



# **RURAL CHILD CARE INNOVATION PROGRAM**

## **COMMUNITY SOLUTION ACTION PLAN FOR CHILD CARE**

**FAIRMONT, MINNESOTA**

MAY, 2019

**The Rural Child Care Innovation Program is possible due to generous funding from the Minnesota Department of Human Services.**



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This Community Solution Action Plan is designed to be a deep dive into the Rural Child Care Innovation Program. You will step through every stage of the community engagement process through solution development and implementation. Please visit [www.ruralchildcare.org](http://www.ruralchildcare.org) for continued updates on community progress.

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**“If employees can’t find quality care for their children, they won’t work for you. They won’t move to your community, or they’ll be forced to move away, or they might have to consider quitting their job to stay home with their children because they have no other option.”**

**Kris Bevell**

Editor  
Prairie Business Magazine

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Rural Child Care Innovation Program (RCCIP), is a community engagement process designed to develop right-sized solutions to address the needs of early care and education in Minnesota's rural communities. The goal of RCCIP is to help communities identify the scope and size of their child care challenges, and to empower and support communities to develop solutions to address these challenges.

The Community Solution Action Plan for Fairmont, Minnesota, intends to outline the child care challenges identified in the community, and the proposed solutions to improve the state of child care in the area. A Core Team from Fairmont, with the support of First Children's Finance, conducted a thorough investigation and analysis to uncover the factors creating the child care shortage in the area through focus groups, individual interviews, and surveys with a multitude of stakeholders in the community.

To understand the potential need for child care in Fairmont, First Children's Finance conducted a Potential Needs Analysis, which showed the child care shortage of Martin County was 172 slots and Fairmont had the highest need with a shortage of 81 slots. The analysis revealed that it's very difficult to be a child care provider due to numerous rules and regulations, low pay and no benefits, long hours, and high operating costs. Staffing is a significant expense for many child care programs, resulting in 60-80% of overall expenses. This heavily influences the ability of child care providers to sustain their child care operations.

The analysis revealed that the child care shortage has severely impacted parents living in Fairmont. Nearly 40% of survey respondents declined employment or withdrew from the workforce due to child care issues. Absence from work (when a provider is closed for the day), inability to work a flexible schedule, inability to work different shifts, and tardiness to work hinders the ability of parents to advance in their careers.

Some of the major factors contributing to the child care shortage in Fairmont include increase in dual-working families, attraction of new employees to the area, difficulties of being a child care provider and lack of resources for child care providers.

**Through the RCCIP, Fairmont has identified four goals to address the child care challenges. These goals include:**

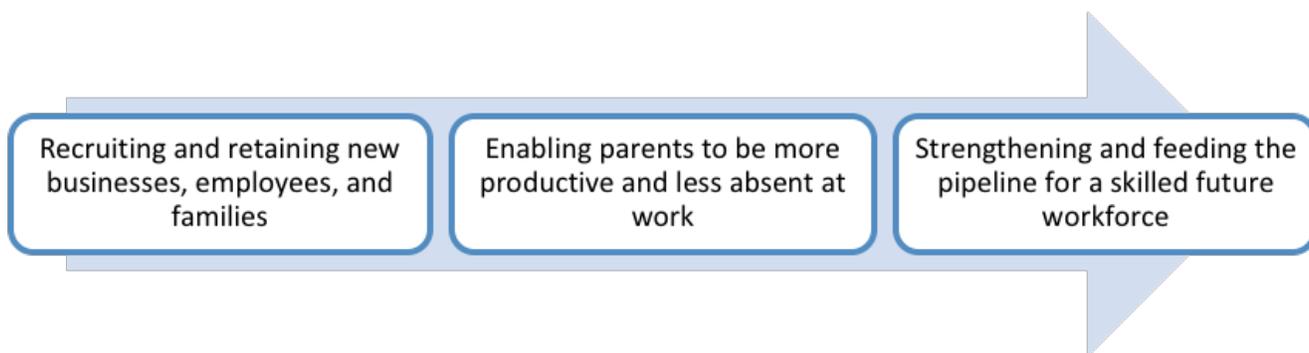
- Engage the Private Sector
- Renovate SMEC into Family Child Care Spaces
- Create Funding for New and Existing Providers to Grow and Increase Quality
- Provide Training Opportunities for Child Care Programs

In implementing these goals, Fairmont will improve the state of child care, empower local child care providers through continuous community support, provide parents with more care options, and providers with better resources to run and operate their child care businesses. In the next 12 months, First Children's Finance will support the core team in implementing these goals and measuring outcomes of their efforts.

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# THE IMPORTANCE OF HIGH QUALITY CHILD CARE IN COMMUNITIES

In rural communities, ebbs and flows of the local economy greatly influence the sustainability of a community's child care supply, and vice versa. That's why the Rural Child Care Innovation Program addresses child care and early education challenges through a framework of regional economic development. A robust supply of high quality child care fosters community growth through:



The connection is clear: when our children thrive, so do our communities. Investing in early care and education is not only the right thing to do for our youngest citizens, but the best thing to do for our economic growth and prosperity.

## INTRODUCING THE RURAL CHILD CARE INNOVATION PROGRAM

Child care is an economic driver for rural communities across the United States but many communities are facing shortages of high quality child care. The Rural Child Care Innovation Program is based on the fundamental idea that rural communities are greater than their size in numbers and greater than their current challenges. By mobilizing and empowering rural communities, the landscape of early care and education is changing in rural America.

### PROGRAM FOCUS

Children living in rural areas are more likely to come from low-income households than children in urban areas, and are more likely to be living in poverty for longer periods of time. Many rural areas struggle to attract and retain a young, educated workforce, while others lack the resources to keep up with their own growth and success. Although rural communities face many challenges, they are also resilient. They have the innovation it takes to develop nimble, creative solutions that will be effective in rural areas. The Rural Child Care Innovation Program leverages communities' independent, can-do attitudes to address early care and education in Greater Minnesota.

## PROGRAM ACTIVITIES AND GENERAL TIMELINE

| APPLICATION PHASE        |                |   |
|--------------------------|----------------|---|
| ACTIVITIES               | TIMING         | DETAILS   |
| Webinar                  | March 26, 2018 | Information session on RCCIP  |
| Application Deadline     | April 30, 2018 |   |
| Selection of Communities | May 25, 2018   | Communities notified via email  |
| Program Setup            | May 2018       | FCF connected by phone with the main community contact to set up first Core Team meeting. |

| PLANNING PHASE                  |                              |   |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| ACTIVITIES                      | TIMING                       | DETAILS   |
| Core Team Onboarding Retreat    | July, 2018                   | Face-to-face meeting with FCF and the Core Team to discuss project details and expectations.            |
| Core Team Planning Meeting      | August 2018                  | Face-to-face meeting to map out community engagement activities and fully develop the program timeline. |
| Community Engagement Activities | August 2018-<br>October 2018 | Implementation of engagement activities within the community.   |
| Child Care Provider Trainings   | January 2019 -<br>April 2019 | Series of business trainings and one-on-one consultations conducted by FCF.                             |
| Town Hall Event                 | November 13, 2018            | Community wide event to identify and develop community solutions.                                       |

| IMPLEMENTATION PHASE            |                                  |   |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| ACTIVITIES                      | TIMING                           | DETAILS   |
| Implementation Planning Retreat | March 2019                       | Face-to-face meeting to map out smart goals and implementation activities with project teams. |
| Community Solution Action Plan  | April 2019                       | Report detailing community data, types of solutions, and community identified projects.       |
| Regular Project Team Meetings   | March 2019-<br>September 2019    | Implementation of community solutions.  |
| Regular Core Team Meetings      | March 2019-<br>September 2019    | Connect with FCF to discuss Project Team outcomes.  |
| Technical Assistance Support    | December 2018-<br>September 2019 | FCF available to provide ongoing business support   |
| Final Report                    | September 28, 2019               | Core Team submits final report to FCF.  |

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

The Rural Child Care Innovation Program is designed to support fundamental change in the overall conditions for child care in the areas that it is delivered. This is accomplished through various methods that include:

- A thorough analysis of the current child care potential need, and evaluation of community factors impacting the local child care supply
- Events that educate community members about the link between quality child care, rural economic development and viable communities.
- A Community Solution Action Plan that includes innovative solutions generated through a facilitated Town Hall process
- Support and business improvement services to existing family child care providers and child care centers
- Access to First Children's Finance's expertise, resources and tools, including research and financial modeling
- Links to other communities working on similar issues

Measurements of success are determined through a tactical project management grid that provides guidance to the Core Team about the involved participants and their projected steps and progress towards project completion.

## ABOUT FAIRMONT, MINNESOTA

The City of Fairmont, located in South Central Minnesota has a total population of 10,593. Fairmont provides an array of recreation, educational, and health care services supporting a regional service area population of over 20,000 and is the county seat for Martin County.

According to the labor market profile, the county is experiencing a rapid increase in industrial job creation. It has been estimated that in the next year more than 557 people will move to the City of Fairmont for employment purposes and may enroll their children in local licensed child care.

It is estimated that the city of Fairmont has a shortage of 81 child care slots at this time. The county wide child care shortage is approximately 172 slots. In efforts to prepare for the increase in positions available and the influx of new residents, the City of Fairmont through the Rural Child Care Innovation Program is working towards creating sustainable solutions that increase the supply of affordable and high quality child care.

## LOCAL CORE TEAM REPRESENTATION

The Core Team was identified locally and asked to commit to investigating the child care challenges in Fairmont. The Core Team has and will continue to support development of solutions to sustain a high quality and sustainable child care infrastructure in the local area.

- **Linsey Preuss**, Economic Development Coordinator, City of Fairmont
- **Amy Long**, Administrator, Mayo Clinic Health Systems Fairmont
- **Wendy Voss**, Human Resources, 3M
- **Joe Brown**, Superintendent, Fairmont Area Schools
- **Michelle Rosen**, E-2 Principal / ECFE Administrator, Fairmont Elementary School
- **Bruce Peters**, City Council, City of Fairmont

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## LOCAL CORE TEAM REPRESENTATION, CONTINUED:

- **Camela Moore**, Faribault and Martin County Licensor – Human Services
- **Ron Kopischke**, Fairmont Market President, Profinium Bank
- **Kathy Smith**, County Commissioner, Martin County, MN
- **Mae Dewar-Aust**, Foundation Director of Lakeview Methodist Health Care Center
- **Roni Dauer**, Director of Community Education and Recreation
- **Shea Ripley**, Co-Owner of Building Blocks Early Learning Center
- **Stephanie Busiahn**, Executive Director of Visit Fairmont
- **Jessica Martinez**, Community Outreach for Fairmont Area Schools

## CHILD CARE DATA AND EARLY EDUCATION TRENDS

As part of the Rural Child Care Innovation Program, the local community was provided with various forms of support to understand the contributing factors for the child care challenges. First Children’s Finance leveraged different data sources to pull together an illustrative picture of the impact of child care in the local area. These data sources include US Census Information, MN Child Care Licensing Records, Minnesota Department of Education, MN DEED, and other internal research tools including First Children’s Finance data.

### POTENTIAL NEED OVERVIEW

First Children’s Finance conducted a supply and demand gap analysis which provided a view of potential child care needs. This analysis was conducted in July 2018 and showed a shortage of 172 slots in Martin County. Additional focus on the 56031 zip code of Fairmont showed a gap of 81 slots.

| ZIP CODE | CITY     | # OF CHILD CARE CENTERS (CCC) | # OF FAMILY CARE CENTERS (FCC) | PLUS/ MINUS/ TOTAL |
|----------|----------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| 56031    | Fairmont | 1                             | 36                             | -81                |
| 56039    | Granada  | 0                             | 4                              | -22                |
| 56075    | Northrop | 0                             | 0                              | -4                 |
| 56088    | Truman   | 0                             | 6                              | -7                 |
| 56121    | Ceylon   | 0                             | 2                              | -25                |
| 56127    | Dunnell  | 0                             | 0                              | -7                 |
| 56162    | Ormsby   | 0                             | 0                              | -13                |
| 56171    | Sherburn | 0                             | 5                              | -26                |
| 56176    | Trimont  | 0                             | 3                              | -11                |
| 56181    | Welcome  | 4                             | 6                              | 25                 |

- JULY 2018

## FAMILY CHILD CARE – BY THE NUMBERS

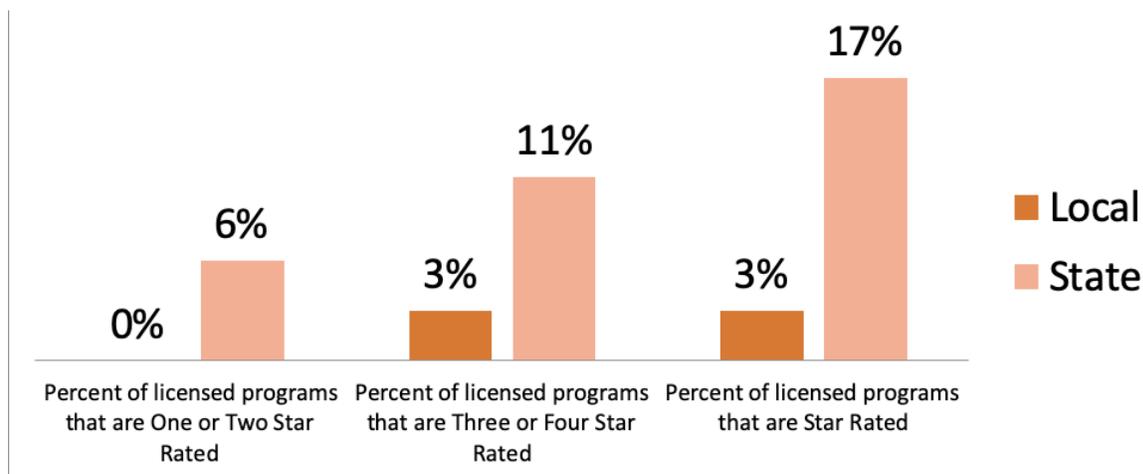
First Children’s Finance evaluated the current supply of family child care to identify trends that needed further examination.

- The average length of service is lower than the state average which indicates a population of providers with shorter lengths of service
- Providers with less than 5 years of service and those with more than 20 years of service are most at risk for turnover in an industry that already sees tremendous employment turn-over rates.
- The area is ahead of the state average for family providers being located outside of their primary residences and in non-residential dwellings.

|                                   | LOCAL      | STATE        |
|-----------------------------------|------------|--------------|
| Total Family Child Care Providers | 60         | 8,156        |
| Average Length of Service         | 12.0 years | 12.7 Years   |
| Less than 5 years / Service       | 13 / 21.6% | 2,392/ 29.3% |
| More than 20 years / Service      | 14 / 23.3% | 2,231/ 27.3% |
| Non-Owner Occupied                | 3 / 5.0%   | 169 / 2.0%   |
| Non-Residential Dwelling          | 2 / 3.3%   | 85 / 1.0%    |

## QUALITY CHILD CARE OVERVIEW

First Children’s Finance examined state-wide information about the number of child care programs that are participating in the Parent Aware program. Parent Aware is Minnesota’s Quality Rating and Improvement System that identifies programs that go above and beyond the general licensing requirements to obtain higher quality in their child care programs.



The chart above demonstrates that child care providers in Martin County, MN are below the state average when it comes to Parent Aware enrollment. This is a critical component when we evaluate the quality child care program offerings in the area.

## AVERAGE COST OF CHILD CARE

Child care is a large investment for families with children. A market rate survey of child care providers was conducted as part of the RCCIP to inform child care investments in the area.

The following chart shows the average cost of child care investment on a weekly basis at the 75th percentile for each age group in both a center and family child care setting. It means that 25% of child care programs charge more than the market average and 75% of child care programs charge less.

### AREA MARKET RATES – MARTIN COUNTY

| AGE GROUP- CHILD CARE CENTER        | WEEKLY RATE | ANNUAL RATE |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| 75TH PERCENTILE - INFANT WEEKLY     | \$ 197.00   | \$ 10,244   |
| 75TH PERCENTILE - TODDLER WEEKLY    | \$ 188.00   | \$ 9,776    |
| 75TH PERCENTILE - PRESCHOOL WEEKLY  | \$ 174.00   | \$ 9,048    |
| 75TH PERCENTILE - SCHOOL AGE WEEKLY | \$ 150.00   | \$ 7,800    |

| AGE GROUP- FAMILY CHILD CARE        | WEEKLY RATE | ANNUAL RATE |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| 75TH PERCENTILE - INFANT WEEKLY     | \$ 125.00   | \$ 6,500    |
| 75TH PERCENTILE - TODDLER WEEKLY    | \$ 120.00   | \$ 6,240    |
| 75TH PERCENTILE - PRESCHOOL WEEKLY  | \$ 115.00   | \$ 5,980    |
| 75TH PERCENTILE - SCHOOL AGE WEEKLY | \$ 110.00   | \$ 5,720    |

*Results of the 2016 Child Care Market Rate Survey; Minnesota Child Care Provider Business Update*

While rates of investment for child care are high for families, many child care operations run on very slim margins due to the high cost of quality staffing and care. Staffing is a significant expense for many child care center programs at 60-80% of overall expenses.

Family Child Care providers invest significant portions of tuition revenue back into their operations leaving providers with less than minimum wage for compensation, according to research by First Children's Finance in 2016.

## OTHER LOCAL SUPPORTING DATA

As part of the overall collection and review of data, First Children's Finance highlighted additional data outcomes that can impact third grade reading levels and local graduation rates. There are multiple studies that indicate the link between early education and school readiness with third-grade reading levels and high school graduation rates. Lower achievement levels can be an early indicator of future challenges with high school graduation rates, engagement in higher education, and teen pregnancy rates.

### THIRD GRADE READING LEVELS

| DISTRICT                   | 2017 PROFICIENCY RATE |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Martin County West         | 51.0%                 |
| Truman                     | 33.3%                 |
| Fairmont Area              | 59.3%                 |
| Granada-Huntley-East Chain | 55.0%                 |
| <b>Statewide</b>           | <b>57.50%</b>         |

### LOCAL GRADUATION RATES

| DISTRICT                   | 2017 GRADUATION RATE |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Martin County West         | 94.2%                |
| Truman                     | 90.9%                |
| Fairmont Area              | 90.1%                |
| Granada-Huntley-East Chain | 100.0%               |
| <b>Statewide</b>           | <b>82.20%</b>        |

## ABILITY TO PAY FOR CHILD CARE

Many families working on the lower end of the wage spectrum have difficulty paying for child care. The following charts provide an overview of local economic factors that can further impact child care:

### *Local Poverty and Household Income Information – Martin County*

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| Total Population Living Below Poverty Threshold in Last 12 Months        | 2,308 |
| Related Children Under Age 18 Living with Income Below Poverty Threshold | 680   |
| Families With Related Child Under Age 5 Living Below Poverty Threshold   | 260   |

### *Household Income – Martin County*

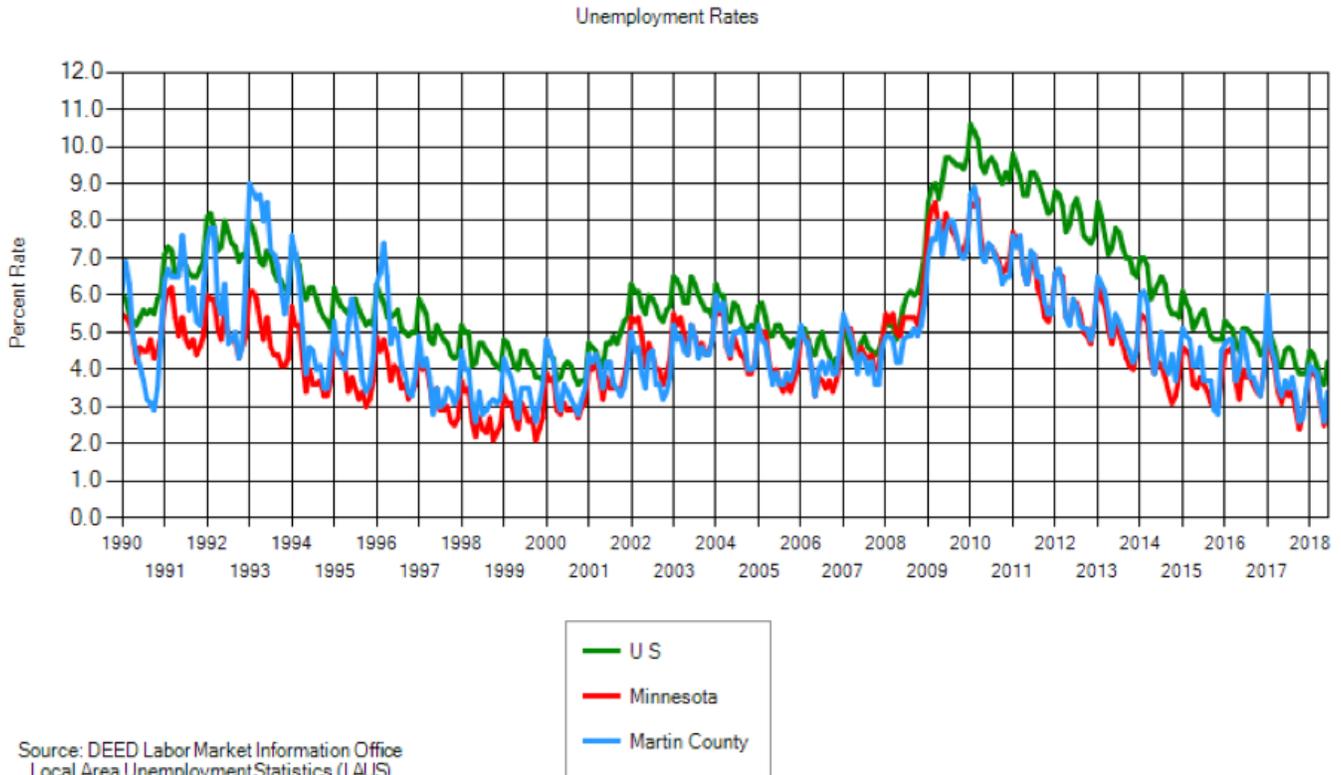
| <b>TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS ACS 2009-13 ESTIMATE</b> | <b>8,797</b>     | <b>% OF TOTAL POPULATION</b> |
|--|------------------|------------------------------|
| HOUSEHOLDS: INCOME LESS THAN \$10,000        | 587              | 6.7%                         |
| HOUSEHOLDS: INCOME \$10,000 TO \$14,999      | 643              | 7.3%                         |
| HOUSEHOLDS: INCOME \$15,000 TO \$24,999      | 914              | 10.4%                        |
| HOUSEHOLDS: INCOME \$25,000 TO \$34,999      | 1079             | 12.3%                        |
| HOUSEHOLDS: INCOME \$35,000 TO \$49,999      | 1,239            | 14.1%                        |
| HOUSEHOLDS: INCOME \$50,000 TO \$74,999      | 1,959            | 22.3%                        |
| HOUSEHOLDS: INCOME \$75,000 TO \$99,999      | 1094             | 12.4%                        |
| HOUSEHOLDS: INCOME \$100,000 TO \$149,999    | 834              | 9.5%                         |
| HOUSEHOLDS: INCOME \$150,000 TO \$199,999    | 199              | 2.3%                         |
| HOUSEHOLDS: INCOME \$200,000 OR MORE         | 249              | 2.8%                         |
| <b>MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME</b>               | <b>\$ 48,530</b> |                              |

## Local Employment Conditions

Employment data was considered as it can be an indicator that additional child care is needed to support the employment needs of the community since there are more two-parent families employed.

### Unemployment Rates – Martin County

- **3.4% Unemployment Rate**



### Top Local Industries – Martin County

The largest employers were invited to participate in the child care conversation since they are impacted by absenteeism and less productivity when child care is a challenge.

|  |              |              |
|--|--------------|--------------|
| <b>INDUSTRY: EDUCATIONAL SERVICES, AND HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE</b> | <b>2,504</b> | <b>24.2%</b> |
| <b>INDUSTRY: MANUFACTURING</b>   | <b>1,661</b> | <b>16.1%</b> |
| <b>INDUSTRY: RETAIL TRADE</b>  | <b>1,187</b> | <b>11.5%</b> |

# COMMUNITY INSIGHTS

Extensive outreach was conducted by the Core Team to engage the community about child care. This work included one-on-one stakeholder meetings with various community leaders, parent and provider electronic surveys, focus groups and presentations about child care. Through these various inputs, the Core Team was able to better understand the underlying causes of the local child care challenges.

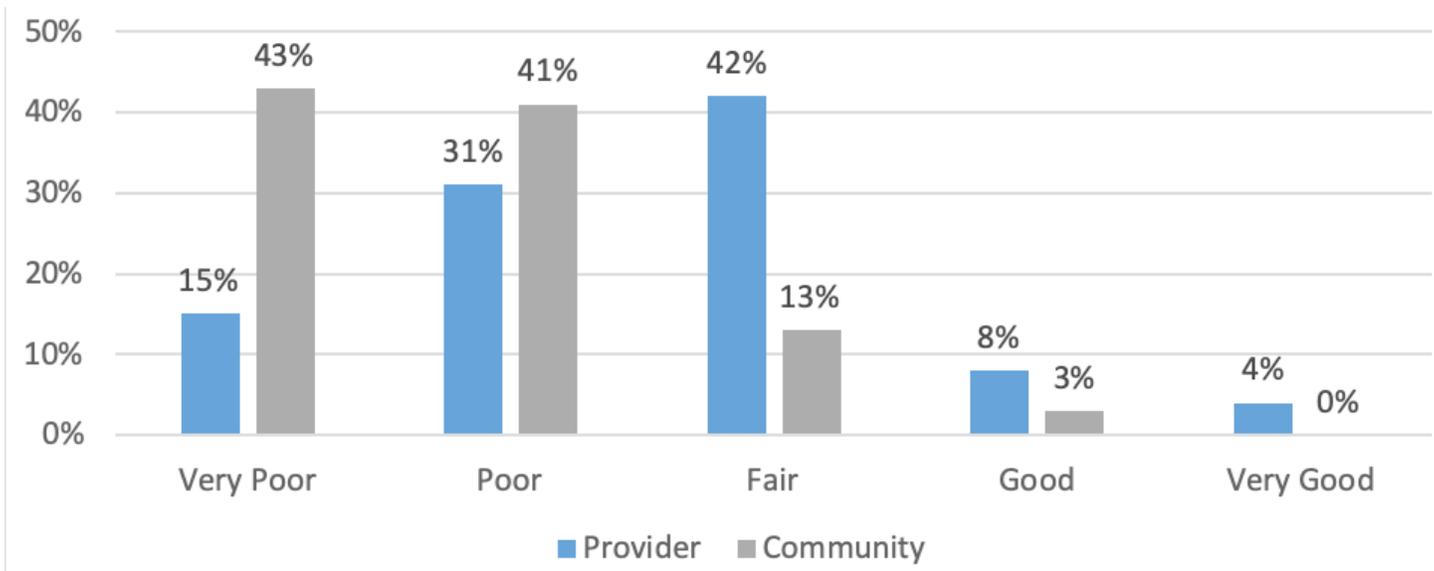


## COMMUNITY SURVEYS – SELECTED PERSPECTIVES

The general community was invited to participate in a comprehensive survey about child care in the Fairmont, MN community. Over 300 individuals participated in the community survey and 27 Family providers participated in a separate survey specific for child care providers.

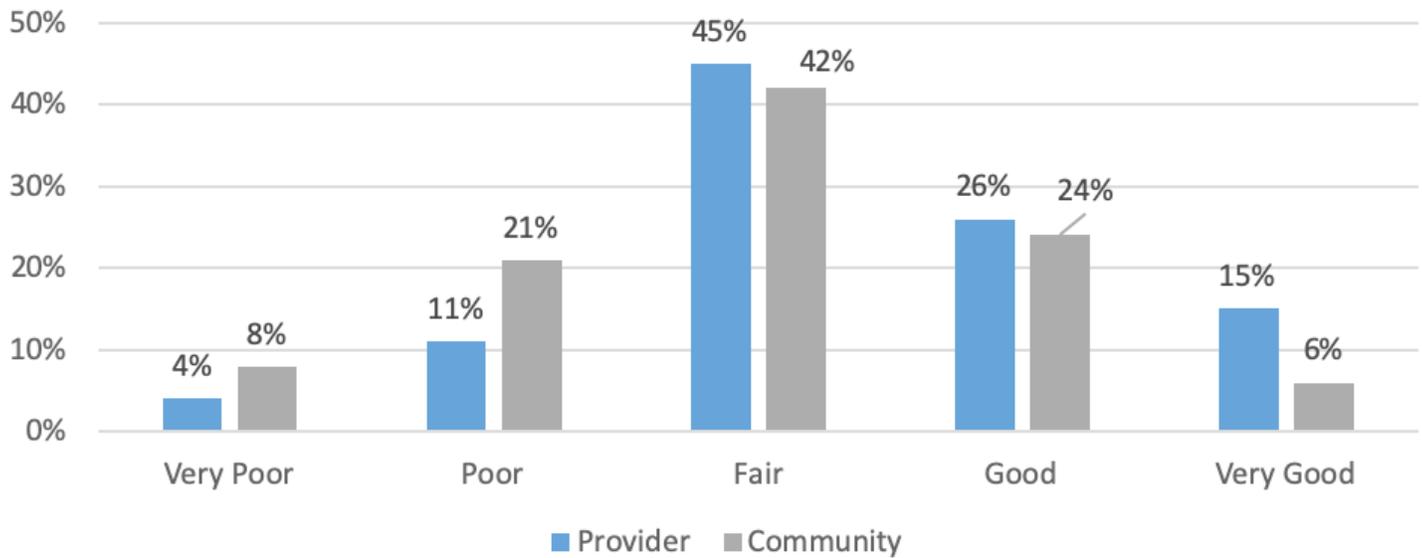
The following charts represent some highlighted perspectives within the community:

### PERCEPTIONS: AVAILABILITY OF CHILD CARE IN THE LOCAL AREA



Survey respondents indicated that they were traveling great distances to find appropriate child care. Nearly 20% indicated that they were traveling more than 11 miles for child care.

## PERCEPTIONS: QUALITY OF AVAILABLE CHILD CARE IN THE LOCAL AREA

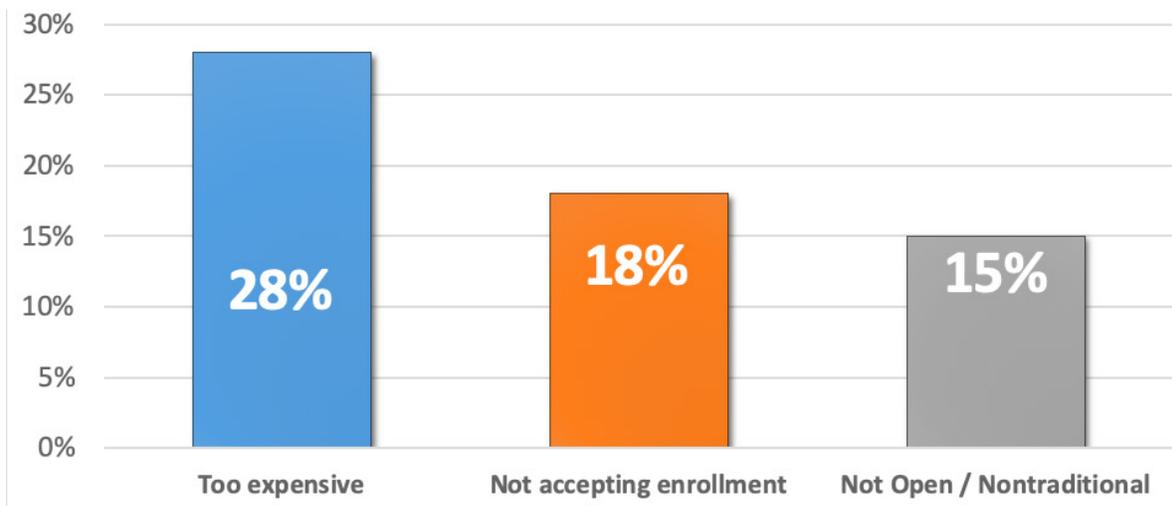


While specific questions about quality were not part of this survey, it was noted that even though the Parent Aware Participation was below the state average, both parents and providers perceive a similar level of quality of care available. When survey participants were asked about what is important for them in a child care program, they ranked their preferences as follows (1 being the most important):

1. Safe and healthy environment
2. Licensed by DHS
3. Educational curriculum
4. Conveniently located
5. Provider has high level of education
6. Provider is Parent Aware Rated
7. Provider is someone I know



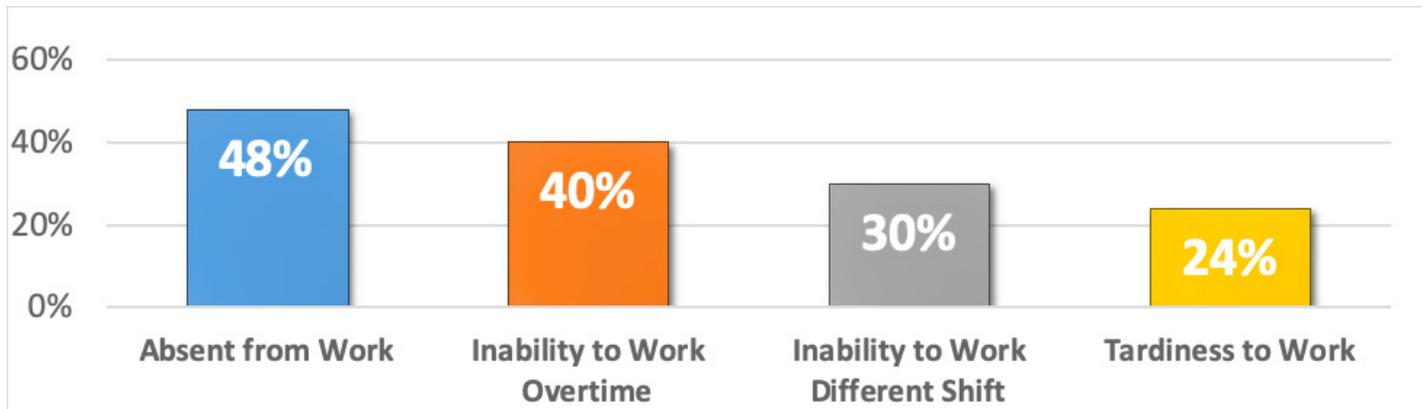
## REASONS FOR NOT ENROLLING IN PAID CHILD CARE



# COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS IMPACTS OF THE CHILD CARE ISSUE

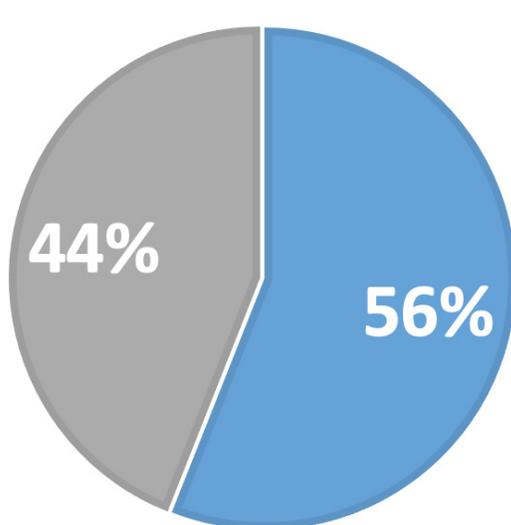
Beyond families and children, the greater community and local businesses can also be impacted by child care challenges and issues. Child care is often framed as an economic development issue by communities facing declining populations or challenges with the work force. These issues can compound and further extend into the business community by causing loss of workers due to unavailable child care or by businesses relocating to environments with more availability of care.

## WORK ISSUES OCCURRED DUE TO CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS



Normal work environments can be adversely impacted when child care is a challenge for employers and workers. As illustrated, the biggest impact of child care limitations include absence from work (when a provider is closed for the day), inability to work overtime, inability to work a flexible schedule or work different shifts, and tardiness to work. A study in 2004 showed the national impact of child care issues in the economy, and it was valued at over \$3 billion dollars annually.

## IMPACT ON FAMILY PLANNING – FAIRMONT



In the survey, 56% of the respondent's stated that the lack of availability of child care is having an impact of family planning. In addition to the impact on family planning child care shortages can also impact the local employment environment. In the survey, 40% of the respondents had withdrawn from the workforce or declined employment due to child care arrangements.

## UNDERSTANDING THE UNDERLYING CHALLENGES

The Core Team in Fairmont spent several months investigating the underlying reasons for the local child care challenges. This work involved engaging with many members of the local area to determine the underlying causes for the identified shortage of care.

The Core Team identified the following factors impacting the child care system in Fairmont:

### • IT'S DIFFICULT TO BE A CHILD CARE PROVIDER

"Daycare providers don't get a lot of respect in the workforce compared to nursing or teaching"  
-Local Provider

"Child care is often a thankless job, overworked physically, mentally and emotionally, and often underpaid." - Local Parent

- ◇ Rules and regulations
- ◇ Low pay/no benefits
- ◇ Long hours/no flexibility
- ◇ High operating cost
- ◇ Damage to home/space
- ◇ Stressful career
- ◇ Increasing turn over

The challenges of being a family child care provider are well-documented and come in a variety of ways. Licensing and regulations have changed over the years along with increasing expectations around outcomes for children entering the primary school system. Many family child care providers operate their businesses with minimal business supports which can sometimes lead to issues with overall sustainability.

### • PARENTS ARE SEEKING NEW CHOICES AND QUALITY IN THE COMMUNITY

"There is little to no child care options for those who work the evening & night shifts"  
-Local Parent

- ◇ Child Care Center
- ◇ Specialized Offerings including Special Needs
- ◇ Drop-in Care / Sick Care / Flex Care
- ◇ Programs that cater to farming families
- ◇ Evening Care
- ◇ After School / School Age Options
- ◇ Increasing recognition in the community about the importance of high quality child care options

Residents indicated the desire to have more licensed child care choices and quality offerings available to select from. While some of this interest is in the form of new child care offerings, many would also like to see enhanced offerings within existing child care. Leveraging interaction and engagement with existing child care programs and families can provide additional insights to support and understand child care programs within the county. As child care quality increases, the community should expect increased family and community investments in child care.

- **THE COMMUNITY CONTINUES TO CHANGE AND EVOLVE**

“We need an established tax base of workers through growth of jobs for the community to grow and meet the demands of our children’s needs and educational opportunities”

-Local Resident

- ◇ Increased dual-working families
- ◇ More young families are looking to make their home in Fairmont
- ◇ Job opportunities ebb and flow
- ◇ High range of wage levels in the community

As communities grow and evolve, needs of new community members can sometimes be different from what the current child care market offers. Working to understand needs of the community and their child care needs can better position the community and the existing provider network to better respond to those needs.

- **INFANT CARE IS IN HIGH DEMAND AND IS DIFFICULT TO FIND**

“I had to use an unlicensed individual, my husband took time off as well, after my maternity leave ran out – to watch my newborn for weeks 6-12 of his life to get him into daycare” -Local Parent

- ◇ There aren’t enough infant and toddler slots in the community

It is clear that a big part of the shortage of child care can be attributed to infant and toddler slots that are often difficult to find. Provider/staff ratios for infants and toddlers are much lower than preschool and school age children. Additional focus on ensuring these slots are created as part of larger community solutions is critical to address overall child care needs in the community..

- **PRICES FOR PARENTS ARE HIGH, AND COST OF DELIVERY FOR CHILD CARE PROVIDERS IS HIGH**

“Child care is very expensive, especially in the summer months with multiple children enrolled. We make just enough to not qualify for any assistance which makes it extremely hard to make ends meet” -Local Parent

- ◇ Many families struggle to afford quality licensed child care
- ◇ Child care centers and in-home family providers alike invest much of their program income into delivery of service

There is no clear answer to the ongoing challenge of costs of care versus family investment to get quality child care. Additional support in helping families with low-to-moderate incomes become acquainted with existing support systems such as CCAP and Early Learning Scholarships can help bridge the gap.

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# TOWN HALL MEETING & GATHERING

The Town Hall meeting is designed to provide an opportunity for the Core Team and the community to interact and understand the findings of the extensive focus groups and surveys. Participants shared ideas about how to address the child care challenges in the local community.

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPED SOLUTIONS

### COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS

- Create a list of volunteers from the community

### EMPLOYER INVOLVEMENT

- Create tax credit to employers offering assistance to employees for child care expenses
- Employers provide paid parent leave separate from PTO

### FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

- Develop revolving loan or grant fund
- Streamline child care subsidy payments to providers

### PROVIDER SUPPORTS

- Start to understand the needs of the providers
- Recognize the important role child care plays in the regional economy and value providers in the community
- Create sponsorships or community discounts to offset the expense of running and operating child care

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# IMPLEMENTATION PROJECTS

The Town Hall meeting is an opportunity to leverage multiple view points and ideas related to addressing the local child care challenge. After the Town Hall meeting, the Core Team met to discuss all ideas and formulated an action plan to move forward. The following SMART goals were developed.

## SMART GOAL ONE – ENGAGE THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Within 6 months, engage at least 3 private sector employers in strategies that result in additional child care slots.

### **Expected Outcomes and Impact**

By engaging the private sector, Fairmont employers will gain child care slots that support employee recruitment and retention. Additionally, employer-sponsored care adds more capacity to the overall local child care supply, while creating a sustainable business model for their child care partners.

## SMART GOAL TWO – RENOVATE SMEC INTO FAMILY CHILD CARE SPACES

In the next 18 months, secure funding to renovate SMEC classrooms into child care spaces.

### **Expected Outcomes and Impact**

This project is focused on increasing supply of child care in the local community. The primary metric is a net increase of 50 slots or more of child care capacity.

## SMART GOAL THREE – CREATE FUNDING FOR NEW AND EXISTING PROVIDERS TO GROW AND INCREASE QUALITY SLOTS

In the next 12 months, create a fund for current and new child care providers in the amount of \$150,000 to incentivize new providers, provide investments in quality for existing providers, and create access to training and professional development.

### **Expected Outcomes and Impact**

Goal three is designed to create a Fairmont Child Care Fund that will create access to capital that incentivizes new child care slot creation or investments that retain existing programs. The overall outcome of the goal will be to create new, high quality child care slots to meet the needs of the Fairmont community.

## SMART GOAL FOUR – PROVIDE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILD CARE BUSINESSES

In the next 6 months, secure sponsorships for professional development training opportunity in Fairmont for all child care programs.

### **Expected Outcomes and Impact**

By underwriting professional development of family child care and child care center programs, those programs are more likely to experience a cost savings while increasing their quality and becoming eligible for additional public funding.



## ABOUT FIRST CHILDREN'S FINANCE

Founded in 1991, First Children's Finance is a multi-state nonprofit organization. We work with communities, and early care and education businesses to increase the supply of high quality early care and education in urban and rural areas. We do this through business management training, one-on-one consulting, and financing. For more information about First Children's Finance, please visit: [www.firstchildrensfinance.org](http://www.firstchildrensfinance.org)

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