April 2026

First Children's Finance

Child Care Market Analysis
Harris-Lake Park Area

firstchildrensfinance.org

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Prepared for:
City of Lake Park

Prepared by:
First Children's Finance
212 Third Avenue North, Suite 310
Minneapolis, MN 55401

Project Lead: Angie Rae Duncan, Business Development Manager

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

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First Children's Finance. (2026). *Child Care Market Analysis, Harris-Lake Park Area.* www.FirstChildrensFinance.org

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INTRODUCTION

In 2026, the City of Lake Park commissioned first Children's Finance to conduct this *Child Care Market Analysis*. This analysis provides relevant child care data, child care market analysis, and First Children's Finance's key findings regarding child care in the Harris-Lake Park area.

The data in this report has been collected from three original surveys developed by First Children's Finance along with data published by the US Census Bureau, US Department of Health and Human Services, Iowa Workforce Development, Iowa Department of Health and Human Services, and Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral. This analysis is First Children's Finance's professional interpretation of the data available as of the date of this report. The information and analysis presented in this document are intended to provide a basis for sound business and community planning decisions, but no warranty is stated or implied as to completeness or accuracy.

PUTTING THIS STUDY INTO USE

This report can be used by employers and other community members that may be considering recruiting or adding new child care businesses, to better understand what parents most prefer for settings and offerings. It can also be used by both existing and future child care programs to understand the families wanting child care and to make operational decisions, such as what ages to care for, hours of operation, and understanding what factors are important to parents.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This *Child Care Market Analysis* is focused on the communities of Harris (51345-zip code) and Lake Park (51347-zip code), referred to as the market area. The US Census Bureau estimates that over the last 5 years, the total population of the market area has decreased, while the number of children ages 0 to 11 has increased. The population of the market area as of 2024 is 1,817 and the total number of children ages 0 to 11 is 284.

In the Harris area (51345 zip code) the average family size is 3.18 and in the Lake Park area (51347 zip code) it is 2.72. In both communities, the majority of families with children are headed by a married couple. The median annual income for families headed by married couple that also have children under the age of 18 is $125,625 in Harris and $130,865 in Lake Park. Most families in the two communities have all parents in the workforce. Combined, 89% of families with children ages 0 to 5, and 85% of families with children ages 6 to 17 living in the area have all parents in the labor force.

A key part of this analysis was a survey to gain input from parents on their child care needs and preferences, compared to the current supply. Using the most popular responses, a parent would be described as married (84%) and living in the 51347-zip code (84%). They work first shift Monday through Friday, they work in Spirit Lake (37%), and the nature of their job is health care & social assistance (24%). Their spouse also works first shift Monday through Friday, they work in Spirit Lake (32%), and the nature of their job is agriculture, fishing, hunting (32%). They currently use child care in Lake Park (63%), Monday through Friday. They use child care 40 to 49 hours per week or more for younger children (63%). For ages 3 and older, they use care part-time during the school year and full-time during the summer. They are satisfied with their current child care provider (84%).

For working parents, choosing child care may be one of the most critical decisions they make. According to longitudinal research, the child care environment parents choose will have lasting effects on their child. When there are not enough child care spaces in a community, finding *any* care is a challenge; and options for *quality* care that meet the needs and preferences of families can be even more challenging.

There are several forms of early care and education available in Iowa to meet families varying needs and preferences. The educational experiences are different for each type of care and most communities desire to have multiple types of care and education available. Through a child care needs survey developed by First Children's Finance and conducted in 2026, it was determined that most of the parents that are likely to use "outside" child care, want their child in an Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) license child care center.

Parents that participated in the child care needs survey said finding child care in the Harris-Lake Park area is difficult. When asked if they had looked for care in the last 12 months and how easy or difficult it had been, 71% of parents with children ages 0 to 2, 82% of parents with children ages 3 to 4, 90% of parents with children ages 5 to 12 had difficulty finding child care. The most commonly named obstacle was that child care programs are full or there were not any openings.

After analyzing local demographics, child care supply, and the survey results, First Children's Finance conducted a *Child Care Gap Analysis*. The gap analysis determined that there are 284 children ages 0 to 11 living in the Harris-Lake Park area and 239 of those are from families that would prefer to use an Iowa HHS regulated child care provider. As of April 2026, there are an estimated 41 spaces (both regulated and non-regulated) available in the area, leaving a gap of at least 133 spaces.

Key Findings of This Analysis

Complete details of these key findings can be found in the last section of this report. These key findings are based on research and conditions of the current child care market. If the community or the child care environment changes significantly, current findings may be affected.

Finding 1: Most families have all parents in the labor force. According to the US Census Bureau as of 2024, 89% of families with children ages 0 to 5, and 85% of families with children ages 6 to 17 living in the Harris-Lake Park area have all parents in the labor force.

Finding 2: Child care challenges are affecting parents' jobs. Over the last 12 months adverse effects reported by working parents were that they had to miss a day of work because their child care provider was closed or on vacation (63%), had to leave work early (49%), and arrived late to work (44%).

Finding 3: Employers are affected by parents' care challenges. Over the last 12 months adverse effects experienced by local employers were they had employees missed a day of work because their child care provider was closed or on vacation (67% of employers), employees missed a day of work because their child care provider did not have space for their child (67% of employers), and employees had to leave work early (67% of employers).

Finding 4: Finding child care in the Harris-Lake Park area is difficult.

In the last 12 months, parent that had looked for child care had difficulty. Seventy-one percent (71%) that looked for care for children ages 0 to 2 experienced some level of difficulty, while 81% that looked for care for children ages 3 to 4 and 90% that looked for care for children ages 5 to 12, also experienced some level of difficulty.

Finding 5: Child care providers are full and turning away families. Through the child care needs survey conducted as part of this study, 100% of the child care providers that participated said they had turned away families because they were full.

Finding 6: There is a shortage of regulated child care spaces in the Harris-Lake Park area. First Children's Finance estimates there are 174 children in the Harris-Lake Park area from families who prefer a child care setting that is regulated by Iowa Department of Health and Human Services. According to Iowa HHS along with self-reported data from local child care programs, there are an estimated 41 child care spaces both regulated and non-regulated available, leaving a gap of 133 child care spaces.

Finding 7: Parents prefer a licensed child care center.
Through the child care needs surveys parents were asked if all choices are available and you were selecting child care today, which setting you would most prefer. The top choice for children of all age groups was an Iowa Department of Health and Human Services licensed child care center.

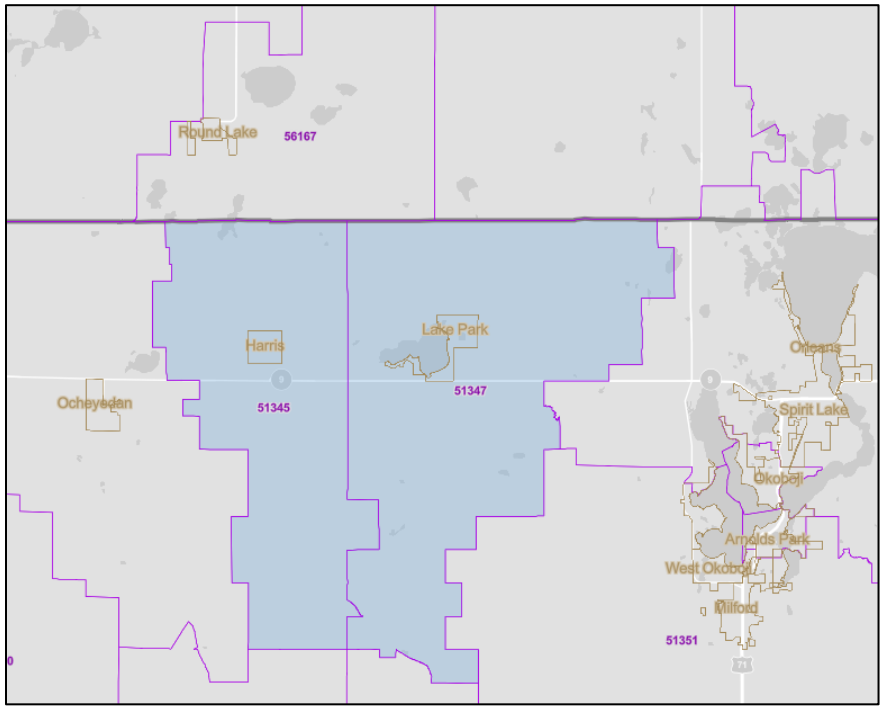
Finding 8: An existing provider is interested in expanding.
One of the child care providers that took part in the child care needs survey said they are interested in expanding to serve more children. The provider noted they would like to build a facility for a child care center.

MARKET DESCRIPTION

Study Area

The area for this study includes the 51345-zip code, which includes the city of Harris and the surrounding unincorporated areas, and the 51347-zip code which includes the city of Lake Park and the surrounding unincorporated areas. These will be referred to as the Harris area or simply Harris, and the Lake Park area or simply Lake Park throughout this report.

Figure 1: Map of the Study Area



Note: Map from US Census Bureau (2020)

Population and Demographics

According to the US Census Bureau, as of 2024 the total population of the market area is 1,817, which is a net change of (-126) since 2019. As of 2024, the total population of the Harris area (51345-zip code) is 347, and the total population of the Lake Park area (51347-zip code) is 1,470.

Table 1: Total Population by Community

Community	2019	2024	Net Change
Harris Area (51345 zip code)	426	347	-79
Lake Park Area (51347 zip code)	1,517	1,470	-47
Total	1,943	1,817	-126

Note: Data from US Census Bureau

Children Ages 0 to 11

As of 2024 there are 284 children ages 0 to 11 in the market area, which is a net change of +18 since 2019 when the total number of children was 266. As of 2024, the total number of children ages 0 to 11 in the Harris area (51345-zip code) is 34, and the total number of children in the Lake Park area (51347-zip code) is 250.

Table 2: Population Ages 0 to 11 by Community

Community	2019	2024	Net Change
Harris Area (51345 zip code)	82	34	-48
Lake Park Area (51347 zip code)	184	250	+66
Total	266	284	+18

Note: Data from US Census Bureau

Fertility

Fertility reflects how many women give birth each year and it may be helpful to give an estimate of how many babies are born each year. It must however be recognized that a single birth may result in more than one child, and there are circumstances where the newborn child may not live within the community after the birth. As of 2024 there are 60 women ages 16 to 50 living in the Harris area. The US Census Bureau estimates that none of those women gave birth in the prior 12-month period. In the Lake Park area, as of 2024 there are 287 women ages 16 to 50. The US Census Bureau estimates that 7% (21 women) gave birth in the prior 12-month period, and all of them are also in the labor force.

Table 3: Fertility by Community

	Harris Area		Lake Park Area	
Women 16 to 50 Years	**60**	**100%**	**287**	**100%**
Women In the Labor Force	42	70%	215	**75%**
Women with Births in the Last 12 Months	0	0%	21	7%
Gave Birth and in Labor Force	0	0%	21	7%

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2024)

Race

In the Harris area 70% of the population is one race, while 30% are two or more races. The race that most residents identify as is White, which accounts for 69% of the population, followed by some other race with 1%. Within the Lake Park area 96% of the population is one race, while 4% are two or more races. The race that most residents identify as is White, which accounts for 94% of the population, followed by Asian with 1%. *See table on the next page.*

Table 4: Race

	Harris Area		Lake Park Area	
Total Population	**347**	**100%**	**1,470**	**100%**
One Race	**243**	**70%**	**1,417**	**96%**
White	*238*	*69%*	*1,386*	*94%*
Black or African American	*0*	*0%*	*0*	*0%*
American Indian or Alaska Native	*1*	*0%*	*8*	*0.5%*
Asian	*0*	*0%*	*14*	*1%*
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	*0*	*0%*	*0*	*0%*
Some Other Race	*4*	*1%*	*9*	*0.5%*
Two or More Races	**104**	**30%**	**53**	**4%**

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2024)

Creating an inclusive child care program by recognizing and incorporating diverse cultures can help build strong relationships with families and children. As of 2024, 31% of the residents in the Harris area are Hispanic or Latino, all identify as Mexican. In the Lake Park area, 3% of the residents are Hispanic or Latino, with the largest groups being Mexican, Cuban, and Spaniard.

Table 5: Hispanic or Latino Origin by Specific Origin

	Harris Area		Lake Park Area	
Total Population	**347**	**100%**	**1,470**	**100%**
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	**108**	**31%**	**44**	**3%**
Mexican	*108*	*31%*	*13*	*1%*
Puerto Rican	*0*	*0%*	*5*	*0%*
Cuban	*0*	*0%*	*14*	*1%*
Spaniard	*0*	*0%*	*12*	*1%*
All Other Hispanic or Latino	*0*	*0%*	*0*	*0%*

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2024)

It can be helpful to look at what languages are spoken within a community to determine if there may be barriers for parents that want to use child care but do not speak English. In the Harris area 29% of residents speak a language other than English. After English, the most common language is Spanish which is spoken by 29% of the population. Among those that speak a language other than English at home, 96% also speak English very well. In the Lake Park area 1% of residents speak a language other than English. Besides English, residents speak Spanish (0.5%) or Other Indo European (0.5%). Among those that speak a language other than English at home, 100% also speak English very well. *See table on the next page.*

Table 6: Language Spoken at Home

	Harris Area		Lake Park Area	
Population Age 5 and older	345	100%	1,401	100%
Speaks Only English	246	71%	1,389	99%
Speaks Language Other than English	99	29%	12	1%
Spanish	*99*	*29%*	*6*	*0.5%*
Other Indo European	---	---	*6*	*0.5%*
Speaks Language Other than English	99	100%	12	100%
Speaks English Very Well	95	96%	12	100%
Speaks English Less than Very Well	4	4%	0	0%

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2024)

Educational Attainment

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in the Harris area, among the population ages 18 to 24, 11 adults (61%) are high school graduates (or equivalent), while 4 (22%) have some college or an associate's degree, and 3 (17%) have a bachelor's degree or higher. When it comes to the population ages 25 and older, 65 (25%) are high school graduates (or equivalent), while 33 (13%) have some college or an associate's degree, and 54 (21%) have a bachelor's degree or higher.

In the Lake Park area among the population ages 18 to 24, 9 adults (25%) are high school graduates (or equivalent), while 6 (17%) have some college or an associate's degree and 9 (25%) have a bachelor's degree or higher. When it comes to the population ages 25 and older, 353 (33%) are high school graduates (or equivalent), while 536 (49%) have some college or an associate's degree, and 181 (17%) have a bachelor's degree or higher.

Table 7: Educational Attainment

	Harris Area		Lake Park Area	
Total Population 18-24	18	100%	36	100%
Less than High School	0	0%	12	33%
High School Graduate, or equivalent	11	61%	9	25%
Some College or Associate's Degree	4	22%	6	17%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	3	17%	9	25%
Total Population age 25+	256	100%	1,087	100%
Less than High School	104	41%	17	1%
High School Graduate, or equivalent	65	25%	353	33%
Some College or Associate's Degree	33	13%	536	49%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	54	21%	181	17%

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2024)

Working Families

As of 2024 there are 190 total households in the Harris area, of which 62 (33%) are family households and 21 (11%) are families with children under the age of 18. The average family size is 3.18. The median income[1] of families with children under the age of 18 is $125,208. In the Harris area 100% of families with children ages 0-5 and 98% of families with children ages 6-17 have all parents in the labor force. All parents in the labor force means if there are two parents in the home, they both work; or if there is a single parent, that parent is working.

In the Lake Park area, there are 651 total households, of which 415 (64%) are family households and 174 (27%) are families with children under the age of 18. The average family size is 2.72. The median income[2] of families with children under the age of 18 is $120,417. In the Lake Park area 88% of families with children ages 0-5 and 82% of families with children ages 6-17 have all parents in the labor force. All parents in the labor force means if there are two parents in the home, they both work; or if there is a single parent, that parent is working. *See table on the next page.*

[1] Median income is the amount which divides the income distribution into two equal groups, half having income above that amount, and half having income below that amount.

[2] Median income is the amount which divides the income distribution into two equal groups, half having income above that amount, and half having income below that amount.

Table 8: Household Types and Characteristics

	Harris Area	Lake Park Area
Total Households	190	651
Average household size	1.83	2.22
Median Income	$54,301	$82,750
Family Households	62	415
Average family size	3.18	2.72
Median Income	$88,667	$104,145
Family Households w/children under 18	21	174
Married couples	*19*	*136*
Male householder (no spouse present)	*2*	*14*
Female householder (no spouse present)	*0*	*24*
Family w/children- Median Income	$125,208	$120,417
Married couples- Median Income	*$125,625*	*$130,865*
Male householder- Median Income	---	---
Female Householder- Median Income	---	---
Households w/children ages 0 to 5	8	94
Households w/children ages 0 to 5, and all parents in the labor force	8	83
Households w/children ages 0 to 5, and all parents in the labor force	*100%*	*88%*
Households w/children ages 6 to 17	55	241
Households w/children ages 6 to 17, and all parents in the labor force	54	198
Households w/children ages 6 to 17, and all parents in the labor force	*98%*	*82%*

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2024)

Economy in the Area

Labor Force and Unemployment

A competitive job market can make it hard for child care programs to attract and retain quality staff. According to Iowa Workforce Development, as of December 2025 the total labor force (residents age 16 or older that are choosing to participate in the workforce) living in Dickinson County is 9,420. Of those, 9,090 are employed, while 330 (3.5%) are unemployed. In comparison, in December 2020 the total labor force was 8,720 with 8,330 employed, and 390 (4.4%) unemployed. This data indicates that, as of December 2025 there are 700 more residents in Dickinson County participating in the labor force than there were 5 years prior.

Place of Work and Time Leaving Home

According to the US Census Bureau as of 2024, there are a total of 238 workers age 16 and over living in the Harris area, of those 61.3% work in county where they live in, 22.3% work outside the county but within Iowa, and 16.4% work out of state. The most popular hour for residents of the Harris area to leave home to go to work is 7:00 am to 7:59 am (17.7%) and the mean travel time to work is 17.5 minutes.

Within the 50048-zip code, there are a total of 631 workers age 16 and over, of those 28.8% work in the county where they live in, 69.0% work outside the county but within Iowa, and 2.2% work out of state. The most popular hour for residents of the 50048-zip code to leave home to go to work is 6:00 am to 6:59 am (35.5%) and the mean travel time to work is 29.6 minutes.

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

	Harris Area	Lake Park Area
Total workers 16 years and over	238	756
Workers who worked from home	5%	7.3%
Time leaving home to go to work		
12:00 am to 4:59 am	9.3%	3.4%
5:00 am to 5:29 am	4.4%	8.7%
5:30 am to 5:59 am	0.0%	7.3%
6:00 am to 6:29 am	2.2%	7.6%
6:30 am to 6:59 am	4.9%	18.3%
7:00 am to 7:29 am	15.9%	17.7%
7:30 am to 7:59 am	1.8%	13.7%
8:00 am. to 8:29 am	6.2%	12.7%
8:30 am to 8:59 am	8.4%	2.6%
9:00 am to 11:59 pm	46.9%	8.1%
Mean travel time (minutes)	18.3 mins.	20.2 mins.
Place of Work		
Within county of residence	61.3%	79.6%
Outside county of residence	22.3%	12.6%
Outside Iowa	16.4%	7.8%

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2024)

Employees and Wages

According to Iowa Workforce Development, as of Quarter 3 of 2025 there is an average of 10,470 people employed by companies located in Dickinson County. The average weekly wage at these companies is $887. The industry that employs the most people on average is accommodations & food service (1,843 employees), followed by retail trade (1,658 employees). Average wages range

from a low of $539 per week for accommodations & food service, to a high of $3,290 per week for management of companies and enterprises.

Table 10: Dickinson County Sector Jobs for All Industries

	2025-Q3		
	Total Locations	**Average Employees**	**Avg. Wk. Wage**
Accommodations & Food Service	98	1,843	$539
Administrative & Waste Management	68	817	$783
Agriculture, Fishing & Hunting	20	97	$952
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	26	476	$559
Construction	110	613	$1,163
Educational Services	18	492	$904
Finance & Insurance	51	242	$1,721
Health Care & Social Assistance	71	1,118	$1,016
Information	23	114	$994
Management of Companies and Enterprises	11	38	$3,290
Manufacturing	40	1,464	$1,033
Mining, Quarrying, & Oil & Gas	1	---	---
Other Services (except Public Admin)	51	192	$815
Professional, Scientific, Technical	78	231	$1,227
Public Administration	24	342	$1,042
Real Estate, Rental, Leasing	41	114	$732
Retail Trade	116	1,658	$724
Transportation & Warehousing	36	291	$935
Utilities	11	64	$1,637
Wholesale Trade	41	264	$1,435
Total	**935**	**10,470**	**$887**

Note: Data from Iowa Workforce Development (2025)

Child Care and Preschool Workforce and Wages

Most child care and preschool workers fall under one of three categories as defined by the US Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system: Childcare Workers[3], Education and Childcare Administrators, Preschool and Daycare[4], or Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education[5].

According to Iowa Wage Report Data from Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) for Northwest Balance of State[6] as of May 2024, the hourly mean[7] wage for Childcare Workers is $10.92 and the annual median[8] wage is $21,930. There are 660 of these workers in the region.

For Education and Childcare Administrators, Preschool and Daycare in the workforce region, the mean hourly wage is $22.52 and median annual wage $40,650. There are 90 of these workers in the region.

For Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education, the mean hourly wage is $18.12, and the median annual wage is $33,120. There are 370 of these workers in the region.

Table 11: Northwest Balance of State Childcare and Preschool Workforce and Wages

	Total Jobs in Region	Hourly Mean	Annual Median
Childcare Workers	660	$10.92	$21,930
Education & Childcare Admin, Preschool & Daycare	90	$22.52	$40,650
Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	370	$18.12	$33,120

Note: Data from Iowa Workforce Development (2024)

[3] SOC Definition: Attend to children at schools, businesses, private households, and childcare institutions. Perform a variety of tasks, such as dressing, feeding, bathing, and overseeing play. Illustrative examples: Au Pair, Daycare Provider, Nanny.

[4] SOC Definition: Plan, direct, or coordinate academic or nonacademic activities of preschools or childcare centers and programs, including before- and after-school care. Illustrative examples: Childcare Center Administrator, Head Start Director, Preschool Director.

[5] SOC Definition: Instruct preschool-aged students, following curricula or lesson plans, in activities designed to promote social, physical, and intellectual growth. Illustrative examples: Home-based Preschool Teacher, Nursery School Teacher, Preschool Head Start Teacher.

[6] Northwest Iowa Balance of State (BOS)- Aggregate data for the counties of Buena Vista, Calhoun, Clay, Cherokee, Dickinson, Emmet, Hamilton, Hancock, Humboldt, Ida, Kossuth, Lyon, O'Brien, Osceola, Palo Alto, Plymouth, Pocahontas, Sac, Sioux, Webster, Winnebago, and Wright.

[7] Mean Wages is the average wage and is computed by dividing the estimated total wage for an occupation by its weighted employment.

[8] Median Wage or 50th Percentile Wage is the point at which 50% of the employment was below this wage and 50% was above.

EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

Early Care and Education Environments in Iowa

There are several forms of early care and education available in Iowa to meet each family's varying needs and preferences. These include:

- Licensed Child Care Centers and Preschools
- Head Start and Early Head Start
- School-Based Programs
    - School-Age Care
    - Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program
- Registered Child Development Homes
- Child Care Homes
- Legal Unregulated Home Care
    - Nanny or Au Pare
    - Family, Friend, or Neighbor care

The educational experiences are different for each type of care and most communities desire to have multiple types of care and education available.

Iowa Department of Health and Human Services[9]

In Iowa, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), formerly Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS), oversees programs that fall into three categories—Licensed Centers, Registered Child Development Homes, and Child Care Homes. The level of regulation and requirements placed on the provider varies based on the type. *See table starting on page 20 for a side-by-side comparison.*

Licensed Centers

Licensed Centers include child care centers (including child care programs operated by school districts), preschool programs, and Head Start. A center can care for larger groups of children, which are typically separated by age groups according to specific staff-to-child ratios. All centers are required to have an Iowa HHS inspection prior to opening and an annual inspection after that. A

[9] Information in this section adapted from "Child Care Overview". Iowa Department of Health and Human Services. https://hhs.iowa.gov/childcare/overview.

licensed center may apply for a Child Care Assistance[10] Provider Agreement and may participate in the voluntary Iowa Quality for Kids (IQ4K) quality rating system[11].

Registered Child Development Homes (a.k.a. Registered Homes)

Anyone caring for more than 6 children at a time is required to register with the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services. Registered child development homes can provide care for up to 8, 12 or 16 children at a time depending on the registration level. Registration levels A, B, or C are based on the providers' experience and if there are any assistants or co-providers present. These programs are required to have an Iowa HHS inspection prior to opening and an unannounced annual inspection after that. A registered child development home may apply for a Child Care Assistance Provider Agreement with HHS and may participate in the voluntary ChildNet[12] program and IQ4K.

Child Care Homes

Child Care homes can care for 6 or fewer children at any given time. These programs are not required to register but have the option to do so. A Child Care Home may apply for a Child Care Assistance Provider Agreement with HHS. Child Care Homes serving children eligible for child care assistance must complete an unannounced inspection once per year to assure compliance with health, safety, and fire standards. These providers are not eligible to participate in ChildNet or IQ4K.

[10] Child Care Assistance (CCA) is a tuition assistance program available to children of income-eligible parents. The tuition reimbursement is paid directly to the child care program based on the child's attendance.

[11] Iowa Quality for Kids (IQ4K) is voluntary rating system for Licensed Centers and Preschools, Registered Child Development Homes, Head Start programs, and child care programs that are operated by school districts. Participating providers achieve a rating on a scale of 1 to 5, by meeting key indicators of quality in the areas of nutrition & physical activity, professional development, leadership & administration, family & community partnerships, environment, teaching staff qualifications, and teaching & learning for centers, and the areas of nutrition & physical activity, professional development, family & community partnerships, environment, provider qualifications, and teaching & learning for homes.

[12] ChildNet certification is a requirement for Child Care Home providers wishing to achieve a Level 2 and higher in the Iowa Quality Rating System. To earn ChildNet certification, the provider must complete the ChildNet training series with Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R), enroll in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and demonstrate 100% compliance with the Iowa Department of Human Services' Registration checklist through a certification visit with their local CCR&R Child Care Consultant.

Table 12: HHS Requirements for Child Care Providers in Iowa

	Non-Registered Home w/out HHS agreement	Non-Registered Home w/HHS agreement	Child Development Home A	Child Development Home B	Child Development Home C (2 providers)	Child Development Home C (1 provider)	Licensed Center
State Regulated	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Maximum Capacity[13]	6	6	8	12	16	8	Varies by license
Inspection prior to Registration/Licensing			•	•	•	•	•
Annual Facility & Records Inspection		•	•	•	•	•	•
Minimum age of caregiver		18 years	18 years	20 years	21 years	21 years	Director 21 Years
Iowa child abuse registry check[14]		•	•	•	•	•	•
Iowa criminal records check[7]		•	•	•	•	•	•
National (FBI) Fingerprint-based records check		•	•	•	•	•	•
Experience required				2 years or 1 year w/child related degree	5 years or 4 years w/child related degree	5 years or 4 years w/child related degree	Combination of experience and education
Minimum education required				High school or GED	High school or GED	High school or GED	Director/ On-Site Supervisor High school or GED
Minimum pre-service & orientation trainings		•	•	•	•	•	•
Professional Development (every 2 years)		6 hours	24 hours	24 hours	24 hours	24 hours	
CPR and First Aid Certification		•	•	•	•	•	•
Mandatory Reporter Training		•	•	•	•	•	•

Table continues on next page.

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

[14] Iowa child abuse registry and Iowa criminal records checks are required for all household members age 14 and older.

Table continued from pervious page.

	Non-Registered Home w/out HHS agreement	Non-Registered Home w/HHS agreement	Child Development Home A	Child Development Home B	Child Development Home C2 (2 providers)	Child Development Home C (1 provider)	Licensed Center
Non-smoking environment		•	•	•	•	•	•
Fire-extinguishers and smoke detectors		•	•	•	•	•	•
2 direct exits				•	•	•	•
Space requirements				•	•	•	•
Quiet area for sick children				•	•	•	•
Reference letters			3 letters of reference				

Adapted from: Iowa Department of Human Services (2025)
https://ccmis.dhs.state.ia.us/providerportal/ChildCareRequirements.aspx.

Additional HHS Requirements for Child Care Providers in Iowa

- Non-Registered Homes may have up to 6 children, as long as at least one child is school-aged.
- Child Development Home A: Limit of 6 preschool children with a maximum of 4 aged 24 months or younger. Of these, no more than 3 can be 12 months of age or younger. They can also care for 2 school-aged children for a total maximum of 8 children in care at any one time.
- Child Development Home B: Limit of 8 preschool children with a maximum of 4 children aged 24 months or younger. Of these, no more than 3 can be 12 months of age or younger. They can also care for 4 school-aged children for a total maximum of 12 children in care at any one time. When there are more than 8 children present for more than 2 hours, an assistant 14 years or older needs to be present.
- Child Development Home C (2 providers): Limit of 14 preschool children with a maximum of 6 aged 24 months or younger. 2 additional school-age children can also be in care for a total maximum of 16 children in care at any one time. Whenever there are more than 8 children present, the business co-provider needs to be present.
- Child Development Home C (1 provider): Limit of 8 children with a maximum of 4 aged 24 months or younger.
- Center and preschool staff to child ratios: babies up to 23 months 1:4; 2-year-olds 1:6; 3-year-olds 1:8; 4-year-olds 1:12; 5-year-olds and older 1:15.

Iowa Department of Education

Iowa's Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program administered by the Iowa Department of Education provides an opportunity for all young children in the State of Iowa to enter school ready to learn by expanding voluntary access to quality preschool curricula for all four-year-old children. Participating school districts receive funding to offer at least 10 hours of preschool per week during the school year. Districts may provide preschool directly or contract with a community partner to provide preschool on their behalf.

Until January 2016 some schools that offered child care, preschool (other than the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program), or before and after school care, were exempt from being licensed with Iowa HHS, because the Iowa Department of Education oversaw them. Now many of those programs need to be licensed as a child care center under HHS. An instructional program for children who are attending prekindergarten, as defined by the State Board of Education under Iowa Code section 256.11, or a higher grade level and are at least four years of age, or are at least three years of age and eligible for special education under chapter 256B, administered by a public or nonpublic school system accredited by the Department of Education or the State Board of Regents, or a nonpublic school system that is not accredited by the Department of Education or the State Board of Regents, is exempt from child care licensing under HHS.

Iowa Legal Unregulated Care

In Iowa, parents may choose "family, friend, or neighbor care" or another unrelated caregiver such as a nanny or au pair. These types of care are not regulated and typically not tracked, unless the provider has an agreement with HHS to accept child care assistance, at which time they are considered a Child Care Home as described earlier. Because these providers are "off the radar" and data is not available, the data in this section does not include unregulated providers. These homes are reflected in the column titled "Non-Registered Home without HHS agreement" in the table below.

Iowa Early Care and Education Supply

The total number of HHS regulated child care providers and child care spaces across Iowa has changed over the last few years. According to Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) data, from 2019 to 2024 the total number of child care spaces in Iowa has increased by 4% while the number of children ages 0 to 5 decreased by 5%. During that same time, within CCR&R Region 1

Northwest Iowa,[15] the number of child care spaces has increased by 1% while the number of children ages 0 to 5 decreased by 3%.

Dickinson County Early Care and Education Supply

According to Child Care Resource & Referral data, for the five-year period from 2019 to 2024 Dickinson County experienced a net loss of 78 regulated child care spaces. There was an increase of 21 spaces in Iowa Department of Education programs; however, that gain was offset by a loss of 99 spaces in child care centers, registered homes, and child care homes.

Table 13: Programs and Spaces in Dickinson County

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Net Change
Total Programs	**28**	**27**	**29**	**29**	**22**	**20**	**-8**
HHS Centers & Preschools	12	11	12	11	9	9	**-3**
Dept. of Ed. Programs	1	1	1	1	2	2	**+1**
Reg. Child Development Homes	6	4	5	5	4	4	**-2**
Child Care Homes	9	11	11	12	7	5	**-4**
Total Spaces	**768**	**709**	**753**	**817**	**707**	**690**	**-78**
HHS Centers & Preschools	647	598	634	681	588	583	**-64**
Dept. of Ed. Programs	8	8	8	8	29	29	**+21**
Reg. Child Development Homes	68	48	56	56	48	48	**-20**
Child Care Homes	45	55	55	72	42	30	**-15**

Note: Data from Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral.

As of March 2026, there is 1 HHS regulated programs within 10 miles of the town of Lake Park.

Table 14: HHS Registered Child Development Homes within 20 Miles of Lake Park

Program Name & Location	Hours	HHS Capacity	Child Care Assistance
Laura Fiebig, Reg. Child Development Home B Lake Park	7:00 am-5:00 pm Mon-Fri	12	Yes

Note: Data from Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (March 2026).

License-Exempt Programs

According to the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Child Care Centers and Preschools Licensing Standards and Procedures, for the purposes of licensing, child care does not include care, supervision, and guidance of a child by any of the following:

[15] Includes the counties of Buena Vista, Calhoun, Cherokee, Clay, Crawford, Dickinson, Emmet, Hamilton, Humboldt, Ida, Kossuth, Lyon, O'Brien, Osceola, Palo Alto, Plymouth, Pocahontas, Sac, Sioux, Webster, Winnebago, Woodbury, and Wright.

- "An after school program continuously offered throughout the school year calendar to children who are least five years old, are enrolled in school, and attend the program intermittently. The program must be provided through a nominal membership fee or at no cost."
- "A special activity program which meets less than four hours per day for the sole purpose of the special activity. Special activity programs include but are not limited to music or dance classes, organized athletic or sports programs, recreational classes, scouting programs, and hobby or craft clubs or classes."

There are no licensed exempt programs within the market area.

Harris-Lake Park Community School District

The Harris-Lake Park Community School District serves residents of Harris and Lake Park. The district is based out of Lake Park. The elementary building houses pre-kindergarten through 5th grade. Enrollment for the 2025-2026 school year is 339 (PK-12), with 24 of those in pre-kindergarten, and 142 in kindergarten through 5th grade.

Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program (SWVPP) is available through both districts. Based on the funding formula used by the state, each enrolled student is counted as 0.5 full time equivalent (FTE). The Harris-Lake Park Community School District's certified enrollment for SWVPP for the 2025-2026 school year is 9.0 FTE. It does need to be noted these enrollments may be duplicative with some of the preschool enrollments listed above, as many districts offer additional hours of preschool that are not funded through the SWVPP program.

Local Price Point

Besides individual providers changing their rates, changes in the average tuition rates can be the result of providers going out of business, new providers coming into the market, or providers no longer reporting their tuition rates if they stop accepting child care assistance. When comparing tuition rates, it is important to note that some providers charge tuition that is all-inclusive, while others may charge separate fees, or charge for specific items or require parents to furnish supplies, snacks, or other items, and some programs operate full-time while some are only part-time.

The average weekly tuition rates for care within a licensed center within Dickinson County have increased over the last 5 years. As of 2024, the average weekly rates ranged from a low of $148.63 per week for full-time school age care, to a high of $239.96 per week for infants. Before& after school care averages $81.87 per week. *See table on the next page.*

Table 15: Average Weekly Tuition Rates of Licensed Centers in Dickinson County

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Infant	$180.00	$210.00	$212.00	$214.20	$238.09	$239.96
Toddler	$180.00	$210.00	$197.00	$204.20	$232.51	$234.36
Two-Year-Old	$162.00	$210.00	$184.00	$184.68	$204.34	$206.25
Three-Year-Old	$135.00	$165.00	$159.50	$157.96	$182.61	$184.47
Four- & Five-Year-Old	$135.00	$165.00	$159.50	$157.96	$180.61	$182.47
School-Age (full-time)	$135.00	$165.00	$119.50	$119.50	$153.24	$148.63
Before & After School	$60.00	$73.33	$53.11	$53.11	$83.80	$81.87

Note: Data from Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral.

The average weekly tuition rates for care within a registered child development home within Dickinson County have increased over the last five years. As of 2024, the weekly rates for infant through age five average $172.00 per week, while full-time care for school age is slightly higher at $176.00 per week. Before and after school care averages $78.22 per week.

Table 16: Average Weekly Tuition at Registered Homes in Dickinson County

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Infant	$137.50	$140.00	$132.50	$153.75	$157.00	$172.00
Toddler	$122.50	$140.00	$132.50	$153.75	$157.00	$172.00
Two-Year-Old	$122.50	$140.00	$132.50	$153.75	$157.00	$172.00
Three-Year-Old	$122.50	$140.00	$132.50	$153.75	$157.00	$172.00
Four- & Five-Year-Old	$110.50	$90.00	$132.50	$153.75	$157.00	$172.00
School-Age (full-time)	$122.50	$140.00	$132.50	$138.33	$156.00	$176.00
Before & After School	$48.89	$40.00	$58.89	$65.56	$92.33	$78.22

Note: Data from Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral.

With a portion of residents out-commuting to other counties and school districts boundaries that cross county lines, the average rates in neighboring counties can be informative.
When it comes to average weekly tuition at licensed centers in the area, as of August 2025, Palo Alto has the lowest average rates for ages infant through three and for before & after school care, while Clay has the lowest average for age four & five and for full-time care for school age children. The highest average rates are split between Clay, Dickinson, and O'Brien, except for before & after school care, which is highest in Emmet. *See table on the next page.*

When it comes to average weekly tuition at a registered child development home in the area, as of August 2025, O'Brien County is lowest in all ages except before & after school care, which is lowest in Emmet County. The highest average rates overall are in Dickinson County for all age groups. *See table on the next page.*

Table 17: Average Weekly Tuition at Licensed Centers in Surrounding Counties

	Clay	Dickinson	Emmet	O'Brien	Osceola	Palo Alto
Infant	$275.00	$248.80	$222.20	$207.42	$177.22	$171.04
Toddler	$245.00	$242.40	$215.53	$207.42	$177.22	$171.04
Two-Year-Old	$215.00	$235.20	$207.20	$199.05	$177.22	$166.85
Three-Year-Old	$160.00	$188.29	$183.33	$192.21	$166.15	$163.10
Four- & Five-Year-Old	$115.00	$188.29	$178.33	$191.55	$166.15	$157.03
School-Age (full-time)	$133.15	$149.83	$165.00	$165.05	$166.15	$151.63
Before & After School	$73.34	$69.12	$79.17	$72.71	$73.84	$67.39
Total Centers	5	9	4	13	2	8
Spaces w/in Centers	611	583	305	767	148	432

Note: Data from Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral (March 2026).

Table 18: Average Weekly Tuition at Registered Homes in Surrounding Counties

	Clay	Dickinson	Emmet	O'Brien	Osceola	Palo Alto
Infant	$162.29	$177.00	$163.13	$143.00	N/A	$144.25
Toddler	$162.29	$177.00	$163.13	$143.00	N/A	$144.25
Two-Year-Old	$162.29	$177.00	$163.13	$143.00	N/A	$144.25
Three-Year-Old	$160.63	$177.00	$163.13	$141.00	N/A	$144.25
Four- & Five-Year-Old	$160.63	$177.00	$163.13	$141.00	N/A	$144.25
School-Age (full-time)	$160.63	$177.00	$163.13	$141.00	N/A	$144.25
Before & After School	$72.13	$78.22	$60.00	$62.67	N/A	$64.11
Total Homes	7	4	8	5	0	4
Spaces w/in Homes	72	48	24	52	0	52

Note: Data from Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral (March 2026).

Child Care Assistance in Iowa

Child Care Assistance (CCA) is available to the children of income-eligible parents to help pay for care at Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) approved child care programs while a parent or caretaker works or attends school. Child care programs are reimbursed directly from HHS when they provide care to a family that qualifies. The income eligibility limit for those initially applying for CCA is 160% of Federal Poverty Level (FPL), or 200% if they have a child with special needs.

According to the federally determined poverty threshold that went into effect January 2026, for a household of 3, to initially qualify for CCA 160% FPL is $43,712 while the point which a family already approved for CCA would exceed income eligibility, 225% FPL, is $59,470. According to the same

threshold, for a household of 4, to initially qualify for CCA 160% FPL is $52,800 while the point which a family already approved for CCA would exceed income eligibility, 225% FPL is $74250.

Reimbursements are based on the number of units a child attends each week but cannot exceed the number approved by HHS. A unit is a half-day (up to 5 hours). In most cases, a child that attends full-time, five days a week would be approved for up to 10 units (2 half-day units, for 5 days), depending on several factors, including the parent or caretaker work or school schedule. A child care provider is reimbursed at a rate equal to the amount they would charge a private pay family (or equivalent), with a maximum reimbursement based on their participation in the Iowa Quality for Kids (IQ4K) quality rating improvement system.

Table 19: Half-Day Maximum CCA Reimbursement Rates

	No IQ4K		IQ4K Level 1 or Level 2		IQ4K Level 3 or Level 4		IQ4K Level 5	
Age Group	**Basic Care**	**Special Needs**	**Basic Care**	**Special Needs**	**Basic Care**	**Special Needs**	**Basic Care**	**Special Needs**
Licensed Centers								
Infant/Toddler	$25.66	$51.94	$25.66	$51.94	$25.66	$51.94	$27.00	$51.94
Preschool	$19.50	$30.43	$20.25	$30.43	$21.50	$30.43	$22.97	$30.43
School Age	$16.50	$30.34	$17.10	$30.34	$17.50	$30.34	$18.50	$30.34
Child Development Home A or B								
Infant/Toddler	$16.63	$24.95	$16.63	$24.95	$16.63	$24.95	$17.50	$24.95
Preschool	$15.00	$22.50	$15.50	$22.50	$16.00	$22.50	$17.00	$22.50
School Age	$15.00	$22.50	$15.25	$22.50	$15.50	$22.50	$15.75	$22.50
Child Development Home C								
Infant/Toddler	$18.00	$27.00	$18.00	$27.00	$18.00	$27.00	$18.50	$27.75
Preschool	$16.28	$24.42	$17.00	$25.50	$17.50	$26.25	$18.50	$27.75
School Age	$15.00	$22.50	$15.75	$23.63	$16.44	$24.66	$17.50	$26.25
Child Care Homes (not registered)								
Infant/Toddler	$16.63	$24.95	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Preschool	$15.00	$22.50	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
School Age	$15.00	$22.50	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

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

CHILD CARE NEEDS SURVEY RESULTS

In 2026, three electronic surveys developed by First Children's Finance were distributed for the purpose of determining how child care affects employers and parents, and to gain insight from child care providers about the current challenges and opportunities they are experiencing. To ensure there are no biases and to maintain confidentiality, survey links were distributed and then responses were collected and analyzed by First Children's Finance as an independent third party. Comments made by survey participants are shared verbatim, if an individual respondent, local employer, or child care program cannot be identified, in which case the comment may have been partially reported or edited to remove the identifying information.

Employer Survey Results

A total of 6 companies are represented in the employer survey results. Participating employers represent the following industries: finance and insurance, manufacturing, other services, public administration, and retail trade. Collectively participating companies employ 46 employees in the Harris-Lake Park area, with the majority considered full-time, first shift (days). Currently there are 4 vacancies, 2 full-time first shift (days) positions and 2 part-time first shift (days) positions.

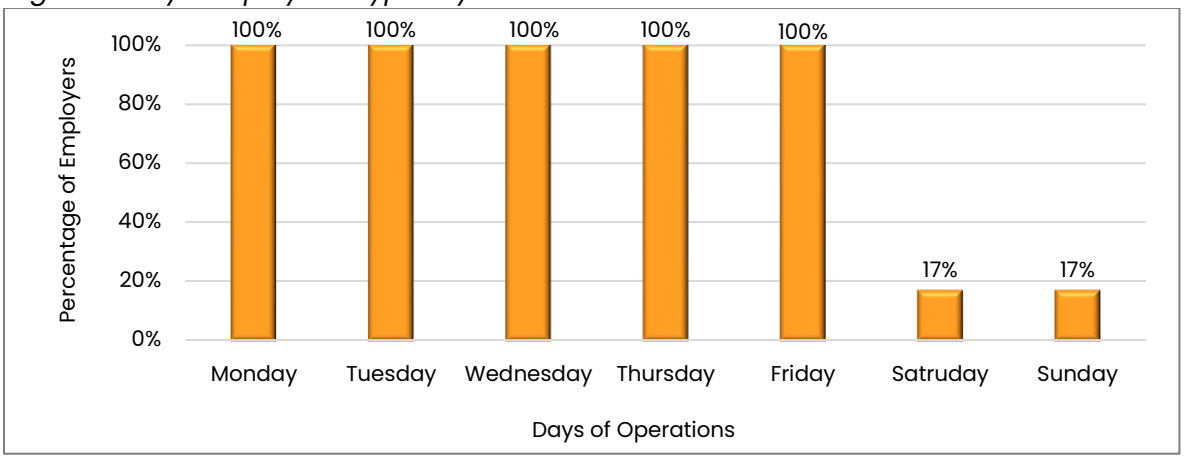
Table 20: Employees and Vacancies by Shift

Shift	Full-Time Employees	Part-Time Employees	Full-Time Vacancies	Part-Time Vacancies
First Shift (days)	39	4	2	2
Second Shift (evenings)	2	0	0	0
Third Shift (overnight)	0	0	0	0
Rotating Shift (changing days/times)	1	0	0	0
Total	**42**	**4**	**2**	**2**

In a separate question, employers were asked how many new positions they plan to add in the next 3 years. Eighty-three percent (83%) of employers said they are planning to add at least 1 new position. Collectively they plan to add 6 positions, with most planning to add only 1 position.

When asked which days of the week their employees typically work, most operate Monday through Friday. Out of the 6 companies, 100% operate Monday through Friday, 17% also operate on Saturday, and 17% also operate on Sunday. *See figure on the next page.*

Figure 2: Days Employees Typically Work



When it comes to hours and days of operation, 67% operate first-shift Monday through Friday (5 days/week), 17% operate first-shift Monday through Sunday (7 days/week), and 17% operate first-shift plus evenings Monday through Friday (5 days/week).

Employers were asked if all or some employees work set shifts, and what are the hours for each shift. The following comment was received:

- *8:00 am to 2:00 pm and 2:00 pm to 10:00 pm.*

Seventeen percent (17%) of employers said there are sometimes changes or fluctuations in their hours or days of operations, such as shut-down, seasonal changes, planned overtime of a group of workers, etc. Comments received about schedule fluctuations were:

- *Winter hours close at 4:00 PM.*

When asked how many of their employees have children age 12 or younger, all employers estimated 50% or fewer.

Table 21: Employees with Children Age 12 or Younger

	Percent of Employers
0% to 25% of employees have children age 12 or younger	50%
26% to 50% of employees have children age 12 or younger	50%
51% to 75% of employees have children age 12 or younger	0%
76% to 100% of employees have children age 12 or younger	0%

Employers were also asked to estimate how many of their employees live within the Harris-Lake Park Community School District Boundaries. Employers were split with the majority indicating up to one-half of employees live in the boundaries.

Table 22: Employees that Live in the School District

	Percent of Employers
0% to 25% of employees live in the school district	33.3%
26% to 50% of employees live in the school district	33.3%
51% to 75% of employees live in the school district	0%
76% to 100% of employees live in the school district	33.3%

One (1) company had 1 employee that departed during the last 12 months as a direct result of child care challenges. As a follow up, employers were then asked a series of questions about productivity, absenteeism, and other challenges as they relate to child care.

When it comes to employee productivity, 50% of employers have experienced challenges related to productivity due to employee's child care challenges during the last 12 months, while 50% said they did not. Comments received were:

- *Yes because daycare provider was sick and could not watch child.*
- *There are times that employees have to leave early or take an unscheduled day off due to child care not being available or closing unexpectedly. There appears not to be enough available to take any overflow if daycare provider they use is not available.*
- *Lack of child care causing canceled shifts, call outs and low availability.*

When asked about absenteeism due to employee's child care challenges, 33% of employers have experienced challenges, while 17% are unsure, and 50% have not. Comments received were:

- *Employee has to take off time because of sick child or sick daycare provider.*
- *There are times that employees have to leave early or take an unscheduled day off due to child care not being available or closing unexpectedly. There appears not to be enough available to take any overflow if daycare provider they use is not available.*

In a separate question, employers were asked if their business had difficulty hiring due to child care options or challenges in the area, 50% are unsure, and 50% have not had any difficulty hiring. Comments received were:

- *Have not specifically had that be an issue in any recent hires, but I can anticipate that it could be a reason in some cases.*
- *Not recently.*

Employers were given a list of common effects their employees (not job applicants) may experience due to child care challenges and asked to select all that they are aware of as having affected their employees in the last 12 months. The most common challenges were employees missed a day of

work because their provider was closed or on vacation (67% of employers), missed a day of work because their provider did not have room or space for a child (67% of employers), and employees had to leave work early (67% of employers). *See table on the next page.*

Table 23: Effects of Child Care Challenges on Employees

	Percent of Employers
Missed a day of work because their provider was closed or on vacation	67%
Missed a day of work because their provider did not have room or space for a child	67%
Did not accept a desired job offer	0%
Arrived late to work	50%
Had to leave work early	67%
Unable to work overtime	17%
Unable to travel for work	0%
Lower productivity	17%
Unable to accept a different work schedule or shift	0%
Have had to reduce the number of hours worked	17%
Received disciplinary action (not including firing)	0%
Quit a job	0%
Got fired	0%
Had to change jobs to one that works with their child care arrangement	0%
Took a job that does not fit their skills	0%
Had to leave their child home alone to go to work	17%
Had to bring their child to work with them	0%
Other (see comments below)	0%
Our employees experienced no issues related to work and child care	17%

Employers were asked if their company currently offered any child care related benefits to their employees (they were asked to select all that applied). The benefits listed typically have some cost to the employer. The majority do not offer any of the benefits on the list. Twenty percent (20%) offer employees dependent care flex spending.

Table 24: Child Care Related Benefits Currently Offered

	Percent of Employers
Dependent Care Flex Spending Accounts	17%
Financial assistance to help employees pay for child care	0%
None of the above	83%

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

- *Small business we just don't offer it. Most of our employees' significant others have jobs that offer those things.*

Employers were then given a second list of child care related benefits and asked which they offer to their employees (they were asked to select all that applied). The benefits on this list typically do not result in the employer incurring additional costs. All employers said that their company does not offer any of the benefits on the list.

Table 25: Child Care Related Benefits Currently Offered

	Percent of Employers
Child care information included in employee orientation	0%
Child care information included in employee handbook	0%
Flexible schedule if regular care is not available	0%
Work-from-home option if regular care is not available	0%
None of the above	100%

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

- *Our employees' significant others have jobs that provide those things, so we do not provide them.*
- *Our positions are not set up to have work from home ability at this time, and some positions will always require them to be in the office (customer service).*
- *Not my choice.*

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

- *We do not penalize our employees from needing to take time off to take care of their children.*
- *Try to be as flexible as possible if child care issues arise.*

Employers were asked how their business would be willing to assist in addressing the child care shortage and/or supporting child care businesses. A list of options was provided, and respondents asked to select all that apply. Thirty-three percent (33%) would consider an annual donation or financial contribution for a portion (but not all) of the wages of a child care center director. Thirty-three percent (33%) are unsure of how their company would be involved and 33% would do none of the above. *See table on the next page.*

Table 26: Solutions Employers Are Willing to Consider to Address Child Care

	Percent of Employers
Provide space for on-site child care center (owned & operated by another entity)	0%
Own and operate a child care center (either on-site or off-site)	0%
Provide a significant donation or financial contribution for a child care center as a match for a grant application	17%
Donation or financial contribution to build, remodel, or expand a child care center	17%
Donate land or provide a financial contribution to purchase land to build a larger child care center	17%
Directly employ the Center Director (paying wages and benefits) in order to help reduce operating costs of a center	0%
Annual donation or financial contribution that is equal to the full wages of a child care center director	0%
Annual donation or financial contribution for a portion (but not all) of the wages of a child care center director	33%
Other	0%
Unsure	33%
None of the above	33%

Employers were given another list with additional ways a business may assist in addressing the child care shortage and/or supporting child care businesses. Respondents were asked to select all that apply. Overall, 33% are unsure what ways they would be willing to assisting with child care in the community and 33% selected none of the above. *See table on the next page.*

Table 27: Additional Solutions Employers Are Willing to Consider to Address Child Care

	Percent of Employers
Appoint an employee to serve on the Board of Directors of a child care program	0%
Provide child care providers access to purchase supplies through our company to take advantage of bulk pricing or discounts	0%
Provide in-kind services to reduce expenses of a child care program (ex. bookkeeping, payroll, maintenance, cleaning, etc.)	0%
Donation or financial contribution for operating a child care program	17%
Donation or financial contribution for child care scholarships for your employees	17%
Donation or financial contribution for child care scholarships for all children	17%
Pay a child care provider the tuition of a vacant slot in order to reserve or hold that slot for one of your employees (with the employees taking over payment upon enrolling)	0%
Other	17%
Unsure	33%
None of the above	33%

Those that selected "Other" were asked to explain. Comments received were:

- *Reduce price on labor for car repair of a child care provider.*

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

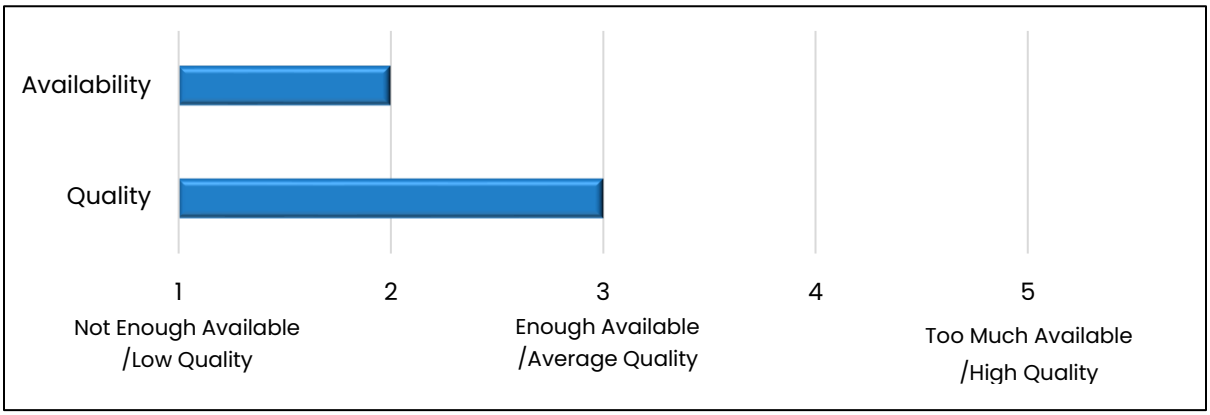
- *Finding available child care.*
- *We have known of a few families that are unable to get daycare in Lake Park due to child care facilities not being opened at an early enough time. For example, someone needs to be to work in Round Lake at 6:30 in the morning but there's no daycares open up at 6:00 a.m.*
- *Simply just finding childcare in our community. I don't think there are nearly enough openings to service the children here in our community.*
- *Just having somewhere available.*
- *People need to become adults and when you look at becoming a parent, maybe you don't need a new car, an 80" television, the latest i-phone, people need to learn to live within their means.*

Employers were asked what opportunities should be explored to help address the child care supply in the Harris-Lake Park area. Comments received were:

- *Unsure.*
- *For example, Sheldon Iowa has a daycare attached to the elementary building. This was a wonderful thing to have for children under the age of 12. If this were an option in Lake Park I think it would make enough money to pay for itself. I believe daycare facilities with more than one adult taking care of children are important I know of a lot of families have had to take a day off of work because their daycare provider is sick or their day care providers child is sick daycare facility would be the way to go.*
- *Any and all areas should be explored. I would think purchasing an existing property or building and renovating with the help of donations and grants. Have seen communities build new and that seems to run too expensive.*
- *I don't think it is up to the GOVERNMENT entities, to be involved in these matters. Child care should be handled by private entrepreneurs that see a need and so they take a risk like everyone else and open a business without expecting handouts.*

Employers were asked to rate the *availability* of child care in the Harris-Lake Park area on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not enough available (there is a deficit), 3 enough available (just right), and 5 highly available (there is a surplus); the higher the score, the more available. The average rating is 2. Employers were then asked to rate the *quality* of child care in the Harris-Lake Park area on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being low quality, 3 average quality, and 5 high quality (the higher the score, the higher quality). The average rating is 3. *See figure on the next page.*

Figure 3: Employer Ratings of Child Care in the Harris-Lake Park Area



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

- *I think a daycare facility attached to our elementary school would be the answer to a lot of people's problems.*

The final question asked employers to provide any additional comments they had about child care in the Harris-Lake Park area. No comments received were.

Child Care Provider Survey Results

A total of 3 child care providers, all located within the Harris-Lake Park area, completed the survey. Among the participating programs, 1 is registered child development home with the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), while the other 2 are not regulated. When the providers that are not regulated were asked for more details, 1 said they used to be a registered child development home but "paperwork was keeping them from curriculum planning and spending time with children". The other indicated they have never been regulated but are interested in becoming regulated.

Providers answered questions about the length of time their child care program has been in operation, and how much longer they plan to provide care. One provider has been in business over 20 years, another between 5 and 9 years, while 1 has been in business 1 to 4 years. All 3 plan to continue providing care for 5 or more years.

The capacity is assigned to a center or home by HHS is based on usable square footage, there are often reasons for the provider setting a lower preferred capacity, such as the ability to staff all classrooms, or large spaces like multi-purpose rooms in centers counted in the total license that do not work well for a classroom.

The registered home has a legal capacity of 12, which is what they prefer, and their current enrollment is 12 children. The non-regulated providers reported they have a preferred capacity of 103 and currently have a combined enrollment of 32 children.

Table 28: Participating Programs by Type

	Total Providers	Preferred Capacity	Full-Time Enrollment	Part-Time Enrollment
Licensed Centers/Preschools	---	---	---	---
License Exempt Centers	---	---	---	---
Registered Child Development Homes	1	12	12	---
Non-Regulated Programs	2	103	29	3
Totals	**3**	**115**	**41**	**3**

One provider said they have 2 full-time and 8 part-time employees. No providers currently have vacant staff positions, however, during the previous 12 months one provider had 1 full-time and 2 part-time employees depart (voluntarily or involuntarily). When asked about hiring over the last 12 months, 1 provider said it was very easy while 1 said it was somewhat easy. The remaining provider did not try to hire during the last 12 months. *See table on the next page.*

Table 29: Employees & Vacant Positions within Child Care Programs

	Full-Time Employees	Part-Time Employees	Full-Time Departures	Part-Time Departures	Full-Time Vacancies	Part-Time Vacancies
Centers/Preschools	---	---	---	---	---	---
Registered Homes	0	0	0	0	0	0
Non-Regulated Providers	2	8	1	2	0	0

When asked if they had to limit enrollment or close a classroom due to not having enough staff during the last 12 months, 0% said yes. No additional comments were received.

When asked if in the last 12 months they had turned away families or put them on a waitlist due to lack of openings, 100% said yes. Comments received were:

- *I really haven't had an opening for quite a few years because the families I have are growing their families.*
- *Since opening I've had a waitlist. I currently don't do a waitlist and do first come first serve as it was getting too long.*

All 3 programs (100%) said they provide care between the hours of 5:30 am and 5:30 pm, Monday through Friday, year-round. None of the providers are open for what are considered extended hours (after 6:30 pm) or on weekends.

Providers were asked, during a typical year, how many days their program closes for planned holidays, vacation, staff training, etc. Sixty-seven percent (67%) plan to be closed between 16 and 20 days, while 33% plan to be closed 10 to 15 days. As a follow up, the providers were asked if parents pay tuition for the days the program plans to be closed. Sixty-seven percent (67%) said yes, while 33% said no.

Providers were then asked if their program ever closes unexpectedly. One hundred percent (100%) said yes. Comments received were:

- *I've closed twice in the 2.5 years of being open for sickness.*

As a follow up, the providers were asked what their policy is related to closing for inclement weather. Comments received were:

- *I very rarely close for inclement weather unless traveling is not recommended or there is a weather warning. Each situation is unique.*
- *I am open during inclement weather.*
- *I am usually open.*

Child care providers were given a list of factors that parents may consider when looking for child care and asked to select which factor seems most important to parents that contact them looking for child care. Sixty-seven percent (67%) said available space/timing of enrollment is the most important factor while 33% said it is tuition rates or price.

Table 30: Factor Most Important to Parents Inquiring About Care

	Percentage of Providers
Available space/timing of enrollment	67%
Care includes preschool	---
Dependable staff or provider	---
Drop-in or occasional care	---
Educational curriculum used	---
Health and safety policies	---
Iowa Quality for Kids (IQ4K) quality rating system	---
Location	---
Open on non-school days	---
Part-time options	---
Positive interactions between staff and children	---
Second-shift/evening care	---
Secured entrance	---
Special needs care	---
Third shift/overnight care	---
Transportation to and from school or preschool	---
Tuition assistance or scholarships	---
Tuition rates or price	33%
Upkeep or appearance of the facility and playground	---
Weekend care	---

Many child care providers will take part in programs that improve business operations or provide funding to off-set costs. Providers were asked about multiple federal and state programs available to licensed centers, registered homes, and some non-registered homes. Overall, the child care programs are aware of the opportunities, with two programs being current or past participants of some of the programs. *See table on the next page.*

Table 31: Child Care Programs Participation in Funding Opportunities

	Current or Past Participant	Aware of, But Never Participated	Not Familiar With/Not Heard Of
Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)	2	1	---
Iowa HHS Child Care Assistance (CCA)	2	1	---
Child Care Assistance (CCA) Program for Child Care Workforce	---	3	---
Agreement with school to provider Statewide Preschool Program (4-year-old preschool)	---	2	1

As a follow up, providers were asked about more programs involving quality improvement, technology, and education. Overall, the child care programs are aware of most of the opportunities but have never participated.

Table 32: Child Care Programs Participation or Knowledge of State Programs

	Current or Past Participant	Aware of, But Never Participated	Not Familiar With/Not Heard Of
Iowa Quality for Kids (IQ4K) Quality Improvement Rating System	1	2	---
TEACH Scholarship Program	---	3	---
Child Care WAGE$® salary supplement	---	3	---
FieldPrint Fingerprinting	---	2	1
Current opportunity for HHS-funded monthly subscription fees for either Playground or brightwheel child care management software	---	3	---

Child care providers were also asked how many children in their program are receiving or are eligible for some form of financial assistance such as child care assistance, the food program (CACFP), or other needs-based grants or scholarship programs. Collectively the programs do not have any children enrolled that are eligible for assistance.

Providers were asked a series of open-ended questions about being a child care provider, what they saw for the future of child care, and any other comments they have about child care. Responses to these questions are listed below.

Providers were asked if they had the opportunity, would they wish to expand their current child care program to serve more children. Thirty-three percent (33%) said yes. Those responding yes were asked to explain how they would expand. Comments received were:

- *I would love to build and operate more of a center type of daycare.*
- *I am comfortable with my current childcare and parents are as well.*

- *That would mean I would have to hire someone and that just isn't something I want to have to deal with.*

In a separate question, respondents were asked to explain how they would expand. Comments received were:

- *My long-term goal is to open an intergenerational daycare.*

If you wish to expand your program, what kind of support would you need to be able to serve more children? Comments received were:

- *Current struggle is finding land that is affordable to build on.*

Providers that said they are not interested in expanding were asked to explain why. Comments received were:

- *I am pleased with the care I am able to provide at this time.*
- *I am happy with the size my childcare is now. Plus, if they were gone or sick then I would be left to figure out back up staff etc.*

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

- *If I were to expand, space and help would be the biggest obstacles.*
- *Greatest challenge currently is not having proper outdoor area for children to play on more.*
- *Staff.*

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

- *Space, employees.*
- *Current struggle is land to build on that is affordable. Always open to help with financing a daycare center.*
- *Money and staffing….I am not talking for myself I am talking if the city decides to build a center things are a lot more complicated with a registered center than they are with a home daycare*.

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

- *Be acknowledged as a business owner and early childhood educators.*
- *Unknown at this time.*
- *I really don't.*

What challenges do you see in the future for child care in the Harris-Lake Park area? Comments received were:

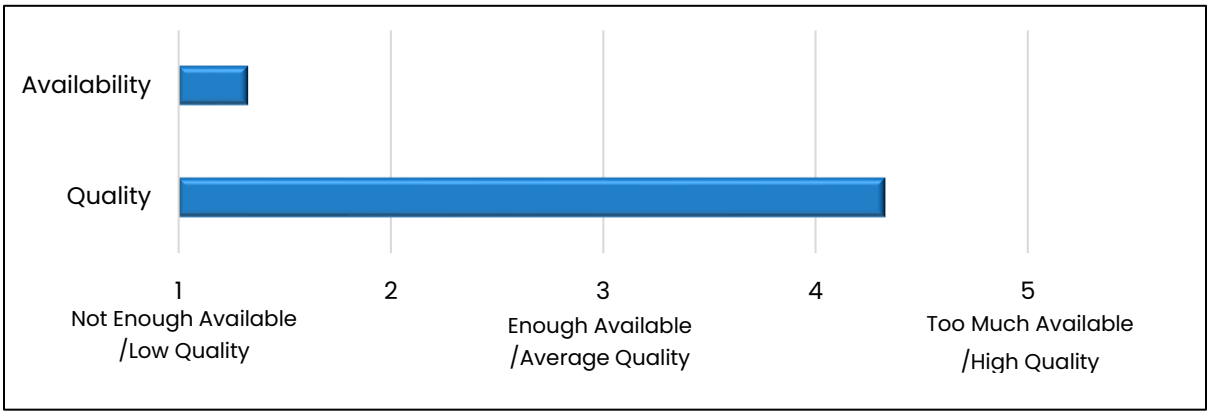
- *In home providers.*
- *The future for child care is very unknown at this time. I believe that child care is needed. I would love to expand if the opportunity is available.*
- *I have been noticing the calls have been getting to be fewer. Not sure if people assume I am full, if we as a community aren't getting growing families, or if people are able to stay home, but that is a worry of mine. If it's the first one if we aren't getting young families in the community then why not?*

What opportunities do you see in the future for child care in the Harris-Lake Park area? Comments received were:

- *With a larger school facility, being able to provide before and after school care would open up spaces for infants and toddlers.*
- *With building a new school having adequate daycare is crucial.*
- *I have been doing this for 18 years and it's been pretty much the same as far as being in the city for that time so as far as opportunities I don't see any.*

Child care providers were asked to rank the *availability* of child care in the Harris-Lake Park area on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not enough available (there is a deficit), 3 enough available (just right), and 5 highly available (there is a surplus); the higher the score, the more available. The average rating is 1.33. Providers were then asked to rank the *quality* of child care in the Harris-Lake Park area on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being low quality, 3 quality, and 5 high quality (the higher the score, the higher quality). The average rating is 4.33.

Figure 4: Child Care Provider Ratings of Child Care in the Harris-Lake Park Area



The final question allowed providers to share any additional comments they had about child care in the Harris-Lake Park area. Comments received were:

- *We are in need of building a daycare center. The idea of a municipal daycare center, however, is very disheartening to those who have been here and working on building.*

Parent Survey Results

A total of 108 individuals accessed the parent survey. Of those, 49 surveys were fully completed, and 35 surveys were "disqualified", which means they are only partially complete. The remaining 24 were not submitted by the participant.

Partially Complete Surveys
Partially complete surveys from those that were disqualified do provide insightful information. Parents that are considered "disqualified" are those that indicated either they do not have children age 12 or younger or that they do not use or are not likely to use child care in the next 3 years.

Among the 35 disqualified surveys, 18 said they do not have children age 12 or younger and 17 said they do not use child care and have no intention of using child care within the next 3 years. Among those that do have children age 12 or younger but were disqualified, they collectively have 25 children. Twelve (12) of those children are school age, 3 are preschool age, 6 are age 2 or younger, and 2 are from a family that is currently expecting.

When parents that were disqualified were asked about their current child care arrangement, only 13% are using an "outside" child care arrangement such as a center or home provider, with a formal arrangement, while 19% said their children are old enough to stay home alone, and the remaining 68% are either using a relative or there is a stay-at-home parent.

When those not currently using outside care were asked if they are likely to use outside care in the next 3 years, 85% said no. Comments received were:

- *I am interested in starting a home child care business in my home.*
- *All of our children will be in school by then, and my wife or I will be able to provide care after school.*
- *She will be too old.*

Parents that were disqualified were asked where they live. Sixty-seven percent (67%) said they live in Harris, while 33% said they live in Lake Park. When those living somewhere other than Lake Park were asked if the availability of child care in Lake Park influenced your decision
to live elsewhere, 100% answered no.

When parents that were disqualified but likely to use outside care were asked if they were selecting child care today if they would choose a provider located in Lake Park, 100% answered no.

Complete Responses

A total of 49 individuals that currently have children ages 12 or younger and are currently using child care in Lake Park or would prefer to use child care in Lake Park completed the parent survey. These parents provided information about their current and future child care needs. Some questions required an answer while others did not, therefore responses from all questions are included in the aggregated data, even if an individual did not complete all survey questions.

Using the most popular responses, a parent would be described as married (84%) and living in the 51347-zip code (84%). They work first shift Monday through Friday, they work in Spirit Lake (37%), and the nature of their job is health care & social assistance (24%). Their spouse also works first shift Monday through Friday, they work in Spirit Lake (32%), and the nature of their job is agriculture, fishing, hunting (32%). They currently use child care in Lake Park (63%), Monday through Friday. They use child care 40 to 49 hours per week or more for younger children (63%). For ages 3 and older, they use care part-time during the school year and full-time during the summer. They are satisfied with their current child care provider (84%).

Parents were asked where they live. Eighty-four percent (84%) live in Lake Park, while 16% live outside the community.

Table 33: Parents' Place of Residence

Geography	Percent of Parents
Lake Park	84%
Harris	2%
Lake Field	6%
Ocheyedan	4%
Round Lake	2%
Spirit Lake	2%

Parents that live outside of Lake Park were asked if the availability of child care in Lake Park influenced their decision to live elsewhere. Twenty-five percent (25%) said yes, it has. Comments received were:

- *Grandparents will not retire to Lake Park because kiddos were unable to have options for childcare in Lake Park.*
- *We are a mile from the Lake Park border.*

Parents that live outside of Lake Park were asked if they were selecting care today, would they choose a provider located in Lake Park, 100% said yes.

In a separate question, parents were asked which school district their children are enrolled in or will be enrolled when they become school aged. Eighty-eight percent (88%) said Harris-Lake Park Community School District.

Table 34: School District Where Children Are Enrolled

District	Percent of Parents
Harris-Lake Park Community School District	88%
Heron Lake-Okabena School District	2%
Jackson County Central School District	2%
Okoboji Community School District	2%
Worthington Public School District	2%
Other	4%

The most common industry or occupational nature for the current parent who completed the survey (self) is health care & social assistance (24%). The most common occupation among their spouses or partners is also agriculture, fishing, hunting (32%).

Table 35: Nature of Job or Occupation

	Self	Spouse or Partner
Accommodations & Food Service	0%	2%
Administrative & Waste Management	0%	2%
Agriculture, Fishing, Hunting	8%	32%
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	4%	0%
Construction	8%	12%
Educational Services	12%	5%
Finance & Insurance	6%	0%
Health Care & Social Assistance	24%	2%
Information	0%	2%
Management of Companies	2%	5%
Manufacturing	12%	15%
Mining, Quarrying, & Oil & Gas	0%	5%
Professional, Scientific & Technical	2%	5%
Public Administration	0%	0%
Real Estate, Rental, Leasing	4%	0%
Retail Trade	4%	0%
Transportation & Warehousing	4%	5%
Utilities	2%	2%
Wholesale Trade	0%	0%
Other Services	4%	5%
Do not work	2%	0%

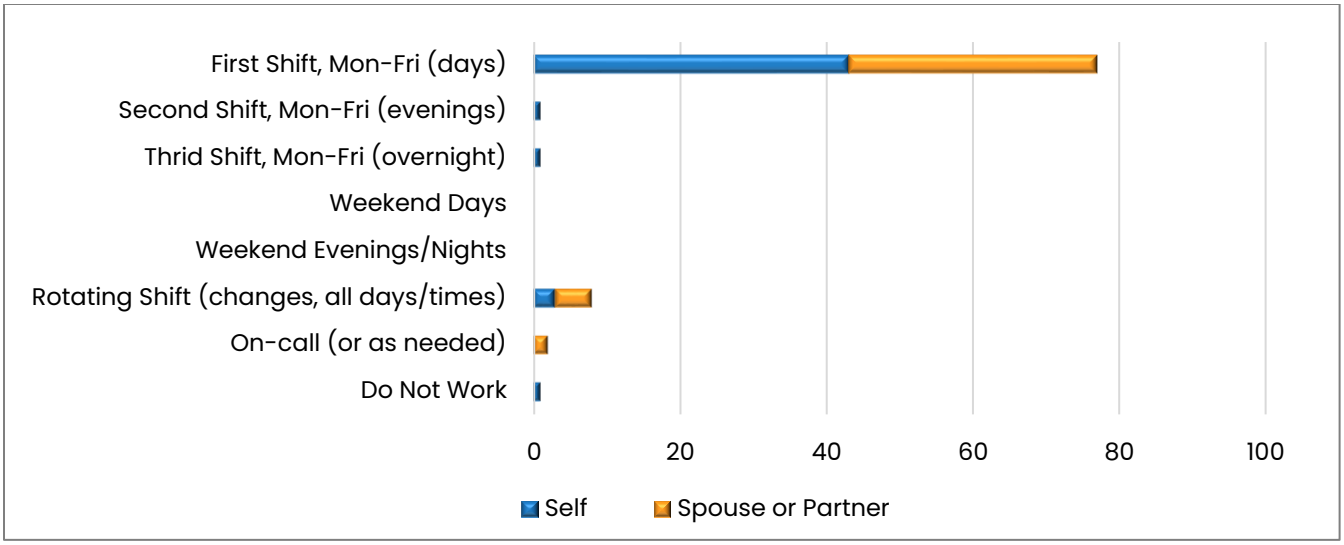
Parents were asked what town their job is in or where they do most of their work. Thirty-seven percent (37%) said their own job is in Spirit Lake and 32% said their spouse's or partner's job is in Spirit Lake.

Table 36: Parents' Place of Employment

	Self	Spouse or Partner
Arnolds Park	---	2%
Brewster	---	---
Cedar Rapids	2%	---
Estherville	4%	---
Harris	2%	5%
Hartley	---	---
Lake Park	29%	22%
Lakefield	---	5%
May City	---	---
Milford	---	---
Ocheyedan	---	---
Okoboji	4%	---
Orleans	---	---
Round Lake	2%	---
Sibley	4%	2%
Spencer	2%	7%
Spirit Lake	37%	32%
Wahpeton	---	---
West Okoboji	---	---
Outside Iowa	8%	2%
Work from home/remote worker	2%	10%
No fixed location 100% travel	2%	12%
Do not work	2%	

Most parents and their spouse or partner work first shift, Monday through Friday. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of those completing the survey (self) and 83% of their spouses or partners work first-shift, Monday through Friday. *See figure on next page.*

Figure 5: Current Parent Work Schedules



The most common child care related benefit parents receive from their employer is dependent care flex spending (29%) followed by flexible schedule if regular care is not available (12%) and work from home options if regular care is not available (12%). Fifty-seven percent (57%) of parents said neither their employer, nor their spouses or partner's employer offers any of these benefits, while 10% were unsure of child care related benefits offered.

Table 37: Child Care Related Benefits Offered by Employer

	Percent of Parents
Dependent Care Flex Spending Accounts	29%
Financial assistance to help employees pay for child care	0%
Flexible schedule if regular care is not available	12%
Work from home options if regular care is not available	12%
Child care information included in employee orientation	0%
Child care information included in employee handbook	2%
Other	0%
Unsure if employer offers any of these	10%
Employer does not offer any of these	57%

Parents were asked if they or their spouse or partner had declined employment or withdrawn from the workforce during the last 12 months due to child care. Twenty-two percent (22%) (11 parents) said "yes". Comments received were:

- *No flexible jobs exist in the area given the daycare needs I have.*
- *No childcare for weeks and I had to take PTO. Child's father is not present or able to help.*
- *I had to leave work to care for our child.*

- *Cost vs pay.*
- *Working one job just to pay for daycare.*
- *Maternity leave for 8 weeks after baby was born.*
- *Had to take a day off if daycare was closed.*

Parents were asked, as of today whether they or their spouse or partner is not working (unemployed) because of child care challenges. Six percent (6%) (3 parents) said "yes". Comments received were:

- *My child needs me as there is no open daycare in the area.*
- *Declined multiple jobs due to cost of care.*

Parents were asked if child care challenges are currently limiting their or their spouse's or partner's employment (Ex. Working part-time when full-time preferred or not working within preferred field). Thirty-five percent (35%) (17 parents) said "yes". Comments received were:

- *We try to work opposite hours so we don't need child care.*
- *Have to take off early to get from school, work from home, or have to take PTO.*
- *I can't work as she needs someone to watch and care for her.*
- *Hours/days available to work.*
- *Need to decline opportunities or miss current work due to childcare's availability.*
- *Hours are not limited but quality of work performed is a struggle.*
- *Just in regards to whether our in-home daycare is closed, finding a "back up" daycare so myself or my husband do not need to take a day off.*
- *Hard to care for two children while working from home.*
- *We have to compromise to get our daughter to Milford in the morning which conflicts with our schedule, and in the fall when my husband's business runs 24hr/day. I have to make the 45-minute commute in the mornings & evenings to get our daughter to daycare.*

Parents were asked how many children are living in their household by age groups. The "Households" column of the following table shows how many parents said they have at least one child in each age group, while the "Children" column reflects how many total children are represented in the survey. Because some households have children in each age group, the household's column may be duplicative and therefore cannot be totaled. A total of 108 children are represented in the survey. *See table on the next page.*

Table 38: Children Represented in Parent Survey

	Households	Children
Currently Expecting	4	7
Ages 0 to 2	26	28
Ages 3 to 4	16	17
Ages 5 to 12	31	56
Total	**---**	**108**

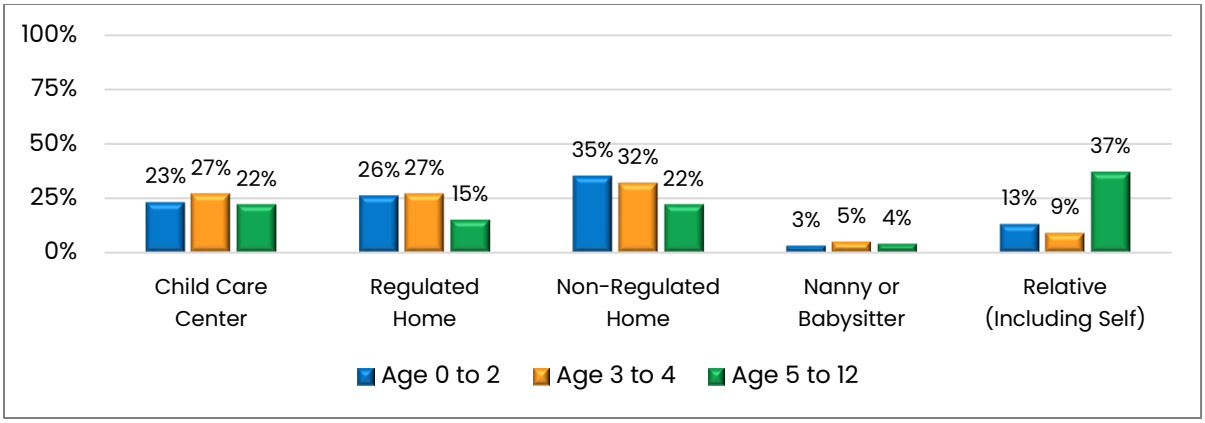
Twenty-four percent (24%) of parents plan to have or adopt more children in the next 5 years. In a separate question, 39% said that the availability of child care locally has impacted their decision to have or adopt children or caused them to limit the size of their family. Comments received were:

- *I would have more children if daycare was more accessible and affordable.*
- *The cost.*
- *Would love to adopt or foster but it is difficult to find state approved daycare.*
- *Due to financial hardships.*
- *No openings.*
- *No daycare openings if we were to have another child.*
- *The price of child care is way too high.*
- *We love the center where we are now, but the commute is awful & we pay thousands of dollars per year in tuition.*

Seventy-six percent (76%) of parents are currently using some form of "outside" child care such as a child care center or home provider with a formal arrangement. In addition, 18% use a relative while 6% use a stay at home or work from home parent. Among the parents not currently using outside care, 100% said they are likely to start using some form of outside child care in the next 3 years.

When asked for specific details about their primary child care setting during the last 12 months, overall, 35% are using a center, followed by 22% using a regulated home, 14% using a non-regulated home, and 14% had a parent home with their children. When broken down by age group, the most commonly used setting for children ages 0 to 2 and ages 3 to 4 is a child care center. For children ages 5 to 12 (school age) a relative is the most common. *See figure on the next page.*

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



A list of effects child care may have on parents' jobs was presented, and parents asked to select all that apply to their own or their spouse's or partner's job in the last 12 months. The effects most commonly experienced by parents were missing a day of work because the provider was closed or on vacation (63%), had to leave work early (49%), and arrived late to work (44%).

Table 39: Effects of Child Care Challenges on Job

	Percent of Parents
Missed a day of work because provider was closed or on vacation	63%
Missed a day of work because the provider was full and did not have a slot for your child	23%
Did not accept a desired job offer	16%
Arrived late to work	44%
Had to leave work early	49%
Unable to work overtime	30%
Unable to travel for work	19%
Lower productivity	14%
Unable to accept a different work schedule or shift	19%
Had to reduce the number of hours worked	21%
Received disciplinary action (not including firing)	7%
Quit a job	5%
Got fired	2%
Considered changing jobs to one that works with child care	12%
Had to change jobs to one that works with child care	21%
Took a job that does not fit my/their skills	7%
Had to leave child home alone to go to work	2%
Had to take child to work with me/them	26%
Had to supervise child while working from home	14%
Other (see comments below)	2%
Experienced no problems related to work and child care	30%

Those that selected 'Other' were asked to explain. Comments received were:

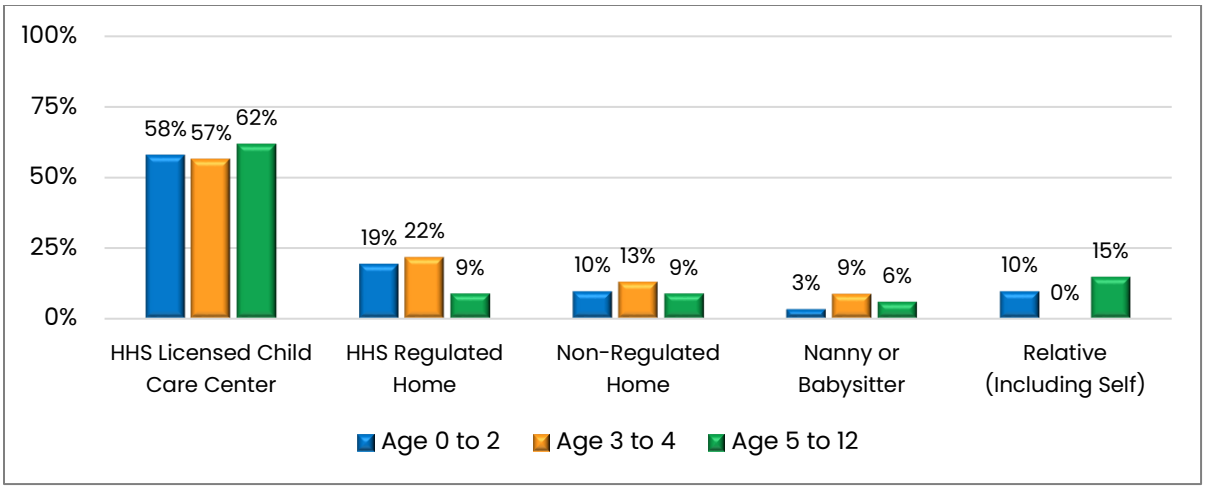
- *Have to have our 15-year-old watch the younger ones while we work.*

Twenty-eight percent (23%) of parents said that there are changes that could be made to their current child care arrangements that would allow them to perform better at work. Comments received were:

- *Center facility may alleviate scheduling when care team needs time off.*
- *After school childcare in our town and summer childcare in our town.*
- *Could be closer to where I work, especially in the summer.*
- *Closes early Wednesdays and frequent days off.*
- *Local childcare.*
- *Wouldn't have to depend on their gramma every day.*
- *They usually close when school gets closed because of weather. We still have to work on those days.*
- *After school programs.*

Parents were asked if all choices are available and you are selecting child care today, which setting would you most prefer. When asked their preference by age, the most commonly desired setting for all ages is an Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) licensed child care center, followed by an HHS regulated home.

Figure 7: Preferred Child Care Setting



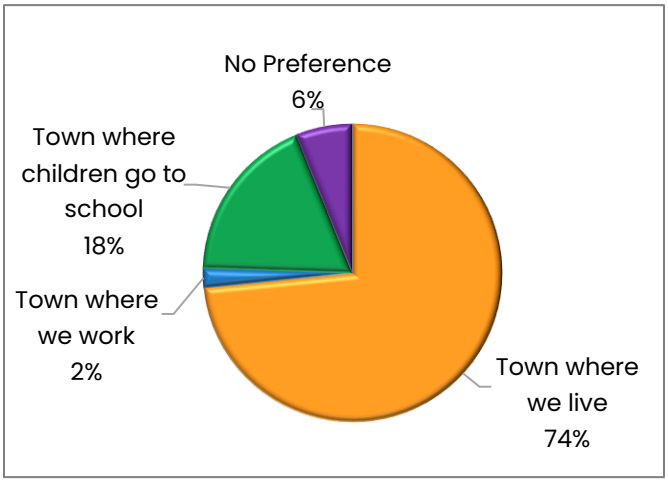
Parents were asked if their children are in their preferred child care setting. Just over half (53%) said their children are in their preferred type of care. The most common reasons why children are not in the preferred setting include not being able to afford (14%) and location too far away (9%). *See table on the next page.*

Table 40: Reason Children Are Not in Preferred Type of Care

	Percent of Parents
Provider not accepting enrollments	7%
Location too far away	9%
Not able to afford	14%
Not conveniently located	2%
Not open for extended or nontraditional hours	0%
My children are not the right age for preferred arrangement	7%
Transportation to and from school/preschool not available	7%
Other	0%
Children are in my preferred type of care	53%

The preferred proximity if they were choosing child care today is the town where the family lives, which was selected by 74% of parents. The second most preferred is the town where children go to/will go to school (18%). *See figure on the next page.*

Figure 8: Preferred Proximity of Child Care



Parents were asked where their current child care provider is located and what location they would prefer. Sixty-three percent (63%) are using care in Lake Park, while 92% said if they were selecting care today Lake Park is their preferred location. *See table on the next page.*

Table 41: Location of Child Care

	Current Location	Preferred Location
Arnolds Park	---	---
Harris	9%	6%
Hartley	---	---
Lake Park	63%	92%
May City	2%	---
Milford	7%	---
Ocheyedan	---	2%
Okoboji	2%	---
Orleans	---	---
Spencer	---	---
Sioux Valley	2%	---
Spirit Lake	9%	---
Wahpeton	2%	---
West Okoboji	---	---
Outside Iowa	2%	---

Parents were asked several questions about the average number of hours of child care they use per week, preferred child care schedule, and current and preferred drop-off and pick-up times. The majority of parents (63%) with children age 2 or younger use 40 to 49 hours per week.

Parents that have preschool and school age children were asked to answer for their usage during the school year vs. the summer. During the school year, parents with children ages 3 to 4 (preschool) use more part-time care than during the summer. During the school year, 42% use less than 30 hours per week, while 38% use less than 30 hours per week during the summer. During the summer, 38% use 40 hours or more per week.

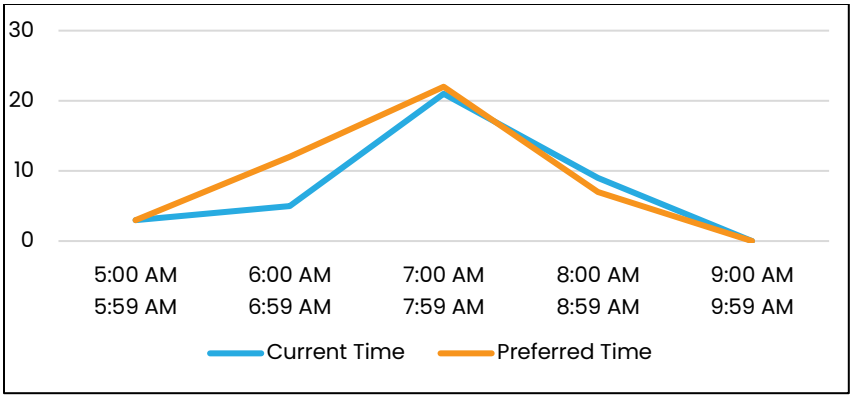
Parents with school-age children use care part-time during the school year and full-time during the summer. Sixty-nine percent (69%) use less than 20 hours per week during the school year, while 14% use less than 20 hours per week during the summer. During the summer, 39% use 40 hours or more per week.

Table 42: Average Hours per Week Child Care Currently Used

	Less than 10 Hours	10 to 19 Hours	20 to 29 hours	30 to 39 hours	40 to 49 hours	50 or more
Age 0 to 2	8%	0%	0%	29%	63%	0%
Age 3 to 4 during school year	24%	12%	6%	12%	35%	12%
Age 3 to 4 during summer	15%	15%	8%	23%	23%	15%
Age 5 to 12 during school year	27%	42%	4%	12%	8%	8%
Age 5 to 12 during summer	4%	10%	3%	23%	23%	16%

Currently, the most popular hour to drop-off children is from 7:00 am to 7:59 am (49%) (21 parents), followed by 8:00 am to 8:59 am (21%) (9 parents). Parents were also asked their preferred drop-off times. The most preferred drop-off times are still 7:00 am to 7:59 am (45%) (22 Parents), followed by 6:00 am to 6:59 am (24%) (12 parents).

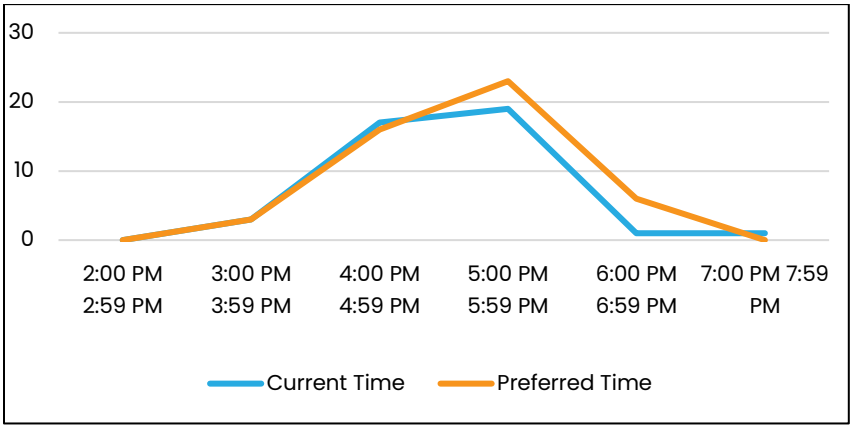
Figure 9: Parents' Current and Preferred Drop-off Times



When it comes to picking up children from care, 5:00 pm to 5:59 pm (46%) (19 parents), followed by 4:00 pm to 4:59 pm (40%) (17 parents). Some parents selected pick-up times between 2:00 am and 7:59 am. Because most parents reported they work first-shift and drop their children off for care between 5:00 am and 8:59 am, FCF suspects these parents intended to choose "pm" rather than "am." Those responses were counted with those responding between 2:00 pm and 7:59 pm.

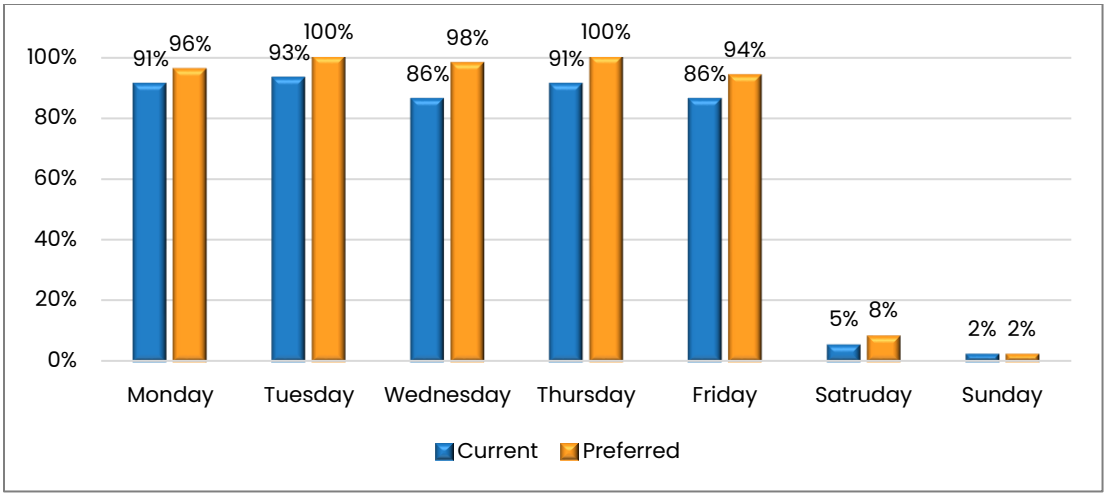
Parents were also asked their preferred pick-up time. The preferred time of parents is 5:00 pm to 5:59 pm (52%) (13 parents), followed by 4:00 pm to 4:59 pm (47%) (23 parents). Again, some parents selected times between 2:00 am and 7:59 am, which appears to have been in error based on the majority reporting they work first shift and their preference to drop off 6:00 am and 8:59 am. Those responses were counted with those responding between 2:00 pm and 7:59 pm.

Figure 10: Parents' Current and Preferred Pick-Up Times



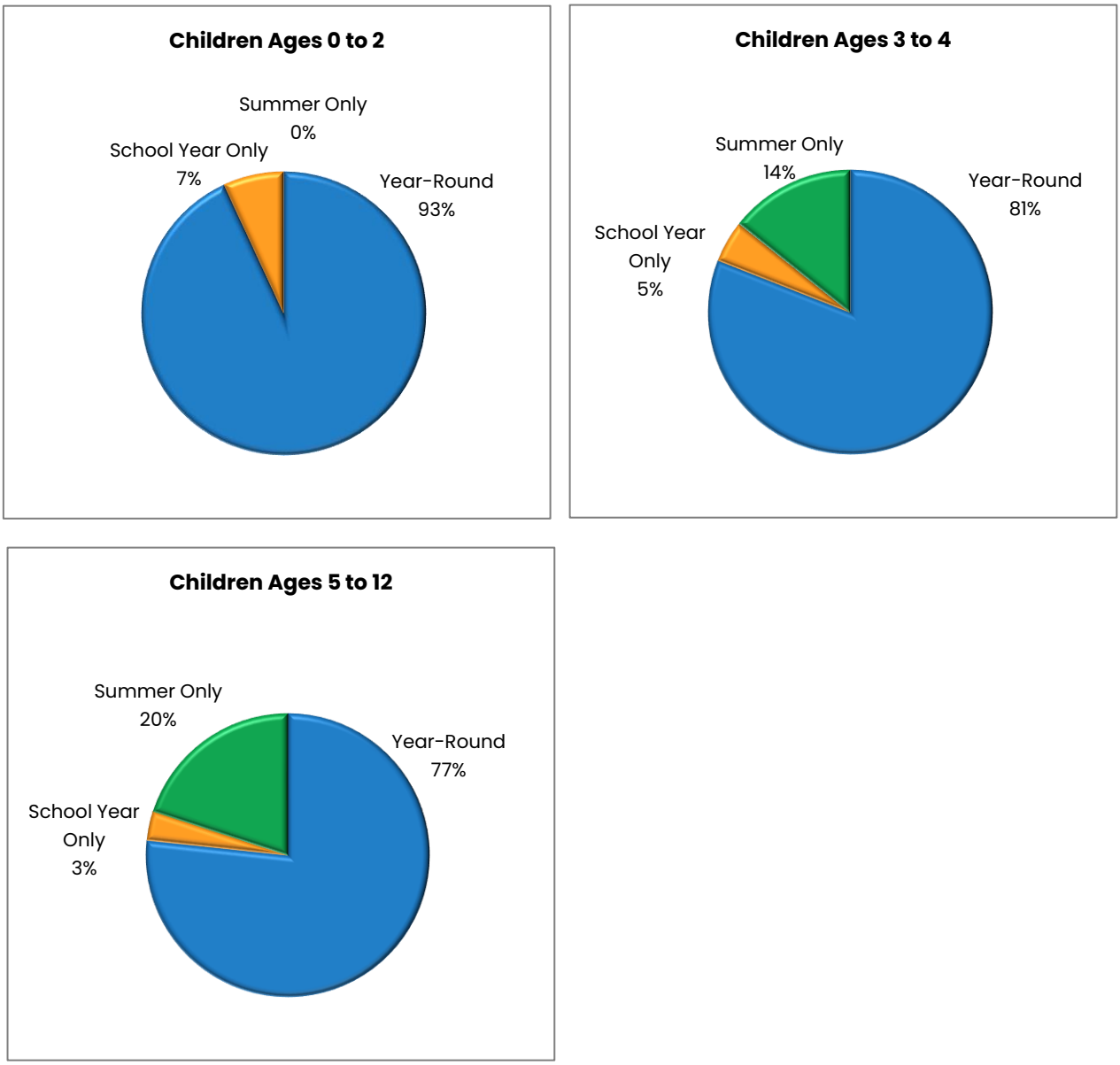
Most parents are using care Monday through Friday (ranging from 93% to 86% per day), while 5% use care on Saturday and 2% use care on Sunday. When it comes to preferred days for care, Monday through Friday is still the most preferred, ranging from 100% to 94% per day. Eight percent (8%) prefer Saturday care and 2% prefer Sunday care.

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



When asked what their preferred time of the year would be if they were selecting child care today, the majority of parents prefer year-round care for all ages. For children ages 0 to 2, 93% prefer to use child care year-round, followed by school year only (7%). For children ages 3 to 4 (preschool age), 81% prefer year-round, followed by summer only (14%). For children ages 5 to 12 (school age) 77% prefer year-round, followed by summer only (20%).

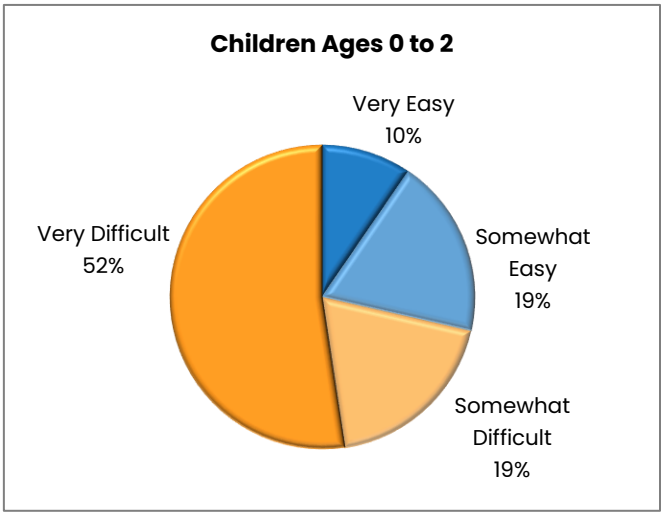
Figure 12: Time of Year Families Prefer to Use Child Care

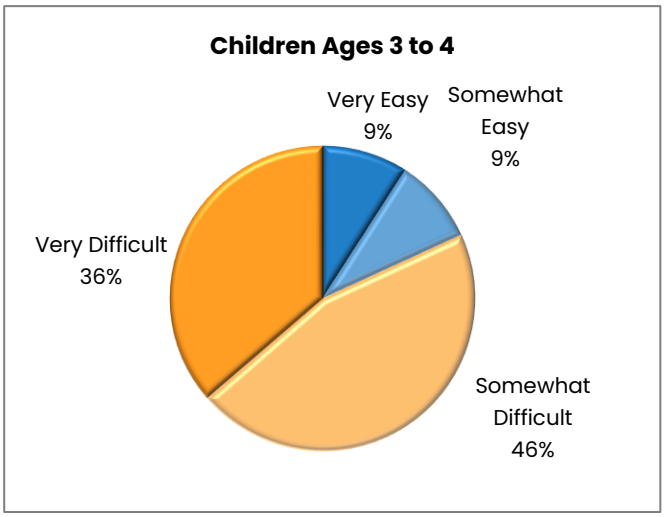


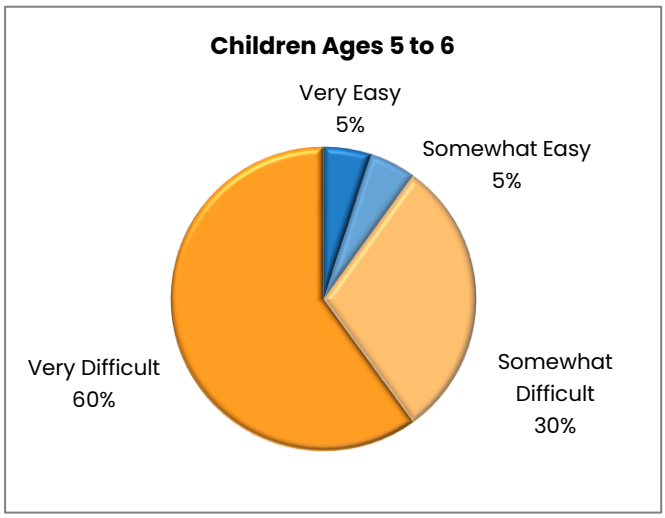
Parents were asked if they had looked for child care in the last 12 months, and if they had, how easy or difficult it had been depending on the age of their child. Overall, parents that have children that have not started elementary school yet had a harder time, than parents with older children.

Among the parents that have children age 0 to 2 and looked for care, 71% experienced some level of difficulty, either somewhat difficult (19%) or very difficult (52%). Among the parents that have children age 3 to 4 and looked for care, 82% experienced some level of difficulty, either somewhat difficult (46%) or very difficult (36%). Among the parents that have children age 5 to 6 and looked for care, 90% experienced some level of difficulty, either somewhat difficult (30%) or very difficult (60%).

Figure 13: Ability to Find Child Care During Last 12 Months







As a follow up, parents were asked, if you experienced obstacles finding child care in the last 12 months, what they were. Comments received were:

- *Finding a daycare that had openings. Only one was available at the time. No options but thankfully the center we found was wonderful and my son loves it!*
- *We were lucky enough to get into Little Wolves, right when they opened, since then we haven't had any issues.*
- *cost- availability.*
- *After school.*
- *Finding daycare being new to town. Not knowing anyone, but mostly, the times. Most daycares are not open at 5:30 am. Most daycares that are in home only take one child under one for example, all the ones in Lake Park.*
- *Price, availability.*

- *Affordable daycare, daycare is not financially affordable for a single parent who has to work. You are basically working 2-3 hours a week just to cover daycare.*
- *Finding a provider with room.*
- *Watching the kids until 11:30 pm or later to 12:30 am.*
- *Finding licensed caregivers close to me.*
- *Cost, availability.*
- *None close.*
- *No room for children, unaffordable, close earlier than we are off work.*
- *None, we have been fortunate to have daycare available for each child as soon as we needed. Our daycare offers the greatest consistency of all of our previous daycare experiences.*
- *Home care provider on vacation or sick and we needed to work.*
- *Cost and after school day care.*
- *Finding opening for my newborn.*
- *Availability, with travel limitations.*
- *Zero openings. All in home daycare in town are unregulated.*
- *Days daycare isn't open/closed finding backup that accommodates multiple children/ages.*
- *No openings or don't open when we have to drop them off in time to get to work.*
- *We applied at 3 daycares in Lake Park and 1 in Harris when I was 15 weeks pregnant. We finally got in to Milford daycare, but did not have daycare for 5 months, so grandparents had to step in.*

Despite difficulties finding care, parents indicate they are satisfied with their provider. Overall, 84% of parents are satisfied with their current provider, while just 16% are not. Those that are not satisfied were asked to explain. Comments received were:

- *Need close to school and home.*
- *Expensive.*
- *Would like a center for my youngest.*
- *Currently using a relative.*
- *Not fair for the 15-year-old to watch the younger ones every day. Especially in the summer.*

Respondents were given a list of factors that are often important to parents when choosing child care and told to select all that apply to them. The top choices among are dependable provider/staff (90%), available space/timing or enrollment (82%), and positive interactions between staff and children (78%).

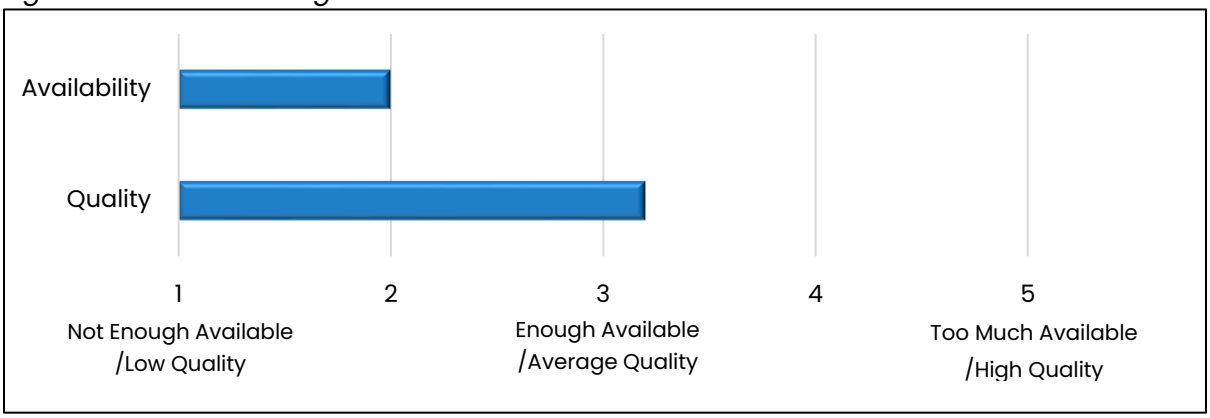
Parents were then asked to select the single factor that is most important to them. The most important factor is dependable provider/staff (37%), positive interactions between staff and children (14%), and health and safety policies (12%).

Table 43: Important Factors When Selecting Child Care

	All Factors that are Important	**Single Most Important**
Available space/timing of enrollment	82%	6%
Care includes preschool	29%	2%
Dependable provider/staff	90%	37%
Drop-in or occasional care	51%	2%
Educational curriculum used	49%	2%
Health and safety policies	76%	12%
Iowa Quality for Kids (IQ4K) quality rating improvement system	16%	0%
Location	73%	6%
Open on non-school days	71%	2%
Part-time options	47%	4%
Positive interactions between staff and children	78%	14%
Second shift/evening care	10%	2%
Secured entrance	41%	0%
Special needs care	8%	0%
Third shift/overnight care	4%	0%
Transportation to and from school or preschool	53%	2%
Tuition assistance or scholarships	27%	4%
Tuition rates or price	43%	4%
Upkeep or appearance of the facility and playground	65%	0%
Weekend care	12%	0%

Parents were asked to rate the *availability* of child care in the Harris-Lake Park area on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not enough available (there is a deficit), 3 enough available (just right), and 5 highly available (there is a surplus), the higher the score, the more available. The average rating is 2.0. Parents were then asked to rank the *quality* of child care in the Harris-Lake Park area on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being low quality, 3 quality, and 5 high quality (the higher the score, the higher quality). The average rating is 3.2.

Figure 14: Parents' Ratings of Child Care in the Harris-Lake Park Area



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

What is the biggest challenge facing parents regarding child care, and what will resolve that challenge? Comments were received from 32 parents. Comments received were:

- *The cost and availability.*
- *Availability and cost.*
- *Availability.*
- *The biggest challenge is low availability for child care. To resolve the issue current daycares will need to expand or new daycares will need to become available.*
- *Cost.*
- *More daycares.*
- *I worked in the daycare industry; it is a HARD job and HARD to keep people and find good people that follow regulations of the state. I know too many daycare places that do not follow regulations of the state and have horrible staff or cannot keep staff.*
- *The start time and price.*
- *Financial.*
- *A daycare center in town.*
- *Cost needs to be lowered per child.*
- *Trusting anyone, finding licensed quality care locally.*
- *Availability.*
- *Finding AFFORDABLE childcare. I can't give my entire paycheck for watching my child when I can do it and have the same amount of funds.*
- *Insanely expensive. No options anywhere. Impossibly long waiting lists. Need more options, cheaper rates, and longer hours.*
- *Cost.*

- *Not enough non-family options. We have been stable the past 12months. But before this had gone through two other in home daycares that closed and spent 6-12 months on some waiting lists only for the children's to stay at home with a parent effecting our work.*
- *Cost is a large factor. We've been fortunate to have a reliable provider we trust.*
- *The lack of daycare, the cost and lack of assistance available to families.*
- *Not having enough options; adding a larger childcare center (expanding Little Wolves if that is a possibility) to accommodate numbers/drop ins.*
- *Availability and cost.*
- *No after school programs for kids.*
- *Having a bigger center with outdoor options.*
- *Thankfully, we have family support who assist with watching our children. If we did not have family support to help then I would say that daycare would be a significant financial increase. We are lucky enough to have had this daycare since the kids were young, but I know the waiting list for daycare in Lake Park are extremely long.*
- *Cost!*
- *Open spots and limited daycares.*
- *I really only need Tuesday-Thursday mornings.*
- *Not enough availability and space. We have several great in home daycares, but not enough availability, especially for infants through age 2.*
- *Price.*
- *Not enough day care providers.*
- *We need more daycare in Lake Park. Simple as that. There aren't enough spaces for all of the children in town. Parents should have more options!*
- *Our family currently does not have any challenges with our daycare provider. She is flexible with our schedules, provides great care and we have no worries or concerns.*

The next question asked parents, what opportunities do you see for the future of child care in the Harris-Lake Park area? Comments were received from 33 parents. Comments received were:

- *A center that was attached to the school would be extremely beneficial. I know our current provider, Amber Snow, would be an amazing asset to this if it were available.*
- *I think the in-home options right now in the Lake Park area are very limited. I also think the one daycare center we have, Little Wolves, is full.*
- *Lake Park happens to have a provider looking to expand their services and offer a wonderful center to families in the community. With proper support and nurturing, this could be a wonderful opportunity for Harris-Lake Park. Personally, my children attend this day care. The staff are phenomenal and everyone there loves my kiddos. The owner would quite literally give you the shirt off her back if needed. She has stayed late for us, come in early for us, and*

would do it over and over again. I know we are one of the few in Lake Park with secure day care and a provider we are comfortable with and we do not take that for granted. Our child was open enrolled to start school in Okoboji until this day care opened. Only reason they weren't going to Harris-Lake Park, where we live, was no child care. I had met with a few in home providers before making the decision to send my child to Okoboji and could not confidently send my children there believing they would be cared for. Thankfully, I went with my gut as these providers are no longer licensed for a number of reasons. Overall, build on what you have. Community is important and you have a community member identifying a need, highly motivated, already up and running, but needs room to grow.

- *We need a center housing 75 kids infant to 5 years old.*
- *Currently, there is one daycare center that is looking to expand and build or obtain a bigger building to meet additional daycare needs. However, financial assistance or community support may be needed to help make this happen in the near future. It would be nice to have a newer/larger daycare center with a playground available for families in Lake Park.*
- *We are in need of daycare that supports school academically. Attentive staff and after school wrap around.*
- *Need more daycares.*
- *We have a nursing home that has no one in it, use it!*
- *Flexible schedules for parents.*
- *If the Little Wolves Daycare closes that will be the end of childcare for a lot of families.*
- *Bringing more families in with readily available daycare.*
- *Town is growing with more children to be raised in town or the district.*
- *It's a need for the community to grow.*
- *Unfortunately, I do not feel there will be adequate childcare.*
- *I see a plethora of families in the area in need of any childcare AT ALL.*
- *No space, cost too much.*
- *More after school programs, such as arranging a relationship with the YMCA.*
- *Uncertain.*
- *One of the greatest things I've seen and have used is a previous school attended had a daycare located at the school. Not necessarily just for school aged kids but if the child was in school they would get them to their classrooms and then they would be there after school as well.*
- *I would like for there to be a daycare center that has specific age rooms for kids. Also allow the opportunity for drop-ins for those that have an in-home daycare that may be closed due to illness or vacation/time off.*

- *Allowing Little Wolves, LLC to build a new location and continue to operate as a privately owned business. Our tax dollars are already working hard enough in our community - a municipal daycare is not in anyone's best interest.*
- *United daycare so families would move here and keep kids in town.*
- *The center that we are at having a bigger space door option.*
- *We need a full facility.*
- *Before/after school program, age-appropriate learning environments, separation of ages of kids/roomed by age.*
- *I think there's a need for more.*
- *Childcare center? Before and after school care within that center.*
- *Lake Park needs more day cares.*
- *I see lots of options, especially if a curriculum or Montessori-based daycare was opened. Children learn the most at ages 2-4, and they should have access to education if wanted.*
- *I believe childcare is needed in this community but doesn't need to be managed in the form of municipal (city owned). I truly believe the only reason the city is conducting this survey is so they can take the numbers to the state to show how much "effort" they put into this to be considered for child care grants so they can profit. Meanwhile the city makes current childcare business owners jump through as many hoops as possible in hopes that they'll give up. Unless its owners that frequent the same churches and establishments as city officials, then they're given special treatment. Lake Park is the definition of clique small town where it's all about who you know and how to use that status to their advantage. We need childcare, that is the goal, but don't need small town city politics involved. The goal should be safe, trustworthy location and employees that parents feel confident leaving their children with. Not another city bill for them to spend the profits on their projects to make them look good in a news article.*
- *Would love to have an after-school learning program.*

The final question asked parents to share any additional comments they have about child care in the Harris-Lake Park area. Comments were received from 14 parents. Comments received were:

- *We love Little Wolves daycare with Amber Snow! We would hate to see this center close as it has been an amazing experience/opportunity for our family! Wish there were more centers like this! Or her ability to grow and expand to make it more accessible to other families.*
- *We currently have really great daycare providers in Lake Park but need to expand the options due to high demand.*
- *Opportunity is there to open one.*

- *Current child care has determined where kiddos go to school, and the retirement location of grandparents. We live 6 miles from Lake Park. But lack of child care made decisions to attend school elsewhere.*
- *Little Wolves Daycare needs a bigger building and that would improve employment and enrollment. Helping them would benefit Lake Park in the long run.*
- *Pleased with our current daycare provider!*
- *None are consistent in communication or scheduling.*
- *Required to pay on days child not there or days taking vacation still have to pay for the day.*
- *Our current provider is excellent and tends to have the most aggressive waitlist. But the other 1-2 Lake Park options are extremely disappointing and frankly concerning.*
- *The H-LP district has a fine amount of daycare options per capita. Our tax dollars do not need to go toward operating a municipal daycare option when we are already paying for a new school and other exciting upgrades to the community. Perhaps consider helping existing child care entities before introducing another at the taxpayers' expense.*
- *More child care is absolutely needed if you want to keep families in our town or moving to our town and to keep them in our school system. No daycare opening turns families away from the area.*
- *The city needs to stop hindering and making it difficult for people that already have daycares to expand on their own.*
- *There needs to be more options other than in-home daycares or "centers" that don't separate kids by age group and don't do much learning by appropriate age.*
- *The city needs to support current daycare providers, instead of trying to take business away for their own profits.*

CHILD CARE GAP ANALYSIS

Calculating the gap in a child care market takes into consideration multiple factors, and as solutions to address this gap are considered, it must be kept in mind that not all families will utilize child care, and those that do have a variety of needs with some children attending full-time while others attend only part-time and therefore may share a space. If there is exactly one space for each child, some spaces would not be utilized or would be utilized in a manner that would not allow the child care provider to maintain a sustainable business model.

The following summary of the supply and demand provides an estimation of the gap between the number of children likely to use regulated child care and the number of estimated child care spaces[16] available in the Harris-Lake Park area.

According to the US Census Bureau there are 284 children ages 0 to 11 in the 51345 and 51347 zip codes, referred to here as the Harris-Lake Park area. Of those, First Children's Finance (FCF) estimates 239 have all parents working. If it is assumed these families are represented by responses of the parents that participated in the child care needs survey, then approximately 174 of the children are from families who are likely to use child care and would prefer a child care in an Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) licensed center or registered home. According to Iowa HHS along with self-reported data from local child care programs, there are 41 spaces available. That means there is a shortage of child care spaces among all age groups. The greatest deficit is for school-age children.

Table 44: Estimated Child Care Gap in the Harris-Lake Park Area

	Likely to Use Regulated Care	Estimated Child Care Spaces	Child Care Gap
Ages 0 to 2	26	22	**-4**
Ages 3 to 4	23	13	**-10**
Ages 5 to 11	125	6	**-119**
Total	**174**	**41**	**-133**

As solutions for child care are being developed, the preferences of parents should be taken into consideration. The majority of parents prefer a licensed center and prefer care located in the town

[16] Reflects the maximum number of child care spaces according to Iowa Department of Health and Human Services for Registered Child Care Homes, plus the number of current spaces self-reported by non-regulated child care providers that participated in the Child Care Needs Survey.

where they live. They work first shift and want child care year-round, Monday through Friday. When selecting child care, the most important factor is a dependable provider or staff.

KEY FINDINGS

These key findings are based on research and conditions of the child care market in the Harris-Lake Park area as of April 2026. If the community or the child care environment changes significantly, these key findings may be affected.

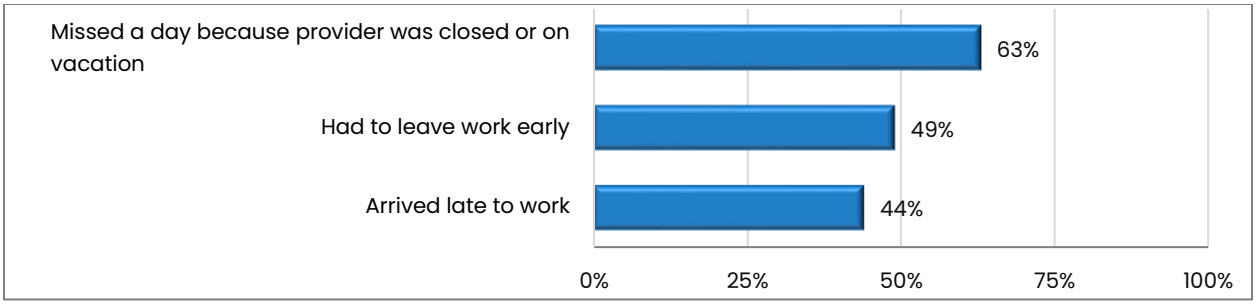
Finding 1: Most families have all parents in the labor force. According to the US Census Bureau as of 2024, 89% of families with children ages 0 to 5, and 85% of families with children ages 6 to 17 living in the Harris-Lake Park area have all parents in the labor force. All parents in the labor force means if a couple heads a family, both parents are working and if a single parent heads it that parent is working. The state-wide averages are 76% and 81%, respectively.

Figure 15: Families in the Harris-Lake Park Area with All Parents in the Labor Force

Through the child care needs survey conducted as part of this study, parents were asked several questions related to their employment and their use of child care. The majority of parents say both they and their spouse or partner work first shift, Monday through Friday, and their job is in Spirit Lake.

Finding 2: Child care challenges are affecting parents' jobs. Through the child care needs survey, parents report the ways their job has been impacted over the last 12 months because of child care challenges. The top adverse effects reported by working parents were, had to miss a day of work because the provider was closed or on vacation (63%), had to leave work early (49%), and arrived late to work (44%). *See figure on the next page.*

Figure 16: Adverse Impacts Reported by Parents Due to Child Care Challenges

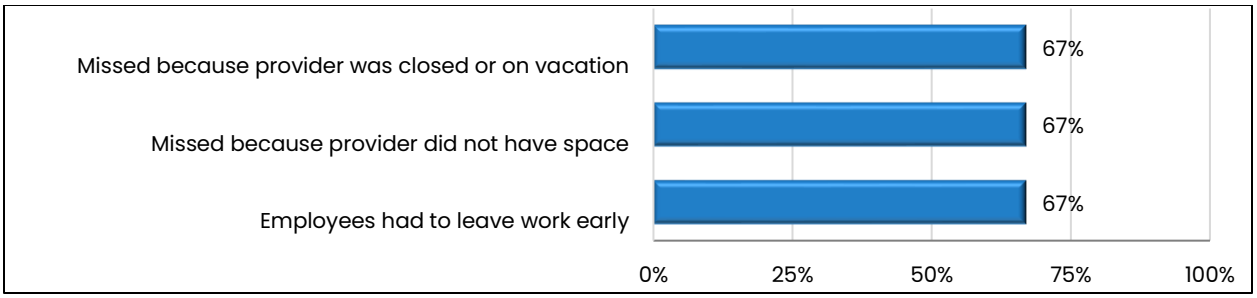


Through similar but separate questions, parents were asked to share more about how child care challenges have impacted their or their spouse's or partner's job over the last 12 months.

- 35% are experiencing limited employment, such as being forced to work fewer hours or only being able to accept positions that have hours when they can secure child care.
- 22% have declined employment or withdrawn from the workforce.
- 6% are not working (unemployed).

Finding 3: Employers are affected by parents' care challenges. Through the child care needs survey, employers reported the ways their employees have been impacted by child care challenges over the last 12 months. The top adverse effects experienced were, employees missed a day of work because their child care provider was closed or on vacation (67% of employers), employees missed a day of work because their child care provider did not have space for their child (67% of employers), and employees had to leave work early (67% of employers).

Figure 17: Adverse Impacts Reported by Employers Due to Child Care Challenges



Through similar, but separate, questions employers indicated they also experienced limited productivity and absenteeism in the last 12 months as a direct result of childcare challenges experienced by their employees. Thirty percent (50%) of employers experienced challenges related to productivity. Some of the related comments received were:

- *Yes because daycare provider was sick and could not watch child.*

- *There are times that employees have to leave early or take an unscheduled day off due to child care not being available or closing unexpectedly.*
- *Lack of child care causing canceled shifts, call outs and low availability.*

Through another question, 33% of employers indicate they experienced absenteeism. Some of the related comments received were:

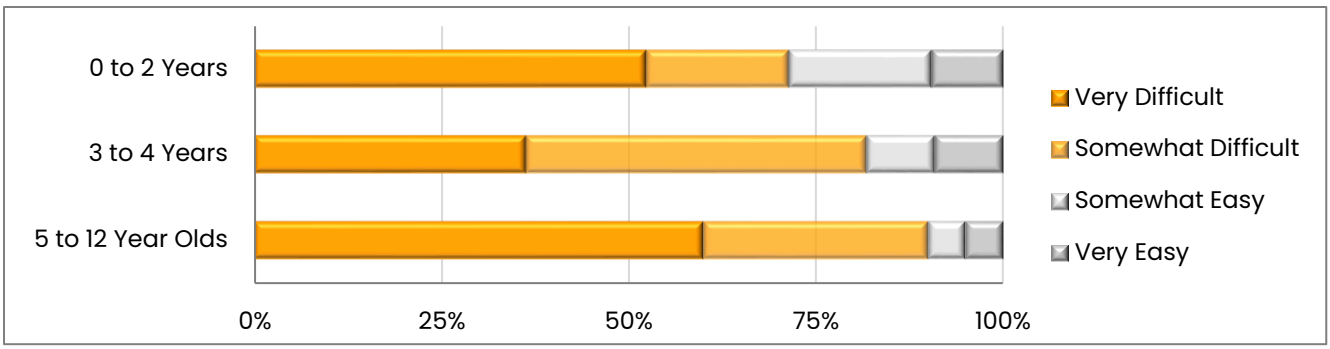
- *Employee has to take off time because of sick child or sick daycare provider.*
- *There are times that employees have to leave early or take an unscheduled day off due to child care not being available or closing unexpectedly..*

Finding 4: Finding Child Care in in the Harris-Lake Park area is difficult.

Parents were asked if they had looked for child care in the last 12 months, and if they had, how easy or difficult it had been depending on the age of their child. Overall, parents that have children that have not started elementary school yet had a harder time, than parents with older children.

Twenty-one (21) parents looked for care for children ages 0 to 2. Among those, 71% experienced some level of difficulty, either somewhat difficult (19%) or very difficult (52%). Eleven (11) parents looked for care for children ages 3 to 4. Among those 81% experienced some level of difficulty, either somewhat difficult (41%) or very difficult (36%). Twenty (20) parents looked for care for children ages 5 to 12. Among those, 90% experienced some level of difficulty, either somewhat difficult (30%) or very difficult (60%).

Figure 18: Parents That Had Difficulty Find Child Care During Last 12 Months



Obstacles noted by multiple parents can be summarized as:

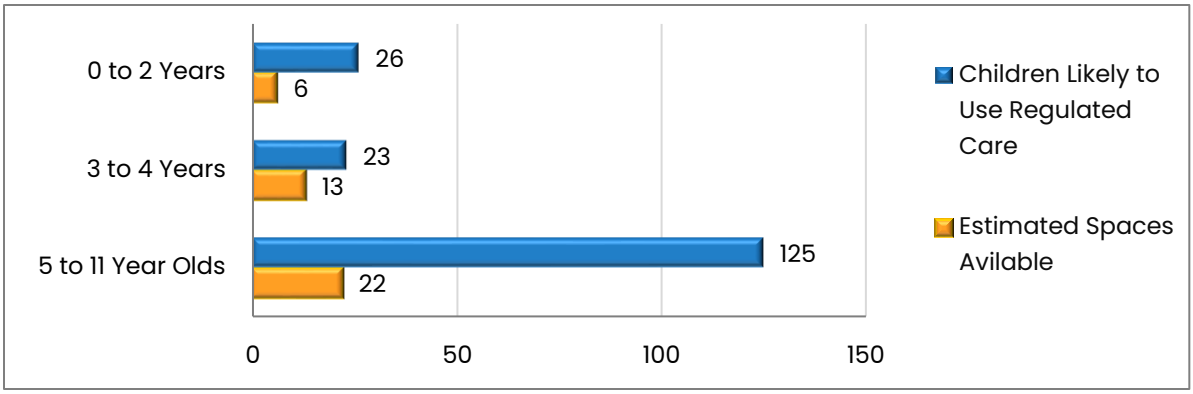
- *No openings.*
- *Finding licensed caregivers.*
- *After school care and newborn care.*
- *Not opening early enough in morning.*
- *Price.*

Finding 5: Child care providers are full and turning away families. Through the child care needs survey conducted as part of this study, child care providers were asked if they had turned away families or put them on a waitlist due to a lack of spaces or openings in their program during the last 12 months. Among those that took part, 100% said yes. Comments received were:

- *I really haven't had an opening for quite a few years because the families I have are growing their families.*
- *Since opening I've had a waitlist. I currently don't do a waitlist and do first come first serve as it was getting too long.*

Finding 6: There is a shortage of child care spaces in the Harris-Lake Park area. In the market area, the 51345-zip code (Harris area) and the 51347-zip code (Lake Park area), there are an estimated 284 children ages 0 to 11. Based on the percentage of families that have all parents working and parents' preferences of child care settings, First Children's Finance estimates 174 are from families who prefer a child care setting that is regulated by Iowa Department of Health and Human Services, either a licensed center or registered home. According to Iowa HHS along with self-reported data from local child care programs, there are an estimated 41 child care spaces available in Lake Park. That means there is a shortage as high as 133 child care spaces among all age groups.

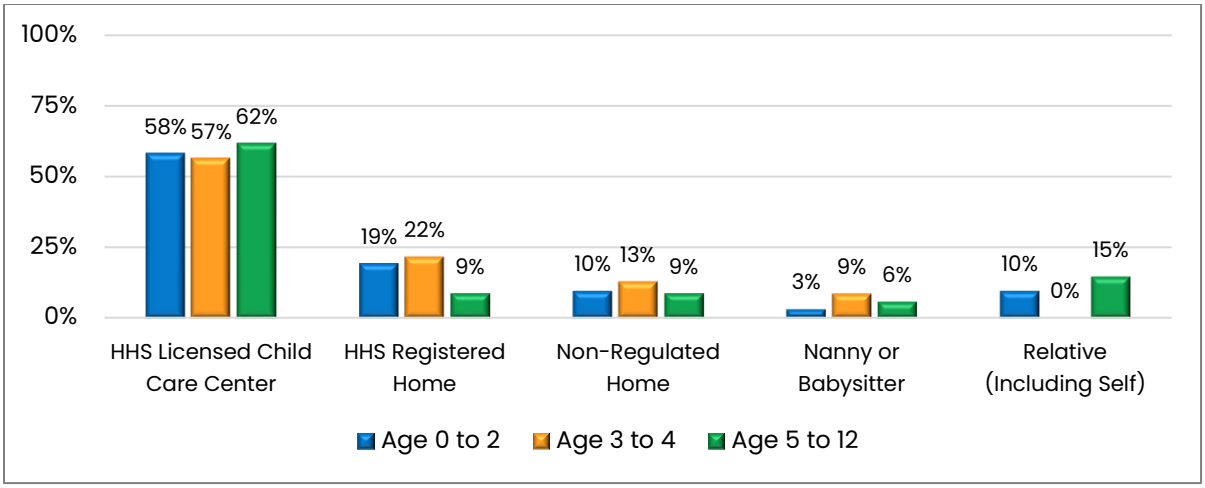
Figure 19: Children Likely to Use Regulated Care vs. Estimated Spaces Available



Finding 7: Parents prefer a licensed child care center.

Through the child care needs surveys parents were asked if all choices are available and you were selecting child care today, which setting you would most prefer. The top choice for children of all age groups was an Iowa Department of Health and Human Services licensed child care center. *See figure on the next page.*

Figure 20: Preferred Child Care Setting by Age



Finding 8: An existing provider is interested in expanding.

Child care providers that took part in the child care needs survey were asked about their willingness to expand and serve more children. One (1) provider said yes and noted they would like to build a facility where they would offer intergenerational programming. Intergenerational settings provide an opportunity for structured or semi-structured interactions between non-familial older adults and children. This environment can take different forms including child care and adult services (ex. senior center, adult day care, or assisted living) being co-located to provide for the two age groups to interact.

When asked about challenges or obstacles for existing programs to expand or a new child care program to start, all providers responded noting space, outdoor areas, and staffing as challenges anyone ca expect. When asked what support they would need to serve more children, the provider interested in offering intergenerational care answered it is finding land that is affordable in order to build.