

INCREASING AVAILABILITY OF
**AFFORDABLE,
INFANT AND
TODDLER CARE**



PURPOSE/PROJECT



The Early Childhood Partnership of Adams County (ECPAC) in our work with both Early Care and Education Providers and with families as well as from our involvement in policy and advocacy work, have been hearing for many years the challenges in having enough affordable childcare available for infants and toddlers. Therefore we started an Infant and Toddler Taskforce to start diving deeper into the issue and to develop strategies towards increasing our affordability and availability.

It is recognized that it is often unaffordable for families to pay for infant or toddler care, with the average monthly cost around \$2,400 for infants and \$1,600 for toddlers at a Center-based program and \$1,500 for infants or toddlers at a Family Childcare Home program. Families are paying close to 16-27% of their income for care, with the recommended average at 7% ([US Dept of Treasury](#)). It is also often not affordable for programs to offer care for infants and toddlers. In addition to the high costs of care for all age groups, infants and toddlers require more staff to meet smaller teacher-child ratios and have additional expenses for their overall care. You can learn more about the costs of care in this [video](#) (2018) or [article](#) (2023). Providing high quality care is more expensive. A [cost of care study](#) through Bell Policy Center shares break even margins are slim.

Having affordable care is crucial to families' ability to work or pursue their education and without reliable care, there is an annual economic cost of \$122 billion in lost earnings, productivity, and revenue ([Ready Nation 2024](#)).

Having quality care is crucial to children's development, where the brain develops more rapidly than any other time during the first 3 years of life.

Having a sustainable business is crucial for early care and education programs, and providing infants and toddler care is often not affordable.

Furthering these challenges, the early care and education workforce capacity is at an all-time low since the pandemic, with fewer people entering the profession, often due to low wages, and others leaving the profession due to wages and high stress. Infant and toddler staff leave the profession or move to working with other age groups at a higher rate than other age groups."

ECPAC received funding from the Department of Early Childhood through their Preschool Development Grant – Local Organizational Capacity building mini-grant program to fund six months of data gathering, analysis and planning. Center-based and Family Childcare Home-based Early Care and Education programs, Childcare Licensing, Early Learning Ventures – Early Head Start, and Mile High United Way engaged with ECPAC staff and a consultant provided by the grant project, to during this six month period. The planning process was further informed by the [Colorado Department of Early Childhood's Local Early Childhood Systems Coordination Toolkit](#). Finally the taskforce kept equity top of mind through [ECPAC's Equity Impact Statement](#) for decision making.

BACKGROUND

Going into this planning, what we knew was as of June of 2023, the number of slots available to serve infants in licensed early care and education programs was 872 with an overall capacity of 8.5% (CO: 11.9%). As of June of 2023, the number of slots in licensed early care and education programs to serve toddlers was 1,818 or 18% capacity (CO: 27.2%).

Infants (0-18 months)

Licensed Infant Capacity:

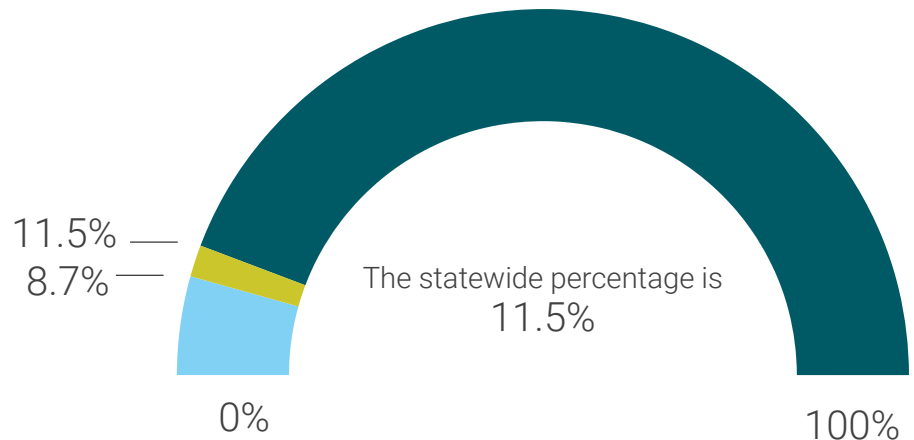
881

Estimated Infant Population:

10,116.5

Percent of the estimated population with access to licensed care:

8.7%



Unlike centers, home providers are not licensed for specific age group capacities. In an effort to include home capacities in our counts, we assume 2 infants are served at each home provider.

Toddlers (18-36 months)

Licensed Toddler Capacity:

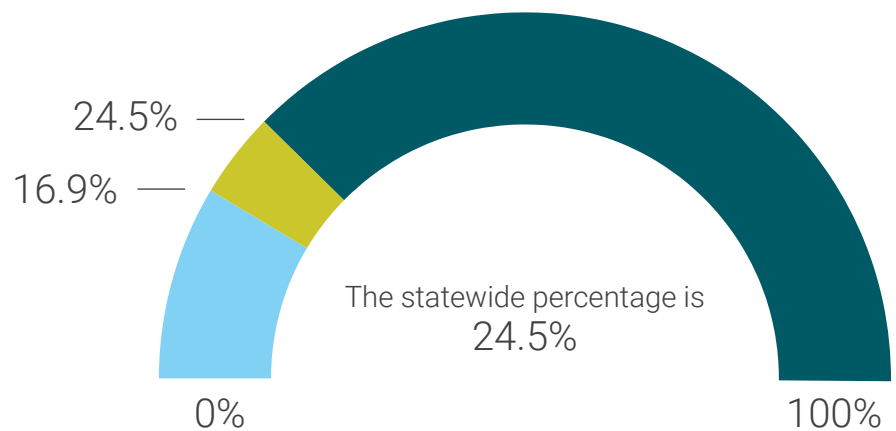
1,715

Estimated Toddler Population:

10,173.5

Percent of the estimated population with access to licensed care:

16.9%



Unlike centers, home providers are not licensed for specific age group capacities. In an effort to include home capacities in our counts, we assume 2 toddlers are served at each home provider.

And while not a perfect match, we know that around 65% of children under the age of 6 have all parents in the workforce. It is recognized that families may choose to stay home or seek alternative care options when children are infants or toddlers. However it is also likely that many families who are working during these time periods struggle to find care in a licensed program.

PROVIDER SURVEY DATA

To begin gathering more local data, the Taskforce developed and disseminated a survey to all licensed providers in Adams County. Of responses, all cities in Adams County were represented proportionally to the number of programs located in each city.

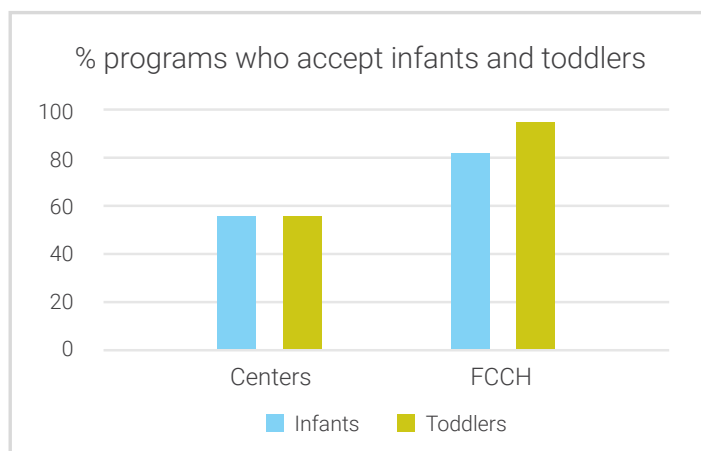


84 were **Family Child Care Homes (FCCH) (57%)**; Of all FCCH: response rate: **68.23% response rate**

61 were **Centers (42%)**; Of all Centers: response rate: **68.54% response rate**



Cities in which programs operate were proportionally represented.



If you **DO** serve infants and toddlers, please indicate why?

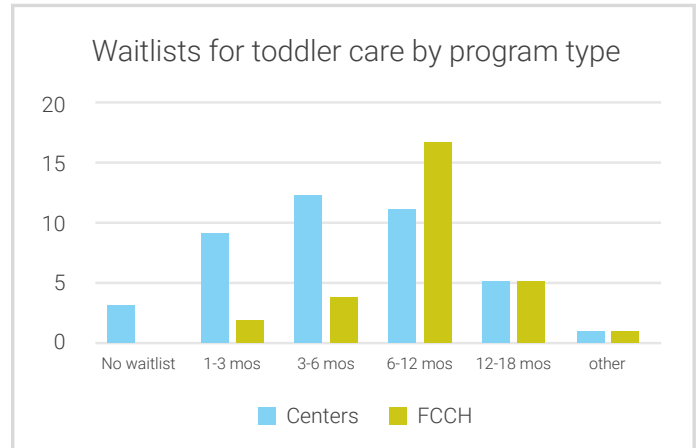
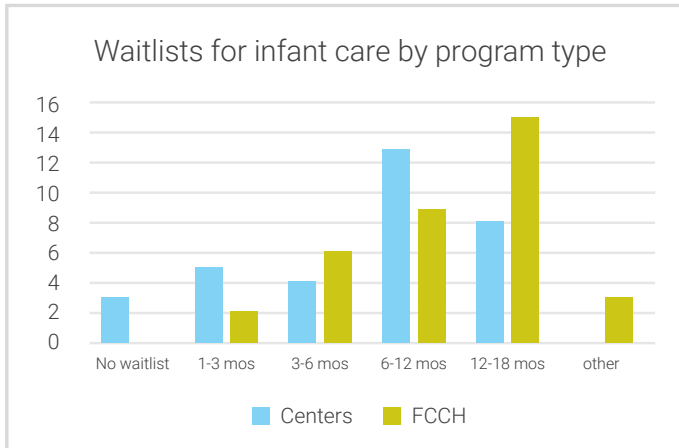
Top 4 listed:

Centers	FCCH
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community Need/High Demand 2. Support families (ie: multiple children) 3. Way the program has always been 4. Helps to bring in new children to feed into older classrooms 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enjoy the age group 2. Community Need/High Demand 3. All age groups served as part of program 4. Continuity of care / Support families (ie: multiple children)
<p><i>9 programs serve toddlers and not infants due to space or because preschool starts at 2.5</i></p>	<p><i>6 programs serve toddlers and not infants (no reason provided)</i></p>

If you do **NOT** serve infants and/or toddlers, please indicate why you choose not to serve this age group. **Top 3 listed:**

Centers	FCCH
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Not enough staff 2. Not enough space 3. Licensing/Health regulations more strict 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Personal Choice 2. Hard to have a mixed-age group 3. Not licensed to take more than 2 under the age of 2

PROVIDER SURVEY DATA CONTINUED



FAMILY SURVEY DATA

To further inform our strategies and ensure family voice, the Taskforce developed and disseminated a survey for families, distributing this through taskforce members' networks and through social media. All responses were from the more urban area of Adams County.

101 Responses

25% Responses from families that speak Spanish

76 were completed by families who speak English

25 were completed by families who speak Spanish

Families reporting receiving **NO** information about childcare from anywhere: English: 80.5% Spanish: 93%

What do families want information about? **Top 5 listed:**

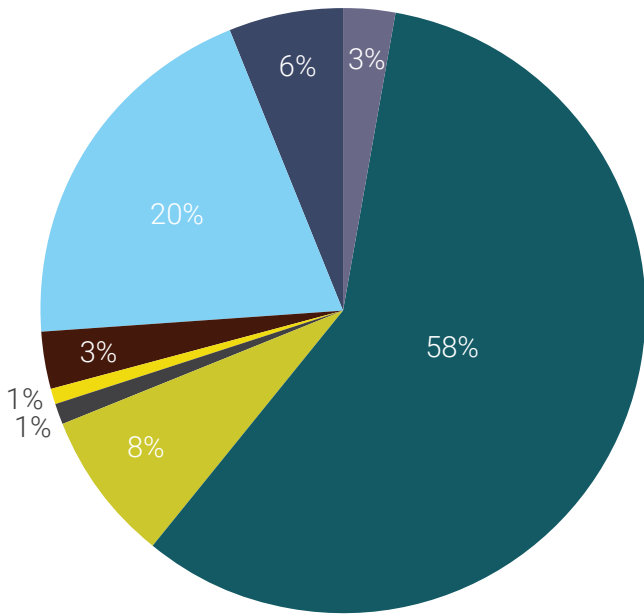
English Speaking	Spanish Speaking
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Cost of care (20%) Availability of openings and waitlists (15%) How to find programs (10%) What are licensing regulations and reviews of program (9.5%) What are the different options and what is there to know about each option (7.5%) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Parenting (17%) Reviews (14%); Teacher background (14%) Cost of Care (14%) What is quality care (10%)

FAMILY SURVEY DATA CONTINUED

Where did families find information? Top 3 listed:

English Speaking	Spanish Speaking
1. Internet searches (21%) - CO Shines (10.5%) 2. Friends or Family (21%) 3. Current or previous childcare provider (10.5%)	No Answers

What type of care do families use?



English Speaking

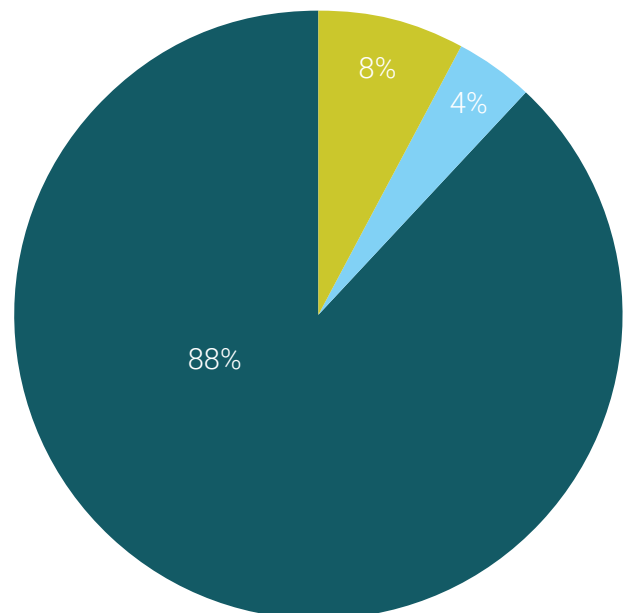
Center: 58% FFN: 3% Licensed: 64%
 One parent: 20% Multiple FFN: 3% Parent: 27%
 FCCH: 8% Nanny: 1% FFN: 6%
 Two parents: 7% Care.com: 1%

- A friend, other family or neighbor
- A licensed childcare center
- A licensed family childcare home
- I have a Nanny just for my child(ren)
- I use a childcare finder provider (ie: Care.com) on an as needed basis
- Multiple family, friends, or neighbors
- One parent stays at home full time
- X

Spanish Speaking

One parent: 88%
 Licensed: 8%
 FFN: 4%

- Licensed
- FFN
- Stay Home



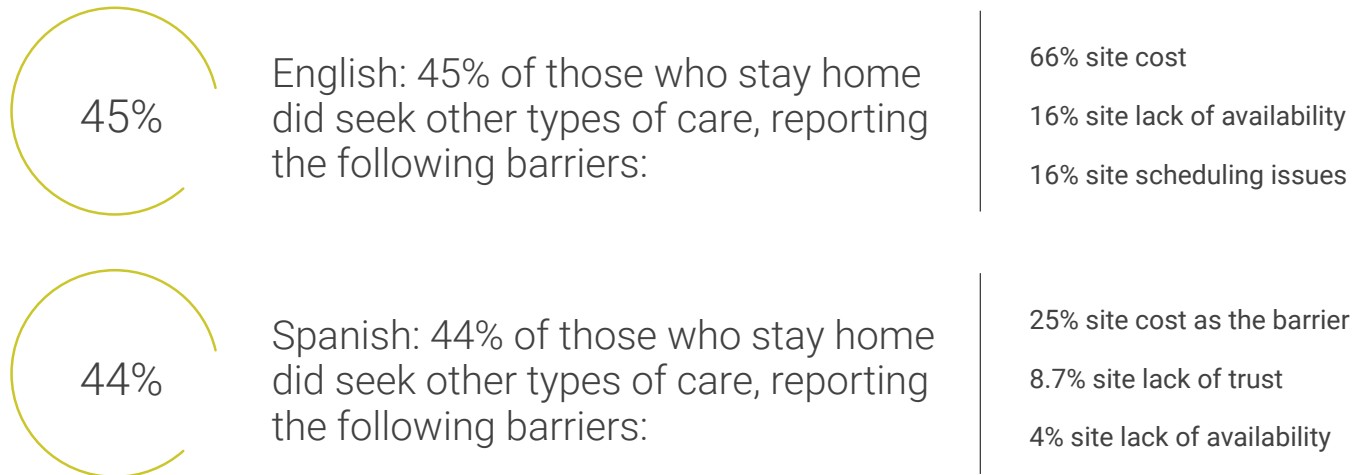
FAMILY SURVEY DATA CONTINUED

| What are some of the **biggest challenges** families face regarding their care option? **Top 3 listed:**

Licensed Care

Centers (English)	Centers (Spanish)	FCCH
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Waitlist (21%) 2. Availability (16%) 3. Quality of care (16%) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Finding a program I felt was Safe (11%) 2. Staff qualifications (11%) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Availability (23%) 2. Cost (23%) 3. Quality (15%)

| Did families seek other types of care and if so **what were the barriers?**



RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

The Taskforce has identified that additional data is needed to fully address the issues around affordability and availability of infant and toddler care. Specifically we hope to gather more data from providers of family, friend and neighbor care, as well as from families who use this type of care. Furthermore, it is recognized that this is an issue that is long standing and very pervasive across our nation. There are no easy and quick fixes. However our

commitment is to continue to move this work forward one step at a time.

With that, the following strategies have been identified through our analysis of the data and serve as our plan for the next two years as this work continues to evolve. Each of these strategies has identified activities and anticipated outcomes and data indicators.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Advocate for systemic changes including greater investment, policy changes, licensing/health regulations, and continued improvements to the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program.
2. Reduce barriers to offering infant and toddler care in Family Childcare Home programs.
3. Reduce barriers to offering infant and toddler care in Center based programs.
4. Inform families about affordable, quality, and available childcare options before the need for childcare arises.
5. Increase efforts focused on Family, Friend and Neighbor Caregivers.

For more details, see the [full plan](#).



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