child.*
- *My work place offers multiple schedule options with a potential day off. Given the availability of childcare I am stuck with only one option.*
- *Only working 3 days a week due to lack of common sense daycare.*
- *Working part time.*
- *I work based on the hours offered by daycare, if I didn't have that constraint, I would be able to pursue a higher paying position.*
- *Current daycare is not reliable and causes one parent to have to stay home frequently.*
- *Sometimes if the sitter is sick or has to have [time] off one of us has to stay home with the kids.*
- *Many times current daycare provider is sick or has other obligations, during these times I have to take off of work and still have to pay for the daycare for the week.*
- *Work hours are dependent on the times that day care facility is open and closed.*

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. There are 176 households with at least 1 child age 0 to 5 (not in Kindergarten) and 161 households with at least 1 child ages 5 to 12. A total of 498 children are represented in the survey. In addition to the children represented here, 36% of current parents indicated they plan to have or adopt more children in the next 5 years. See table on next page.

Table 42: Children Represented in Parent Survey

	Households	Children
0 to 5 (not started Kindergarten)	176	248
5 to 12	161	250
<b>Total</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>498</b>

Twenty-three percent (23%) (52 parents) of current parents and 13% (1 parent) of future parents indicated that the availability of child care in Independence has impacted their decision to have or adopt children or caused them to limit the size of their family. Comments received were:

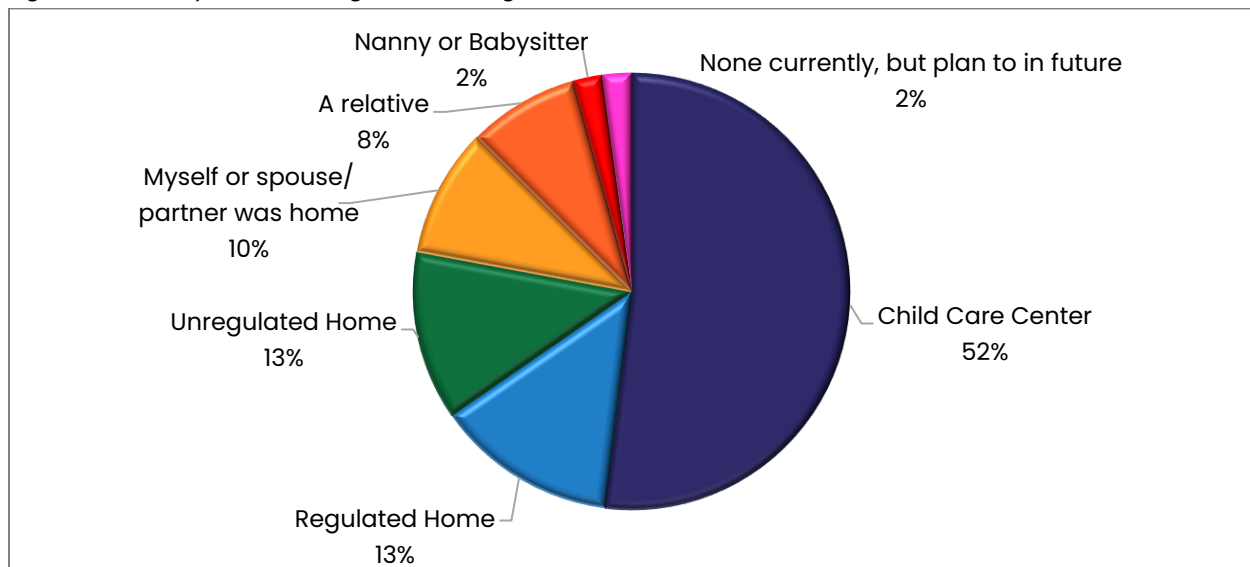
- *Not being able to be in a center.*
- *It has definitely caused us to limit the size of our family both due to the cost and availability. It is hard to want to commit the expense and deal with the challenges of child care when both parents are working. Expanding Kidsville and providing an after school program at Independence would go a long way in making us want to expand our family.*
- *Have postponed more children due to my inability to provide enough available time slots to clients to make enough money to support adding another child due to childcare unavailability.*
- *Price.*
- *Limited space.*
- *It seems in many places across Iowa daycare is hard to come by due to the lack of providers in each area.*
- *Price, availability, and how often daycare is closed.*
- *It's a nightmare having dependable daycare.*
- *It is always a potential issue when planning for children to make sure that our current childcare facility has an opening for when that child would need to start childcare.*
- *It is too hard to find care for an infant, it is expensive, and we still don't have consistent care for one of our kids. We don't want to add to that stress by finding care for another child.*
- *It is a factor we are currently discussing as we do hope to expand our family.*
- *Hard to find childcare and pay for it with today's income.*
- *There is no way you can expand your family and expect to get your child in a daycare as they are full.*
- *I am not willing to give up my employment to have more children.*
- *If we had another child, we would struggle to find care for them and neither of us can risk losing our jobs for that.*
- *Sick of dealing with it and financially don't qualify for assistance but childcare costs are becoming unmanageable.*
- *The cost of childcare has impacted our decision of having more children.*

- *Proper hours and hourly rate has gotten out of hand. I can't afford to have two kids in daycare at this time.*
- *Since moving to independence, we are debating if adding to our family is a possibility with having to find a third childcare opening.*
- *There is no space, after school staff is poor and we don't have family in the area.*
- *If childcare is not available in Independence, I can't start a family with concerns of finding daycare. This will also factor the number of children I have; I need childcare if I have children, I don't plan to give up my job to stay home with children, this would not be the plan for my family.*

When asked about their current child care situation, 80% of parents indicated they are using an “outside” child care arrangement such as a center or home provider, with a formal arrangement. Eight percent (8%) are using a relative with no formal arrangement and no money exchanged, 10% stay at home or a work from home parent cares for the children, 1% indicated children are old enough to be home alone, and 1% indicated they are not using any form of child care. Those that are not using outside child care were asked if they are likely to in the next 5 years, all parents indicated “yes”.

When asked to provide more specific details about their primary child care setting during the last 12 months, 52% of parents indicated they are using child care center. Other top settings being used are regulated home (13%), unregulated home (13%), and a parent being home (10%).

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



A list of possible effects child care challenges may have had on parents’ jobs was presented, and parents were asked to select all that apply to their own or their spouse’s or partner’s employment

in the last 12 months. The most common effects were “missed a day or work because provider was closed, on vacation, or not available (64%), followed by had to leave work early (48%), and had to supervise child while working from home (41%). Twenty-five percent (25%) of respondents indicated they experienced no problems related to their job as a result of child care.

*Table 43: Effects of Child Care Challenges on Job*

	<b>Current Parents</b>
Missed a day of work because provider was closed, on vacation, or not available	49%
Missed a day of work because the provider did not have room or space for child	15%
Did not accept a desired job offer	16%
Arrived late to work	31%
Had to leave work early	48%
Unable to work overtime	28%
Unable to travel for work	14%
Lower productivity	11%
Unable to accept a different work schedule or shift	21%
Had to reduce the number of hours worked	20%
Received disciplinary action (not including firing)	2%
Quit a job	3%
Got fired	0%
Considered changing jobs to one that works with child care	17%
Had to change jobs to one that works with child care	7%
Took a job that does not fit my/their skills	2%
Had to leave child home alone to go to work	6%
Had to take child to work with me/them	15%
Had to supervise child while working from home	26%
Other (please specify)	5%
Experienced no problems related to job due to child care	28%

Comments received from parents selecting “other” were:

- *Had to choose a daycare that I’m not 100% happy about because it is the only option.*
- *Cost of childcare has gone up per kid with no increase in pay from our jobs. Daycare monthly cost ends up being more than our mortgage. Definitely hard to make work, but also still need a job so our hands are tied there.*
- *Traveling to Cedar Falls to pick up my child, getting home late in the afternoon to pick up other child from Kidsville in Independence.*
- *We have voluntarily kept our child(ren) home on days when daycare has asked for parents who could to do so because of staffing, etc.*
- *Changed to third shift to allow more time with child.*
- *Not having transportation to or from school.*

- *Had to rely on family to drop the child off as daycare isn't open when spouse goes to work.*
- *Leaving work, being disciplined for children being sick due to getting sick from illnesses circulating around the center that is out of our control.*
- *Had to adjust meeting times.*
- *Had to drive our kids to Cedar Rapids every day because of the lack of daycare in Independence.*
- *Had to depend on family in many instances,*

Thirty percent (30%) of 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:

- *I could perform better at work if daycare opened earlier than 6:00 am and stayed open past 6:00 pm.*
- *Having my baby at Kidsville.*
- *Independence bus route dropping Kindergarten/younger kids off to daycare providers close to the school or the school offering an after-school program. This would help tremendously as we are uncomfortable having our kindergartener walk to our provider. Many other schools such as Jesup have after school programs.*
- *Provide us with help finding back up care for her days off.*
- *If childcare was available after school gets out, would not need to leave work early to pick up child. Child could go to daycare after school and could pick up child later.*
- *Provider taking less time off or hiring help.*
- *If I had child care outside of family I could work more.*
- *Spending less time transporting if child care was in town.*
- *Getting my younger child in day care in Independence as opposed to Cedar Falls.*
- *Not so expensive. We work 45-hour weeks and our contract is for 45 hours and everything over is way up charged.*
- *Longer day options and weekend options.*
- *Having a later pick up time.*
- *More readily available options.*
- *Accommodating short notice schedule changes.*
- *Accountability.*
- *Pick-up past 5:00 and coverage when she is unable to work.*
- *More child care availability so there is room for drop in kids.*
- *A sick bay daycare (I feel this would help lots of parents who do not have family to help watch sick kids). Not sure if this is possible due to state regulations.*
- *Before/after school childcare at the school.*



Comments continued... Changes that could be made to their current child care arrangements that would allow parents to perform better at work.

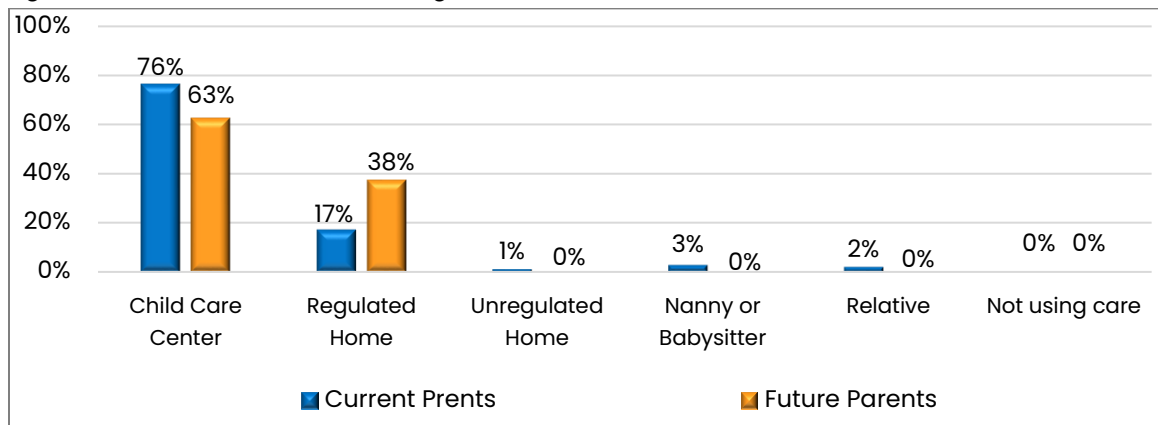
- *A latch key type program at the school would be great. It would cut my need for daycare greatly as I only need it after work unless they are sick.*
- *Potentially a flexible "if needed" schedule where we could pay a flat rate and use the care services if our work schedule requires it.*
- *Price.*
- *More reliable.*
- *Evening care.*
- *Hours/ more flexibility.*
- *Right now things are fine, but next year when my child goes to school I will have to select the school district based upon my ability to drop him off and get to work on time. I can't drop him at Independence schools and get to Fayette on time, so he'll go to West Central unless I can secure a spot for him at Kidsville for before/after school care. Whether or not I am actually on a wait list at Kidsville, I signed up for a waiting list twice--once in 2019 before he was born, and once again recently via their Facebook page. From what I understand, though, they don't have the capacity to take more children very often. I serve on the board of our childcare provider in Fayette, so I know that the real struggle in childcare availability is staff, and that staffing will remain difficult until childcare workers are paid more and receive benefits!*
- *If able to get into a child center it would create less challenges.*
- *More availability for hours, those that work earlier in the morning either have to have someone drop them off or go in late. Those that work later or up until 6:00 or 6:30 have to have someone pick them up or leave early - which is not always easy. We have a community that also has weekend shifts, and I feel that is a hold-up for people taking these shifts as it is difficult to find someone to cover childcare that early to that late on a weekend.*
- *Pay for child care based on hours present, instead of a contracted number of hours.*
- *If there was an after-school program for kids k-5, then I could work longer hours and not have to be home at 4:00 when the bus arrives. There is NO after-school child care available.*
- *Better access with flexible hours.*
- *Availability and flexibility.*
- *Consistent after school programs.*
- *Sick care for children.*
- *After-school care options - either expanding Kidsville or providing in-town transportation services to in-home providers.*

Comments continued... Changes that could be made to their current child care arrangements that would allow parents to perform better at work.

- *Brief after-school care for school-aged children that does not require transportation.*
- *Change the time of school to the time that most people work 9:00 to 5:00. Get more after school wraparound care.*
- *I am a single father that lives paycheck to paycheck barley getting by. With some child care I would be able to get a few hours of overtime that would be greatly beneficial.*
- *Having someplace to actually provide daycare near school, before and after.*
- *Later hours.*
- *Childcare that includes school transportation or openings for affordable childcare at the preschool. Or full days of preschool. Currently leaving work twice each day to take child to school and pick child up and take to daycare.*
- *Open earlier, close later, open weekends.*
- *We are currently using our last available option offered in Independence. If this location does not continue to accept our child, then we will be out of childcare options.*
- *More availability at Kidsville.*
- *Work more hours.*
- *More consistent daycare, using in-home so there more days uncovered due to only one person providing care.*
- *Less stress of missing work when [our] center is closed.*
- *Lesser adult to child ratio. Children are resistant to going to a child care center when there is little attention to them, especially if they are getting angry, sad, hurt, etc. The quality of attention is lower with so many kids, and not enough adults.*
- *On-site services provided through the district would be beneficial.*
- *If she had back up when she had to be closed.*
- *Closer to home.*

Parents were asked if all choices were available and you were selecting child care today, which setting would you most prefer. The top choices for current parents were a licensed center (76%), followed by regulated home provider (17%). Among future parents the top choices were a licensed center (63%), followed by regulated home provider (38%). Overall, 93% of current parents and 100% of future parents prefer a child care setting that is regulated by Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)-either a licensed center or a regulated home. See figure on next page.

Figure 7: Preferred Child Care Setting



Current parents were asked the primary reason why their children are not in their preferred type of care. The most common reason selected was not able to afford (16%), followed by provider not accepting enrollments (7%). Overall, 64% indicated their children are enrolled in their preferred type of care.

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

	Current Parents
Provider not accepting enrollments	15%
Location too far away	0%
Not able to afford	7%
Not conveniently located	1%
Not open for extended or nontraditional hours	4%
My children are not the right age for preferred arrangement	1%
Transportation to and from school/preschool not available	4%
Other (see comments below)	7%
My children are in my preferred type of care	60%

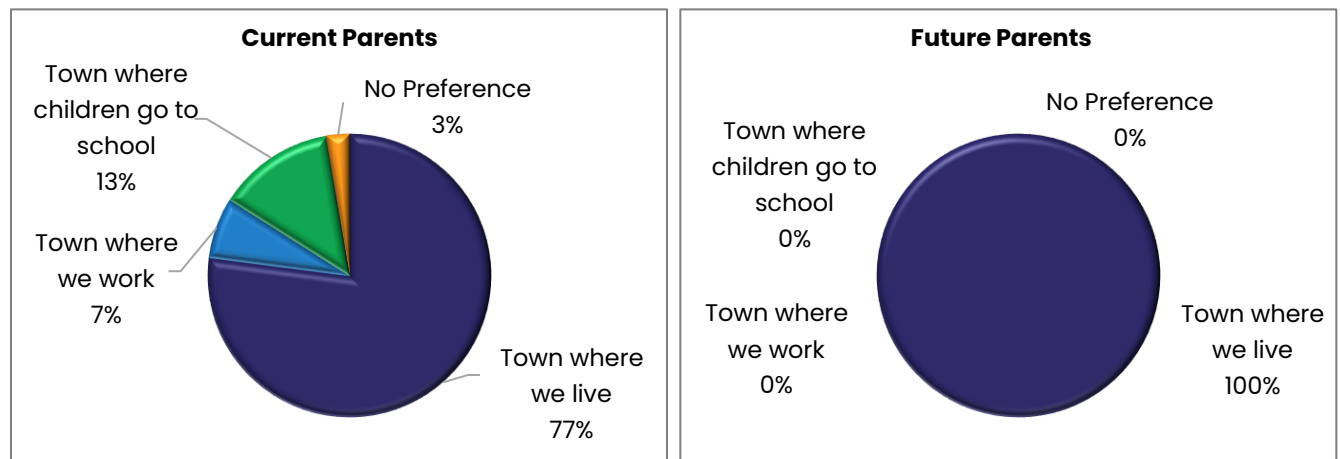
Those that selected other were asked to explain. Comments received were:

- Again, Kidsville having something like an 80-kid waitlist and never having a realistic shot at getting in. Expanding this service would be great as well as an after-school program for Independence.
- Looking into preschool with childcare.
- Wait list.
- All my kids at one care facility.
- Not available.
- Currently at a daycare center. Would be open to in home to create a smaller environment.

- They are enrolled.
- My child currently is in preferred care.
- Summer child care.
- Knit picky rules.
- Stil looking for after school care, currently piecing together between family and flexibility provided in my current job - not long term solution.
- Both of our kids are 20th on the list for the type of care we would like.
- Again, myself and others have never moved up the list at [center]. I think I've been on the "list" for 3 years and no call. When I've called to get an update no return calls
- No issues.

Respondents were asked their preference of proximity if they were selecting care today. The most preferred proximity among both current and future parents is the town where they live, which is preferred by 77% of current parents and 100% of future parents.

Figure 8: Preferred Proximity for Child Care



Parents were asked which community their current child care provider is located in. Because this study is being conducted to specifically address the child care supply in Independence, parent surveys were sorted only those that indicated Independence as their preferred location were included. Overall, 88% of current parents are using care in Independence today, but 100% would prefer to. See table on next page.

Table 45: Location of Child Care

	Current Parents		Future Parents
	Current Location	Preferred Location	Preferred Location
Independence	89%	100%	100%
Cedar Falls	<1%	---	---
Cedar Rapids	1%	---	---
Center Point	<1%	---	---
Evansdale	<1%	---	---
Fayette	<1%	---	---
Hazelton	<1%	---	---
Jesup	2%	---	---
La Porte City	<1%	---	---
Lamont	<1%	---	---
Manchester	1%	---	---
Oelwein	1%	---	---
Palo	<1%	---	---
Quasqueton	<1%	---	---
Walker	<1%	---	---
Waterloo	<1%	---	---
Independence & Cedar Falls	<1%	---	---

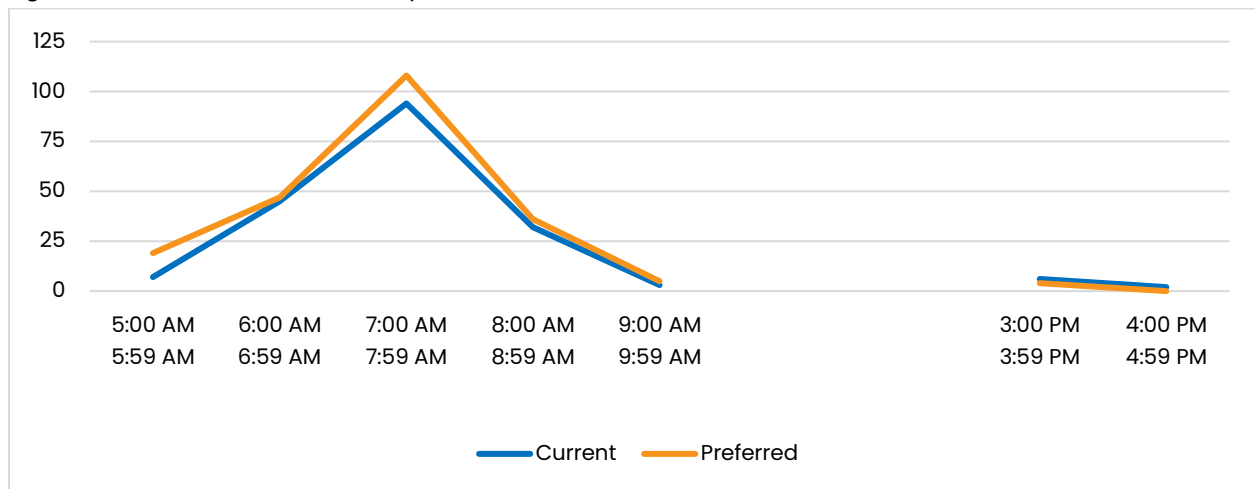
Parents were asked several questions about the average number of hours of child care used per week, preferred child care schedule, and current and preferred drop-off and pick-up times. When it comes to the number of hours parents are currently using child care, for ages 0 to 5, the most popular answer was between 40 and 49 hours a week (37%). Parents with school age children use less than 10 hours per week during the school year (51%), and 40 to 49 hours a week during the summer (34%).

Table 46: 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)	5%	5%	21%	24%	37%	8%
Age 5 to 12 during school year	51%	34%	6%	2%	5%	2%
Age 5 to 12 during summer	11%	10%	17%	22%	34%	7%

Currently, the most popular hour to drop-off children is from 7:00 am to 7:59 am (47%), followed by 6:00 am to 6:59 am (23%) and 8:00 am to 8:59 am (16%). Parents were also asked their preferred drop-off times for children. The most preferred hour is still 7:00 am to 7:59 am (48%), followed by 6:00 am to 6:59 am (21%) and 8:00 am to 8:59 am (16%). See figure on next page.

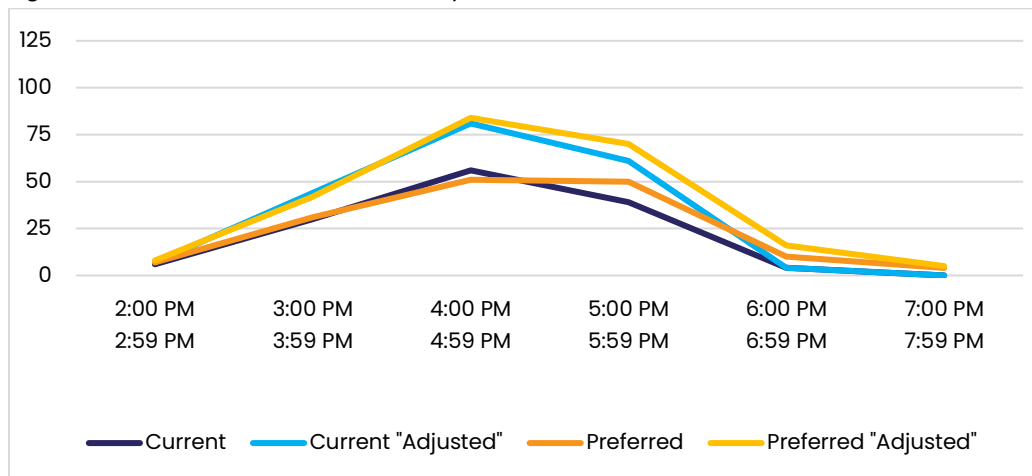
Figure 9: Current vs. Preferred Drop-off Times of Current Parents



Currently, the most popular hour to pick-up children is 4:00 pm to 4:59 pm (28%), followed by 5:00 pm to 5:59 pm (19%) and 3:00 pm to 3:59 pm (15%). Parents were also asked their preferred pick-up times for children. The hours of 4:00 pm to 4:59 pm (22%) and 5:00 pm to 5:59 pm (22%) are equally preferred, followed by 3:00 pm to 3:59 pm (14%). The number of parents that prefer to pick-up either 6:00 pm to 6:59 pm or 7:00 pm to 7:59 pm both increased, from 1% each currently, to 4% preferring the 6:00 pm hour and 2% preferring the 7:00 pm hour.

In addition, 30% of parents indicated their current pick-up time and 29% indicating their preferred pick-up time occurring between 3:00 am and 5:59 am. Because 81% reported their work schedule as first-shift and 83% reported their spouse's or partner's work schedule as first-shift, it is likely some of these parents actually prefer to pick up their children between in the PM (afternoon) not AM (morning). If this is true, the most popular pick-up times are currently 4:00 pm to 4:59 pm (40%), followed by 5:00 pm to 5:59 pm (30%) and 3:00 pm to 3:59 pm (22%), while the most preferred pick-up times are still 4:00 pm to 4:59 pm (37%), followed by 5:00 pm to 5:59 pm (31%) and 3:00 pm to 3:59 pm (19%). The following figure shows a comparison of parents' current versus preferred pick-up times, as well as the "adjusted" times assuming some parents unintentionally selected AM rather than PM. See figure on next page.

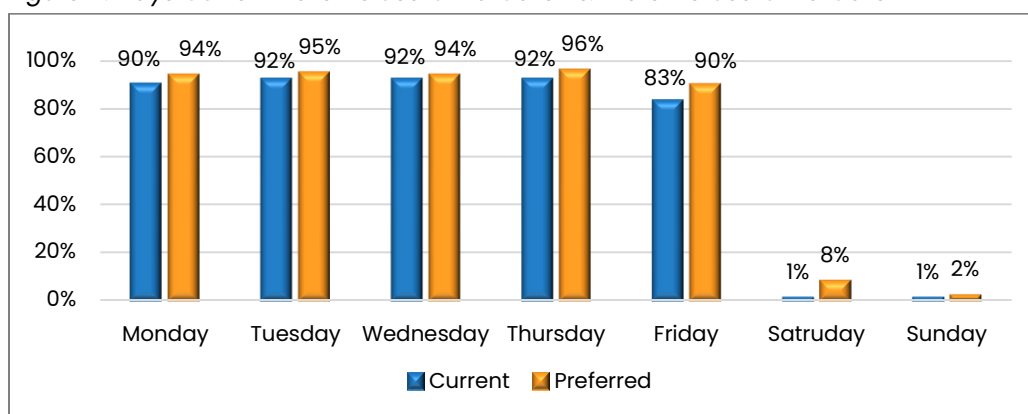
Figure 10: Current vs. Preferred Pick-Up Times of Current Parents



Among future parents the most preferred drop-off time is also 7:00 am to 7:59 am (38%), followed by 6:00 am to 6:59 am (25%). And when it comes to the most preferred pick-up times, future parents selected 5:00 pm to 5:59 pm (50%), followed by 4:00 pm to 4:59 pm (38%).

Most parents indicated they currently use care Monday through Friday (ranging from 83% to 92% per day). Currently 1% is using care on Saturday and 1% is using care on Sunday. When it comes to preferred days for care, Monday through Friday are still the most preferred, ranging from 90% to 96% per day. Meanwhile, 8% prefer Saturday care and 2% prefer Sunday care.

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

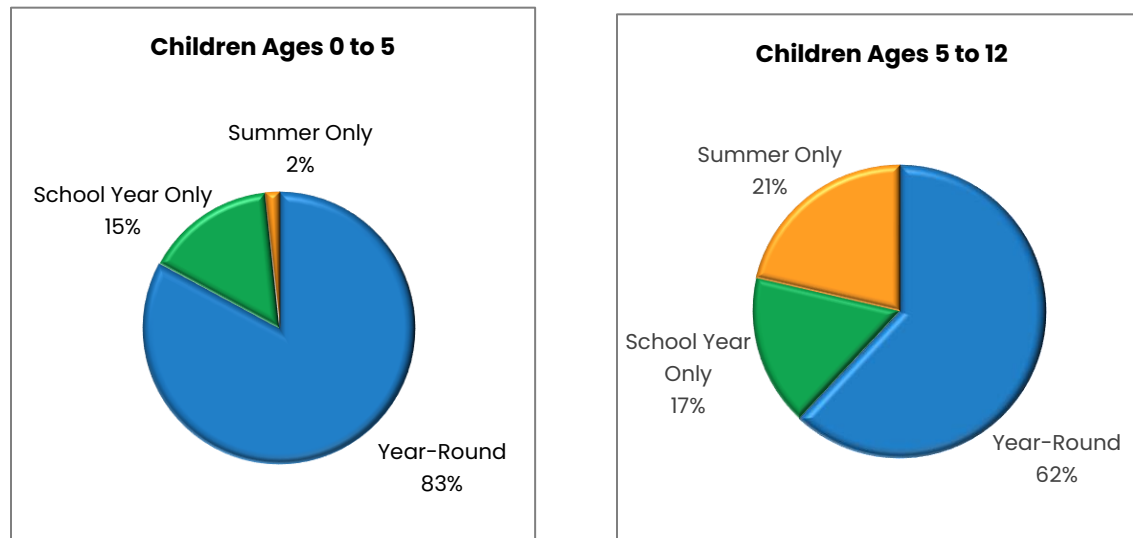


All future parents indicated they prefer to use care Monday through Friday (100% per day), while 13% (1 parent) indicated they prefer to use care on Saturday, and 13% (1 parent) indicated they prefer to care on Sunday.

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 current parents prefer year-round care (83%). When asked what

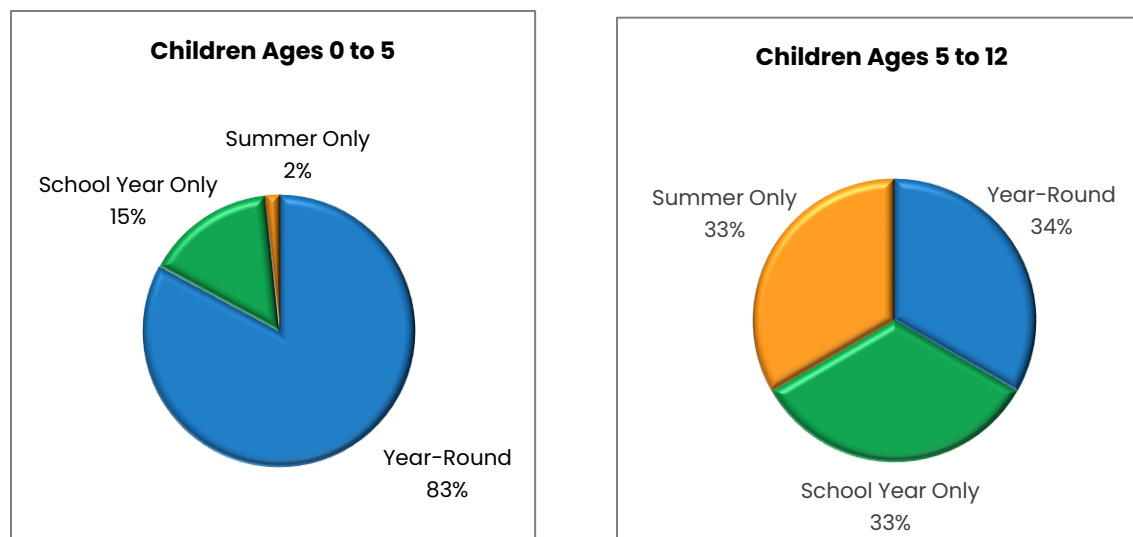
their preferred time of the year would be if they were selecting child care today for ages 5 to 12, the majority again prefer year-round care (62%).

Figure 12: Time of Year Current Parents Prefer to Use Child Care



Future parents were also asked what time of year they prefer to use care. When asked what their preferred time of the year would be if they were selecting child care today for ages 0 to 5, all future parents prefer year-round care (100%). When asked what their preferred time of the year would be if they were selecting child care today for ages 5 to 12, the group was split equally among all three options.

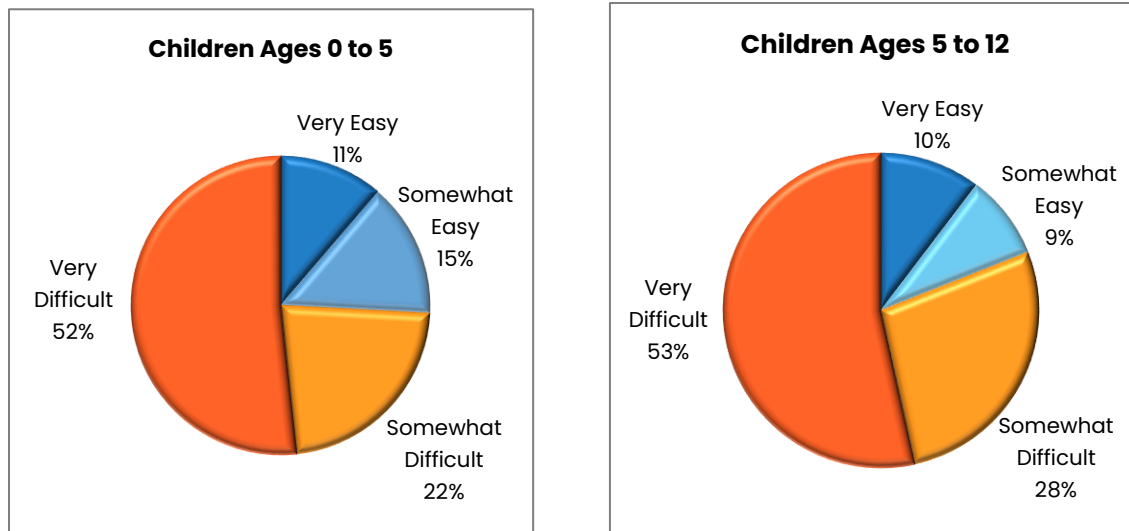
Figure 13: Time of Year Future Parents Prefer to Use Child Care





Parents were asked if they had searched for care in the last 12 months, and if they had, how easy or difficult it was to find care. Among the 89 parents that looked for care for children ages 0 to 5, 74% indicated they experienced some level of difficulty- either somewhat difficult (22%) or very difficult (52%). And among the 58 parents that looked for care for children ages 5 to 12, 81% indicated they experienced some level of difficulty- either somewhat difficult (28%) or very difficult (53%).

Figure 14: Ability to Find Child Care During Last 12 Months



Those experiencing obstacles finding child care in the last 12 months were asked, what were they? Comments received were:

- *Lack of space, only 1 center near us.*
- *Unable to get into Kidsville which has much less risk to working parents than at-home providers due to having multiple care givers that can cover for potential illnesses, vacation, doctor appointments, etc. Very difficult to find a quality at-home provider.*
- *We have been on a waiting list for years. We need a center, not more in home daycares.*
- *Turned away due to no openings available.*
- *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. Our daughter was a foster child and then we adopted so she needed a DHS registered in-home provider.*
- *Lack of options.*
- *My children have been going to this center for a while now, but they aren't flexible with hours and not affordable. Make too much to get assistance.*
- *Openings.*
- *Limited space.*

Comments continued... Obstacles experienced when looking for child care in the last 12 months.

- *A grandparent or siblings.*
- *Waiting list.*
- *No openings for our three-year-old.*
- *No third shift child care.*
- *Few spots are available for infants.*
- *Not enough daycare providers in the area.*
- *We are blessed by Kidsville. We did not have difficulty getting our second child into this facility in the past twelve months because we already had one child at this facility; however, I know that the waiting list is very long for families who wish to get their first child into this facility.*
- *Wait list.*
- *No openings.*
- *Not enough spaces available at current child care center.*
- *Affordability. Flexibility. Schedule.*
- *Finding childcare with spots open yet affordable.*
- *No openings.*
- *Somewhat easy to get childcare for our newborn as we are already grandfathered into the center with our older daughter.*
- *Availability.*
- *Lack there of.*
- *Getting on waiting list.*
- *It was easy for me to find care because I already had an older child at the daycare center, but I have heard others are struggling to find care recently.*
- *No one has openings. Costs are extremely high (more than half a weekly paycheck).*
- *Not knowing if the child would have a spot at daycare when placed on the waitlist.*
- *My kids all go to separate daycares. Very inconvenient.*
- *Don't know where to look.*
- *None.*
- *Price!*
- *Availability of care.*
- *Finding someone I trust to keep my children safe. Finding someone who works with my work schedule. Not having a 5 to 10 child wait list.*
- *No openings.*
- *Finding one accepting under 2 years old. Waiting list.*

Comments continued... Obstacles experienced when looking for child care in the last 12 months.

- *The biggest obstacle my wife and I ran into was finding a place that had room for our child.*
- *The list for the Independence child center is so long.*
- *More availability for hours, those that work earlier in the morning either have to have someone drop them off or go in late. Those that work later or up until 6:00/6:30 have to have someone pick them up or leave early - which is not always easy. We have a community that also has weekend shifts, and I feel that is a hold-up for people taking these shifts as it is difficult to find someone to cover childcare that early to that late on a weekend.*
- *All of the daycare centers and in-home day care providers are full. There are no openings for my kids. Also, I cannot get the kids from school to daycare because of my work.*
- *Summer child care.*
- *No openings.*
- *[Center] is pretty well worthless when it comes to finding daycare - every time I have needed to find new daycare I have called and they never have openings and even after years on the waiting list, I have never been called with an opening. There is not an easy to find listing of child care providers, unless they are registered, but all of the registered daycares I called either didn't answer or return my call or they were full, so then it is up to a Facebook search to find non-registered daycares. Most of the non-registered daycares I found were not up to my standards to feel comfortable leaving my kids in their care. Daycare has become very expensive, especially when they are non-registered.*
- *No available babysitters and very limited hours.*
- *Lack of openings for infants.*
- *Baby on the way- finding daycare that will accept small children and have availability.*
- *Lack of openings in high quality setting.*
- *Finding a provider that transfers to and from school.*
- *Availability (having space for a school age student). We have been on the waitlist for 7 years for my almost 7-year-old at [center] - they seem to play favorites with who gets in. Transportation to/from school has also been a challenge (PK student attending private school because that is where daycare transports to).*
- *No openings! Been on 1 list for over 2 years!*
- *Had to resort to my child's great grandmother to watch her because there is a 6 month to 1 year waiting list for all child care providers in town.*

Comments continued... Obstacles experienced when looking for child care in the last 12 months.

- *If we had an important meeting or doctor's appointment, the children could not go during a weird time of day.*
- *No room, waited on a list for 2 years.*
- *After school care.*
- *Finding someone to watch them in the morning before school when my regular daycare is closed.*
- *Could not find a provider when we move to Independence. We had to continue taking our kids back and forth to Cedar Rapids.*
- *Lack of options or no room for my kids. The options that are available are too expensive.*
- *There is no availability, staff or hours.*
- *I've been on a waiting list for one daycare since March of 2022 and others can't handle my youngest due to him being a little high risk. So having trouble finding a place.*
- *No providers have openings.*
- *We have exhausted all options due to daycares being full, not offering transportation, or their age. We were very lucky to get into Mosers.*
- *Full or not on school campus. I don't want to drive all over town for drop offs.*
- *Everything full, especially for part time and summer schedules. Ended up hiring adolescent nanny for in-home during the summer.*
- *In home daycare having open spots.*
- *Trying to find childcare for my school-aged kids when there's no school (summer and holiday breaks).*
- *No availability.*
- *Lack of options that are open the hours we need. Just lack of options alone is hard.*
- *The waitlist for Kidsville is YEARS, if you get in at all. I was told that even if my child were enrolled in preschool, I would not be guaranteed a spot, and daycare doesn't currently offer transportation. It's also difficult to find an in-home daycare that you trust and is reliable. I'm satisfied with my current daycare situation, but I would prefer my child be in a licensed facility.*
- *We are not friends with [staff], so our name never moves up the list at [center].*
- *Room, space available, school pick up.*
- *Finding a quality provider that has openings and accepted CCA (child care assistance).*
- *We have our parents watch our kids most days due to limited places for child care.*
- *Prices and availability.*
- *Moved back to the area in June and had trouble finding care before school started in August. (I am a teacher).*

Comments continued... Obstacles experienced when looking for child care in the last 12 months.

- *Finding a spot for both my children.*
- *I did not experience challenges, but I did get on the center's list when I was 7 weeks pregnant which was helpful in enabling me to be able to get into that center.*
- *My ex-husband (child's father) also needs a schedule that fits his work schedule, no one opens up at 5:00 am in Buchanan County area. Our current provider opens at 6:30 and I have to be at work by 7:00 typically.*
- *None available or too expensive.*
- *Finding someone with openings and also finding someone who could get my child to and from school.*
- *Unable to find any openings in suitable childcare facilities anywhere near our home. We currently have to take our children to Cedar Rapids.*
- *We can't change job hours since there are only two options for child care centers in Independence. Both have waiting lists for years.*

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

Overall, 79% of parents indicated they are satisfied with their current provider, while 21% are not.

Those that are not satisfied were asked to explain. Comments received were:

- *It's a home daycare.*
- *There are a lot of children in this home for the size the home is. They do not provide a lot of outside activities.*
- *Too much time off.*
- *Does not offer transportation to and from school. Not a variety of similar aged children for my child to engage with. Does not offer late pick-up.*
- *Childcare costs more than our mortgage does.*
- *Calls off a lot.*
- *Grandma daycare.*
- *Needs to be more reliable.*
- *Mostly satisfied with actual care but the new payment quotas really mess with us as we have a village and our kids don't necessarily need 25 hours of care every week, but we are getting charged 25 hours of care regardless of how long they are there and that's putting a damper on things.*
- *Recent increase in price and limitation in options. Also, my child is not happy with the current provider as they "yell a lot" and it's "boring"*
- *I'm trying to find a permanent daycare.*
- *Scheduling.*

Comments continued... Explain why you are not satisfied with your current child care provider.

- *I like my daycare provider, but my kids were in a registered daycare from infancy on up until our provider moved out of state and I really miss having a registered provider - it makes me feel safer that they have to follow certain rules, certain trainings, etc.*
- *They lack child development knowledge and refuse free learning and consultation offered. They are not receptive to feedback or improvement.*
- *PK provider - yes. Our older child has behavioral difficulties and was kicked out when he was 3. We now rely on family (paid) and high school students (Friday and as needed) for him. I wish there was a better option, but we are still on the waitlist at our preferred center and do not want to return to a home-based provider for him.*
- *Yes, it's my mom watching my daughter, but would like her to have other interactions with other children.*
- *Great grandmother is too old and will eventually no longer be available.*
- *Very satisfied with my current at-home provider for our youngest child. Frustrated with our lack of options for after school care for my kindergartener - currently leaning on family, friends, and flexibility from our jobs to piece care together but unlikely to be able to do this long term.*
- *We would like our kids to be in a center. And wraparound care after preschool.*
- *No provider currently.*
- *Childcare is only available during the school year, so we have to find alternate arrangements in the summer. This was the best option available.*
- *I wish they were open earlier and close later to fit around work schedules.*
- *Very quick to send kids home/exclude from care. Cost has become outrageous. Takes more holidays than the federal government. Shortened hours with 1 week notice two months after increasing rates \$20/week.*
- *They are always needing to hire new staff because the current staff leaves. My child does not handle change very well. This makes some days/weeks very hard every time a new staff member comes in. We continue to have the price of care go up, but it doesn't seem to be going to the workers who leave for better pay.*
- *Too many kids, not enough staff. Attention paid to each kid is very low. Especially during the moments they need an adult.*
- *It's not an ideal situation, no fault of provider.*
- *It's expensive but does provide good care.*
- *[Center] have staff that are under trained, mostly high school students, and have high turnover as well as waiting lists for years. Each room under 3-year-olds are great with well trained and compassion, empathic staff. However, the after-school group is a major issue. Parents walking past day care providers who are yelling at other kids is a daily*

*occurrence. Local DHS doesn't respond to reports made by multiple parents. AEA consultants have labeled after school program as, "a lack of staff knowledge how to address common behavioral issues with children", "staff was noted to persistently yell at child" and "an utterly chaotic environment after school". There are almost no staff that have any early childhood education. Director... seems indifferent to getting staff better trained despite parents finding free, professional training help from local child professionals. However, we have no other options, but feels horrible sending our children there. One of us would have to quit our job and it would affect our income to support our family.*

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 factors among current parents were dependability (87%), followed by positive interactions between staff and children (81%), and health and safety policies (81%). Current parents were then asked to select the single factor that is most important to them. The most important factor was positive interactions between staff and children (24%), followed by dependability (19%).

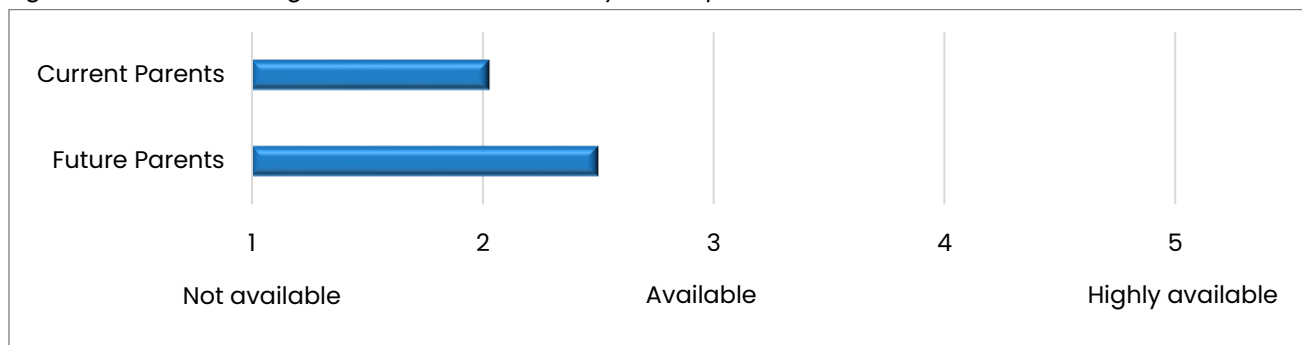
Among future parents the top factors selected were available space/timing of enrollment (88%) and positive interactions between staff and children (88%), followed by dependability (75%). Future parents were then asked to select the single factor that is most important to them. There was a tie for the most important factor with available space/timing of enrollment and positive interactions between staff and children each being selected by 25% of parents. *See table on next page*

Table 47: 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	77%	10%	88%	25%
Care includes preschool	47%	3%	13%	0%
Dependability	87%	19%	75%	13%
Drop-in or occasional care	51%	4%	25%	0%
Educational curriculum used	63%	2%	50%	13%
Health and safety policies	81%	10%	63%	0%
Iowa Quality for Kids (IQ4K) quality rating improvement system	29%	1%	0%	0%
Location	78%	4%	38%	13%
Part-time options	45%	5%	13%	0%
Positive interactions between staff and children	81%	24%	88%	25%
Second shift/evening care	18%	1%	0%	0%
Secured entrance	51%	1%	25%	0%
Special needs care	10%	1%	0%	0%
Third shift/overnight care	6%	0%	0%	0%
Transportation to and from school or preschool	56%	10%	38%	0%
Tuition assistance or scholarships	15%	0%	13%	0%
Tuition rates or price	41%	4%	38%	0%
Upkeep or appearance of the facility and playground	63%	0%	63%	0%
Weekend care	15%	0%	13%	0%

Parents were asked to rate the availability of child care in Independence on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not available, 3 adequate, and 5 highly available (the higher the score, the more available). The weighted average among current parents was 2.03, while the weighted average among future parents was 2.50.

Figure 15: Parents' Ratings of Child Care Availability in Independence

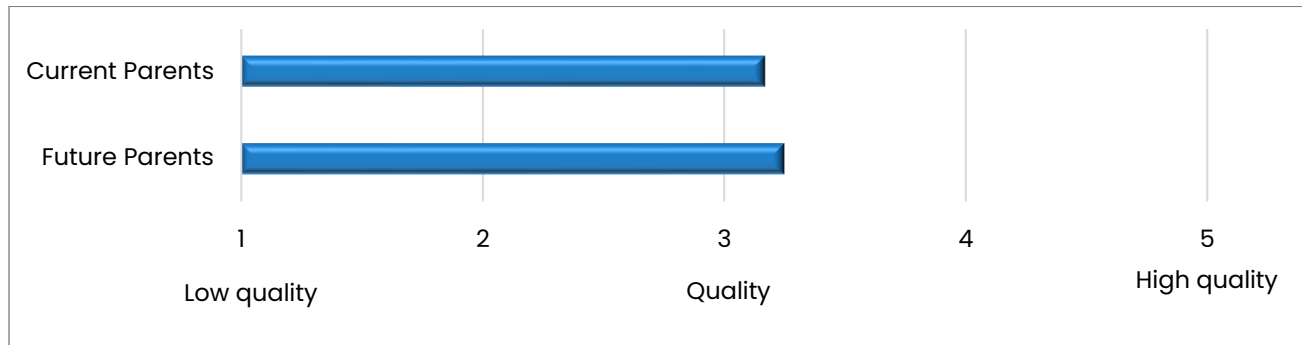


Parents were then asked to rate the *quality* of child care in Independence on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being low quality, 3 quality, and 5 high quality (the higher the score, the higher quality). The



weighted average among current parents was 3.17, while the weighted average among future parents was 3.25.

Figure 16: Parents' Ratings of Child Care Quality in Independence



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

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

- *Availability, cost.*
- *Cost of daycare and the non-traditional hours.*
- *Lack of care available. We need more childcare providers.*
- *Expanding the center in Independence.*
- *Daycare opening shortage, cost, flexibility of schedule/part time.*
- *Lack of availability for childcare centers such as Kidsville that have less risk for working parents. For example, there are more caregivers at a facility like this to cover employee sickness/vacation/doctor's appointments/etc. that take parents away from work. Lack of an after school program for younger students is also a major challenge. Schools seem to get out earlier, have more in-service days and scheduled early outs than they ever used to. This requires that my wife or I leave work early every day to be home for bus drop off which will most likely not be sustainable.*
- *More centers!*
- *Huge waitlists for local care centers, transportation timing with work schedules. We need more child care centers with a wider variety of educational systems. A Montessori school would be amazing. I would change my career to help support a better educational system for raising my child.*
- *Having availability to enroll - more providers.*
- *Availability of care centers and enrollment.*
- *There aren't quality options for safe, registered daycares in Independence.*
- *Cost.*

Comments continued... What do you think is the biggest challenge facing parents regarding child care, and what will resolve that challenge?

- *Cost of daycare. Some sort of decreased rate for additional children. More facilities with transportation.*
- *Trust, trust with their child & earning the trust of the child. Have more providers who spend more 1 on 1 time with child(ren).*
- *Availability. New location on school site (not the movie theater or any other off-site location).*
- *Tuition rates have changed to make it "affordable". Rates went from hourly to weekly and it doesn't fit with our budget. Center isn't professional regarding staff and parent relationships. The communication I've encountered between staff and myself and director, have not shown any professionalism when talking about my children.*
- *Availability. The waitlist is so long.*
- *Small daycare with limited resources.*
- *Cost and availability! Opening up another facility would be very helpful!!*
- *No openings, waiting list is long.*
- *Adding additional licensed childcare center in Independence is BADLY needed. There are many stay at home moms who I know personally who would love to be working but are unable to due to not having dependable childcare.*
- *Financial burden and availability. We need more regulated centers in town with more options for financial assistance or scholarships.*
- *Child care availability. Adding more daycares and finding and hiring more staff would make more spots available.*
- *Safe and reliable employees with your child.*
- *Not enough daycares in town.*
- *More options low staff at current options.*
- *Financial cost, availability. More professional facilities and opportunities.*
- *No availability.*
- *Transportation to and from school, especially for parents that work out of town. Also, when there are early dismissals and late start.*
- *Availability and affordability.*
- *Availability and pricing.*
- *Not enough capacity, need a larger facility.*
- *Finding anyone with availability or ability to transport to school.*
- *Waiting lists for years.*
- *The cost. Multi child discount?*
- *The lack of childcare seems to be the biggest challenge.*

Comments continued... What do you think is the biggest challenge facing parents regarding child care, and what will resolve that challenge?

- *The cost of it and the flexibility.*
- *Flexibility for scheduling.*
- *Child care prices. I would like to have another child, but the cost of childcare is holding me back.*
- *Availability and cost.*
- *Finding childcare- creating more childcare centers/in home daycare.*
- *Costs. Room.*
- *2nd and 3rd shift availability and price. The open shifts in the workforce don't have open space in childcare.*
- *Nothing available in a licensed setting, waitlist years long, and certain people bumped or approved because of social status.*
- *Cost.*
- *Need more staff and centers.*
- *Openings with a variety of hours. Need more options.*
- *When kids are sick and parents have to take off work. In our American society we are to work like we don't have kids and take care of our kids as if we don't have a job..*
- *No space for children of new residents and new siblings. More spots available, in turn, staffing.*
- *Availability.*
- *Cost of daycare is extremely high.*
- *Availability; more child care opportunities.*
- *Prices.*
- *Limited hours/availability.*
- *The cost of child care for sure. Grants could help I guess but I don't know what else can help.*
- *Finding care that works with their schedule and provides transportation to and from school. Having care that has more evening and weekend hours and that provides transportation would remedy this.*
- *Trusting the person I'm leaving my child with daily. Truly get to know the person/people taking care of my child/infant every day. Not just a hello/goodbye relationship.*
- *Find a center for both children.*
- *Availability of a center that focuses on mental and emotional wellbeing and growth of child. In home centers are great but sometimes don't have structured educational schedules.*

Comments continued... What do you think is the biggest challenge facing parents regarding child care, and what will resolve that challenge?

- *Availability of childcare in HHS licensed facilities with transportation to school. I know there are people doing childcare in their homes, and I just wonder what it would take to entice a few of them to work at a center, as I know staffing is the primary struggle in childcare. Some incentives are within the power of the childcare provider (like free childcare for their own children) but I'm afraid that staffing will remain difficult as long as childcare remains a low-pay job with no benefits.*
- *Enrollment.*
- *Finding daycare accepting kids.*
- *Options for ages 8 weeks to 10 years old.*
- *Space being available at centers and lack of in-home providers. Adding more space to the current facility to allow more children to come to a daycare center.*
- *Space.*
- *More openings in the child center.*
- *No available spots.*
- *Child care is not available. Parents cannot get kids into programs, because they don't exist. Opening another center like Kidsville would help or starting an after school program that runs until 6:00 pm.*
- *More availability for hours. Those that work earlier in the morning either have to have someone drop them off or go in late. Those that work later or up until 6:00/6:30 have to have someone pick them up or leave early - which is not always easy. We have a community that also has weekend shifts, and I feel that is a hold up for people taking these shifts as it is difficult to find someone to cover childcare that early to that late on a weekend.*
- *Lack of opportunities.*
- *Space, when I moved to Independence I couldn't find any childcare in Independence for my preschool twins, we ended up having to enroll them at Little Huskies in Oelwein where we could get both preschool and childcare.*
- *Finding a suitable daycare with openings, transportation. Opening a daycare center with more openings than Kidsville currently offers. Independence schools be more open to picking kids up at daycares in Independence (we tried talking to [school administration] and they had no interest in helping kids in daycare get to school).*
- *There is not a choice.*
- *Lack of openings for infants.*
- *More options.*

Comments continued... What do you think is the biggest challenge facing parents regarding child care, and what will resolve that challenge?

- *Reputable childcare with openings is the largest challenge families face. The community needs more slots for children at the only childcare center and/or more registered childcare providers.*
- *It seems the waiting lists are long and it's hard to find openings. More reliable daycares in the area.*
- *None.*
- *Daycare working against you.*
- *Availability and flexibility. If our child is sick, maybe a sick bay to be able to care for the ill child so that we are still able to go to work. Or flexibility with needing for the kids to not be there if they are sick. In healthcare we call it low census... so if the provider(s) are off I give the staff low census so they don't have to use up PTO, but in turn they don't get paid for the day. If we don't have patients, we don't produce revenue, if you don't have kids you don't produce revenue.*
- *Not enough openings and it's expensive More child care assistance options Open more daycare.*
- *Lack of options.*
- *Finding reliable care that transports to school and from.*
- *Our family has been incredibly fortunate in the ability to be able to send both of our children to Kidsville, however I had to secure a spot when I was newly pregnant with both of them (before 20 weeks!). I know there are so many families in the Independence area that are not able to find childcare due to the small number of options in the area. I'm so thankful for being able to utilize Kidsville, but so many people cannot say the same.*
- *Not having reliable in town care. That can do transportation.*
- *Waitlisted at the center in town. We need more center based options that follow the waitlist and don't let people skip the wait because they have connections.*
- *I've talked to a lot of parents and the problem is there isn't any available child care here. Independence needs to open a bigger child care facility.*
- *Openings bigger and or more facilities.*
- *Cost.*
- *Price.*
- *Cost number one and availability.*
- *There are not many options for childcare in Independence. I am watching my nephew after school because his parents have a hard time finding childcare. I think it would be helpful to have an available, reliable, secure, safe, and friendly center that I could bring kids to when needed.*

Comments continued... What do you think is the biggest challenge facing parents regarding child care, and what will resolve that challenge?

- *The cost of childcare. More financial help for those who need it, discounts or cheaper for more than one child attending daycare. We have also had problems with daycare employees mistreating our children. Having a licensed daycare that follows strict policies and helps educate their employees on how to properly handle children.*
- *The cost of childcare is more than my mortgage. I have one child that only does before and after care and one full time child.*
- *After school care inclusive of transportation.*
- *Cost, availability.*
- *Open later in the evening to accommodate parents who commute.*
- *Opening for reliable child care. Also pay your child care employees A livable wage!*
- *Not reliable daycare.*
- *For a growing community there are not enough daycare providers.*
- *Price and availability with safe and proven care. It's scary choosing people to care for your young children who cannot advocate for themselves. Too many scary stories in the news of abuse.*
- *Not enough daycare providers, adding more providers.*
- *Finding a place to go.*
- *Lack of affordable options. More childcare center and in-home daycare options.*
- *Not enough space or trained staff.*
- *My biggest challenge is my children are almost able to be home by themselves but aren't quite to that age yet. It would be really nice to have some childcare available right after school so I could just pick them up from school instead of trying to find a daycare to take them right after school and Friday afternoons.*
- *Money spent on childcare. I'm unsure.*
- *Transportation. Larger or more facilities located near the school.*
- *Prices & schedules.*
- *Price.*
- *No room.*
- *Having openings for child care.*
- *Availability at good centers.*
- *Availability and transportation. The school provided/sponsored options, even a before and after school program would be very beneficial.*
- *Night weekend availability and cost.*
- *Affordable, transportation from school, availability/openings.*
- *It appears to be directly related to worker shortages.*

Comments continued... What do you think is the biggest challenge facing parents regarding child care, and what will resolve that challenge?

- *Availability.*
- *Not having childcare available year round with long hours.*
- *Availability and cost is huge, but also just GOOD providers that aren't burnt out!*
- *We need more child care options and facilities.*
- *None.*
- *Availability. Not enough options and the ones we do have fill up.*
- *Too expensive.*
- *Not being able to find a caring daycare facility.*
- *Drop kids off at school then travel across town to drop off at daycare. All needs to be on the school campus.*
- *We just don't have enough day care centers / in homes in town. And the two main centers we do have do not have the space or availability to add more kids.*
- *More daycare settings or Kidsville having the ability to take on more children.*
- *Hours that fit work schedule.*
- *Reliability and safety. We need a large, regulated childcare facility that can accommodate the growing population of Independence.*
- *Cost is huge, but so is availability. Less paperwork required for them to fill out would be a start.*
- *Availability. There are not enough child care providers in the area.*
- *Cost and availability.*
- *Not enough spaces available.*
- *I did not have any issue finding childcare 8 years ago with our first child. My childcare will take siblings as first priority [over] outside families, if we were to have more children. This has been a benefit to my family during the childcare shortage. Cost of childcare is very stressful for my family, but I want the childcare workers to have a fair wage as they are taking care of my most prized possessions.*
- *There's not enough child care in Independence, and not a lot of the current ones take school aged kids, [they] are for preschool age and under. Maybe having some sort of summer program/childcare for school aged kids that don't have a daycare.*
- *Availability.*
- *Lack of child care options.*
- *Not available. Open another daycare center, pay well. Give incentives for in-home providers.*
- *The amount of space available for families in town. There needs to be more availability for young families.*

Comments continued... What do you think is the biggest challenge facing parents regarding child care, and what will resolve that challenge?

- *Finding providers that accept CCA (child care assistance) and are of good quality. Many providers are not QUALIFIED.*
- *Safety and being able to trust people.*
- *Availability.*
- *Cost of tuition, limited availability, relying on a care center that has improperly educated staff.*
- *There isn't enough. I would think a center would be best because their availability and dependability is a little better than in-home. There is no closing because the provider is sick or on vacation.*
- *Unsure.*
- *Availability.*
- *Availability. A bigger center that offers employees better pay and benefits.*
- *Price is the biggest factor.*
- *Finding any child care opening and finding them at good facilities.*
- *We need a 3rd and or 4th facility to open up. Pay and qualifications for staff need to go up and I think most would pay more. We need more early childhood degree leaders in after school programs as that is a huge weak point.*
- *Negative factors of childcare centers. Dependability, safety, and lower staff/child ratio.*
- *Needs to be more flexible & open earlier. Most childcare doesn't up until 6am earliest, which doesn't work when you need to be at work at 5:30am.*
- *Availability and safety. At-home daycare are not as safe and the babysitter will cancel short notice, leaving families in a bad situation.*
- *We do foster care and having an available child care would impact whether or not we could foster a younger child. We haven't explored this opportunity yet with this age group so I'm not sure what response we would get if we started calling around.*

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

- *A childcare center that offers 24/7 coverage.*
- *Allowing more families to be involved.*
- *Expand Kidsville so that it can realistically meet the needs of the community. Develop an after school program for younger students so that working parents do not have to leave work early to be home for bus pickup. Most jobs don't have schedules that accommodate the kids being done with school as early as they are.*



Comments continued... What opportunities do you see for the future of child care in Independence?

- *Before/After school programs, more centers.*
- *We have a growing population of families using Montessori and Waldorf approaches to raising their children. Acton academies are pioneers in the educational community and gaining massive support in other areas. We have some available public space we could utilize, and I think we have qualified people to work to create such an establishment. I have a social work background and would do anything, including switching my career, to support a local facility with one of these educational models.*
- *A center associated with the school that would allow transportation for school-aged kids. I also think that if the hospital in town offered a daycare to their employees it would be a HUGE draw of nurses to the area.*
- *There is a need. We need to expand existing facilities or have new ones open.*
- *Another daycare facility that provides transportation to school. The facility would be open and not follow the school calendar as far as closed on same days, out early/late start. Longer hours. Reasonable/affordable prices is a big problem too. Parents are quitting their jobs because they can't afford the weekly cost of care. It doesn't make sense for them to work.*
- *Expansion on the current campus. (Grass to the west of current Kidsville location)*
- *Hopefully finding a new center that is affordable for my children, and have the capability to communicate with parents in a professional way. I want my kids to be in a healthy environment to be able to grow and learn.*
- *Childcare with preschool, healthy clean environment with proper staffing.*
- *We really need more in Independence. Traveling to Cedar Falls to take my child is really inconvenient.*
- *Anything!*
- *I think the addition of more regulated daycare centers would solve a lot of problems. The waitlist at so many of our facilities are insanely long, and it creates a burden of families who need childcare in order to keep their jobs.*
- *More availability or options.*
- *There is a lot of room to add more room for day cares.*
- *Hoping to have a few options to choose from.*
- *We need more options!*
- *More availability and transportation to school.*
- *More child care options with similar aged children and an education aspect will give them social skills and knowledge preparing them for school.*
- *More childcare centers.*

Comments continued... What opportunities do you see for the future of child care in Independence?

- *The empty McDonalds would make a great daycare.*
- *Kidsville relocating to a larger facility such as the movie theater.*
- *Possible drop in/part time on weekend?*
- *I didn't know there were opportunities for more child care here. Expand!!*
- *I like that the child care is next to the school. It makes pick up and drop off easier with older kids and benefits the kids to be able to share staffing.*
- *Growing to a larger facility.*
- *A large center for child care.*
- *Another daycare center option.*
- *Need to expand.*
- *I think offering a grant or help of some kind may improve the possibility of offering more hours.*
- *A better daycare.*
- *Centers that can accommodate families that work early, late and weekends.*
- *A sick bay daycare for kiddos. This would help so many parents. We love being home with our babies when they are sick but we also have to provide for our families.*
- *Improvement needed for wages to keep workers in the field and thus allowing potential for more spots and space for growth.*
- *We need a child care facility.*
- *It would be great to see Kidsville expand to allow for more kids, especially if something could be done to make it more attractive for older kids to be there. That said, I think it would be difficult to move it away from school grounds.*
- *A latchkey program similar to Jesup's.*
- *I would love to see an additional licensed daycare enter in Independence. I know there is great need and so many families would benefit from quality care.*
- *More providers.*
- *New center with more staff? Higher paid staff to make people actually want to work there and be involved.*
- *There's a lot of families that daycare in the surrounding towns because there's no room at the daycares in town. Or they're very expensive and it wouldn't make since to pay that price and work so the parent just stays home.*
- *Unknown.*
- *I see parents looking for childcare frequently in Independence (for example, posting in Facebook groups). I do think if there were more spots in HHS licensed facilities, they would fill!*

Comments continued... What opportunities do you see for the future of child care in Independence?

- *Childcare center that is able to accommodate more children that are in line to prepare kids for school. Also, time frame flexibility outside of 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, along with weekend availability. Also, possible funding/grants for in-home providers to encourage more educational based structure learning.*
- *Having more options available.*
- *Expand existing daycare facilities but need staff to do so. It's difficult to retain staff in childcare industry.*
- *I think there are a couple of buildings that could be used as a center. The old Starlight building could be retro fitted to a daycare center or the old McDonalds building.*
- *Expanding the child center.*
- *More availability for hours, those that work earlier in the morning either have to have someone drop them off or go in late. Those that work later or up until 6:00/6:30 have to have someone pick them up or leave early - which is not always easy. We have a community that also has weekend shifts, and I feel that is a hold up for people taking these shifts as it is difficult to find someone to cover childcare that early to that late on a weekend.*
- *More locations/options/space for kids.*
- *More licensed in-home day care options. Supplement those licensed in home programs so it is affordable for them to open. Open another child care center. Start an after school program.*
- *After school childcare at East Elementary and Summer childcare programs.*
- *Larger childcare facility with more slots. Expanded hours. More childcare at-home centers. Businesses offering their own childcare.*
- *A daycare center with extended hours to accommodate work schedules, Independence schools provide bussing for daycares, city ordinance to require in-home daycares to be registered (not sure if that is possible?) to help ensure safe/suitable alternatives to centers, before and after school care in the elementary schools (St. John's has this and its amazing!)*
- *It would be nice if the hospital was able to assist in opening a childcare center.*
- *something close to the hospital- another center.*
- *I think independence could support at least one more major childcare center. Or double the size of the existing Kidsville center in a location close to the school as it currently is.*
- *Do NOT move it out to the old movie theater!!!!!! Raising prices at Kidsville will change the supply/demand. More in home daycare centers will enter as rates for care raise.*

Comments continued... What opportunities do you see for the future of child care in Independence?

- *Upgrade buildings like [center]. Expand the building and make the environment better for the kids. [Center] is too expensive and they pick favorites so nobody is getting in there unless it's an employee and that's not right either.*
- *New center with trained professionals, before/after school care with school district, 3-year-old and 4-year-old preschool through school district*
- *There are plenty of empty buildings that would make perfect daycares.*
- *I would love to see a new state funded childcare facility open in the Independence area.*
- *More centers.*
- *I see more parents get to work any hours if child care was available anytime. We need a bigger facility for children. Separate spaces for different ages. I also see opportunity in employment for child care.*
- *Expand Kidsville into the other half of the building. Move preschool to east or west.*
- *Need many more options at affordable pricing.*
- *I think more childcare in Independence is definitely needed. I could see it filling up quite quickly. There aren't many options in Independence, especially for the size of the town.*
- *Hopefully we will see an increase in childcare available and affordability for everyone!*
- *Limited options and availability.*
- *After school programs.*
- *Another center.*
- *Need a couple more day care centers that provide care and wraparound care for younger age school children.*
- *I see a growing community that could use more childcare space.*
- *More in-home daycares should be used as I personally feel they are more personal and less chaotic so parents and kids are more comfortable putting kids in childcare.*
- *More options.*
- *More children and students.*
- *Build bigger place.*
- *More daycares.*
- *All, there simply isn't enough available today.*
- *Nights and weekends.*
- *Unknown.*
- *I would love to see an expansion of Kidsville.*
- *I Believe that more childcare providers would be available if there were group options for health and other insurance available more people would be interested in being providers*
- *There is a huge need for childcare.*

Comments continued... What opportunities do you see for the future of child care in Independence?

- *Another large daycare facility.*
- *None.*
- *Having more options or expanding ones we currently have with grants so they can build and pay employees more to keep them.*
- *Getting another facility like Kidsville or expanding. We've been on the waitlist for almost 3 years now.*
- *When East Elementary builds new building, that building should be used for daycare/preschool. Don't build a building or use a property now and just find out in a couple years you messed up and wasted money.*
- *Having a before and after school program (like Jesup) and having a summer program for school aged kids.*
- *I think we need another center (would be cool if there was another (bigger) childcare center by the hospital or that side of town, or if Kidsville could somehow be expanded in its current location so that it remains close to the schools for easier drop off/pick up and transportation.*
- *Have partnerships with the high school to get more staff to be able to take on more kids. Having educators and medical staff get a higher priority at the centers. BCHC (Buchanan County Health Center) should have their own daycare. They could provide OT, speech, PT, play therapy in the daycare during the day by hospital staff, so that is one less thing parents need to worry about.*
- *It would be fantastic as a parent to see a large facility open that offers early and late hours, and I'm sure many others would like third shift and weekend shift availability as well. It would offer childcare for newborns through school age kids for the summer months. It would have age-appropriate rooms and outdoor play areas. It would have a secure entrance and a rigid pickup procedure. It would provide meals, a monthly menu, and lots of activities and field trips. The staff would be trained in CPR.*
- *A summer care option at the school would be awesome.*
- *They need to pay staff better to keep them. If they had more workers, they would be able to accept more kids. I don't think opening a new daycare center will help at all. The ones that are open just need to be able to keep a full staff so they can have more kids.*
- *The city never should have gotten rid of original East Elementary. What a waste of usable space.*
- *Expanding childcare we already have, which allows them to take on more children.*
- *Expand Kidsville where it's currently at. I have kids at East, West and Kidsville and it's most convenient to have all of those schools in one location.*

- *Another center could be opened and filled quickly. We need to pay well, provide opportunities for children to have positive relationships with other kids and adults.*
- *Adding another center or expanding Kidsville.*
- *Daycare Centers that take CCA (child care assistance). have a variety of hours available. Quality staff. Quality curriculum*
- *More available daycares.*
- *More spots for child care.*
- *If the school district could offer a child care service for staff, I think that would open up more availability at the centers for other families. We have a high interest of high schoolers that show interest in child care that we could collaborate and utilize them to get relevant work experiences.*
- *We need bigger facilities for our child care to grow. Right now, our provider is at max and needs more space to grow and provide more for incoming families.*
- *I'm not sure.*
- *Growth.*
- *Our daycare center needs to be in a larger building.*
- *I believe the first step is to just meet the needs of the community. After that, focus on improvement to facility and more conducive hours of care.*
- *We have plenty of city building space for 2 or more new centers. I am 99% sure they will fill up almost instantly once announced given our communities opinion on child facilities here. Anything 3rd or 4th party will be better than what we have. Two facilities is not even close for the needs.*
- *Expanding around the school district. The use of the old theater is out of the way for many and still causes traffic through town.*
- *Increase in openings, more flexibility for drop in hours, more flexible opening hours starting at least 5:00 am if not earlier.*
- *I believe it is limited and will result in families moving out of the community. Having another or more daycare centers will increase employment for the community.*

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

- *Many of our friends have had children on waitlists for well over a year.*
- *Independence has so many families needing more childcare anything would help but I would love better educational models to choose from.*
- *Having the option to have part time status during the school year and being able to remain full time status during the summer.*
- *We hope we can get more in town.*

Comments continued... Share any additional comments you have about child care in Independence.

- *Doesn't matter a parent's income, daycare is still expensive, especially when they don't have any increase in hourly rate at their place of employment. Bills are hard, but our hands are tied, and we still have to work. I love that our daycare takes the kids to and from school, late starts/early outs. Truly a blessing to parents who both work out of town. I think all daycares should have secured, keypad entries. Parents punch the code in to get inside. If someone else is picking them up they can ring the doorbell to have their ID shown at the door. Might be inconvenient for staff but should be mandatory for safety.*
- *I think Kidsville needs to expand to encompass the growth and needs of the community and create availability, but I believe moving it off the current school campus would not be a smart choice and would cause far more issues for parents than it would solve the problem. There is plenty of space on the school campus to expand the footprint of Kidsville and keep it all in one convenient location with the school.*
- *There is none available. Everywhere is full. It's impossible to get in when the waiting list takes years.*
- *I would like to see more options for state accredited child care centers (like Kidsville) rather than more in-home daycares.*
- *We need to get a community child care system.*
- *I do appreciate, though I know some may find it unfair, that our daycare puts their existing families as priority when their family grows. It was a relief to know that we wouldn't need to put our infant in a different facility than our preschooler. But I recognize that doing that stalls the waitlist. The waitlists are YEARS out, and that is just crazy to me. We need more options.*
- *Kidsville is fantastic. We are so blessed to have the opportunity to send our Children to their facility. I would love for them to be able to expand or add additional facilities like theirs for other families!*
- *The child I have in Independence child care has had a great experience. I just wish we could get our other child in the same center. I take an hour out of my night driving to a different town and back for child care. I prefer a center due to hours and lack of closure.*
- *Kidsville needs more space, and the drop off/pick up area is way too small.*
- *There shouldn't be high schoolers working in child care, at least in the infant rooms! It's hard enough for a mom to go back to work after having a baby and it makes it 100 times harder knowing it's a 16-year-old watching our babies. We are trusting the providers with our infant's life! That's not something to be taking lightly!*



Comments continued... Share any additional comments you have about child care in Independence.

- *I know there has been talks of moving a daycare from the school area, and I feel this is a bad idea. Keeping the daycare close to the schools is nice to have everything on one campus. Helps with security, staffing, and pick up/drop off. If the daycare would move you are having people drive out of their way to get to daycare and not have the opportunity to pick up and drop off with older kids that don't require daycare but are on the school campus. My fear is a bigger campus isn't going to fix a staffing issue.*
- *A lot of the in-home providers have come together to create a basic contract. This will make daycare more expensive for families and include paid vacation for providers. Their goal is to unanimously raise prices for childcare to make it easier for the providers, but this will make it more difficult for parents. There are so few options for second and third shift that many of us can't even look at finding another job because the only decent paying jobs available are all 2nd and 3rd shift. As an employee in child care, I make very little and am offered no benefits or paid time off at all. The only benefit for me is being able to bring my children to work with me and not have to pay a tuition. I'm currently unable to afford healthcare for myself due to this situation.*
- *There is a severe lack of childcare in Independence. We need more safe and reputable places for children to be cared for.*
- *I think there is a bit of a stigma around sending kids to a daycare facility. Unfortunately, as kids get older, some of their peers may make fun of the fact that they are at daycare and not at home or in a smaller setting. I don't know what the solution is, but I think it does add a level of aversion for the child going to daycare.*
- *We need more options of quality care in Independence. Safe, certified, quality center daycare options.*
- *When I was looking for childcare would have really appreciated an up-to-date listing of providers in area instead of having to ask around.*
- *There is a huge need for more day care in Independence.*
- *We are on our fourth childcare provider, as the first was an incredibly poor and honestly concerning experience, and the next two left the businesses to pursue careers outside of the home. We love our current childcare provider, and although she does not provide care during the summer months, it is worth having an at-home nanny and additional expense at home in the summer to have her and her assistant during the school year!*
- *DONT MOVE KIDSVILLE TO THE MOVIE THEATER!!! Seriously. Splitting up the campus is a terrible idea and will make it harder for both families and the Kidsville staff to move children around. There is plenty of space to the west of the current Kidsville. Build there. Don't dump millions into the old theater.*



Comments continued... Share any additional comments you have about child care in Independence.

- *It is super hard to find someone to trust even the current one we use Im not fond of but my kids are safe and cared for and that's all that matters*
- *If I hadn't been proactive with my daughter 9 years ago I wouldn't have daycare for her and her sister (5 years old). I love the daycare we go to and the other daycare in town we looked at was not clean and didn't make us feel safe leaving our children there. And the in-home daycare we looked at was also not up to par. Kidsville is great, but I know staffing is ever changing, one with the work ethic of people, or the want for more money without working toward making more. Reward staff with the hard work they do. Don't reward the ones that do bare minimum. Think about bonuses after 1-2 years of employment, or ways to display that they are doing well so that parents know and know the staff more. Appreciation is a huge thing with keeping staff. And reward is huge.*
- *We are losing a lot of money because of the lack of adequate childcare. Children are also exposed to unsafe and unstimulating conditions because of this.*
- *The new flat rate pricing the centers are currently using are ridiculously price gouging! It only benefits the centers and cost the parents a lot more money! Hourly is a fair pricing for watching our kids! We shouldn't have to pay when our kids are not being cared for!*
- *I didn't know what to put for quality of childcare in Independence. My children haven't been in childcare for close to 4 years. Before that they did go to one of the child care centers in Independence and they did do a fabulous job.*
- *Daycares need to be monitored a lot better. We had 2 daycares we used. One was an in-home not licensed and the other was an in-home that was licensed. Both of these places mistreated our children to the point they absolutely refused to go because they were too scared and didn't want to face certain daycare employees. We have had a really hard time figuring out a new daycare because of our lack of trust for daycares around here or unavailability to the ones we are interested in.*
- *I have been very happy with the services from Moser.*
- *We are so lucky to have gotten into a great daycare center 9 years ago with our oldest and they have made room for our expanding family. It is just so expensive it is hard to justify as 75% of my paycheck goes to childcare and we receive lots of help with grandparents filling in when needed.*
- *There need to be more options for before and after school programs.*
- *Transportation is the biggest challenge. Current daycare does not offer transportation, or care for school aged kids (kindergarten +). Preschool ends early so finding transportation or providing transportation has affected my work.*

Comments continued... Share any additional comments you have about child care in Independence.

- *The theater is not what you or the families of Independence want! School district is not signing up to bus kids to and from and this will force parents to be later to work.*
- *Staffing is always going to be a problem because we do not have a college in this town so less college students looking for a job.*
- *I would never send my kids to a former movie theater building.*
- *I will say, I applied at [center] in the past just so see if I could secure a spot for my child and was shocked at the extremely low wage they offered. No wonder we can't get enough staff to support that building. If we cannot get adequate childcare, people will choose to live and work in areas that do have better resources.*
- *I heard they want to move Kidsville out to the old movie theater and to me this does not make sense. How will they transport kids to school? This is a big benefit of having my kids go there. If they have to bus kids then they will have to charge more money. We already struggle to pay with the recent changes. I don't think people have fully thought that idea through. I think they have plenty of space in the building they are in they just do not have enough staff to have more kids. They have an entire room up front that is used for storage and meetings. That room could be used for kids.*
- *Kidsville is amazing. Highly recommend it, but the wait list is horrible.*
- *Need more space for the growing of our community. If we are to have more families come in with little ones the state where we are right now, we will not be able to provide for them.*
- *I would open and manage another daycare center if I could.*
- *My family is in a very good space because of all of the support that we have. However, there are families that don't have the support that we have, and it is really hard to find day care in Independence. I am not sure what the correct answer is to this problem, but I do know that it is a problem. That is definitely not helping many families in Independence.*
- *We just moved to Independence and have two young (under 5) children. We are so disappointed in the availability and quality of the daycare options here. We are currently having to wake our children up before 6:00 am so they can continue to go to their daycare in Cedar Rapids. We had no idea until we moved just how horrible the options were here. It is very discouraging for young families. We want our children to live in a smaller community around family and friends, but the lack of childcare makes it extremely hard to justify moving here. We assumed there would at least be some quality options, but we have not found any with openings any time soon.*

Comments continued... Share any additional comments you have about child care in Independence.

- *We don't need to expand Kidsville to two locations please. Have a new company or separate entity start from scratch PLEASE!!!! We need 3 or 4 separate providers to create completion for a better child care environment.*

## CHILD CARE GAP ANALYSIS

Calculating the gap in a child care market needs to take 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 in the market area 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) in the Independence Community School District.

As of January 2024, there are 9 HHS regulated child care programs offering a total of 348 spaces. One of the programs, Immanuel Lutheran Wee Care Preschool has announced it will close after the 2023-2024 school year. This closure will result in a loss of 16 spaces. After that closure, there will be 3 HHS licensed centers and preschools with 268 licensed spaces, of which 220 will be available year-round. There are also 5 registered child development homes, with 64 spaces.

Among the child care centers that will be operating after May 2024, all 3 centers and 3 of the homes operate between 5:30 am and 6:00 pm, Monday through Friday. Only 1 center will serve children younger than 18 months year-round, while 1 center will serve ages 18 months and older year-round, and the remaining center will serve children age 3 and older for preschool and wrap-around care during the school year only.

When it comes to registered home providers, 3 of the 5 operate between the hours of 5:30 am and 6:00 pm Monday through Friday. Another operates between 7:00 am and 4:30 pm, Monday through Sunday (7 days per week). And the remaining registered home operates 24-hours a day, 7 days per week, however it should be noted that this provider would likely not actually operate 24-hours per day, it means they are willing to provide care at any time within a 24-hour period and likely would limit the total number of hours they provide care within that day.

In the market area, there are 1,153 children ages 0 to 11. Of those, First Children's Finance (FCF) estimates 960 have all parents working. If it is assumed these families are represented by responses of current parents that participated in the child care needs survey, then 93% or approximately 893 are from families who prefer and would be likely to use an HHS regulated child care setting.

When broken down by age group, calculations show for ages 0 to 2 there is a gap of 106 spaces year-round, for ages 3 and 4 (preschool age) there is a surplus of 2 spaces during the school year and a deficit of 21 spaces during the summer, and for school age children there is a deficit of 441 spaces during the school year and 466 during the summer. That means the child care gap could be as high as 593 spaces for all ages, assuming most parents are looking for year-round care.

The following table shows the estimated child care gap in the market area, the Independence Community School District boundaries, based on the number of regulated spaces expected to be available after May 2024.

*Table 48: Estimated Child Care Gap in the Independence Area*

	<b>Children w/All Parents Working</b>	<b>Likely to Use Regulated Care</b>	<b>School Year Spaces</b>	<b>School Year Child Care Gap</b>	<b>Summer Spaces</b>	<b>Summer Child Care Gap</b>
Age 0 to 2	226	210	104	-106	104	-106
Age 3 to 4	146	136	138	+2	115	-21
Age 5 to 11	588	547	106	-441	81	-466
<b>Total</b>	<b>960</b>	<b>893</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>-545</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>-593</b>

While Independence has a shortage of child care for the families that live in the market area, that gap may be worsened by families that live in other communities. According to preferences among parents completing the child care needs survey, 21 families that live outside of the Independence CSD prefer regulated child care located in Independence. These families have a total of 45 children, 26 age 0 to 5 (not in Kindergarten) and 19 age 5 to 12. Including these children increases the child care gap to 666, with school age still having the larger gap.

## KEY FINDINGS

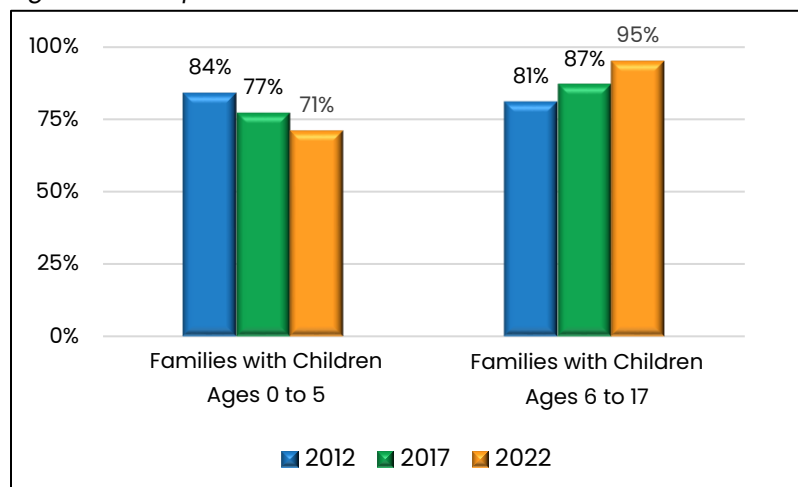
These key findings are based on research and conditions of the current child care market, which is the boundaries of the Independence Community School District as of January 2024. If the community or the child care environment changes significantly, current findings may be affected.

### **Finding 1: The Percentage of Families with Young Children and All Parents in the Labor Force is Declining**

According to data from the US Census Bureau the percentage of families that have children ages 0 to 5 and that have all parents in the labor force has been decreasing over the last 10 years. During the same time period, the percentage of families that have children ages 6 to 17 and have 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.

As of 2022, 71% of families with children ages 0 to 5, and 95% of families with children ages 6 to 17 living in the Independence Community School District (CSD) area have all parents in the labor force. Five years ago in 2017, those numbers were 77% and 87% respectively, and in 2012 they were 84% and 81%.

Figure 17: Comparison of Families with All Parents in Labor Force Over Past 10 Years



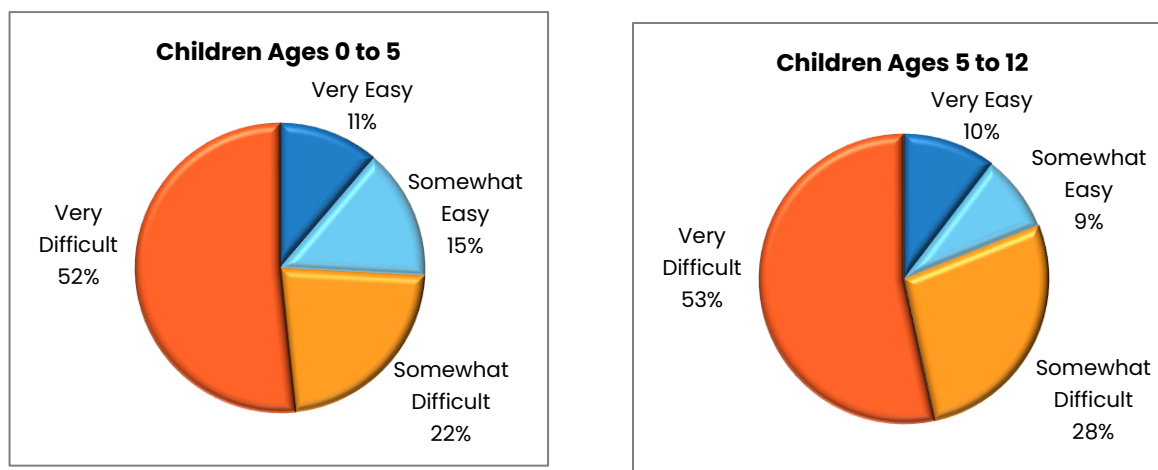
### **Finding 2: Parents are Having Difficulty Finding Child Care**

Parents were asked if they had looked for child care in the last 12 months. Eighty-nine (89) parents indicated they had looked for care for children ages 0 to 5, and 58 parents indicated they had looked for care for children ages 5 to 12. Among those looking for care for ages 0 to 5, 74% indicated they experienced some level of difficulty—either somewhat difficult (22%) or very

difficult (52%). And among those that looked for care for ages 5 to 12, 81% indicated they experienced some level of difficulty—either somewhat difficult (28%) or very difficult (53%). See figure on next page.

As a follow up, parents were asked what obstacles they had experienced when looking for child care. Eighty-six (86) parents provided a response, with nearly all of those including something about providers they had contacted not having any open spaces. More specifically comments refer to no openings within centers, providers not accepting children under the age of 2, and a few mentioned the cost or tuition or that they cannot afford the setting they prefer.

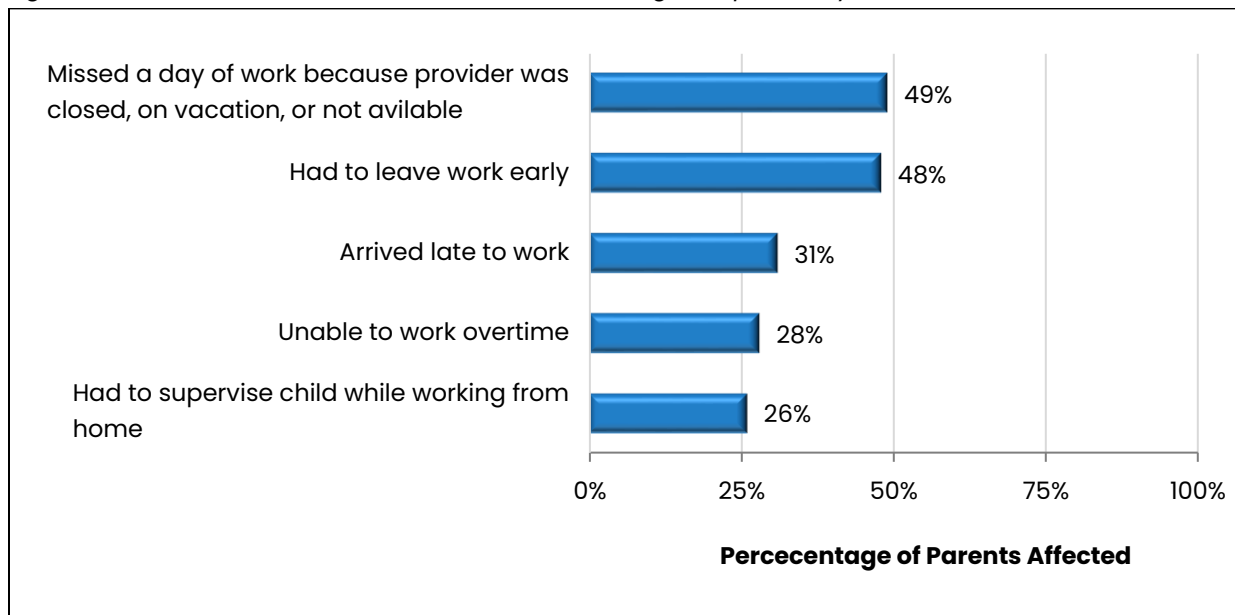
Figure 18: Ability to Find Child Care During Last 12 Months



### Finding 3: 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 25% of parents that participated in the child care needs survey were: missed a day of work because the provider was closed, on vacation, or not available (49%), had to leave work early (48%), arrived late to work (31%), unable to work overtime (28%), and had to supervise child while working from home (26%). Overall, 57% of parents indicated they experienced no issues related to their job due to child care. See figure on next page.

Figure 19: Most Common Effects of Child Care Challenges Reported by Parents



Separately, 32% (75 parents) indicated child care challenges are currently limiting their or their spouse's or partner's employment, such as working part-time when full-time is preferred, or not working within their preferred field. In addition, 17% (40 parents) indicated that they or their spouse or partner has declined employment or withdrawn from the workforce in the last 12 months due to child care and 6% (14 parents) indicated as of today they or their spouse or partners is not working (unemployed) because of child care challenges.

#### **Finding 4: There is a Shortage of Spaces Among All Age Groups**

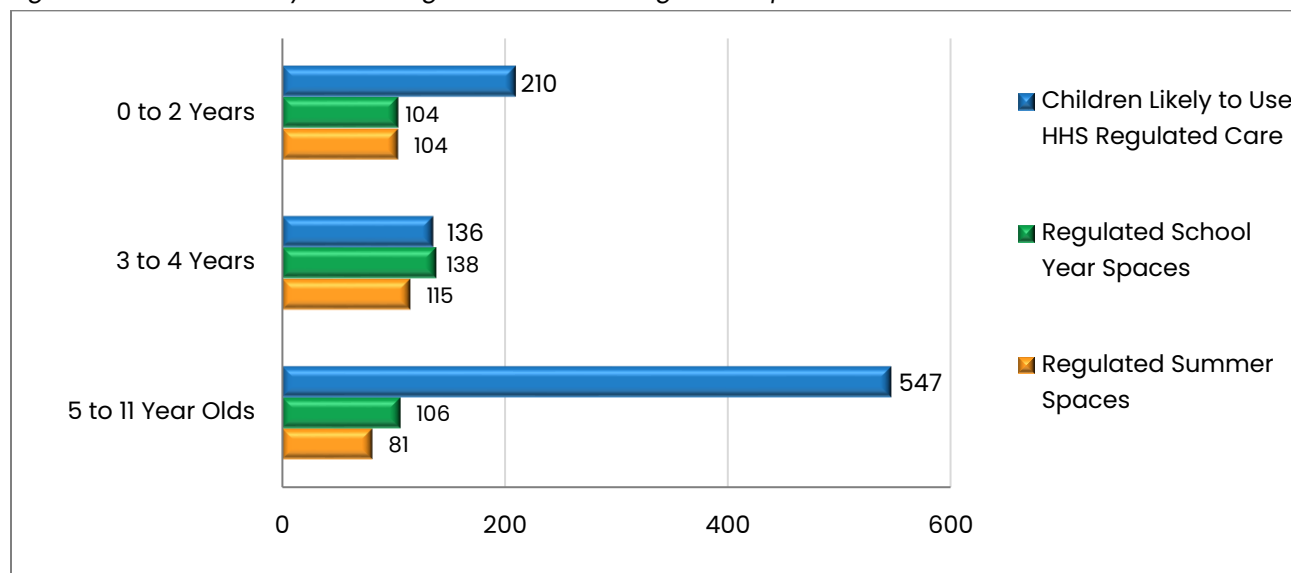
There are 1,153 children ages 0 to 11 in the Independence Community School District (CSD) boundaries. Of those, First Children's Finance (FCF) estimates 960 have all parents working. Based on the percentage of families that have all parents working, and parents' preferences of child care settings, First Children's Finance estimates that approximately 893 of those children are from families who prefer and are likely use Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) regulated child care. According to Iowa HHS, there are currently 348 HHS regulated spaces, however one preschool program has announced they are closing in May 2024, which will mean 332 spaces, of which 332 are available during the school year and 300 are available during the summer. There are enough spaces to serve approximately 34% of the children whose parents need full-time, year-round care to work.

When broken down by age group, the *Child Care Gap Analysis* shows there is a shortage of 545 spaces during the school year, 106 spaces for ages 0 to 2 and 441 spaces for children 5 to 11 (there is a surplus of 2 for ages 3 and 4). During the summer, when some preschool and school age spaces are not available, that shortage jumps to 593 spaces, 106 for ages 0 to 2, 21 spaces



for ages 3 to 4, and 466 for ages 5 to 11. Based on input from the child care needs survey, FCF believes this gap may be worsened by families that live in other communities but prefer regulated child care in Independence.

Figure 20: Children Likely to Use Regulated Care vs. Regulated Spaces Available

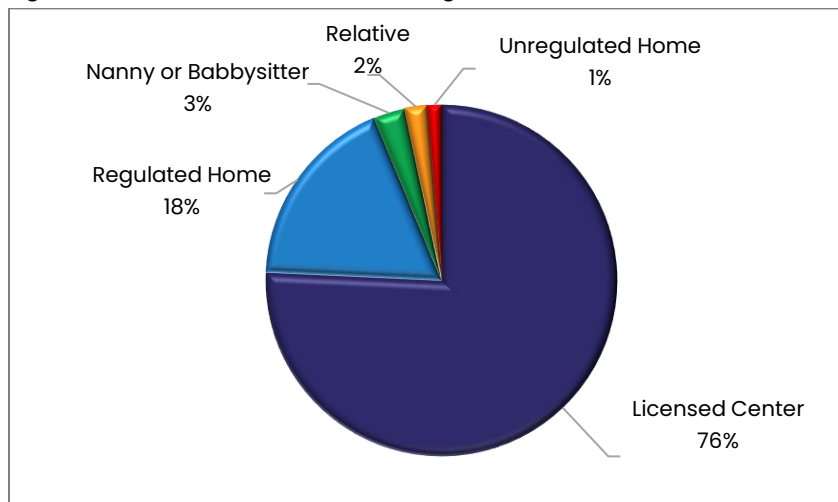


### Finding 5: Parents Want Center-Based Child Care

Through the child care needs surveys completed by parents in 2023, both current and future parents were asked several questions about their child care needs and preferences. The most preferred child care arrangement chosen was a licensed child care center, which is preferred by 76% of all respondents, followed by a regulated child development home (18%).

There are currently 284 spaces within licensed centers (which also includes preschools) for children ages 18 months to 12 years. One of the preschool programs has announced they will close in May 2024, bringing the number of spaces in licensed centers down to 268, of which 220 will be available year-round. *See figure on next page.*

Figure 21: Preferred Child Care Setting



In addition to preferred child care setting, the child care needs survey also revealed that both current and future parents prefer to drop-off their children for care between 7:00 am and 7:59 am (47% overall) and pick them up between 4:00 pm and 4:59 pm (37% overall), and to use care Monday through Friday (90%-96% depending upon the day). Parents also prefer care that is available year-round for all ages, with 83% of those with children ages 0 to 5 choosing this option, and 61% of those with children ages 5 to 12.

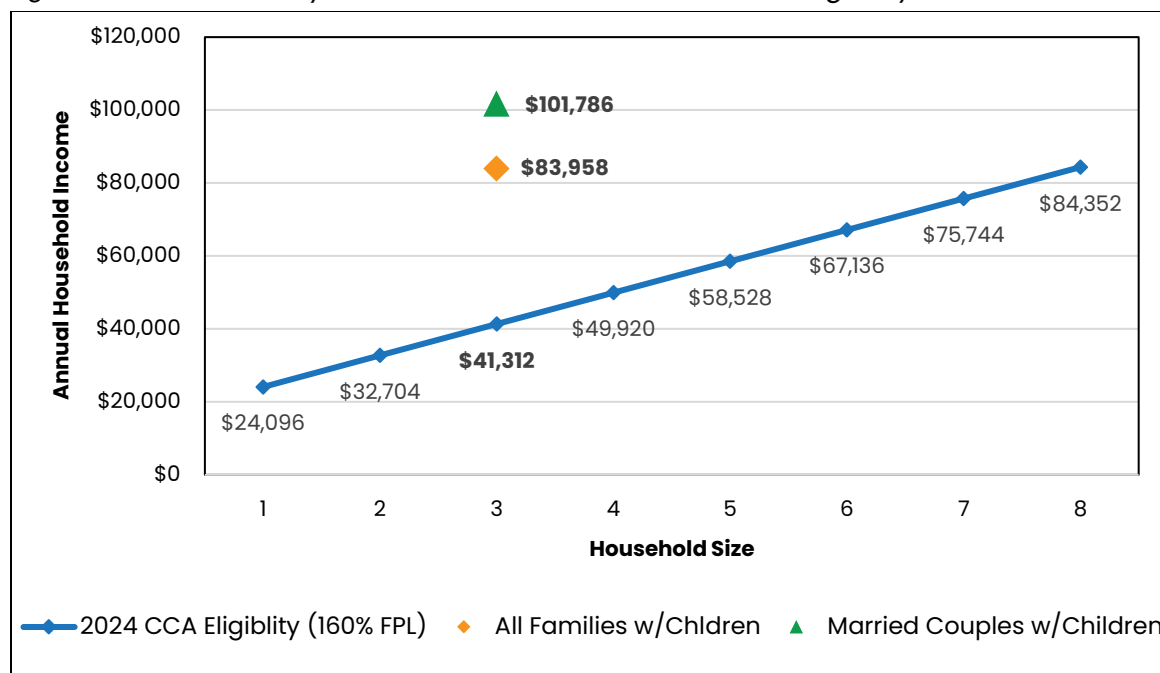
#### **Finding 6: Median Income of Families with Children is Higher than the Child Care Assistance Threshold**

The median income for families with children under the age of 18 in the Independence Community School District (CSD) is \$83,958, and that income jumps to \$101,786 for married couples with children under the age of 18. Among respondents of the child care needs survey, 87% of current parents (those that have children age 12 or younger) indicated they are married. 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% FPL.

According to the federally determined poverty threshold that went into effect January 2024, 160% FPL is \$41,312 for a household of 3, and \$49,920 for a household of 4. These families would remain eligible for CCA until they would exceed the 225% FPL income limit if their household income is over \$58,095 for a household of 3, or \$70,200 for a household of 4. While many households with children in the area exceed these incomes, comments provided by parents through the child care needs survey indicate some families may be struggling to pay for child care expenses out of pocket.

The following figure plots the median income of households with children under 18 in the Independence CSD area using the family size of 3 (rounding the average family size of 2.94). The diagonal line shows 160% FPL by household size. The gap between 160% FPL for a family of 3 (\$41,312), and the median income for a family with children (\$83,958) or a married couple with children (\$101,786) can easily be seen by comparing the blue line which represent the 160% FPL by household size, and the orange diamond or green triangle which represent the annual median incomes of each family type.

Figure 22: Median Family Incomes vs. Child Care Assistance Eligibility Threshold



### Finding 7: Child Care Centers are Willing to Expand

Child care centers that completed the child care needs survey were asked, would you wish to expand your current child care program to serve more children? All 4 of the licensed centers in Independence participated, and at the time of the survey (October 2023) 3 of the 4 indicated, yes they would expand if they had the opportunity. Following the survey, one center announced they will close in May, which may change the number of centers willing to expand as of the date of this report.

Providers that said yes were then asked to explain how they could expand. Comments received were:

- *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.*

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. All responses were related to two types of support, needing help with staffing and financing.

### **Finding 8—Few Employers are Currently Impacted by Child Care**

Through the child care needs survey employers were asked several questions related to how child care is affecting them and their employees. Those questions included:

- 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. Some of the comments received from all employers were:

- *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 to Child Care**

Employers that participated in the child care needs survey indicated their business is willing to assist in addressing the child care shortage and/or support child care businesses through various actions.

- 3 employers are willing to make a donation or financial contribution to build, remodel, or expand a child care center.
- 3 employers are willing to make a donation or financial contribution for child care scholarships for their own employees.
- 2 employers are willing to make an annual donation or financial contribution for a portion (but not all) of the wages of a child care center director.
- 2 employers would pay a child care provider the tuition of a vacant slot in order to reserve or hold that slot for one of their employees (with the employee taking over payment upon enrolling).

- 2 employers would make a financial contribution for the operation of a child care program.
- 2 employers would make a donation or financial contribution for child care scholarships for all children.