



# Grant County Child Care Assessment

*February 2025*



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**Grant County**



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# 1. Introduction

Child care is an essential part of a thriving community as it provides children with safe and enriching learning environments while supporting parents' and guardians' ability to work, increasing their economic mobility. Lack of adequate, affordable child care can have a ripple effect on communities, the workforce, and the broader economy. Parents and guardians can be late, absent from work, or distracted when their child care needs go unmet. As a result, they miss out on career growth opportunities, earnings, and chances to advance. More than two thirds of working parents' work days have been impacted by child care falling through, costing employers \$13 billion a year in lost productivity.

In 2024, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, in partnership with the Indiana Chamber of Commerce and Early Learning Indiana, developed a report to understand the impact of child care on working parents, their employers, and the state economy. The report found that child care-related absences and turnover cost Indiana employers \$3.05 billion annually. Indiana experiences a direct financial impact of \$4.22 billion each year due to insufficient child care coverage.<sup>1</sup>

**Employers in Indiana lose an estimated \$3.05 billion annually due to absences and turnover caused by a lack of child care.**

	<b>\$3.05 billion</b>	<b>\$4.22 billion</b>	<b>\$1.17 billion</b>
<b>Indiana's Cost</b>	Indirect cost to employers	Lost economic activity every year	Lost tax revenue

Source: U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation (2024). *IN Untapped Potential: How Childcare Impacts Indiana's Workforce Productivity and the State's Economic*.

To address these needs, the Indiana Chamber of Commerce and the Family and Social Services Administration's Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning launched the Employer-Sponsored Child Care Fund at the end of 2023. The opportunity provided communities, businesses, schools, and nonprofit organizations funding to create or expand employer-subsidized child care benefits for working Hoosier families. **Greater Grant County (GGC)** applied and received an Employer-Sponsored Child Care grant to complete a comprehensive analysis of child care in Grant County and develop best practices and recommendations for the community. These findings will be used to identify and address gaps in child care needs to support Grant County's workforce. GGC engaged Transform Consulting Group (TCG) to complete the comprehensive analysis and develop the strategic action plan.

<sup>1</sup> Source: U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation (2024). *Untapped Potential in IN: How Childcare Impacts Indiana's Workforce Productivity and the State's Economic*.  
[https://www.indianachamber.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Untapped\\_INDIANA\\_072924\\_DIGITAL.pdf](https://www.indianachamber.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Untapped_INDIANA_072924_DIGITAL.pdf)

## TCG's Approach to the Strategic Action Plan

TCG follows a four-step process to create a strategic action plan.

- 1. Collaborate to determine what we need to learn.** We follow a participatory approach, which starts with increasing our client's buy-in and ownership. We work with our client to determine the research questions we want to answer and engage all the key partners and collaborators—both internally and externally. We then choose the best methods to gather data to answer those questions.
- 2. Analyze the organization and landscape.** We ground the planning process in data. We utilize publicly sourced data to understand the community and its needs. We solicit feedback from identified partners and collaborators regarding the strengths and opportunities within the community and child care. We benchmark similar organizations in the industry and review policies and funding structures to inform the new plan.
- 3. Facilitate consensus.** Before turning the data, research, and identified best practices into a plan for our clients, we gather the client and committee for a planning retreat to facilitate consensus on the new strategic direction. We work with the team to analyze the data and information using their perspective and expertise—collectively determining key goals and strategies.
- 4. Create the strategic action plan.** We then will design a visually appealing action plan that can be shared externally as a public-facing document. We also develop an implementation plan that can be used internally to monitor progress. We create strategic action plans that help our clients take action—moving the work they do forward.



**Collaborate**



**Analyze**



**Facilitate**



**Create**

## Research Completed for Grant County

TCG collaborated with GGC and the committee to establish research questions to guide the analysis. The following key research questions were developed:

1. What is the need for child care in the community?
2. What are the strengths, barriers, and gaps related to child care?
3. How have businesses in the region supported child care access?
4. What are the compelling messages to help make the case for child care?

TCG worked with GGC and the committee to identify key community partners and collaborators to solicit feedback and inform the approach to completing the strategic action plan. TCG conducted research and gathered information from the following sources:

Method	Participants/Source	Purpose
Publicly available data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey</li> <li>• Brighter Futures Indiana Data Center</li> <li>• Indiana Family and Social Services Administration</li> <li>• Hoosiers by the Numbers</li> <li>• United for ALICE</li> <li>• Early Learning Indiana</li> </ul>	Understand the community and the child care landscape in Grant County and identify needs and opportunities.
Surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents and guardians with young children (n=70)</li> <li>• Employers (n=15)</li> <li>• Child care providers (n=15)</li> <li>• School and community partners (n=3)</li> </ul>	Gather the community's perspectives on barriers and challenges to accessing care and expanding services, current initiatives to support child care, and potential solutions. Demographic information is included in Appendix A.
Interviews and focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University leaders (n=3)</li> <li>• Employers (n=2)</li> <li>• Employer focus group (n=2)</li> </ul>	Gather more in-depth perspectives on barriers and challenges to accessing care and expanding services, current initiatives to support child care, and potential solutions.
Research on promising models and aspirational organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child care workforce development and employee retention</li> <li>• Coalition building and strengthening</li> <li>• Scholarship or tuition assistance</li> <li>• Backup and sick care</li> </ul>	Learn from research evaluating these promising models and aspirational organizations to understand what actions may best support and improve child care in Grant County.

### Strategic Action Plan Retreat

On February 18, 2025, TCG will lead a meeting with GGC and the steering committee to review the information gathered and plan for the future. This report will jump-start the committee planning meeting. **TCG requests that all committee participants read this report in advance of the meeting.** The purpose of the planning meeting is to use the knowledge gathered from the feedback provided by community partners and collaborators, community information and history, and other related research to determine the goals and strategies for the strategy action plan.

## 2. State of Child Care in Grant County

The findings from public data and community partner and collaborator feedback are presented in the following sections and are meant to inform the identified research questions listed above.

- 1. Need for child care in Grant County:** Provides data on Grant County's population characteristics, such as the number of young children, children in need of child care, median household income, and employment rates.
- 2. Strengths, barriers, and gaps in child care:** Describes the emerging themes related to strengths and barriers related to child care in Grant County.
- 3. Business contributions:** Discusses how businesses are currently supporting child care access and potential opportunities to strengthen employer contributions in Grant County.

Grant County Quick Facts					
<b>Current Child Care Landscape</b>	<b>4,464</b> Young Children (ages 0 - 5)	<b>3,083 (73%)</b> Young Children Who Need Care	<b>1,387</b> Capacity of Known Programs	<b>1,696</b> Unmet Need <sup>1</sup>	<b>\$6,135</b> Average Annual Cost of Child Care in Grant County
<b>Current Workforce Landscape</b>	<b>27,850</b> Working-Eligible Population	<b>27,925</b> Total Employed in the County <sup>2</sup>	<b>4.6%</b> Unemployment Rate	<b>\$55,448</b> Median Family Income	Education, health care, and social services are the top workforce industries.
<sup>1.</sup> Number of children who need care minus the capacity enrolled in known programs. <sup>2.</sup> Includes those living within and outside of the county who are employed in Grant County.					

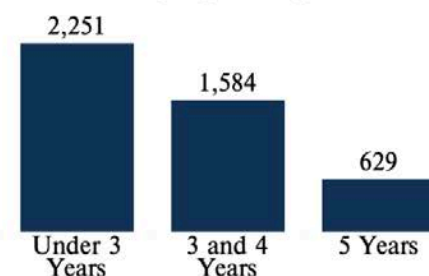
### Need for Child Care in Grant County

#### Young Children and Families

Grant County has roughly 4,500 children under 6 years old. Half (50%) of these young children are under 3 years old, approximately one third (35%) are 3 and 4 years old, and 14% are 5 years old.

Nearly half of all family households in the county have young children. There are more than 6,700 family households in Grant County and 44% have children under 6 years of age.

Number of Young Children by Age Group



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2022). American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B09001.



Grant County has a higher percentage of single-parent households (44%) compared to the state (33%). Family composition and socioeconomic status are closely aligned, as single-parent households are more likely to live in poverty than married-couple households.<sup>2</sup>

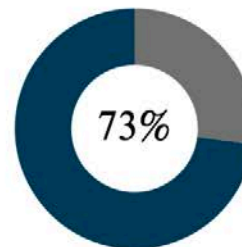
### Family Households with Children Under 6 Years Old



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2022). American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S1101.

**Approximately three quarters (73% or 3,083) of Grant County children under six may need care because all parents in the home are working.** This percentage is higher than Indiana's rate (68%).

### Percentage of Young Children Who Need Care Because All Parents Work



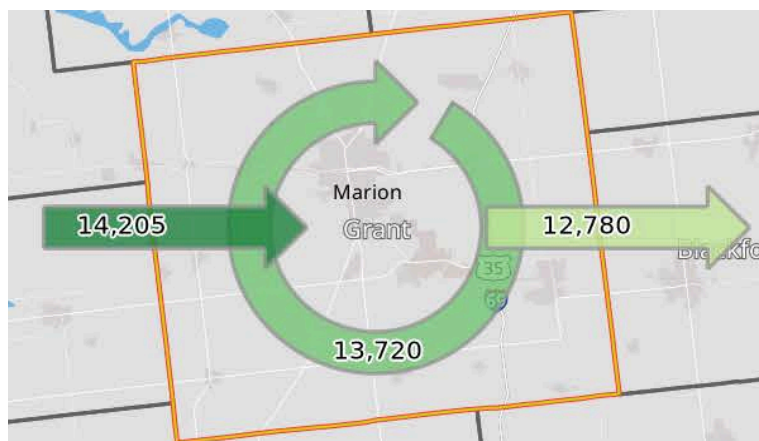
Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2022). American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B23008.

### Workforce

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2022), Grant County had a working-age population ages 20 to 64 of 37,179 people, with three fourths (75%, or 27,850) participating in the labor force. Among the labor force in Grant County, there was a 4.6% unemployment rate in 2022, which is a 1% increase compared to 2017 (3.6%).

According to the U.S. Census Bureau commuting flows data, 13,720 people (52%) live and work within the county, while the remaining 12,780 (48%) resident workers commute to work outside the county. Over 14,200 workers who live outside Grant County commute to work within Grant County.

### Inflow and Outflow Commuter Patterns in Grant County

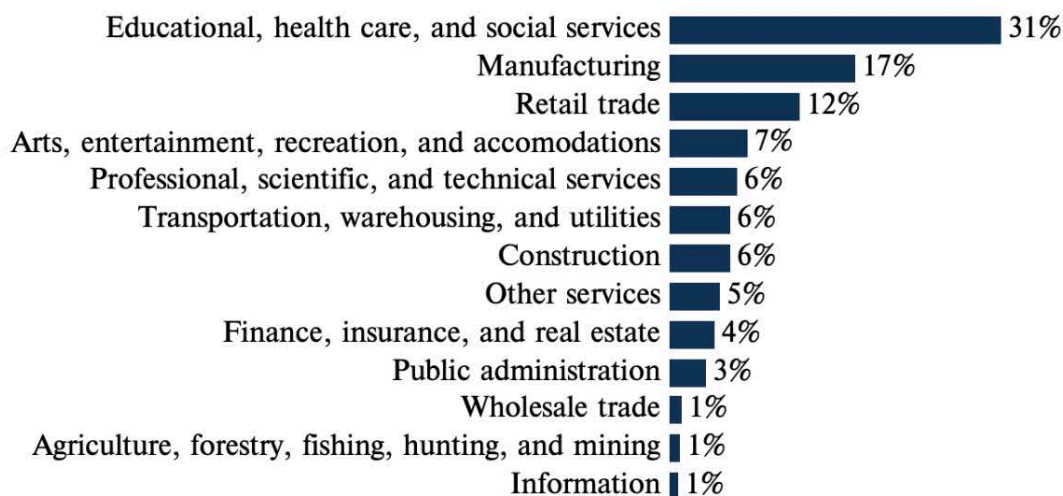


U.S. Census Bureau (2022). *OnTheMap*.

<sup>2</sup> Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2022). Child Well-Being in Single-Parent Families. <https://www.aecf.org/blog/child-well-being-in-single-parent-families>

Grant County offers employment opportunities representing a wide range of workforce industries. Approximately one third (9,128, or 31%) of individuals employed in Grant County work in education, health care, or social services (i.e., Indiana Wesleyan University, Marion Health, Radiant Health). Manufacturing is the county's second most common employment industry (GM, Cafe Valley, and Huhtamaki). Retail trade is the third highest employment sector (i.e., Walmart, Meijer), with over 3,500 employees (12%).

### Top Workforce Industries in Grant County



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2022). American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP03.

### Household Income

The median family household income in Grant County is \$55,448, over \$27,000 less than the state median family household income of \$82,646. Single-parent households earn approximately 39% to 47% less than the average family income, and about two thirds that of married-couple households. The median household income for married-couple families is \$88,491. The median household income for single-parent families is \$29,369 for female-headed households and \$34,005 for male-headed households.<sup>3</sup>

### Median Household Income for Families with Children



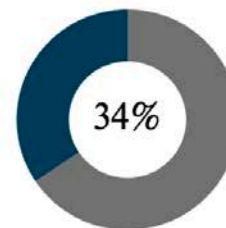
Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2022). American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S1903.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.



While income data is limited for families with children under 6, we know younger parents are not as far along in their careers and may therefore be earning less. Parents of younger children may be more likely to be out of the workforce due to child care issues. Therefore, we estimate household incomes for families with young children are even lower.

**Percentage of Young Children Living in Poverty**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2022). American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B17024.

In Grant County, 19% of the population falls below the poverty level, higher than the state rate of 12%. The poverty rate for young children under 6 is even more pronounced, with approximately one third (34%) living below the poverty line. Grant County's child poverty rate is nearly double that of the state (18%). Out of the 92 counties, **Grant County has the second-highest young child poverty rate in the state.**

According to the 2024 Federal Poverty Guidelines that went into effect on January 17, 2024, the 100% FPL for an individual is an annual income of less than \$15,060. For households, each additional person adds \$5,380 to that number. For example, a family of three living at or below the federal poverty threshold would earn below \$25,820 annually or less.

2024 Federal Poverty Guidelines			
	Family of Two	Family of Three	Family of Four
100% FPL (Poverty)	\$20,440	\$25,820	\$31,200
125% FPL	\$25,550	\$32,275	\$39,000
130% FPL	\$26,572	\$33,566	\$40,560
Source: Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. (2025). Poverty Guidelines. <a href="https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines">https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines</a>			

In addition to Grant County's high poverty rate, over 8,650 (33%) additional households are living in financial hardship. These households are known as Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE). ALICE households live above the federal poverty level but often cannot afford the cost of living. This population may have unique struggles, as they often do not qualify for public assistance programs and may live paycheck to paycheck.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> United for ALICE. (2024). Research Center: Indiana. <https://www.unitedforalice.org/county-reports/indiana>

## Strengths and Barriers to Child Care

*What are the strengths, barriers, and gaps related to child care?*

### Strengths of Child Care

**Surveyed and interviewed respondents discussed that there is a strong desire to work collaboratively in Grant County and that local leaders are invested in addressing child care needs and gaps.** Respondents noted that the community can leverage the available social capital to prompt innovative solutions to improve child care access while increasing the workforce. This includes the local universities, the Early Childhood Education Coalition, local churches that are engaging in creative solutions, and services such as Head Start and Early Head Start.

In addition to social capital, respondents noted that **investments are being made in early care, and are expected to be implemented within the next few years in Grant County.** For example, Indiana Wesleyan University received the Lilly Endowment's College and Community Collaboration grant to transition a campus building to an onsite child care center. The center will allow students to gain experience and build skills related to early care and education. Further, leaders from Ivy Tech discussed the potential to couple early childhood education training with business programs to prepare educators for operating child care centers.

*“Locally, there are a lot of people who not only have been identified but are also starting to come up with creative solutions based on our capacities.”*

-Interviewed community leader

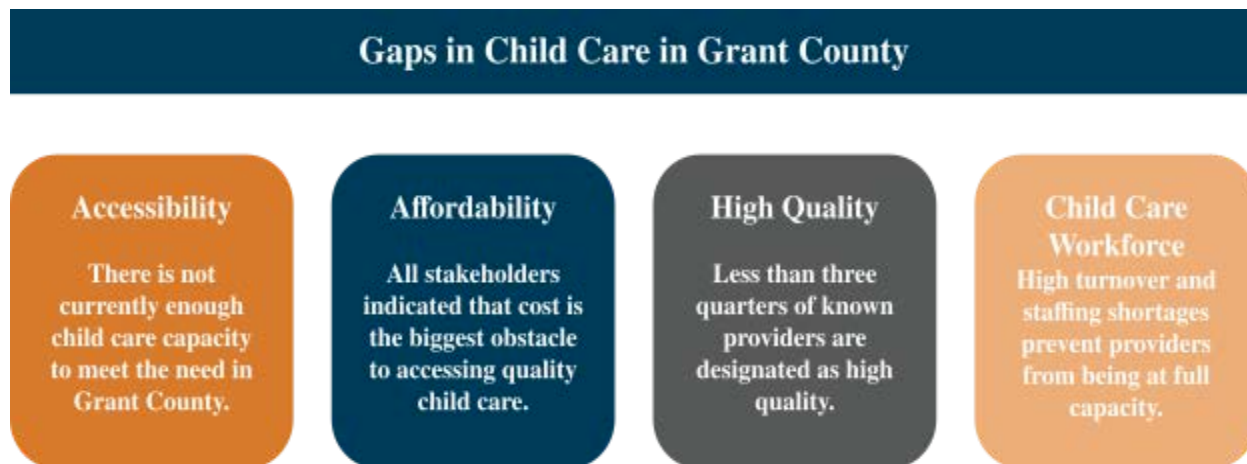
### Barriers and Gaps to Child Care

Overall, surveyed partners and collaborators noted that child care negatively impacts the workforce in Grant County. Nearly three fourths (73%) of employers agreed that employees are either unable to focus at work, are late, or miss work altogether due to child care-related issues. Nearly half of surveyed parents and guardians said that child care impacts their ability to be on time, and 41% said it affects their ability to not miss work. Taken together, child care in Grant County needs to improve to better meet the needs of both families and the workforce.

*“Without adequate, affordable, and safe childcare, I am unable to perform my job to the highest level. I am constantly interrupted and sometimes have to attempt to work one-handed. This has led to higher anxiety and stress related to my job.”*

-Surveyed parent or guardian

Using feedback and local data, the following four themes within child care emerged.



### Accessibility of Child Care

Grant County has 35 known child care providers with a total capacity of 1,387 children. The known child care programs are distributed among different settings, including family child care centers (14), child care centers (7), licensed education agencies (7), and ministries (7).

There are a total of 35 programs that can serve approximately 45% of the 3,083 children that need care. Of those, licensed education agencies (LEAs) represent about one third (35%) of Grant County's child care capacity. LEAs are school-based programs that serve preschool-age children. Additionally, registered ministries represent 34% of Grant County's child care capacity, while child care centers represent 18%. Due to their more extensive space and staffing capacity, LEAs, registered ministries, and child care centers can accommodate more children than family child care homes.

Capacity of Known Child Care Providers in Grant County				
7 Child Care Centers	14 Family Child Care Homes	7 Registered Ministries	7 Licensed Education Agencies	<b>35 Total Programs</b>
251 (18%)	183 (13%)	470 (34%)	483 (35%)	<b>1,387</b>
Source: Brighter Futures Indiana; Indiana Department of Education				

Eighty percent (80%) of surveyed parents and guardians reported needing child care during the work week, and 4% reported needing care on the weekends. The hours and schedule parents and guardians reported needing child care varied. Nearly two thirds (60%) of parents reported needing care 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Ten percent (10%) reported needing extended care until 9:00 p.m. About one third of known child care providers are open between the hours of 7:00 am and 6:00 pm. About half of known child care providers in Grant County open at 7:00 a.m. or earlier,

and one third stay open until 6:00 PM or later. Surveyed employers agreed that there is a need for extended morning and evening care, especially for healthcare workers.

Schedule Preferences of Surveyed Parents and Guardians in Need of Child Care <i>Number of responses: 70</i>			
<b>Days</b> <b>84%</b> <b>Monday-Friday</b>	<b>Times of the Year</b> <b>43%</b> <b>Year-round</b>	<b>Hours</b> <b>60%</b> <b>7:00 am-6:00 pm</b>	<b>Location</b> <b>71%</b> <b>Near home</b>

As the demands of the modern workforce continue to evolve, there is an increasing need for child care services to adapt and meet the needs of working families. In Grant County, only 10 programs offer non-traditional child care hours. Among these, three programs provide overnight care, five offer early-hour care, and two offer early- and late-hour care. One child care site is open on Saturday. Extended child care availability is crucial in supporting workforce participation and ensuring families have reliable access to care.

**Parents, guardians, and employers expressed the need for more backup and emergency child care services, as parents and guardians often face disruptions when their regular arrangements fall through.** Respondents also included sick child care options for when parents and guardians cannot use their regular provider and may have to miss work when their child is sick.

*“Hours of operation for child care need to be more consistent with work hours in order to maintain a full-time job to support the home.”*  
-Surveyed parent or guardian

*“Sick children can limit hours worked, which impacts financial stability. It is difficult to schedule medical appointments and activities to maintain my mental health with child care hours limited to 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM.”*  
-Surveyed parent or guardian

**Although these challenges persist, child care providers are interested in addressing capacity needs.** Ninety-two percent of surveyed child care providers stated they would be interested in expanding their capacity if barriers did not exist. In order to expand, 71% said they would need financial support, 64% need expanded space, and 43% need staff recruitment and retention support.

### Provider Needs in Order to Expand Capacity Number of responses: 14



### Affordability of Child Care

Child care providers, employers, parents, and guardians highlighted affordability as the biggest obstacle to accessing child care in Grant County.

#### Top Issue Related to Child Care



Employers	Child Care Providers	Parents and Guardians
Cost 93%	Cost 71%	Cost 73%

As of September 2024, the average weekly cost of child care for families in Grant County is **\$118.52 for one child, which is \$6,163 a year.**<sup>5</sup> For households with children under the age of 18, the median household income in 2022 was \$55,448.<sup>6</sup> **That means the average household spends more than 11% of their income on child care, compared with the national recommendation of 7% from the Department of Health and Human Services.** Single-parent families spend 12 percentage points more (19%) than married-couple families (7%).

Households with Children	Median Household Income	Percentage of Income Spent on Child Care
Average Family Household	\$55,448	11%
Married-Couple Families	\$88,491	7%
Single-Parent Household	\$31,687	19%
Source: Brighter Futures Indiana Data Center; U.S. Census Bureau Table S1903		

<sup>5</sup> Brighter Futures Indiana, Data Center (September 2024).

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Nationally, more than one quarter (29%) of families reported that their child care tuition had increased in the last month.<sup>7</sup> The average cost of child care tuition is similar to one year's tuition at a public university. However, many families paying for child care are at the beginning of their careers where their earning potential has not been fully realized. Families sending a child to college are typically at the highest earning potential in their career (in their 40s and 50s) and have saved for 18 years. Even then, college tuition costs are still not affordable.

*“The cost of childcare nowadays makes it hard for a working parent to afford... It seems like sometimes you work to pay for childcare alone.”*

-Surveyed parent or guardian

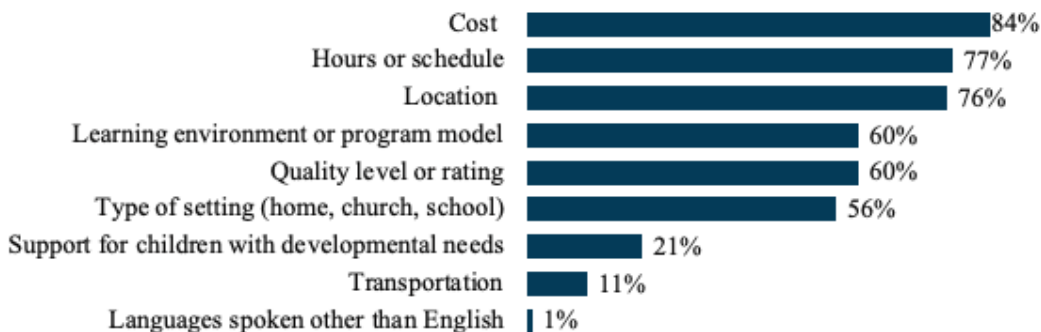
Although tuition and fees are unaffordable for many families, these costs are market prices and may not be the actual costs incurred by early learning programs. Market prices are based on what families in the community can afford, and they often do not cover the actual operating costs of early care and education programs. Many factors go into programs' operating costs and how program administrators make ends meet.

Child care labor costs are higher than other educational programming due to the need for lower adult-to-child ratios. Teacher and staff compensation is the most considerable portion of a program's budget, ranging from 60% to 80% nationally. Programs face the dilemma of having to spend most of their revenue on staff compensation yet not being able to afford to pay their staff anything close to the median wage in their area. This gap results in high turnover and poorly staffed classrooms, lowering overall capacity and availability.

Over four fifths (84%) of surveyed parents and guardians reported that cost—or affordability—is their top priority when looking for child care. Parents and guardians discussed choosing between quality and affordability, which creates additional stress.

#### Top Priorities when Looking for Child Care

Number of responses: 70



<sup>7</sup> National Association for the Education of Young Children (2023). Going Over the Child Care Cliff. Retrieved from [https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/nov\\_survey\\_brief.pdf](https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/nov_survey_brief.pdf)



***“I have to settle for a daycare that is less than satisfactory so that I can afford for my kids to go.”***

**-Surveyed parent or guardian**

### ***Public Assistance Available for Child Care***

To help low-income parents afford the cost of early care and education, some federal and state public financial assistance is available for eligible families. These include the following:

- Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) vouchers,
- On My Way Pre-K (OMWPK) vouchers
- Early Head Start/Head Start programs
- Title 1 funding
- IDEA, Part B.

**As of January 2025, the Family and Social Services Administration will be reimplementing waitlists for CCDF and vouchers. Currently enrolled families will maintain their enrollment as funding allows. Additionally, the Indiana General Assembly increased CCDF eligibility to 150% of the federal poverty level, an increase from 127%. These changes will limit the number of families eligible at any given time for assistance, creating additional barriers to affording child care.**

**Read more:**

<https://www.in.gov/fssa/carefinder/child-care-vouchers/>

### **The Child Care Development Fund**

(CCDF) uses federal and state funding to provide child care vouchers to low-income families working or attending school. On My Way Pre-K is a state-funded program allowing 4-year-olds from low-income families working or going to school to attend approved high-quality pre-K programs. Head Start and Early Head Start are federally-funded programs that provide education, care, and other comprehensive services to children whose families meet certain income or at-risk population requirements (homeless, foster, or disabled). Special Education and Title I funding can be used by public schools to support preschool.

<b>Early Care and Education Public Assistance Programs</b>			
<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Ages Served</b>	<b>Child Eligibility</b>	<b>Funding Type</b>
Child Care Development Fund Voucher	0 - 12-year-olds	150% federal poverty level and parent(s) must work/ go to school	Voucher with parent
On My Way Pre-K	4-year-olds	150%-185% federal poverty level and parent(s) must work/ go to school.	Voucher with parent
Early Head Start	0 - 2-year-olds; pregnant women	150% federal poverty level and other determinations	Grant with program



Early Care and Education Public Assistance Programs			
Funding Source	Ages Served	Child Eligibility	Funding Type
Head Start	3 - 5-year-olds	150% federal poverty level and other determinations	Grant with program
Title 1	3 - 18-year-olds	School determines	Formula funding to school
IDEA, Part B (SPED)	3 - 21-year-olds	Disability	Formula funding to school

Of the 35 programs registered with the state in Grant County, 32 are eligible to serve children with CCDF vouchers. There are 1,203 children living in poverty in Grant County who could be eligible for most of these financial assistance programs. The CCDF-eligible programs can serve 842 children or 70% of the children living below 150% of the federal poverty level.

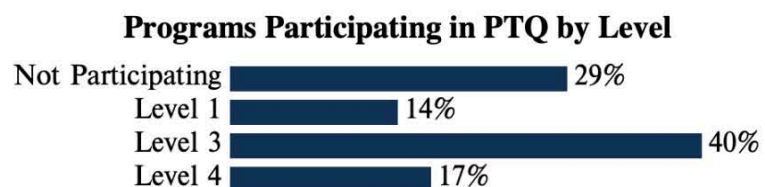
More than two thirds of provider respondents (67%) discussed how families often inquire about CCDF and other subsidized services. Among the 14 child care provider survey responses, 70% indicated that they offer CCDF, and 57% reported offering other subsidized services, such as On My Way Pre-K, Head Start, sibling discounts, and scholarships provided by local churches. **Parents and guardians and employers discussed the need for additional public assistance opportunities, especially for families that do not qualify for CCDF or other public assistance vouchers.**

*“There is a need for financial assistance for child care for families who don’t qualify for CCDF due to being middle class but still really struggle to make ends meet since we don’t receive any type of government assistance. Inflation has made affording life really difficult.”*  
-Surveyed employer

### High-Quality Child Care Programs

Indiana has a quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) for early care and education programs called Paths to QUALITY™ (PTQ). This is a voluntary rating system where programs are rated from Level 1 to Level 4, with Level 4 being the highest. In Indiana, “high quality” is defined as a program rated Level 3 or Level 4 on PTQ or accredited by an approved national organization.

Grant County has 25 programs that participate in PTQ. Less than three quarters (71%) of known child care programs and



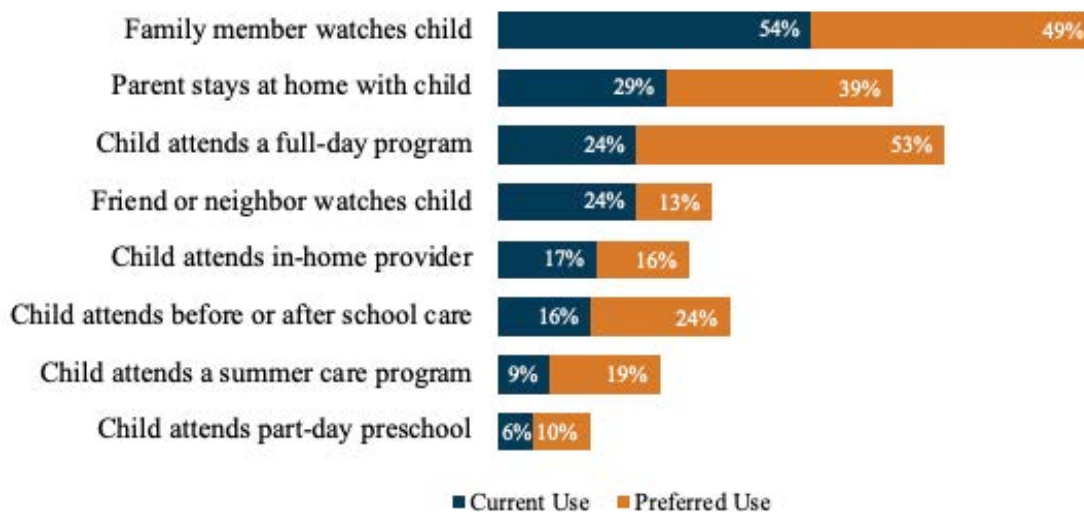
Source: Brighter Futures Indiana (December 2024), Data Center.

approximately two thirds (65%) of capacity are designated as high-quality. Of the high-quality rated programs, six have reached the highest ranking of Level 4. This rating indicates that the programs have met the highest child care quality standards and are nationally accredited. The current high-quality capacity in Grant County can serve less than one fifth (19%) of children under six who may need care.

Surveyed parents and guardians reported on the current use of child care, with over half reporting that they rely on a family member. Additionally, 29% stated that a parent stays home, and 24% indicated that they utilize a full-day program, such as a child care center. When looking at the preferred use of child care, 53% indicated that they prefer to have their children attend a full-day program at a child care center, and 49% preferred relying on a family member. Many parents and guardians have discussed that the lack of high-quality programs deters them from utilizing available child care centers. Although their preferred choice is a child care center, some parents and guardians felt they would rather have a parent or family member stay home with their child due to safety and quality of care concerns.

***“We need more quality options. There is child care available, but many of the options are at locations I would never send my child due to safety concerns. The good locations have over-200-person waiting lists.”***  
-Surveyed parent or guardian

#### Parents and Guardian’s Current Child Care Compared to Their Preferred Child Care *Number of responses: 70*

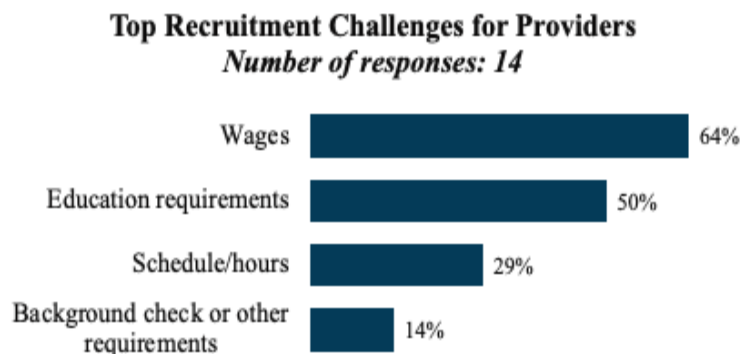


#### Child Care Workforce

All program types expressed challenges in staffing child care facilities. Half of the surveyed child care providers noted that their facilities were not at full enrollment but were at full capacity based on the number of staff members employed. The Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning asks providers to report monthly how many open teaching positions they

have in their programs. Statewide, that number fluctuates from 2,200 to almost 3,000 positions. This impacts the program's ability to be at full capacity.

Grant County child care providers reported that wages are a barrier to recruiting and retaining child care staff. Nearly two thirds (64%) of provider respondents stated that assistant teachers are the most challenging positions to retain.



Grant County child care providers reported on hourly wages for part-time and full-time employees. On average, part-time and full-time employees both earn around \$15 per hour. **The living hourly wage for one adult with no children in Grant County is \$18.01 and \$31.52 for one adult with one child. This comparison indicates that child care staff members do not make enough to meet the living wage.**

Average Wages Reported by Providers	
Hourly Wages for a Part-Time Employee:	Hourly Wages for a Full-Time Employee:
<b>\$15.00</b>	<b>\$15.60</b>

Access to consistent child care wage information across the state is limited, however. Early Learning Indiana reported that child care workers had lower wage increases than most other jobs in Indiana, with only 6.5% seeing wage increases between 2019 and 2021.

***“We are the industry that allows every other industry to exist. We are the industry that allows parents and guardians to remain in the workforce. We are the industry that ensures children have the skills needed to be successful in K-12 classrooms, taking much of the stress off the kindergarten teachers so they can focus on their kindergarten academic standards. Many of us have specialized training, advanced degrees, and decades of experience. We need to be recognized, respected, and paid as the professionals we are.”***

-Surveyed child care provider

## Business Contributions to Early Childhood Education

*How have businesses within the region supported child care access?*

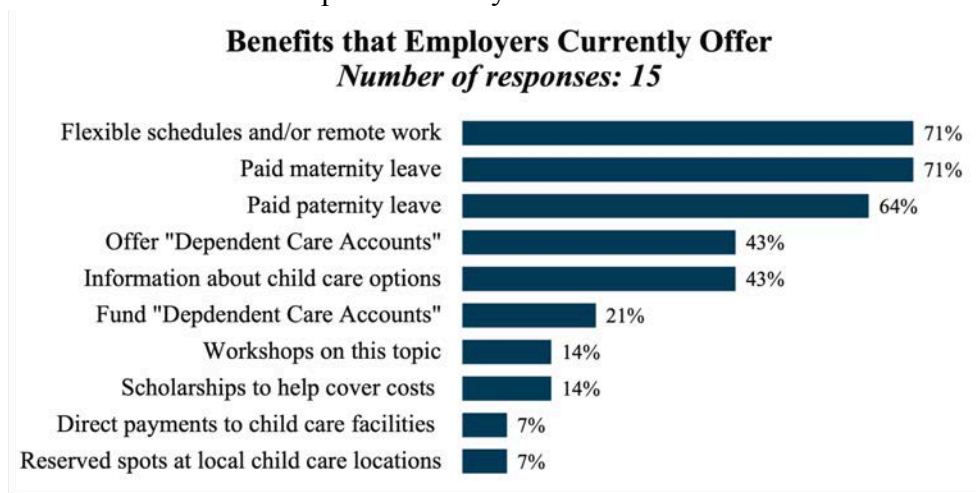
Employers have a stake in expanding access to child care. According to a recent report from Boston Consulting Group and Moms First, 12% of workers in the U.S. have access to child care benefits from an employer—a number that falls to 6% for part-timers and those in the lowest income quartile. Yet those workers typically lose pay because of a child care emergency.

### Current Employer-Supported Initiatives

Employers can offer a range of benefits to help improve child care access and affordability. Potential benefits include:

- Flexible scheduling and remote work: Employees are able to build their own schedule or work from home if applicable.
- Paid parental leave: Parents have several weeks of paid leave after a child is born or adopted.
- Offer and fund dependent care accounts: Dependent care accounts are flexible spending accounts for child care-related costs. Employers and employees contribute to these accounts.
- Scholarships: Provide parents and guardians with tuition assistance in the form of scholarships.
- Direct payments to child care facilities: Employers can pay a portion of tuition directly to child care facilities.
- Reserve spots at local child care facilities: Employers can partner with local child care programs to reserve spots for their employees, where employees get priority placement.

Grant County employers who responded to the survey stated they offer some benefits that may assist with child care-related issues. Nearly three fourths (71%) of employers offer flexible schedules and/or remote work and paid maternity leave.



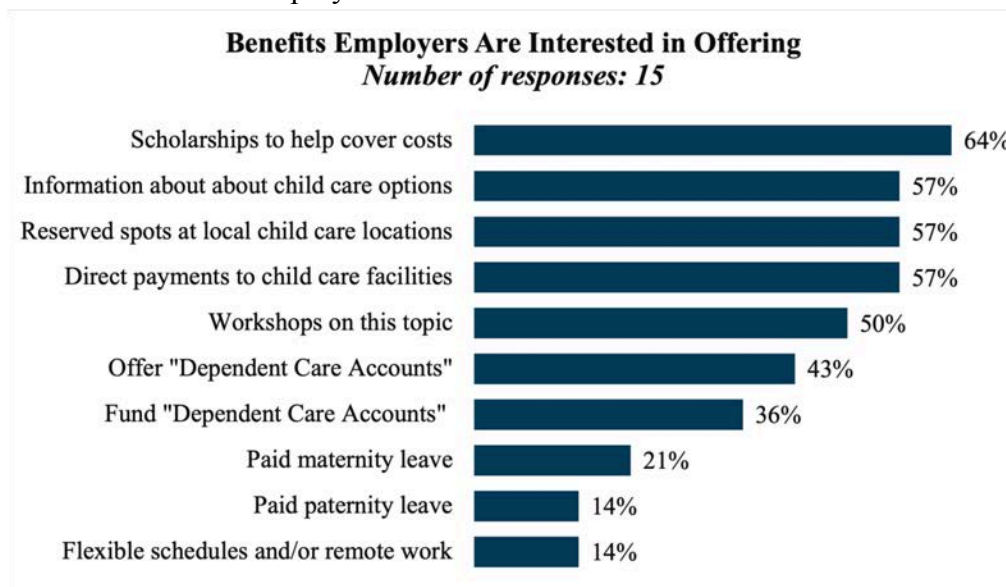
In addition to these current benefits, Indiana Wesleyan University will be working to expand access through the Lilly Endowment's College and Community Collaboration grant to implement collaborative projects across community partners and collaborators that enhance the

county's quality of life. Within the next two years, IWU will transition a campus building to an onsite child care center. The center will allow students to gain experience and build skills related to early care and education.

### Opportunities for Business and Employer Support

Parents and guardians noted priority areas for employers to support child care efforts in the community. Nearly two thirds (63%) expressed interest in employers offering scholarships to assist with child care costs, and nearly half (49%) expressed interest in having employers reserve spots at local child care programs that give employees priority.

Employers expressed a similar interest in expanding benefits, with 64% stating they were interested in learning more about providing scholarships to help cover child care costs, and 57% were interested in reserving spots at local child care programs and/or making direct payments to child care facilities for their employees.





### 3. Benchmarking Research on Peer and Aspirational Models

TCG identified common themes of opportunities for Grant County related to child care workforce development and employee retention, coalition building and strengthening of coalition efforts, scholarship or tuition assistance for families, and backup care and sick care for families. Addressing these areas will improve access, affordability, quality, and the child care workforce in Grant County. TCG has identified example models from other organizations and communities who have successfully implemented solutions to address child care sustainability.

Model	Accessibility	Affordability	High Quality	ECE Workforce	Community Business Sustainability
Child Care Workforce Development and Employee Retention	✓		✓	✓	✓
Coalition Building and Strengthening	✓	✓	✓		✓
Scholarship and Tuition Assistance	✓	✓			
Backup and Sick Care	✓				✓

#### Child Care Workforce Development and Employee Retention

[Child Care Works Wage Supplement Program](#) in Cerro Gordo County, where the child care centers have the physical capacity to add hundreds of additional children. However, they do not have the workforce to care for them. It comes down to wages. The average starting wage for child care workers in Cerro Gordo County is just \$9.51/hour, and the average wage for a tenured employee is \$11.81/hour. The Wage Supplement Program, launched in January 2024, raises employee pay at qualifying centers by \$2/hour, making the average wage more competitive and the industry more attractive for workers. This is possible because of the investment of local businesses and a matching grant from the State of Iowa. All centers in the county are eligible to apply for the



program if they meet requirements, such as quality rating or accreditation, offer year-round, all-day care for children birth to 5 years of age.

#### [Orleans Parish Early Educator Wage Enhancement Program](#)

The City of New Orleans supplements early childhood education worker pay. Educators are eligible to receive \$750 every three months, for a total of \$2,250, which are considered bonuses.

[Connect Battle Creek, Battle Creek, Michigan](#) Hub that provides resources for Battle Creek job seekers, employers, and community organizations in one centralized location. Connect Battle Creek understands that child care is sometimes a barrier for job seekers. The website provides child care referral information for job seekers and employers assisting their employees with their care needs.



#### [Elkhart Area Career Center's Early Childhood Education Program](#)

[Elkhart, Indiana](#): The Elkhart Area Career Center participates in Indiana's Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Registered Teacher Apprenticeship, offering high school students the chance to receive early childhood career field experience and college credit. Students may earn up to 24 college credits towards an associate's degree through dual enrollment at Ivy Tech at no charge.



[Next Generation Hoosier Educators Scholarships, Indiana](#): Provides high school and college students interested in pursuing a career in education the opportunity to earn a renewable scholarship of up to \$10,000 each year. Students agree to teach for five years at an Indiana school.

[Teacher Education and Compensation Helps \(TEACH\) Early Childhood Scholarship Program](#): Provides scholarships to teachers, assistant teachers, Early Head Start staff, center directors, and child care home owners. It works to link education, compensation, and commitment to improve the quality of early care and education.



### **Coalition Building and Strengthening**

[LaunchPad](#): Supported by Kosciusko County's Chamber of Commerce, LaunchPad currently has one employee who builds relationships with businesses and child care providers. More than 15 businesses invest in the operations of the coalition. Partners can invest through different tiers and an annual membership fee of \$2,000, \$5,000, or \$10,000.



[Ready to Grow St. Joe](#): A coalition of early childhood stakeholders that engage the community, build systems, and empower families, focusing on all children birth to age 8. In 2017, the coalition hired a paid staff member and have added over 1,000 child care seats over the past six years.



**Grant Opportunities:** Many coalitions utilize donations and local funding to sustain their work, including funds from United Way and community foundations. Additionally, [Early Learning Indiana](#) and [FSSA's Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning](#) offer ongoing funding opportunities.

## Scholarship and Tuition Assistance

### ***Sponsoring Dependent Care Assistance Plans (DCAPs):***

DCAPs are flexible spending accounts, like accounts used for health care costs. Employers and employees can contribute to these accounts, setting aside up to \$5,000 annually in pre-tax household income for child care and adult daycare expenses. The daycare expenses must be necessary to enable one or both parents or guardians to work, look for employment, or go to school. Employers interested in adding a DCAP benefit can do so by establishing a written plan document (an IRS requirement) and distributing a benefits summary plan description to every employee.



Two examples include Prudential and Subaru of Indiana (SIA). Prudential offers employees savings of \$5,000 annually in pretax dependent-care accounts with a 25% match. Subaru of Indiana Automotive offers both health care and dependent care FSA. SIA provides a contribution and a dollar-for-dollar matching contribution to the health care FSA.

***Offering Tuition Benefits:*** Employers can provide tuition scholarships for employees who have children in child care programs, like college tuition scholarships some employers offer. This option allows employers the opportunity to share the cost of care with employees (often using a sliding scale model).

[KinderCare at Reid Health, Richmond, Indiana:](#) Reid Health, one of Richmond's largest employers, partnered with KinderCare to build a new child care facility exclusive to Reid Health employees. As an additional benefit, Reid Health offered a 10% discount on tuition at all other KinderCare locations for their employees.



## Backup and Sick Care

[Home Depot:](#) Offers eligible associates backup care when their regular child, adult, or elder care is unavailable. All associates who have been with the company for at least one year have access to backup care. The care is available 24/7, and up to 10 days of backup or sick care is offered per calendar year.



[Pathfinder](#) in Huntington County, Indiana, operates a backup and sick child care program called Kids Klinik. It is free (via donations and other funding sources) and open to the community to support working parents. Pathfinder Services Kids Clinic is located inside Pathfinder Early Learning Center and operates with an open-door policy offering a quality sick care alternative for working families for any child in the community with a minor illness (ages 6 weeks to 12 years)



regardless of enrollment status at Pathfinder Early Learning Center. The clinic is staffed by a certified/licensed nurse or a certified/licensed medical assistant who provides healthcare Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. for free. The clinic is sponsored by a grant from the United Way of Huntington County for community members and included in tuition for families attending the learning center.

## 4. Key Insights

In summary, a few themes and key findings emerge from surveys and other information and data collected about child care in Grant County.

1. **Need for care:** Grant County has about 4,500 children under 6. Of these, nearly three quarters (73% or 3,083) may need care because all parents in the home are working.
2. **Leveraging available social capital:** Surveyed and interviewed respondents indicated that local leaders are invested in addressing child care needs. Respondents noted programs and services such as the Early Childhood Coalition, local church initiatives, and grant opportunities that can be leveraged to address child care gaps.
3. **Accessibility:** The current child care capacity can only serve 45% of Grant County's young children who need care. Parents, guardians, and employers discussed the need for expanding operating hours and offering backup, or emergency, child care options.
4. **Affordability:** All interviewed and surveyed respondents noted that affordability is the biggest obstacle to accessing child care in Grant County. The average Grant County household spends more than 11% of their income on child care, which is higher than the national recommendation of 7% from the Department of Health and Human Services.
5. **High-quality programs:** Less than three quarters (71%) of known child care programs and approximately two thirds (65%) of capacity are designated as high-quality in Grant County. Many parents and guardians have discussed that the lack of high-quality programs deters them from utilizing available child care centers.
6. **Child care workforce:** Half of the surveyed child care providers noted that their facilities were not at full enrollment but were at full capacity based on the number of staff members. Providers indicated that wages are a barrier to recruiting and retaining child care staff. When looking at average hourly wages, child care staff members do not make enough to meet the living wage.
7. **Business contributions:** Some Grant County employers offer a range of benefits that can help improve child care access and affordability, such as flexible schedules and/or remote work and paid maternity leave. There is interest from both employers and parents and guardians in expanding benefits, especially related to tuition assistance and backup care options.

# Appendix

## Appendix A: Survey Demographics

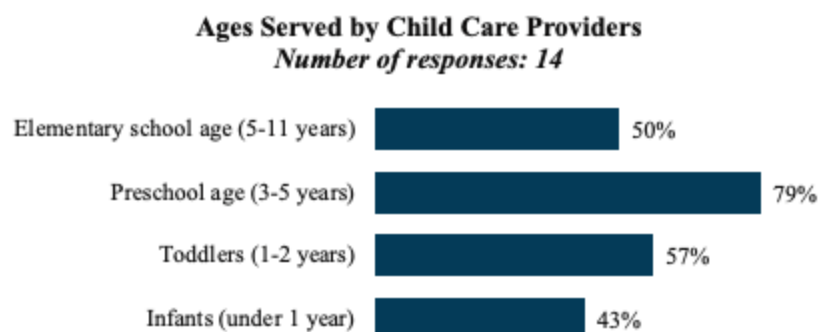
The following provides demographic information and other characteristics of survey respondents by community partners and collaborators group—child care providers, employers, and parents and guardians. Characteristics from the school and community partner survey were not included as the sample size was too small.

### Child Care Providers

There were a total of 27 survey responses from providers. Of those, five responses did not qualify as they were not a child care provider, and seven were too incomplete to include in the analysis. Fourteen responses were used in the analysis. This represented 40% of known child care providers in Grant County. Providers represent all communities where there is a known provider. The table below describes the types of providers that responded to the survey.

Provider Type	Percent of Responses
Licensed family child care home	21%
School-based program (not licensed/exempt)	21%
Community-based program (not licensed/exempt)	14%
Licensed child care center	7%
Licensed exempt school-based program	7%

Provider respondents serve the following age groups, representing a variety of ages and settings. About two thirds (62%) of provider respondents serve children with disabilities and 57% serve English as a second language families.





### Employers

TCG received a total of 20 responses from employers. However, five were incomplete and not included in the analysis. Employers represented Marion, Upland, and Van Buren. All company sizes were represented in the sample. Further, all shifts were represented, with 26% having third shift workers.

Size of Workforce	Percent of Survey Responses
0-10 Employees	7%
11-50 Employees	33%
51-100 Employees	7%
101-300 Employees	40%
Over 300 Employees	13%

### Parents and Guardians

There were a total of 149 parent and guardian survey responses. Of those, 54 stated they did not have children under 11 years old and did not qualify for the survey. Twenty-five were incomplete and not included in the analysis. A total of 70 responses were used in the analysis. Of those, 92% identified as white, 5% as Black or African American, 2% as American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 2% preferred not to answer. Further, 5% identified as Hispanic or Latinx. More than two thirds (69%) were married, and 11% were single-parent families. Eighty-five percent were employed. The survey reached many communities, but individuals living in Jalapa, Landess, Sweester, Fowlerton, and Matthews were not represented.