

2023-2024

Pierre/Fort Pierre

Child Care Study

PREPARED BY

REALIZING
RURAL 



Table of Contents

| | | |
|----|---|-------------------------------|
| 3 | ● | UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUE |
| 4 | ● | METHODOLOGY |
| 5 | ● | WHAT PARENTS ARE SAYING |
| 6 | ● | CHILD CARE SLOTS |
| 7 | ● | WAITLISTS |
| 7 | ● | FAMILY BARRIERS |
| 8 | ● | WORKFORCE IMPACTS |
| 9 | ● | COST OF CHILD CARE |
| 10 | ● | EXPLORING THE CAUSES |
| 11 | ● | RECOMMENDATIONS |
| 12 | ● | SUPPORTING FAMILIES |
| 13 | ● | EMPOWERING PROVIDERS |
| 14 | ● | STRENGTHENING CAREER PATHWAYS |
| 15 | ● | STEERING COMMITTEE |
| 16 | ● | REFERENCES |



UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUE

In an effort to better understand the issue of child care in the Pierre/Fort Pierre communities, the Pierre Economic Development Corporation (PEDCO) and the Fort Pierre Development Corporation (FPDC) partnered to complete a local Child Care Study.

The study, completed from December 2023 to February 2024, was funded by the Governor's Office of Economic Development Community-Based Child Care Planning Grant. The study included a regional child care provider inventory; stakeholder focus groups for parents, child care providers, and community leaders; surveys for child care providers and parents of children under the age of 12; and a child care solutions inventory.

The findings of this study confirm that the Pierre and Fort Pierre communities are, in fact, facing a child care shortage. This study estimates that the communities are in need of approximately 326 additional child care slots for children under the age of six (Child population by single year age, n.d.; US Census Bureau, n.d.). The lack of available child care slots isn't the only barrier to enrolling: A survey of 249 local parents of children under

the age of 12 revealed that approximately 46% of respondents ranked the cost of child care services as the number one barrier to enrolling their child or children in a child care program. Twenty percent of respondents ranked the quality of local child care programs being too low as their number one barrier. The Pierre and Fort Pierre area is facing a shortage of not just child care slots; these communities are in dire need of additional affordable, high quality child care slots.

Research regarding the impact of quality child care is clear: the environments in which children spend their time from birth through childhood, both within and beyond the walls of their homes, have a profound impact on the long-term outcomes of children (Child Care Aware, 2022). Children who are placed in high quality child care environments early in life have significantly better educational, health, and economic outcomes later in life than those who are not (Donaghue et al, 2017; McCoy et al, 2017). Research also demonstrates the value of investing in child care; some studies even estimate that every dollar spent on child care shows a 13% return on investment (Solomon, 2013).

The completion of the Pierre/Fort Pierre Child Care Study has underscored the urgency of the child care shortage not only as a matter of child and family success but also as a key contributor to quality of life and economic health for the region.

Methodology

1: Child Care Inventory

The regional child care inventory, which focused on identifying all child care providers in the Pierre/Fort Pierre area regardless of whether they are licensed or registered, was a necessary first step in identifying the number of additional child care slots needed.

2: Focus Groups

This study included three focus groups with the following: local child care providers from varied child care settings, parents of children ages 12 and under, and community leaders representing business, non-profit, and government sectors in the Pierre/Fort Pierre area.

3: Public Surveys

Two surveys were released for a two-week period: one for parents of children ages 12 and under and another for child care providers. Surveys were available electronically via social media and key stakeholder websites. 249 parents and 25 child care providers completed the surveys

4: Solutions Inventory

Potential solutions to alleviate the child care shortage identified in focus groups and surveys were researched. A review of these and other innovative solutions was completed and a set of recommended solutions for the community to pursue was compiled.



ENGAGING KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Community collaboration was prioritized throughout the entirety of this study, and every effort was made to ensure all key stakeholders were engaged in developing innovative and community-led solutions to the child care shortage in the Pierre/Fort Pierre area.

What Parents Are Saying

“

“I quit working full time to stay home with our kids. We were only able to have another child (our youngest) because we would no longer be paying for daycare. There is **NO WAY** we could’ve afforded to pay for three children to be in daycare full-time.”

“

“I stopped challenging myself when I started having kids and picked a job that would be flexible instead of fulfilling. I had a *job* while dealing with daycare and a *career* after.”

“

“I started searching for a daycare before I even told friends and family that I was pregnant. There were only 2 total newborn openings in the entire community. I had *no other choice*.”

Describe the process of seeking child care:

“

**INVASIVE NERVE-RACKING
ROUGH OVERWHELMING HARD
EXHAUSTING DISCOURAGING
SLOW FRUSTRATING DEFEATING
ANXIETY-INDUCING STRESSFUL**

”

Child Care Slots



Pierre and Fort Pierre have 17 registered and licensed child care providers, including six licensed day care centers, ten state registered family day cares (in-home), and one state licensed group family day care. Despite having only 17 state registered and licensed child care providers, the provider inventory performed as part of this study identified approximately 55 child care providers in Pierre and Fort Pierre altogether.

If every child care provider in Pierre and Fort Pierre was operating at its legal capacity, the communities of Pierre and Fort Pierre would have an estimated 1,232 child care slots. Current child care providers are not, however, operating at full capacity, in large part due to extensive workforce shortages. Providers also shared that they viewed legal capacity as "flawed" and "inflated" because of the use of square footage in calculating capacity. Every child care center that engaged in this study shared that even at full staff, their centers would never accept as many kids as their capacity allows for because of space constraints. Taking into account workforce shortages and space constraints, current child care providers are only willing and able to take an estimated 778 children.

CHILDREN 0-12

3,267

The KIDS Count Data Center estimates 3,267 children under the age 12 living in Hughes & Stanley Counties (n.d.). The Census Bureau estimates 1,201 children under the age of six in Hughes and Stanley Counties (n.d.).

CHILD CARE SLOTS

1,232

If every child care provider in Pierre/Fort Pierre was operating at its full legal capacity, the community would have an estimated 1,232 slots. However, current child care providers are only willing and able to take an estimated 778 children.

SLOTS NEEDED

326

At current child care facility operating capacities, the Pierre/Fort Pierre community is facing a shortage of an estimated 326 slots for children under the age of six.

Waitlists

Out of 25 child care provider survey respondents, 72% reported having a waitlist of at least one child. Altogether, provider survey respondents reported having over 335 children on their waitlists. Notably, several respondents reported no longer keeping a waitlist because of the overwhelming number of requests they receive throughout a typical year.

Family Barriers

When asked “what are the barriers to enrolling your child(ren) in a child care program?” parent survey respondents ranked the top five barriers as follows:

- The cost of care is too high.
- The quality of childcare is too low.
- My child(ren) is on a waitlist.
- I don’t have transportation for my child(ren).
- Child care hours aren’t compatible with my work hours.

These barriers demonstrate the breadth of issues contributing to the child care shortage. In order to best support families, leaders in the Pierre/Fort Pierre communities must come together to engage in a multi-faceted, long-term approach.



Workforce Impacts

Access to child care is affecting families far beyond the confines of their homes. The affects of the child care crisis are following parents to work as well.

Seventy-four percent of parent survey respondents (or their partners) reported having missed work due to child care issues in the last year. On average, these respondents reported having missed over 80 hours of work on average in the last year, more than two times the length of the average work week. Further, 45% of parent survey respondents (or their partners) reported having to cut back hours at work due to child care issues in the last year. Finally, a staggering 8% of parent survey respondents (or their partners) reported having to quit a job due to child care issues in the last year.



MISSING WORK

74%

74% of parent survey respondents (or their partners) reported having missed work at least once in the last year due to child care issues.

CUTTING BACK

45%

45% of parent survey respondents (or their partners) reported having to cut back hours at work due to child care issues in the last year.

LEAVING THE WORKFORCE

8%

8% of parent survey respondents (or their partners) reported having to quit a job due to child care issues in the last year.

Cost of Child Care

Child care is costly at best and unaffordable at worst for families in Pierre and Fort Pierre.

Forty-six percent of parent survey respondents ranked the cost of services being unaffordable as their top barrier to enrolling their child or children in a child care program.

The average price of childcare in South Dakota is \$5,825 for a child in family child care as compared to \$7,862 for a child in center-based child care (Child Care Aware®, 2022). Based on the median income for a married couple in South Dakota, the cost of center-based child care at these rates would cost the family 8% of their annual household income. In comparison, 55% of survey respondents reported that up to 0-10% of their total annual household income goes to paying for child care while 26% reported 11-20% and nearly 10% reported 21-30% of their total annual household income goes to paying for child care.

Further, 24% of child care provider survey respondents reported having children who are unable to enroll in their child care program or must withdraw from their child care program due to inability to pay in a typical year. The cost of care is a major barrier for many families when it comes to accessing quality child care.



Exploring the Causes



A key consideration of this study was not only determining if there is a child care shortage in Pierre and Fort Pierre, but also why a shortage exists. Identifying the causes of the child care shortage and developing a plan to address those causes is key to alleviating the shortage moving forward. During the child care provider focus group, participants identified the following as the top causes of the child care shortage in the area:

- Workforce Shortage
- Provider Burnout
- Low Pay
- High Cost of Providing Services
- Inability to Compete for Staff
- Lack of Benefits

Similarly, child care provider survey respondents listed the following as the top causes of the child care shortage:

- Provider Burnout
- Lack of Benefits
- Low Pay
- Child Behaviors
- High Cost of Providing Services
- Inflexibility of Schedule

Better understanding these suspected causes of the local child care shortage was a crucial step in developing recommendations to alleviate the shortage moving forward.

Recommendations

Child care is vital to individual, family, and community well-being, and Pierre and Fort Pierre are facing a dire shortage. This shortage is impacting life in the area at all levels, from living rooms to storefronts. In response to the shortage and associated challenges as identified throughout this study, it is recommended that leaders in the Pierre/Fort Pierre community begin a concerted, three-pronged effort to alleviate the child care shortage over the next three to five years focused on **Supporting Families, Empowering Providers, and Strengthening Career Pathways**.

SUPPORTING FAMILIES

- Child Care Stipends
- Family-Friendly Business Campaign
- Daycare/Preschool Pilot Program

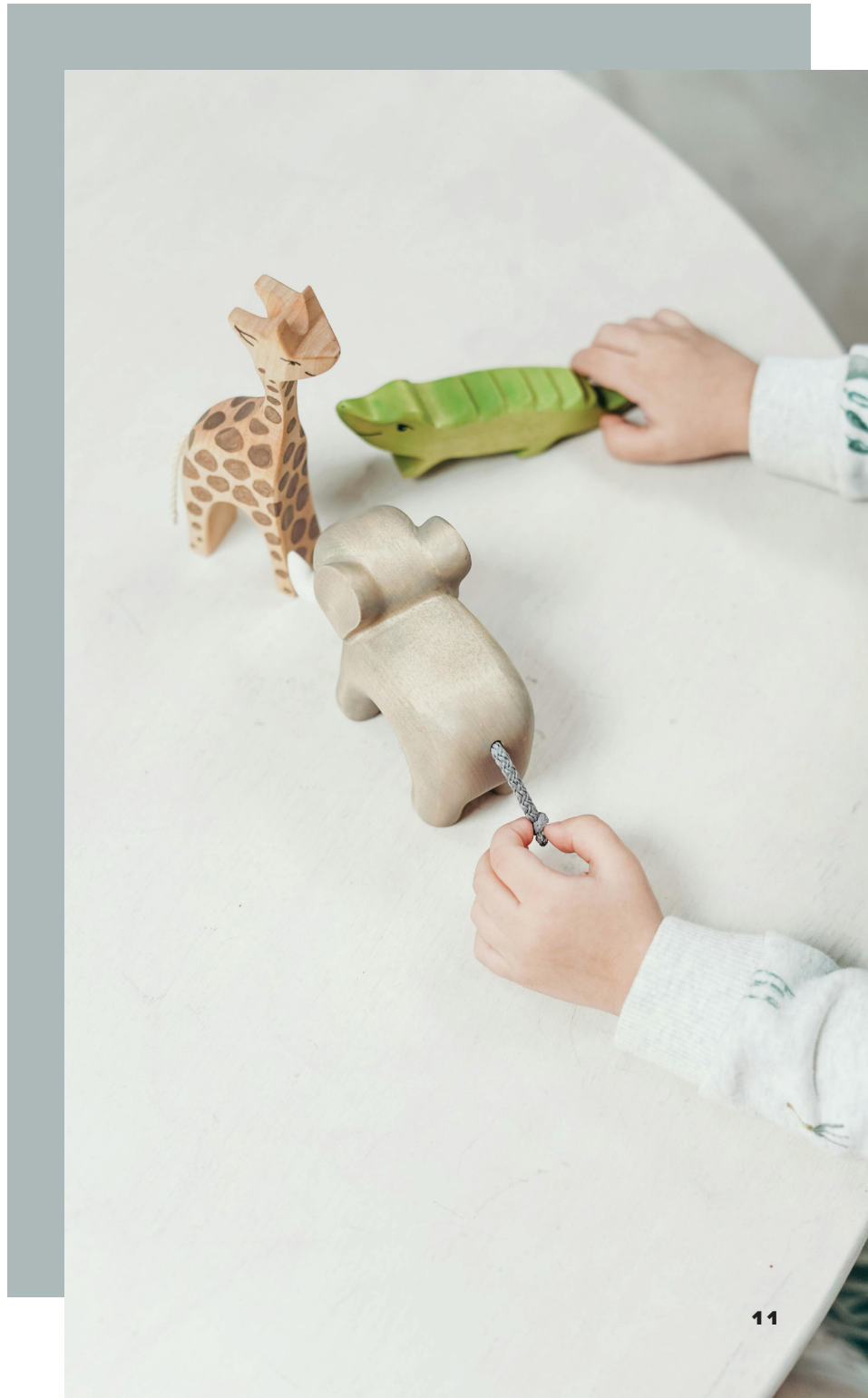
EMPOWERING PROVIDERS

- Child Care Endowment Fund
- Child Care Cooperative
- Flex Spot Registry
- Child Care Substitute Program
- Local Ordinance Study

STRENGTHENING CAREER PATHWAYS

- Higher Education Partnerships
- Educators Rising
- Local Scholarships
- Dual Credit Opportunities

The following pages provide further details on the recommended strategies for alleviating the child care shortage in the Pierre/Fort Pierre area. These recommendations are the conclusion to months of research and input from local stakeholders. These recommendations have been *locally* developed so they can be *locally* enacted, and they have the potential to drive meaningful change in the child care landscape of Pierre and Fort Pierre.





Supporting Families

Child Care Stipends

Encourage employers to include child care stipends as employee benefits. Provide matching funding to support these efforts to recruit and retain a strong workforce.

Family-Friendly Campaign

Develop & execute a family-friendly business advocacy and education campaign to educate employers about family-friendly business practices that support employee attraction and retention.

Daycare/Preschool Pilot Program

Provide supportive funding for the development of a daycare-preschool pilot program between the YMCA and Discovery Center that would support 20 new child care slots and address barriers to child care such as cost and transportation.

Empowering Providers

Endowment Fund

Create a Pierre/Fort Pierre child care endowment fund to develop and expand funding opportunities to support child care in the following areas:

1. Child Care Facility Start-Up/Expansion
2. Child Care Training & Licensing
3. Child Care Workforce Recruitment & Retention
4. Employer-Provided or Sponsored Child Care

Substitute Program

Create a substitute program made up of Child Development Associates who are appropriately trained and screened to provide substitute child care. Allow local child care providers to hire these substitutes for low costs to oversee their child care facilities for short-term assignments to limit facility closures and provider burnout.

Flex Spot Registry

Develop a community child care flex spot registry to ensure all available child care slots are filled as often as possible, including in instances when illness, due dates, or other circumstances would typically result in short-term child care slot vacancies. Make the registry publicly available to connect families in need of short-term or drop-in care with child care providers with temporarily vacant slots.

Child Care Cooperative

Develop a community child care cooperative to encourage engagement between providers, decrease feelings of isolation and burnout, and create opportunities for shared services.

Local Ordinance Study

Develop a task force to complete a review of local ordinances affecting child care facilities and provide recommendations for changes in an effort to support new and expanding child care facilities.



Strengthening Career Pathways

Higher Ed Partnerships

Partner with the Capital City Campus and institutions of higher education to improve access to ongoing training opportunities for new and existing child care providers.

Local Scholarships

Develop and expand local scholarships to incentivize both traditional and non-traditional students to establish, expand, and work in child care facilities

Educators Rising

Engage students in the fields of early childhood education & child care by creating Educators Rising chapters in local high schools.

Dual Credit Opportunities

Partner with local school districts to expand dual credit and career and technical education offerings for child care & early childhood education.



Steering Committee

JIM PROTEXTER

Pierre Economic Development Corporation
Chief Operating Officer

DAVE BONDE

Fort Pierre Development Corporation
Executive Director

ALICIA FABEL

Pierre Area Chamber of Commerce
Chief Executive Officer

DR. KELLY GLODT

Pierre School District
Superintendent

AARON FABEL

Oahe Family YMCA
Chief Executive Officer

SUE GLODT

Oahe Child Development Center
Director

KAT HAARSTAD

Avera St. Mary's Hospital
Talent Ambassador

KRISTI HONEYWELL


City of Pierre
City Administrator

ZACH CLARK

Zach Clark Insurance Agency
Business Owner



References

- 
- Child Care Aware® of America's Catalyzing Growth: Using Data to Change Child Care Report Series. (2022). Child Care Affordability in South Dakota. <https://info.childcareaware.org>
- Child population by single year of age. (n.d.). The Annie E Casey Foundation Kids Count Data Center. Retrieved February 1, 2024, from <https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables/10689-child-population-by-single-year-of-age>
- Demanding Change: Repairing our Child Care System. (2022, January 19). Child Care Aware® of America. <https://www.childcareaware.org/demanding-change-repairing-our-child-care-system/>
- Donoghue, E. A., Lieser, D., DelConte, B., Donoghue, E., Earls, M., Glassy, D., Mendelsohn, A., McFadden, T., Scholer, S., Takagishi, J., Vanderbilt, D., Williams, P. G., & COUNCIL ON EARLY CHILDHOOD. (2017). Quality early education and child care from birth to kindergarten. *Pediatrics*, 140(2). <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2017-1488>
- McCoy, D. C., Yoshikawa, H., Ziol-Guest, K. M., Duncan, G. J., Schindler, H. S., Magnuson, K., Yang, R., Koepp, A., & Shonkoff, J. P. (2017). Impacts of early childhood education on medium- and long-term educational outcomes. *Educational Researcher* (Washington, D.C.: 1972), 46(8), 474–487. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189x17737739>
- Solomon, C. (2017, January 13). Research summary: The Lifecycle Benefits of an Influential Early Childhood Program. The Heckman Equation. <https://heckmanequation.org/resource/research-summary-lifecycle-benefits-influential-early-childhood-program/>
- US Census Bureau. (n.d.). Hughes County, South Dakota Census Profile. Census.gov. Retrieved February 4, 2024, from <http://census.gov>
- US Census Bureau. (n.d.). Stanley County, South Dakota census Profile. Census.gov. Retrieved February 4, 2024, from <http://census.gov>
- US Census Bureau. (n.d.). South Dakota Census Profile. Census.gov. Retrieved February 4, 2024, from <http://census.gov>
- Photos by Cottonbro studio