

First Children's Finance, Rural Child Care Innovation Program Meeker County Childcare Team

The Need

The Supply Demand Gap Analysis for Meeker County dated October 15, 2019 shows a shortage range of 402 slots to 919 slots for children birth to 5 with all available parents in the workforce. Narrowing that down even further, the data shows that roughly 31% of the slots needed are for infants & toddlers.

Meeker County Social Services data shows that there were about 46 licensed family child care providers in 2014, data from DHS from early June 2019 indicated that that number has dropped to 28 licensed family child care programs.



Why a Shortage Exists

Some of the major factors contributing to the child care shortage in Meeker County include an increase in dual-working families, attraction of new employees to the area, affordability of child care, difficulties of being a child care provider, and lack of community recognition for child care providers. Furthermore, there is a lack of business supports and business incentives in the area, including parent support and parent education.

How we compare

Research conducted by the University of Minnesota ranks Meeker County 70th of the 87 counties in the availability of child care.



Importance of Child Care

Nearly 33% of survey respondents declined employment or withdrew from the workforce due to child care issues. Absence from work (when a provider is closed for the day), inability to work a flexible schedule, inability to work different shifts, inability to work overtime, and tardiness to work hinders the ability of parents to advance in their careers. From the employer survey, 40 percent of employers responded that the lack of child care impacted their ability to attract employees and 30 percent stated that it has an impact to retain employees.

Recruiting and retaining new businesses, employees, and families

Enabling parents to be more productive and less absent at work

Strengthening and feeding the pipeline for a skilled future workforce

The Solution

The Meeker County Childcare Committee has established a number of goals that will work towards addressing childcare needs in Meeker County including:

- ...➤ Eliminate the Licensing Fee for Providers That are Renewing Their Child Care License. Goal was met in 2020
- ...➤ Create an Interactive and Comprehensive Website for Child Care Programs on the Meeker County Website. Goal was met in 2020
- ...➤ Identify Free Local Training Opportunities and Increase the Number of Local Approved Trainers. Goal was met in 2020.
- ...➤ Build Private, School, Provider, and Community Partnerships to Increase the Number of Child Care Slots Within the County. Goal is underway.
- ...➤ Create a Community Fund to Financially Support New Child Care Programs and Existing Child Care Programs With Ongoing Support. Goal is underway.

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