

# **Child Care Market Analysis of Lee County, Iowa**

**July 2022**

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Lee County, Iowa**

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**Prepared for:**

Lee County

**This project was made possible with funding by:**

Empower Rural Iowa

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## INTRODUCTION

In 2022, First Children's Finance was commissioned by Lee County 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 of the child care market of Lee County, Iowa.

The data in this report has been collected from three original surveys developed by First Children's Finance along with data provided by the US Census Bureau, US Department of Health and Human Services, Iowa Workforce Development, Iowa Department of 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.

First Children's Finance is a national nonprofit organization with a mission to grow the supply and business sustainability of excellent child care. Access to quality early care and education is essential for all communities. Furthermore, early care and education is the foundation of individual success making it an engine of regional economic growth. For more information, contact Heidi Schlueter, Regional Director [InfoA@FirstChildrensFinance.org](mailto:InfoA@FirstChildrensFinance.org).

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Lee County is located in extreme southeastern Iowa. It is bordered by Des Moines, Henry, and Van Buren counties on the west and north, the Mississippi River on the east and south, and Clark County Missouri on the southwest. Incorporated communities within the county are Donnellson, Fort Madison, Franklin, Houghton, Keokuk, Montrose, St. Paul, and West Point. Lee County has two county seats, Fort Madison and Keokuk. The US Census Bureau estimates the population of Lee County has decreased slightly over the last 5 years, while the number of children is essentially unchanged. The total population as of 2020 was 33,555 and the total children ages 0 to 11 was 4,810. Taking into consideration the data collected through this study, First Children's Finance estimates there are 2,646 children in Lee County whose families are likely to use Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) regulated child care, either licensed child care centers or registered child development homes.

In Lee County, the average family size is 2.76 people and the median income for families with children under the age of 18 is \$57,928 per year. According to Iowa Workforce Development, as of Quarter 1 of 2022, there was an average of 13,849 people employed by companies in Lee County, and the average wage among those workers was \$942 per week. The industry that employs the most people is manufacturing.

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 family's 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 Lee County in 2022, it was determined that most area parents that are likely to use "outside" care want their child in a setting that is regulated by the Iowa Department of Human Services. Parents' top preference is a licensed child care center.

Iowa Department of Human Services data shows that as of July 2022 there were 1,131 spaces in DHS Licensed Child Care Centers and Registered Child Development Homes in Lee County. Of those spaces, 1,035 are available on a year-round basis, the other spaces are school year only spaces. With only 1,035 year-round spaces but an estimated 2,646 children likely to use outside



care, it is reasonable to conclude there is a shortage of regulated child care spaces in Lee County.

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. Of the parents that participated, 209 reported they currently have children age 12 or younger and would like to use child care in Lee county. Using the most popular responses, a current parent would be described as married (75%) and living in Fort Madison (44%). They work first shift Monday through Friday (70%) and are employed in health care & social assistance (26%). Their spouse also works first shift Monday through Friday (59%) in manufacturing (24%). They currently use child care in Fort Madison (41%), Monday through - Friday, year-round. They use child care 40-49 hours per week for younger children, and less than 10 hours per week for before and after school care. They are satisfied with their current child care provider (83%).

Participants in the child care needs survey confirmed there is a shortage of child care spaces. When asked if they had difficulty finding child care, 71% of parents with children ages 0 to 5 (not in Kindergarten) and 64% of those with children ages 5 to 12 (school age children) indicated they had. The most commonly named obstacle was lack of openings or available spaces.

### **Key Findings of This Analysis**

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

#### **Parents are in the Labor Force and Need Child Care**

According to the US Census Bureau as of 2020, 77% of families with children ages 0 to 5, and 80% of families with children ages 6 to 17 living in Lee County have all parents in the labor force.

#### **Parents Prefer DHS Regulated Child Care Settings**

The most preferred child care setting according to parents that participated in the child care needs survey was an Iowa Department of Human Services licensed center. The second most preferred setting was a registered child development home. Collectively 70% of parents preferred one of these two settings.

### **Less Than Half of Parents Are Using their Preferred Child Care Setting**

Only 40% of current parents, indicated their children are currently in their preferred type of child care setting. Of those that indicated their children are not in their preferred setting, the most common reason given was that their preferred provider not accepting enrollments.

### **Parents Have Difficulty Finding Child Care**

Results of the child care needs survey indicated that 77% of parents with children ages 0 to 5 (not in Kindergarten) and 64% of parents with children ages 5 to 12 found it somewhat difficult or very difficult to find child care. Obstacles named were almost exclusively related to lack of openings or not enough spaces.

### **Shortage of Child Care Spaces**

There are an estimated 4,810 children ages 0 to 11 living in Lee County. Based on the number of children that have all parents working and parents' preferences to use a regulated child care setting, First Children's Finance estimates that approximately 2,646 children would be likely to use care within a DHS regulated setting. With only 1,131 DHS regulated spaces and only 1,035 of those available year-round, the deficit could be as high as 1,611 spaces.

### **Median Family Income is Higher than the Child Care Assistance Threshold**

The median annual income in Lee County for families with children under the age of 18 is \$57,928 and the average family size is 2.76. To be eligible for tuition assistance under the Iowa Child Care Assistance (CCA) program according to the 2022 eligibility criteria, a family of 3 must have an annual household income below \$33,393.

### **Parents Indicate Child Care is Affecting Their Employment**

Over the last 12 months, parents have experienced child care challenges (besides COVID) that have in turn affected their employment. The most common effects were having to miss a day of work because the child care provider was closed, having to leave work early, and not being able to work overtime.

In addition, over the last 12 months, 56 parents have declined employment or withdrawn from the labor force due to child care, child care challenges are keeping 56 parents from working, and child care challenges are limiting 95 parents' employment, such as forcing them to work fewer hours or only being able to accept positions that have hours when they can secure child care.

### **Employers Indicate Child Care is Affecting Productivity and Attendance**

Employers in Lee County are seeing the affect child care challenges has on their employees. Through the child care needs survey, 53% of employers indicated their business has experienced challenges related to productivity due to parents' child care challenges (besides COVID), while 47% indicated they had experienced challenges related to employee absenteeism because of employee's child care challenges (besides COVID).

### **Employers Willing to Participate in Child Care in Lee County**

Employers that participated in the child care needs survey indicated they are willing to help support child care in Lee County through various actions. Five (5) were willing to appoint someone to serve on the Board of Directors of a child care program, while 3 were willing to make financial donations to support the operations of a child care program.

### **Child Care Providers Willing to Expand**

Child care providers that participated in the child care needs survey were asked a series of questions about the current child care environment and their willingness to expand and serve more children. Two (2) licensed centers and 5 of the homes indicated they are willing to expand to serve more children, but they first need help with location, staffing, and funding.

### **Putting this Study into Use**

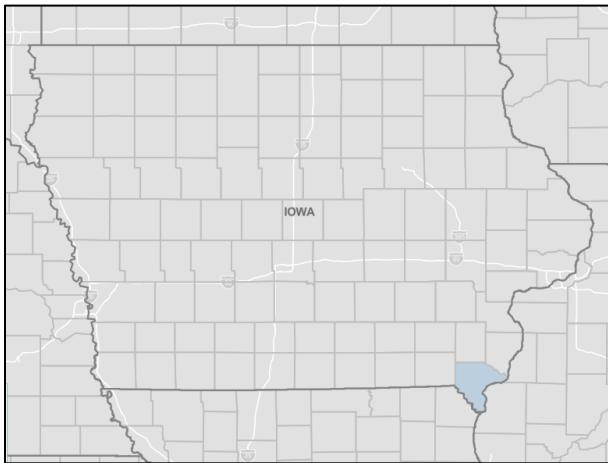
Based on First Children's Finance's analysis, it can be concluded that the current child care options in Lee County are not meeting the needs of all parents. The data and analysis show that the families in Lee County have varying needs and preferences, and each community has a different supply and demand for child care.

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.

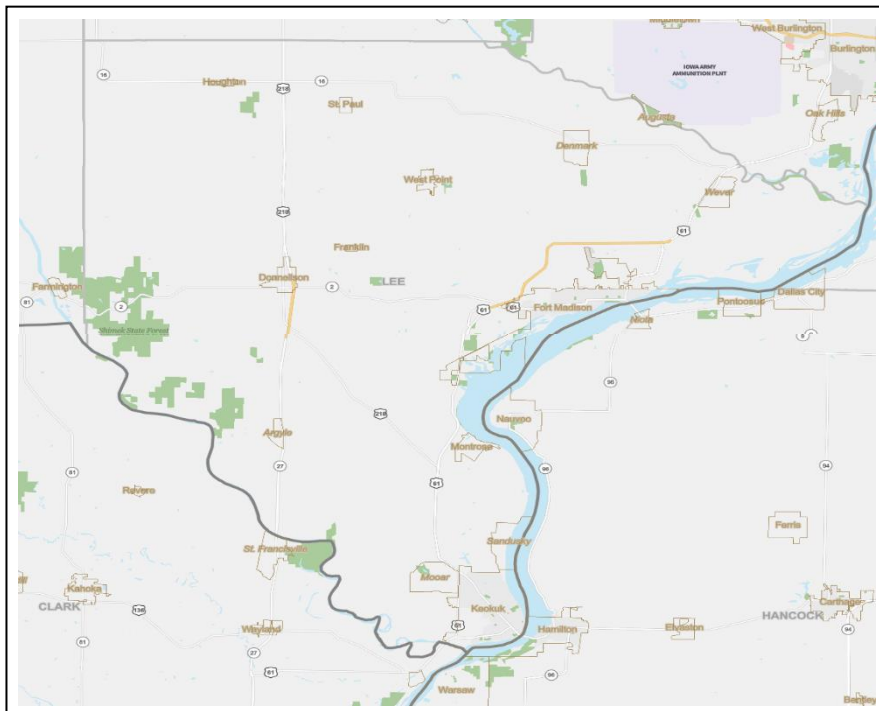
## MARKET DESCRIPTION

### Market Area

Lee County is located in extreme southeastern Iowa. It is bordered by Des Moines, Henry, and Van Buren counties on the west and north, the Mississippi River on the east and south, and Clark County Missouri on the southwest. Incorporated communities within the county are Donnellson, Fort Madison, Franklin, Houghton, Keokuk, Montrose, St. Paul, and West Point. Lee County has two county seats, Fort Madison and Keokuk.



Source: US Census Bureau



Source: US Census Bureau

For the purpose of this report, data for each community represented the city limits only, with those living in unincorporated areas included in “balance of county”.

## Population and Demographics

### *Total Population*

According to the US Census Bureau, as of 2020 the total population of Lee County was 33,555, which is a net change of -2,307 since 2010. Each of the incorporated towns as well as the unincorporated (balance of county) lost population. The largest losses were in the areas with the most population, Keokuk (lost 880), Fort Madison (lost 781), and unincorporated (lost 377).

*Table 1: Population Change by Community*

	<b>2010</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>Net Change</b>
<b>Lee County</b>	<b>35,862</b>	<b>33,555</b>	<b>-2,307</b>
Donnellson	912	885	-27
Fort Madison	11,051	10,270	-781
Franklin	143	131	-12
Houghton	146	141	-5
Keokuk	10,780	9,900	-880
Montrose	898	738	-160
St. Paul	129	109	-20
West Point	966	921	-45
Balance of County	10,837	10,460	-377

*Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2010, 2020)*

### Fertility

As of 2020 there were 6,297 women ages 16 to 50 living in Lee County. The US Census Bureau estimates that 626 (10%) of them gave birth in the prior 12-month period. Overall, 5% were both in the labor force and gave birth. The communities with the highest percentage of women giving in the prior 12-month period were also the smallest. The communities with the most women giving birth and being in the labor force were Keokuk (144 women), unincorporated areas (99 women), and Fort Madison (58 women).

*See table on next page.*

Table 2: Fertility by Community

	<b>Women 16-50</b>	<b>Gave Birth</b>	<b>% Gave Birth</b>	<b>Gave Birth and In Labor Force</b>	<b>% Gave Birth and in Labor Force</b>
<b>Lee County</b>	<b>6,297</b>	<b>626</b>	<b>9.9%</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>5.4%</b>
Donnellson	215	9	4.1%	8	3.7%
Fort Madison	1,868	115	6.1%	58	3.1%
Franklin	29	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Houghton	12	5	41.6%	5	41.6%
Keokuk	2,124	367	17.2%	144	6.7%
Montrose	157	6	3.8%	6	3.8%
St. Paul	18	5	27.7%	2	11.1%
West Point	126	20	15.8%	20	15.8%
Balance of County	1,748	99	5.6%	99	5.6%

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2020)

### Children Ages 0 to 11

As a whole, Lee County saw very little net change in the total number of children ages 0 to 11 from 2010 to 2020, while a few individual communities experienced larger changes. In 2010 there were a total of 4,790 and in 2020 there were 4,810, a net change of +20. The largest net change was in the unincorporated areas of the county where there was a total of 933 children ages 0 to 11 in 2010, and a total of 1,431 by 2020 (net change +498). Communities with the next largest changes were Fort Madison and Keokuk, each with a decrease. Fort Madison had 158 fewer children ages 0 to 11 in 2020 than in 2010, and Keokuk had 265 fewer.

Table 3: Population Ages 0 to 11

	<b>2010</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>Net Change</b>
<b>Lee County</b>			
Age 0 to 5	2,468	2,266	-202
Age 6 to 11	2,322	2,544	+222
<b>Total Ages 0 to 11</b>	<b>4,790</b>	<b>4,810</b>	<b>+20</b>
<b>Donnellson</b>			
Age 0 to 5	64	58	-6
Age 6 to 11	64	90	+26
<b>Total Ages 0 to 11</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>+20</b>
<b>Fort Madison</b>			
Age 0 to 5	803	617	-186
Age 6 to 11	700	728	+28
<b>Total Ages 0 to 11</b>	<b>1,503</b>	<b>1,345</b>	<b>-158</b>
<b>Franklin</b>			
Age 0 to 5	2	5	+3
Age 6 to 11	5	3	-2
<b>Total Ages 0 to 11</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>+1</b>

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<i>Table Continued from previous page</i>			
	<b>2010</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>Net Change</b>
<b>Houghton</b>			
Age 0 to 5	11	11	0
Age 6 to 11	17	4	-13
<b>Total Ages 0 to 11</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>-13</b>
<b>Keokuk</b>			
Age 0 to 5	940	790	-150
Age 6 to 11	946	831	-115
<b>Total Ages 0 to 11</b>	<b>1,886</b>	<b>1,621</b>	<b>-265</b>
<b>Montrose</b>			
Age 0 to 5	22	61	+39
Age 6 to 11	96	64	-32
<b>Total Ages 0 to 11</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>+7</b>
<b>St. Paul</b>			
Age 0 to 5	10	10	0
Age 6 to 11	0	5	+5
<b>Total Ages 0 to 11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>+5</b>
<b>West Point</b>			
Age 0 to 5	84	80	-4
Age 6 to 11	93	22	-71
<b>Total Ages 0 to 11</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>-75</b>
<b>Balance of County</b>			
Age 0 to 5	532	634	+102
Age 6 to 11	401	797	+396
<b>Total Ages 0 to 11</b>	<b>933</b>	<b>1,431</b>	<b>+498</b>

Note: Data from US Census Bureau- S0901 (2010, 2015, 2020) S0901

### **Race**

The racial composition of Lee County did change slightly over the last 10 years. The race that most residents identify as is White which was 93.5% in 2010 and 90.4% in 2020. There was also a small decrease in the percent of residents that identified as Black or African American, going from 3.1% to 2.7%. The only increase was in the percent of those that identify as Some Other Race, going from 0.7% to 0.9%.

In 2010 98.0% of the population was one race, and in 2020 that had decreased to 94.6%. This change helps explain why all races (except the category Some Other Race) experienced decreases.

See table on next page.

**Table 4: Race**

	<b>2010</b>		<b>2020</b>	
Total Population	35,862		33,555	
One Race	35,168	98.0%	31,766	94.6%
<i>White</i>	33,537	93.5%	30,336	90.4%
<i>Black or African American</i>	1,118	3.1%	910	2.7%
<i>American Indian or Alaska Native</i>	68	0.2%	72	0.2%
<i>Asian</i>	183	0.5%	140	0.4%
<i>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander</i>	11	0.0%	8	0.0%
<i>Some Other Race</i>	251	0.7%	300	0.9%
Two or More Races	694	2.0%	1,789	5.4%

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2010, 2020)

From 2010 to 2020, the number of residents identifying as Hispanic or Latino, regardless of race, also remained relatively unchanged. In 2010, approximately 3.1% of Lee County’s population identified as Hispanic or Latino, in 2020 that had increased to 3.7%.

**Table 5: Hispanic or Latino Origin by Specific Origin**

	<b>2010</b>		<b>2020</b>	
Total Population	35,991		33,946	
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	1,104	3.1%	1,241	3.7%
<i>Mexican</i>	881	2.4%	1,112	3.3%
<i>Puerto Rican</i>	30	0.1%	7	0.0%
<i>Cuban</i>	79	0.2%	10	0.0%
<i>Other Hispanic or Latino</i>	114	0.3%	112	0.3%

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2010, 2020)

A portion of the residents of Lee County speak a language other than English at home, although from 2010 to 2020, the percentage of residents that only speak English increased slightly. As of 2020, the most common language spoken other than English was Spanish. Among those that speak a language other than English, 75.5% speak English very well or well, while 24.5% speak English less than well.

See table on next page.



*Table 6: Primary Language Spoken at Home*

	2010		2020	
Population Age 5 and older	33,955		31,959	
Speaks Only English	32,805	96.7%	31,307	98.0%
Speaks Language Other than English	1,105	3.3%	652	2.0%
<i>Spanish or Spanish Creole</i>	771	2.3%	531	1.7%
<i>Other Indo-European Language</i>	166	0.5%	38	0.1%
<i>Asian and Pacific Islander Languages</i>	116	0.3%	41	0.1%
<i>Other Languages</i>	52	0.2%	42	0.1%
Speaks Language Other than English	1,105		652	
<i>Speaks English Very Well or Well</i>	819	74.1%	492	75.5%
<i>Speaks English Less than Well</i>	286	25.9%	160	24.5%

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2010, 2020)

### ***Educational Attainment***

According to the U.S. Census Bureau the percent of residents of Lee County ages 18 to 24 whose highest level of education is high school graduate, has increased. In 2010 the percentage of those age 18 to 24 that were a high school graduate or equivalent was 30.0%, by 2020 that had increased to 37.6%. during that same time period, the number of residents age 18 to 24 that has come college or a college degree fell. In 2010 the percentage that had some college or a college degree was 50.4%, by 2020 that number had decreased to 47.4%.

There was also change among residents 25 or older. The total percent of residents whose highest level of education was high school graduate or equivalent went from 40.9% in 2010 to 38.2%. During that same time, the percent that had an associate's degree, bachelor's degree, or professional degree increased from 23.1% collectively in 2010 to 31.8% collectively in 2020.

*Table 7: Educational Attainment*

	2010		2020	
<i>Total Population 18-24</i>	2,827		2,446	
Less than High School	554	19.6%	367	15.0%
High School Graduate, or equivalent	848	30.0%	920	37.6%
Some College or Associate's Degree	1,284	45.4%	1,081	44.2%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	141	5.0%	78	3.2%
<i>Total Population age 25+</i>	24,989		24,161	
Less than High School	3,423	13.7%	1,674	6.9%
High School Graduate, or equivalent	10,221	40.9%	9,229	38.2%
Some College, No Degree	5,573	22.3%	5,573	23.1%
Associate's Degree	2,074	8.3%	3,225	13.3%
Bachelor's Degree	2,449	9.8%	3,275	13.6%
Graduate or Professional Degree	1,249	5.0%	1,185	4.9%

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2010, 2020)

## Working Families

From 2010 to 2020, Lee County experienced an increase in the total number of households, but a decrease in both family households and family households with children under 18 present. As of 2020, there were 14,338 households in Lee County, of which 9,388 were family households. The average size of all households was 2.27 persons, while the average family household was slightly larger with 2.76 persons. Over half of all households were family households (65%), yet just one-quarter of all households (25%) have children under the age of 18 present.

The median income<sup>1</sup> for all households in Lee County was \$52,072, while the median income of families was \$64,578, and \$57,928 for families with children under the age of 18. These were increases over 2010. An increase in median income can be the result of multiple factors including more people in each household working, those that are working are working more hours, and workers receiving wage increases. In Lee County 77% of families with children ages 0–5 and 80% of families with children ages 6–17 had all parents working. All parents working means if there are two parents in the home they both work, or if there is a single parent that parent is working.

*Table 8: Household Types and Characteristics for Lee County*

	2010	2020
Total Households	14,234	14,338
Average household size	2.37	2.27
Median household income	\$42,444	\$52,072
Family Households	9,624	9,388
Average family size	2.84	2.76
Median family income	\$50,630	\$64,578
Family Households w/children under 18	3,909	3,533
<i>Married couples</i>	2,330	2,275
<i>Male householder (no wife)</i>	436	604
<i>Female householder (no husband)</i>	1,143	654
Median income for families w/children under 18	\$44,483	\$57,928
<i>Median family income married couples</i>	\$66,128	\$88,646
<i>Median family income male (no wife)</i>	\$26,750	\$39,512
<i>Median family income female (no husband)</i>	\$19,908	\$25,800
<i>B19126</i>		
Households w/children ages 0 to 5, and all parents working	69.4%	76.9%
Households w/children ages 6 to 17, and all parents working	73.5%	79.9%

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2010, 2020)

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## 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 May 2022 the total labor force (residents age 16 or older that are choosing to participate in the workforce) living in Lee was 15,100. Of those, 14,580 were employed, while 530 (3.5%) were unemployed. In comparison, in May 2019 the total labor force was 16,280, with 15,750 employed, and 530 (3.3%) unemployed. That means there are 1,180 fewer workers in the labor pool than there were just 3 years ago.

### Place of Work and Time Leaving Home

According to the US Census Bureau as of 2020, there were a total of 15,443 workers age 16 and over, which is a decrease since 2010. Of those 79.9% worked in Lee County, 16.2% worked outside the county, and another 4.0% worked outside the state. The most popular hour to leave home to go to work was 7:00 am to 7:59 am (26.7%), followed by 6:00 am to 6:59 am (22.9%).

A comparison of 2010 and 2020 data shows both where residents work and what time they leave home to go to work has changed. As of 2020, fewer residents out-commute to other counties or out of state for work. Fewer residents leave home between 12:00 am and 4:59 am, and more are leaving home between 6:00 am and 6:59 am to go to work.

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

	2010	2020
Total workers 16 years and over	15,828	15,443
Workers who worked from home	3.2%	5.2%
<i>Time leaving home to go to work</i>		
12:00 am to 4:59 am	5.8%	4.9%
5:00 am to 5:29 am	5.8%	5.5%
5:30 am to 5:59 am	5.1%	7.1%
6:00 am to 6:29 am	7.4%	9.3%
6:30 am to 6:59 am	11.3%	13.6%
7:00 am to 7:29 am	10.8%	13.7%
7:30 am to 7:59 am	14.4%	13.0%
8:00 am to 8:29 am	10.8%	5.7%
8:30 am to 8:59 am	2.3%	2.7%
9:00 am to 11:59 pm	26.2%	24.6%
Mean travel time (minutes)	17.5	18.2
<i>Place of Work</i>		
Within county of residence	81.3%	79.9%
Outside county of residence	15.2%	16.2%
Outside Iowa	3.5%	4.0%

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2010, 2020)

## Lee County Employees and Wages

According to Iowa Workforce Development, as of Quarter 1 of 2022, there was an average 13,849 people employed by companies located in Lee County, which is a decrease of 1,790 from the same period in 2017. The average weekly wage of those working at these companies was \$942 per week, up from \$880 during the same period in 2017. Of all the industries based in Lee County, the industry that employed the most people on average was manufacturing (3,866), followed by health care & social assistance (1,791), and retail trade (1,668). Average wages ranged from a low of \$246 per week for arts, entertainment & recreation, to a high of \$2,008 per week for utilities.

Table 10: Lee County Employees and Wages

	Q1 2017			Q1 2022		
	Total Locations	Average Employees	Avg. Wk. Wage	Total Locations	Average Employees	Avg. Wk. Wage
Accommodations & Food Service	90	1,025	\$233	84	959	\$278
Administrative & Waste Management	59	899	\$423	65	637	\$527
Agriculture, Fishing & Hunting	21	89	\$605	15	103	\$700
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	13	31	\$294	15	106	\$246
Construction	116	1,168	\$1,643	104	700	\$1,131
Educational Services	23	1,001	\$726	24	1,088	\$777
Finance & Insurance	68	399	\$839	72	393	\$1,061
Health Care & Social Assistance	136	2,193	\$697	171	1,791	\$783
Information	14	90	\$635	16	69	\$801
Management of Companies	3	---	---	11	110	\$2,413
Manufacturing	70	4,115	\$1,219	61	3,866	\$1,301
Mining, Quarrying, & Oil & Gas	3	6	\$964	2	---	---
Other Services (except Public Admin)	116	501	\$640	76	305	\$623
Professional, Scientific, Technical	60	261	\$936	60	229	\$1,083
Public Administration	31	938	\$1,009	34	927	\$1,008
Real Estate, Rental, Leasing	38	109	\$578	33	86	\$658
Retail Trade	135	1,900	\$479	117	1,668	\$586
Transportation & Warehousing	46	434	\$815	49	365	\$1,107
Utilities	10	107	\$1,653	9	92	\$2,008
Wholesale Trade	42	373	\$1,270	45	355	\$1,519
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,094</b>	<b>15,639</b>	<b>\$880</b>	<b>1,063</b>	<b>13,849</b>	<b>\$942</b>

Note: Data from Iowa Workforce Development (2017, 2022)

## 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<sup>2</sup>, Education and Childcare Administrators, Preschool and Daycare<sup>3</sup>, or Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education<sup>4</sup>.

According to Iowa Wage Report Data from Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) for Southeast Iowa<sup>5</sup> at the time this report was prepared, the entry wage<sup>6</sup> for Childcare Workers in the region was \$8.58, while the mean<sup>7</sup> wage was \$9.64 and experienced wage<sup>8</sup> was \$10.18. There were 860 of these workers in the region, and 6,980 across the state.

For Education and Childcare Administrators, Preschool and Daycare in the workforce region, the entry wage was \$17.01, the mean wage \$22.78, and experienced wage \$25.66. There were 80 of these workers in the region, and 830 across the state.

For Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education, the entry wage in the area was \$8.87, the mean wage \$15.98, and experienced wage \$19.53. There were 420 of these workers in the region, and 3,890 across the state.

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<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> Southeast Iowa - Aggregate data for the counties of Appanoose, Cedar, Clinton, Davis, Des Moines, Henry, Iowa, Jackson, Jasper, Jefferson, Keokuk, Lee, Louisa, Mahaska, Marion, Marshall, Monroe, Muscatine, Poweshiek, Tama, Van Buren, and Wapello.

<sup>6</sup> Entry Wage is the average of the lowest third of reported wages for the occupation.

<sup>7</sup> Mean Wages is the average wage and is computed by dividing the estimated total wage for an occupation by its weighted employment.

<sup>8</sup> Experienced Wage is the average of the upper two-thirds of reported wages for the occupation.

## 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
- 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 Human Services<sup>9</sup>

In Iowa, the 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.

#### *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 DHS inspection prior to opening and an annual inspection after that. A licensed center may apply for a Child Care Assistance<sup>10</sup> Provider Agreement and may participate in the voluntary Iowa Quality Rating System (QRS)<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Information in this section adapted from "Child Care Overview". Iowa Department of Human Services. <https://dhs.iowa.gov/childcare/overview>

<sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> Quality Rating System (QRS) 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 professional development, health and safety, environment, family and community partnership, and leadership and administration.

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

Anyone caring for more than 5 children at a time is required to register with the Iowa Department of 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 DHS 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 DHS and may participate in the voluntary Child Net<sup>12</sup> program and the Iowa Quality Rating System (QRS).

### *Child Care Homes*

Child Care homes can care for 5 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 DHS. 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 Child Net or Iowa Quality Rating System (QRS).

*See table on next page.*

### **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. School districts that have been approved to participate receive funding to offer at least 10 hours of preschool per week during the school year. Districts may provide the 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 DHS, because they were overseen by the Iowa Department of Education. Now many of those programs need to be licensed as a child care center under DHS. Statewide Voluntary Preschool is still exempt in most cases, unless it is extended for additional hours with parents paying tuition for the extra hours.

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<sup>12</sup> 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.

## Legal Unregulated Care

In Iowa, parents may choose “family, friend, or neighbor care” or other unrelated caregiver such as a nanny or au pare. These types of care are not regulated and typically not tracked, unless the provider has an agreement with DHS 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.

Table II: DHS Requirements for Child Care Providers in Iowa

	Non-Registered Home w/out DHS agreement	Non-Registered Home w/DHS agreement	Child Development Home A	Child Development Home B	Child Development Home C (1 provider)	Child Development Home C2 (2 providers)	Licensed Center
State Regulated	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Maximum Capacity <sup>13</sup>	5	5	8	12	8	16	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	Lead teacher 18 years
Iowa child abuse registry check <sup>14</sup>		•	•	•	•	•	•
Iowa criminal records check <sup>7</sup>		•	•	•	•	•	•
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		•	•	•	•	•	•

<sup>13</sup> A home provider’s own children are included in their legal capacity. Their school-age children are not unless they are being home-schooled.

<sup>14</sup> Iowa child abuse registry and Iowa criminal records checks are required for all household members age 14 and older.



	Non-Registered Home w/out DHS agreement	Non-Registered Home w/DHS agreement	Child Development Home A	Child Development Home B	Child Development Home C (1 provider)	Child Development Home C2 (2 providers)	Licensed Center
Professional Development (every 2 years)		6 hours	24 hours	24 hours	24 hours	24 hours	
CPR and First Aid Certification		•	•	•	•	•	•
Mandatory Reporter Training		•	•	•	•	•	•
Emergency Preparedness Response Training		•	•	•	•	•	•
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 (2011)

<https://ccmis.dhs.state.ia.us/providerportal/ChildCareRequirements.aspx>

### Early Care and Education Supply

The total number of DHS regulated child care providers and child care spaces across Iowa has changed over the last few years. According to Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral data, from 2016 to 2021 the total number of child care providers in Iowa declined by 28%, yet the total number of child care spaces increased by 4%. During that same time, across Southeast Iowa<sup>15</sup> the number of child care programs declined by 28%, while the number of child care spaces increased by 8%.

Industry changes that occurred during this time that may have influenced the numbers are:

- As of January 2016, child care, preschool (other than the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program), and before and after school programs operated by a school district are no

<sup>15</sup> Include the counties of Benton, Cedar, Clinton, Des Moines, Henry, Iowa, Jackson, Jefferson, Johnson, Jones, Keokuk, Lee, Linn, Louisa, Muscatine, Scott, Tama, Van Buren and Washington.

longer exempt from DHS licensing. In some communities, this resulted in a shift, with some spaces previously counted under Department of Education being counted under DHS.

- Starting in September 2016, all child care center staff, Registered Child Development Home operators, and Child Care Home operators that accept Child Care Assistance were required to take the 12-hour “Essential Child Care Preservice” training.
- As of July 2017, Child Care Home operators that accept Child Care Assistance were required to complete preservice training, have their home inspected at least once a year, and meet other regulations that had not previously been required.
- Since 2012, participation of school districts in the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program has increased significantly. Overall participation of school districts increased from 90% of districts participating in 2011–2012 to 98% in 2019 (321 of 327 districts). Overall enrollment increased from 19,900 in 2011–2012 to 25,330 in 2019–2020. As more districts participate, this has increased the number of child care spaces under both DHS and Department of Education.

According to Child Care Resource & Referral data, from 2016 to 2021 Lee County experienced a net loss of 123 regulated child care spaces. All Child Care Homes (those not registered but that have an agreement with Iowa DHS for Child Care Assistance) either closed or are no longer reporting to Iowa DHS and are therefore not tracked, these homes alone account for the loss of 115 spaces. There were not significant changes in the amount of child care spaces within any of the other settings.

*Table 12: Programs and Spaces Listed with Child Care Resource & Referral*

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Net Change
<b>Total Programs</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>-26</b>
DHS Centers & Preschools	19	18	18	17	19	18	-1
Dept. of Ed. Programs	1	1	1	1	1	1	--
Registered Child Dvpmt. Homes	19	17	18	15	18	17	-2
Child Care Homes	23	4	3	2	2	0	-23
<b>Total Spaces</b>	<b>1,288</b>	<b>1,140</b>	<b>1,144</b>	<b>1,148</b>	<b>1,260</b>	<b>1,165</b>	<b>-123</b>
DHS Centers & Preschools	936	908	901	938	1,022	941	+5
Dept. of Ed. Programs	29	20	20	20	20	20	-9
Registered Child Dvpmt. Homes	208	192	208	180	208	204	-4
Child Care Homes	115	20	15	10	10	0	-115

*Note: Data from Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral as of June 2021.*

Iowa DHS data shows that as of July 2022, there were 36 DHS regulated programs with 1,147 spaces in Lee County. These programs include child care, preschool, and Head Start. They breakdown as follows:

- Licensed Child Care Centers and Preschools- There are 18 DHS Licensed Child Care Centers and Preschools, which account for 941 (82%) of the spaces.
- Registered Child Development Homes- There are 16 DHS Registered Child Development Homes which account for 196 (17%) of spaces.
- Child Care Homes- There are 2 (non-registered) child care homes which account for 10 (1%) spaces.

The following tables show the child care programs tracked by DHS within Lee County as of July 2022. It is possible there are additional home providers or Department of Education preschools not listed because they are not regulated by DHS, comparable data is not available for those programs.

Table 13: DHS Regulated Child Care, July 2022

<b>Licensed Centers &amp; Preschools</b>						
<b>Program Name &amp; Location</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>DHS Capacity</b>	<b>Child Care Assistance</b>	<b>QRS Level</b>	<b>Ages</b>	<b>Year-Round</b>
Carousel Preschool Fort Madison	8:15 am -3:00 pm, M/F 9:00 am-3:00 pm, T/Th 8:15 am- 11:45 am, W	20	No	4	3-4 yrs.	No
Creative Edge Child Care Fort Madison	6:00 am - 6:00 pm Mon-Fri	34	Yes	---	2-12 yrs.	Yes
Eichacker Center (Head Start) Fort Madison	8:00 am -5:00 pm Mon-Fri	36	No	---	3-5 yrs.	No
Fort Madison Family YMCA Early Learning Center, Fort Madison	5:30 am -5:30 pm Mon-Fri	35	Yes	2	0-12 yrs.	Yes
Fort Madison Family YMCA Learning Center, Fort Madison	5:30 am-5:30 pm Mon-Fri	30	Yes	1	5-12 yrs.	Yes
Holy Trinity ECC Ft Madison Site	6:30 am -6:00 pm Mon-Fri	100	Yes	4	2-12 yrs.	Yes
Holy Trinity ECC West Point	8:30 am - 11:30 am Mon, Wed, Fri	32	No	4	3-4 yrs.	Yes
Inertia Boys and Girls Center Inc Keokuk	6:30 am – 5:30 pm Mon-Fri	86	Yes	3	0-12 yrs.	Yes
Keokuk Christian Preschool Keokuk	8:30 am – 11:00 am, M/W/F 8:30 am- 10:30 am, T/Th	27	Yes	---	3-5 yrs.	No
Keokuk Community Child Development Center, Keokuk	6:30 am – 5:30 pm Mon-Fri	80	Yes	2	0-12 yrs.	Yes
Keokuk Head Start Keokuk	6:00 am – 5:00 pm Mon-Fri	104	No	---	0-5 yrs.	Yes
Kiki's Kids Learning Center and Preschool, West Point	6:00 am – 6:00 pm Mon-Fri	51	Yes	---	0-12 yrs.	Yes
Learning Tree Daycare Center, LLC Fort Madison	5:45 am – 6:30 pm Mon-Fri	100	Yes	4	0-12 yrs.	Yes
Little Sprout's Preschool West Point	8:30 am-3:30 pm Tues-Fri	30	No	---	3-4 yrs.	Yes

<b>Program Name &amp; Location</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>DHS Capacity</b>	<b>Child Care Assistance</b>	<b>QRS Level</b>	<b>Ages</b>	<b>Year-Round</b>
Miss Janet's Preschool Donnellson	8:30 am -11:00 am Tues/Thurs	13	No	---	2-4 yrs.	No
Richardson Head Start Fort Madison	8:00 am – 5:00 pm Mon-Fri	31	No	---	0-4 yrs.	Yes
Sunshine Childcare Inc West Point	6:00 am – 6:00 pm Mon-Fri	59	Yes	---	0-12 yrs.	Yes
The Giving Tree Childcare Center Keokuk	6:30 am – 5:30 pm Mon- Fri	73	Yes	---	0-12 yrs.	Yes
<b>Registered Child Development Homes</b>						
<b>Program Name &amp; Location</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>DHS Capacity</b>	<b>Child Care Assistance</b>	<b>QRS Level</b>		
Angelick Houge, Fort Madison Registered Child Development Home A	6:00 am – 6:00 pm Mon-Fri	8	Yes	---		
Jennifer Pope, Fort Madison Registered Child Development Home A	6:30 am – 6:30 pm Mon-Fri	8	Yes	---		
Kataya Todd, Fort Madison Registered Child Development Home A	6:00 am – 6:00 pm Mon-Fri	8	Yes	---		
Beth Lumino, Fort Madison Registered Child Development Home B	6:00 am – 4:30 pm Mon-Fri	12	Yes	1		
Leslie Teeters, Keokuk Registered Child Development Home B	5:00 am – 11:00 pm 7 days/wk.	12	Yes	1		
Pamela Ragar, Keokuk Registered Child Development Home B	5:30 am – 5:00 pm Mon-Fri	12	Yes	1		
Sandra Clay, Keokuk Registered Child Development Home B	6:00 am – 6:00 pm Mon-Fri	12	Yes	---		
Sara Clay, Keokuk Registered Child Development Home B	24 hours/day 7 days/wk.	12	Yes	1		
Susan Morgan, Keokuk Registered Child Development Home B	8:00 am – 5:00 pm Mon-Fri	12	Yes	---		
Tabitha Hall, Fort Madison Registered Child Development Home B	5:30 am – 10:30 pm Mon-Fri	12	Yes	---		
Tiny Town Daycare (Amanda Welding), West Point Registered Child Development Home B	6:00 am – 6:00 pm Mon-Fri	12	Yes	---		
Vicki Augustine, Wever Registered Child Development Home B	7:00 am – 5:00 pm 7 days/wk.	12	Yes	---		
Christa Bronnenberg, Donnellson Registered Child Development Home C	6:15 am – 4:30 pm Mon-Fri	16	No	---		
Colleen Calvert, Montrose Registered Child Development Home C	5:45 am – 4:45 pm Mon-Fri	16	Yes	---		
Jessie Olsen, Keokuk Registered Child Development Home C	24 hours/day Mon-Fri	16	Yes	4		
Tonya's Tiny Tots Childcare (Tanya Hurley), Fort Madison Registered Child Development Home C	6:00 am – 4:30 pm Mon-Fri	16	No	4		

<b>Child Care Homes (Non-Registered Homes)</b>						
<b>Program Name &amp; Location</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>DHS Capacity</b>	<b>Child Care Assistance</b>	<b>QRS Level</b>		
Dorsheana Nikodijevic, Fort Madison	24 hours/day 7 days/wk.	5	Yes	---		
Elizabeth Garcia-Hidalgo, Fort Madison	24 hours/day 7 days/wk.	5	Yes	---		

Note: Data from Iowa Department of Human Services (2022)

### **Price Point**

Over the last 5 years, the average weekly tuition rates for care within a licensed center or preschool within Lee County has increased considerably for all ages. 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, providers no longer reporting their tuition rates if they stop accepting child care assistance, or homes that let their registration expire and no longer report their tuition to DHS (centers cannot let their license expire or they will be shut down). When comparing 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.

According to Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral, as of July 2022, the average weekly rates for care in a DHS Licensed Child Care Center in Lee County ranged from a low of \$138.33 per week for a school-age child, to a high of \$170.00 per week for an infant or toddler. Before and After School care averaged \$60.00 a week.

*Table 14: Average Weekly Tuition Rates of DHS Licensed Centers, Lee County*

	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
Infant	\$124.25	\$127.88	\$131.67	\$142.50	\$165.00	\$170.00
Toddler	\$124.25	\$127.88	\$131.67	\$142.50	\$165.00	\$170.00
Two-Year-Old	\$124.25	\$127.88	\$128.33	\$137.50	\$155.00	\$162.50
Three-Year-Old	\$124.00	\$126.00	\$128.33	\$135.00	\$150.00	\$157.50
Four- & Five-Year-Old	\$123.00	\$125.00	\$128.33	\$132.50	\$142.50	\$150.00
School-Age (full time)	\$111.67	\$111.25	\$117.50	\$120.00	\$130.00	\$138.33
Before & After School	\$34.00	\$35.83	\$36.00	\$41.67	\$53.75	\$60.00

Note: Data from Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral.

Over the last 5 years, the average weekly tuition rates for care within a registered home within Lee County has increased only slightly for all ages. As of July 2022, average weekly rates for care in a DHS Registered Child Development Home in Lee County ranged from a low of \$124.00 per

week for a school-age child, to a high of \$130.00 per week for an infant or toddler. Before and After School care averaged \$56.88 a week.

*Table 15: Average Weekly Tuition at Registered Homes*

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Infant	\$124.29	\$123.90	\$123.33	\$132.75	\$130.00	\$130.00
Toddler	\$121.43	\$123.90	\$123.33	\$132.75	\$130.00	\$130.00
Two-Year-Old	\$120.00	\$120.60	\$123.33	\$132.75	\$130.00	\$127.00
Three-Year-Old	\$120.00	\$120.60	\$123.33	\$127.80	\$130.00	\$127.00
Four- & Five-Year-Old	\$120.00	\$120.60	\$123.33	\$127.80	\$130.00	\$125.00
School-Age (full time)	\$115.00	\$115.95	\$125.00	\$127.80	\$127.50	\$124.00
Before & After School	\$45.00	\$51.25	\$47.50	\$56.00	\$50.00	\$56.88

*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. The average weekly tuition rates for care in both DHS Licensed Child Care Centers and Registered Child Development Homes for Lee County and surrounding counties which are located in Iowa are in the following tables.

Average weekly tuition at DHS Licensed Centers varies greatly from county-to-county. As of 2021, Des Moines County had the highest overall average tuition for ages 0 to 2 and ages 4 and up, while Van Buren County had the highest overall average for three-year-olds. In contrast, Van Buren County had the lowest overall average tuition rates for all other ages (besides three-year-old). With only 4 neighboring counties in Iowa to compare, Lee County average rates are on the lower side.

*Table 16: Average Weekly Tuition at Licensed Centers in Surrounding Counties, 2021*

	Des Moines	Henry	Lee	Van Buren	State of Iowa
Infant	\$176.25	\$175.00	\$170.00	\$160.00	\$218.42
Toddler	\$172.50	\$165.00	\$170.00	\$160.00	\$217.23
Two-Year-Old	\$162.50	\$155.00	\$162.50	\$148.00	\$198.15
Three-Year-Old	\$158.75	\$145.00	\$157.50	\$163.00	\$186.21
Four- & Five-Year-Old	\$157.50	\$135.00	\$150.00	\$140.00	\$179.34
Full time School-Age	\$151.25	\$110.00	\$138.33	\$140.00	\$155.47
Before & After School	\$51.67	N/A	\$60.00	N/A	\$83.84
Total Centers	15	7	18	3	1,496
Spaces w/in Centers	1,156	429	941	92	130,341

*Note: Data from Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral (2021)*

Average weekly tuition at DHS Registered Child Development Homes also varies from county to county. As of 2021, Henry County had the highest overall average rates for registered home care for ages 0 to 2, while Van Buren had the highest average rates for ages 3 and over. In contrast, Des Moines County had the lowest overall average rates for registered home care for all ages.

*Table 17: Average Weekly Tuition at Registered Homes in Surrounding Counties, 2021*

	<b>Des Moines</b>	<b>Henry</b>	<b>Lee</b>	<b>Van Buren</b>	<b>State of Iowa</b>
Infant	\$129.00	\$145.00	\$130.00	\$140.00	\$144.74
Toddler	\$128.20	\$145.00	\$130.00	\$140.00	\$143.37
Two-Year-Old	\$123.50	\$145.00	\$127.00	\$140.00	\$141.09
Three-Year-Old	\$123.50	\$138.75	\$127.00	\$140.00	\$139.50
Four- & Five-Year-Old	\$121.90	\$138.75	\$125.00	\$140.00	\$137.50
Full time School-Age	\$113.00	\$137.50	\$124.00	\$140.00	\$127.16
Before & After School	\$60.50	\$62.14	\$56.88	N/A	\$65.40
Total Registered Homes	69	11	17	3	2,442
Spaces w/in Registered Homes	764	128	204	32	26,796

*Note: Data from Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral (2021)*

### **Child Care Assistance**

Child Care Assistance (CCA) is available to the children of income-eligible parents to help pay for care at Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) approved child care programs while a parent or caretaker works or attends school. Child care programs are reimbursed directly from Iowa DHS when they provide care to a family that qualifies. In Iowa, a family's household income cannot exceed 145% of the annual federal poverty threshold to qualify for assistance. According to the federally determined poverty threshold that went into effect as of January 12, 2022, 145% of poverty is \$33,393 for a household of 3, and \$40,238 for a household of 4.

Reimbursements to the provider are based on the number of units a child attends each week but cannot exceed the number of units approved by DHS. 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 10 units (2 half-day units, for 5 days) or less, 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 rate based on whether or not the provider participates in the Iowa Quality Rating System (QRS).

The following table shows the maximum amount child care providers can be reimbursed through the CCA program. These rates went into effect as of July 1, 2021.

Table 18: Half-Day Maximum CCA Reimbursement Rates

Age Group <sup>16</sup>	No QRS		QRS Level 1 or Level 2		QRS Level 3 or Level 4		QRS Level 5	
	Basic Care	Special Needs	Basic Care	Special Needs	Basic Care	Special Needs	Basic Care	Special Needs
Infant/Toddler	\$19.30	\$51.94	\$20.50	\$51.94	\$21.50	\$51.94	\$23.21	\$51.94
Preschool	\$17.00	\$30.43	\$18.00	\$30.43	\$18.98	\$30.43	\$20.00	\$30.43
School Age	\$13.50	\$30.34	\$14.75	\$30.34	\$15.00	\$30.34	\$16.00	\$30.34

Note: Data from Iowa Department of Human Services (2021)

As of July 2022, 27 (75%) of the 36 Iowa DHS regulated child care programs in Lee County are approved to accept CCA. Looking at the programs that do not, 3 are Head Start which is an income-based program, 4 are licensed child care center or preschool programs that offer only part-time or school year only services, and the remaining 2 are registered child development homes.

<sup>16</sup> As of July 1, 2020, the age group Infant/Toddler for CCA includes ages 0 to 2, and Preschool includes children from the age of 3 until they begin Kindergarten.



## CHILD CARE NEEDS SURVEY RESULTS

In May 2022, three electronic surveys developed by First Children’s Finance were distributed for the purpose of determining how child care affects employers and parents, as well as to gain insight from child care providers about the current challenges and opportunities they are experiencing. To assure there were no biases and to maintain confidentiality, surveys were distributed electronically and then collected and analyzed by First Children’s Finance. Comments made by survey participants are shared verbatim as long as 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 15 different employers were represented in the employer survey. Employers represented the following industries: Agriculture, Fishing, Hunting; Educational Services; Finance & Insurance; Health Care & Social Assistance; Manufacturing; Public Administration; and Other. Collectively they employ over 916 individuals at their Lee County locations, have 26 vacant full-time positions, and 7 vacant part-time positions.

Nine (9) employers reported that the composition of their workforce working in Lee County is more than half female.

Table 19: Composition of Workforce

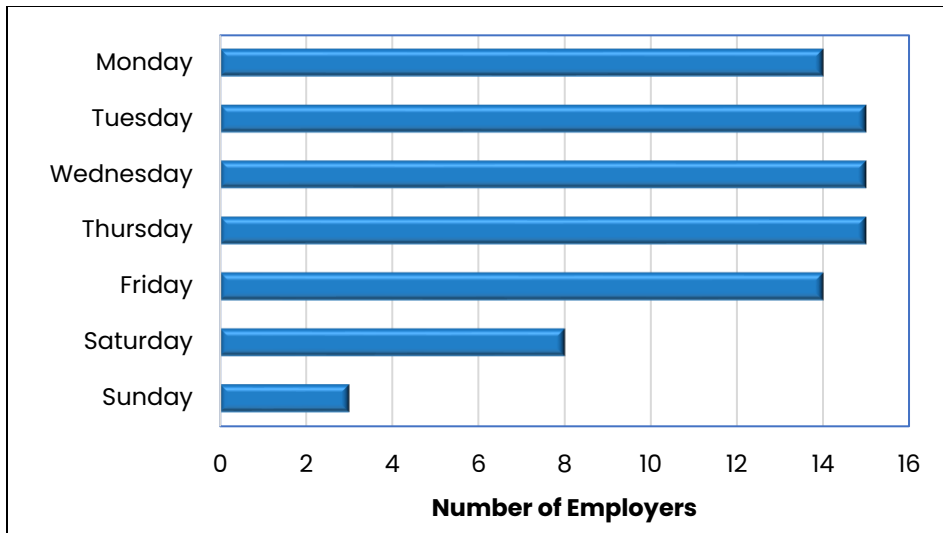
	Number of Employers
Male 0% to 25% -- Female 75% to 100%	5
Male 25% to 50% -- Female 50% to 75%	4
Male 50% to 75% -- Female 25% to 50%	3
Male 75% to 100% -- Female 0% to 25%	3

Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children’s Finance, ©2022

When asked which days of the week their employees typically work, 13 employers indicated they operate Monday through Friday, 4 of those also operate on Saturday (6 days per week), and 3 of those also operate on both Saturday and Sunday (7 days per week). One additional employer indicated they operate Monday through Thursday, and another Tuesday through Saturday.

See table on next page.

Figure 1: Days Employees Typically Work



Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

When it comes to employers' hours of operation the majority (9 employers) operate first shift or days Monday through Friday, with one also operating on Saturdays. Three (3) others operate both first and second shift (varying hours between 7:00 am and 10:00 pm) with one of those running 7 days per week. The remaining 3 operate 24-hours, with 2 of those running 7 days per week and the other running 6 days per week (Monday through Saturday).

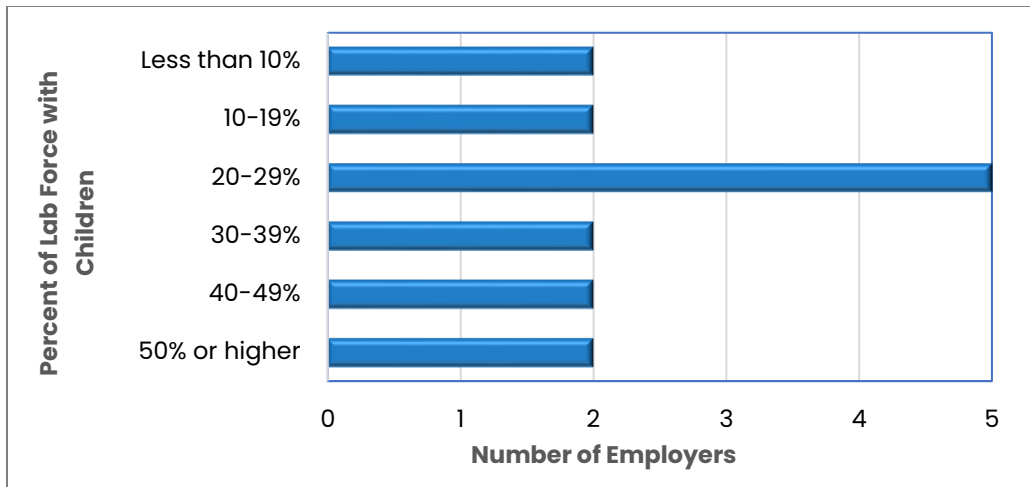
Eight (8) of the employers indicated that there are sometimes changes or fluctuations in their hours or days of operations. Comments received about schedule fluctuations were:

- *We do have early out for students on Wednesdays, but the staff stay for the full day.*
- *Sports announcers are dependent on game schedules and seasons.*
- *Market demand.*
- *Overtime in Spring and Fall.*
- *Thanksgiving break, Christmas Break, Spring Break, and specific holidays.*
- *About 50% laid off during summer months.*
- *Rotational Schedules (swing shift), some overtime, and turnaround variations.*  
*Administrative group, operations group, packing, and maintenance groups are all on different schedules.*
- *We are seasonal production and distribution.*

Two (2) employers estimated that less than 10% of their employees have children age 12 or younger, while 2 indicated 10-19%, 5 indicated 20-29%, 2 indicated 30-39%, 2 indicated 40-49%, and 2 indicated 50% or higher.

See figure on next page.

Figure 2: Estimated Employees with Children Age 12 or Younger



Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children’s Finance, ©2022

Employers were asked to estimate the percentage of their workforce that lives in Lee County. The majority of employers indicated that 50% or more of their workforce lives in Lee County.

Table 20: Percent of Employees Living in Lee County

	Number of Employers
0% to 25% live in Lee County	1
25to 50% live in Lee County	2
50% to 75% live in Lee County	7
75% to 100% live in Lee County	5

Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children’s Finance, ©2022

A total of 4 employers indicated their company had employees that departed during the last 12 months as a direct result of child care challenges. Three (3) indicated they lost 1 or 2 employees, and 1 indicated they had lost more than 5 employees.

As a follow up, employers were then asked if any employees departed as a direct result of changes to child care due to COVID. One (1) indicated yes, while 12 indicated no, and 2 were unsure. Comments received were:

- We had employees that opted to just stay home with family.

Employers were asked if their company experienced changes over the last 12 months due to COVID. A list with multiple options was provided and employers instructed to select all that apply. Over half of employers indicated all or some employees temporarily worked from home. Overall, 6 of the 15 employers indicated their company experienced none of the listed changes.

Table 21: Company Changes in Last 12 Months Due to COVID

	Number of Employers
All or some employees temporarily worked from home.	8
All or some positions permanently changed to work from home.	1
At least one employee permanently departed as a result of their child care arrangement being affected by COVID.	2
My company experienced none of these.	6

Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

Respondents were given the opportunity to explain their answers. The only comment received was:

- *Ag was essential, but some salesmen worked from home and traveled less.*

When asked if their company is currently making changes to staffing levels or schedules due to COVID (not including individual employees taking time off when sick or needing to quarantine), 2 indicated yes, and 13 indicated no. Comments received were:

- *Due to quarantine issues, we increased headcount.*
- *We offered a voluntary separation package to all employees in 2020, and 19 employees chose to take the package and leave employment with the company. We operated at the reduced headcount for a few months but have since returned to pre-COVID staffing levels.*
- *We got security guards as a direct result of COVID.*

Three (3) employers indicated their company has implemented or changed employee policies to adapt to employees' child care needs in regards to COVID. Comments received were:

- *Allowed children to come to work.*
- *If COVID related due to child care needs no points given in attendance program.*
- *We have a COVID leave policy that includes child care needs.*

When it comes to employee productivity (besides COVID), 53% of employers indicated they had challenges related to productivity due to employee's child care challenges, 20% said they do not have challenges, and 27% were unsure. Comments from those answering yes or unsure were:

- *It seems that it has been somewhat of an issue in the past. Frequent absences related to child care can result in poor connection and communication among employees.*
- *The staff has to take time off for children as needed and we don't have staff to replace them.*
- *Children can get in the way when brought to work.*

- *We experienced productivity challenges related to COVID however unclear if this was child care or not. Not a metric we tracked.*
- *I think some don't even apply as they have childcare issues.*
- *Finding daycare when current daycare facilities are closed due to illness or other personal reasons.*
- *Sick child and unavailable child care (usually family).*

When asked about absenteeism due to employee's child care challenges (besides COVID), 46% of employers indicated they had experienced challenges, while 27% did not, and another 27% were unsure. Comments received were:

- *We experienced productivity challenges related to absenteeism however unclear if this was child care or not. Not a metric we tracked.*
- *New parents can't get into daycare for months after the child is born. Every little cold the child seems to get sent home and has to get a covid test.*
- *We do not require our employees to specify why they take a paid sick time off, so we don't know for certain if they're sick or caring for a child or family member.*
- *We have employees calling in or asking for days off because they don't have child care.*
- *Inability to find daycare when current facilities are closed – see above.*
- *Our employees are the primary source of child care backup.*

In a separate question, 27% of employers indicated they had experienced difficulty hiring employees during the last 12 months due to child care options or challenges, 27% indicated they had not experienced difficulty, and another 46% were unsure. Comments received were:

- *It is against the law to ask perspective employees about family situations.*
- *Our operations crews are on swing shift and only 2% (3) of those employees are female.*
- *I know lots of people won't apply because 2<sup>nd</sup> shift does not work for them.*

Employers were given a list of common affects their employees (not job applicants) may experience due to child care challenges and were asked to select all that they are aware have affected their employees in the last 12 months. The most common challenges were arriving late to work and having to leave work early because the providers was closed, on vacation, or not available.

*See table on next page.*

Table 22: Affects of Child Care Challenges on Employees

	Percent of Employers
Arrived late to work	80%
Had to leave work early	73%
Missed a day of work because their provider was closed, on vacation, or not available	67%
Had to bring their child to work with them	53%
Missed a day of work because their provider did not have room or space for a child	33%
Have had to reduce the number of hours worked	33%
Have had to reduce the number of hours worked	33%
Lower productivity	27%
Unable to accept a different work schedule or shift	27%
Quit a job	20%
Unable to travel for work	20%
Other	20%
Unable to work overtime	13%
Received disciplinary action (not including firing)	13%
Had to change jobs to one that works with their child care arrangement	13%
Had to leave their child home alone to go to work	0%
Got fired	0%
Took a job that does not fit their skills	0%
Did not accept a desired job offer	0%
Our employees experienced no issues related to work and child care	7%

Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

Comments from those selecting "other" were:

- We do not require our employees to specify why they take a paid sick time off, so we don't know for certain if they're sick or caring for a child or family member.
- One employee had daycare closed and had to find new day care for children.

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 most common child care related benefit offered is dependent care flex spending accounts, followed by flexible schedules and work-from-home options when an employee's regular child care arrangement is not available.

See table on next page.

Table 23: Child Care Related Benefits Currently Offered

	Number of Employers
Dependent Care Flex Spending Accounts	8
Flexible schedule if regular care is not available	5
Work-from-home option if regular care is not available	2
Financial assistance to help employees pay for child care	0
Child care information included in orientation	0
Child care information included in employee handbook	0
None of the above	4

Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

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

- *We may not have the budget for any other option.*
- *Do not have the revenue to offer financial incentives.*
- *Some of our services are providing child care so we must have staff on location.*
- *Being a small business we cannot afford to help with child care assistance and because [of our industry] we cannot offer work from home.*
- *In person service and public access... is critical to [our customers].*
- *The nature of our production makes working from home and flexible schedules difficult. Our facility operates continuously 24/7 with the exception of our annual shutdown/ planned maintenance.*
- *Cost to taxpayers.*
- *Limited access to finding reliable caretakers and isn't compatible with our hours.*
- *Other employee benefits provided.*
- *Our situations are too diverse to provide a one-size fits all policy.*

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

- *We attempt to be gracious and offer time off as needed.*
- *Flexible when can and sick leave benefits.*
- *Two weeks paid parental leave when employees welcome a new child to their family via birth, adoption, or foster placement.*
- *We let them bring their kids to work sometimes if they are above the age of two and if it's for a short period of time.*
- *We allow employees to make up time if they have to pick children up early in order to work a full forty-hour week.*
- *Flexibility.*

Employers were asked “How would your business be willing to assist in addressing the child care shortage and/or supporting child care businesses?” and asked to select all that apply.

*Table 24: Solutions Employers are Willing to Consider*

	<b>Number of Employers</b>
Appoint an employee to serve on the Board of Directors of a child care program	5
Donation or financial contribution for operating of a child care program	3
Donation or financial contribution for child care scholarships for your employees	2
Provide in-kind services to reduce expenses of a child care program (ex. bookkeeping, payroll, maintenance, cleaning, etc.)	2
Provide child care providers access to purchase supplies through our company to take advantage of bulk pricing or discounts	1
Donation or financial contribution for child care scholarships for all children	1
Provide space for on-site child care (operated by another entity)	0
Own and operate a child care program (either on-site or off-site)	0
Other	9

Source: Lee County, Iowa Child Care Needs Survey by First Children’s Finance, ©2022

Comments shared by those selecting “other” were:

- *Attempt to have our Extended Learning Program Coordinator work with various entities to review our options.*
- *New coverage when appropriate.*
- *Corporate decision, can’t be made at a local level.*
- *We are a non-profit that operates a Head Start program. We would be interested in collaboration of services and sharing knowledge.*
- *Assist parents in finding resources for child care services.*
- *I cannot commit to donations; however, we’d be more than happy to look into the partnership possibilities.*
- *We are not sure if any employees would be interested in serving on the board mentioned above. Being parents of small children needing daycare, not sure if they would have adequate time between work, home and children’s events to be able to serve on the board.*

Employers were asked what they think the biggest challenge facing parents in Lee County today regarding child care, and what will resolve that challenge. Comments received were:

- *There is no financial incentive for early childhood educators to open child care facilities. In other industries we would never expect an entrepreneur to open a business out of kindness and not with the goal of profit. Also, there are many manufacturing positions that require second and third shift that are not compatible with most current daycare options.*



- *The cost of child care. Iowa politicians will need to dedicate funds to reduce the cost of child care.*
- *Lack of openings.*
- *Finding quality child care that provides educational activities or opportunities or structured play.*
- *Affordability and reliability of services.*
- *We have to help child care providers find adequate staff to be able to accommodate the needs of Lee Co parents.*
- *Lack of qualified providers in our communities is a challenge. The limited capacity of qualified provider has a lot to do with the cost and liability of these services. Insufficient income to sustain these services is detrimental to capacity to serve the community's needs.*
- *Lack of available childcare for off-shift (nights, weekends) workers makes childcare a major obstacle for parents, especially single or divorced parents.*
- *Not enough providers.*
- *Finding care takers and/or that are open until 9pm-10pm.*
- *Day care facilities being able to find employees to expand the number of children they can safely care for.*
- *Infant care.*

Employers were asked what opportunities they see that should be explored to help address the child care supply. Comments received were:

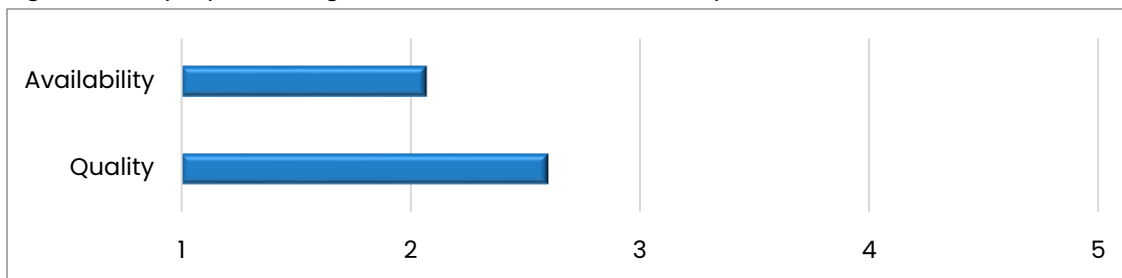
- *I think that if the major manufacturing industries were able to support the creation of a centrally located childcare facility and then provided flex pay options to their employees, that they would be able to fill many open shifts at manufacturing plants. Additionally, if they opened up a childcare facility to other industries outside of the major manufacturers, they would be able to pay for the facility faster.*
- *Young entrepreneurs who may want to start a business related to childcare.*
- *Child care employees need better pay and benefits, but that in turn raises prices for parents.*
- *Partnerships with preschools. Our clientele of incoming students do not attend preschools because they do not have arrangements from child care to a preschool.*
- *Financial support and mentoring for new providers.*
- *Subsidize the cost of doing business and allow the service cost to be based on the competency and quality of the employees delivering service.*
- *Any and all partnerships to make childcare more accessible.*
- *More 2nd shift options.*
- *An online listing of caretakers.*

- *Multi business collaboration.*

Employers were asked to rate the *availability* of child care in Lee County on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not available, 3 adequate, and 5 highly available (the higher the score, the more available). The weighted average was 2.07.

Employers were then asked to rate the *quality* of child care in Lee County on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being low quality, 3 adequate, and 5 highly quality (the higher the score, the higher quality). As a whole, employers think the quality is adequate. The weighted average was 2.60.

Figure 3: Employer Ratings of Child Care in Lee County



Source: Lee County, Iowa Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

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

- *Child care options are not there. Childcare costs are too high.*
- *A lot of the daycares (in home) do not teach children how to play appropriately or work on their educational pre-requisite skills that are needed. Learning the 26 letters of the alphabet (lower case and upper case), recognition of numbers (0-5), the ability to count.*
- *Without familial connections working parents of this community have significant difficulty in securing quality child care services.*
- *Creativity in the area of quality and child stimulation.*

The final question asked employers to provide any additional thoughts about the supply of child care in Lee County. Comments received were:

- *We cannot grow our population and attract young families without proper childcare options.*
- *Child care really needs to consider partnering with early childhood teachers (preschool and Kindergarten) to help prepare for a school setting.*
- *Childcare provider must be recognized as a critical infrastructure of the community. The workforce of Lee County is directly affected by the service as well as contributes to an aging and/or transient workforce locally.*

- *I am aware the daycare facilities in our area have long waiting lists. Safety of children in those settings needs to be a top concern.*
- *Child care exists, but is it available where and when it is needed. This is not a single solution problem.*

### **Child Care Provider Survey Results**

A total of 9 child care providers surveys were completed. The majority of programs are located in Fort Madison, however Donnellson, Keokuk, and West Point were also represented.

*Table 25: Location of Child Care Program*

	<b>Number of Programs</b>
Donnellson	1
Fort Madison	5
Keokuk	1
West Point	2

*Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022*

Six (6) home-based providers and 3 child care centers are represented. Of the 6 home providers, 4 were registered with DHS and 2 were not. Among the providers that were not registered, 1 was previously registered but is no longer. When asked if they are interested in becoming registered, all nonregistered providers indicated "no". Those that answered no were asked to explain, comments received were:

- *To be able to have more children there is a limit and I don't think that's fair in order for me to have a steady income.*
- *Home not large enough for more than 5 children.*

All providers answered questions about the length of time they have been providing care, and how much longer they plan to provide care (home providers only). Three (3) of the 9 programs have been in business 20 years or longer, 1 home has been in business for just 2 years, and 1 center for just 1 year.

*Table 26: Years Child Care Business Has Been in Operation*

	<b>20+ Years</b>	<b>10 to 19 years</b>	<b>5 to 9 years</b>	<b>0 to 4 years</b>
Homes	2	1	2	1
Centers	1	0	1	1

*Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022*

The home providers were also asked how much longer they intend to provide child care. Four (4) are planning on 5 or more years, while 1 is planning 3 or more years and 1 is planning on 2 more years.

The providers that participated are collectively caring for 383 children, with some enrolled full-time and others part-time. Although the licensed capacity is assigned to a center based on usable square footage, there are often reasons for the provider setting a lower preferred capacity. Reasons for a lower preferred capacity may include the ability to staff all classrooms, or large spaces like multi-purpose rooms counted in the total license that do not work well for a classroom. Most reported their preferred capacity is the same as their licensed capacity.

The 3 centers reported that according to Iowa DHS licensing capacities, their collective legal capacity is 510 children while their preferred capacities as 305, and that they currently have 320 children enrolled. The 4 registered homes have a collective legal capacity of 52 children, their preferred capacities total 41, and their current collective enrollment 52. The 2 nonregistered homes have a collective legal capacity of 10 children (5 each). Both indicated their preferred capacity is 10 (collectively 20), and they have a collective total of 11 children enrolled.

*Table 27: Participating Programs by Type*

	<b>Total Providers</b>	<b>Legal Capacity</b>	<b>Preferred Capacity</b>	<b>Full-Time Enrollment<sup>17</sup></b>	<b>Part-Time Enrollment</b>
Licensed Center/Preschool	3	510	305	76	244
Registered Homes	4	52	41	41	11
Nonregistered Homes	2	10	20	8	3

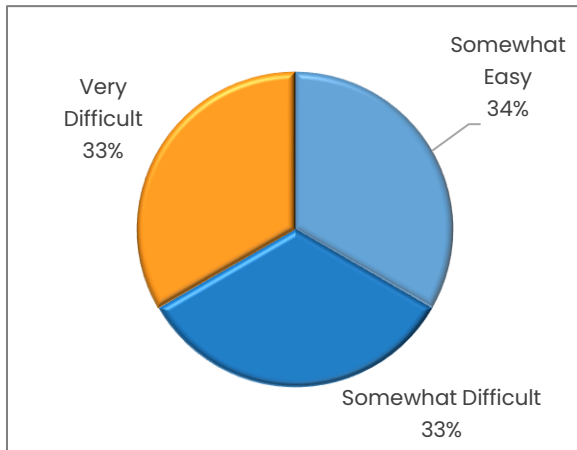
*Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022*

Collectively, centers reported they have 61 employees, 44 part-time (35 hours per week or less) and 17 full-time (36 hours per week or more). Turnover during the previous 12 months affected all 3 centers. Two (2) centers had 3 employees leave (voluntarily or involuntarily), and the third had 18. This adds up to 24 center employees turning over in one year (assuming no duplication-meaning the same person working for multiple centers). As a group, the centers report they currently have a total of 5 vacant staff positions, 2 full time positions and 3 part time. When asked how hiring staff had been over the last 12 months, all 3 experienced different levels of difficulty.

*See figure on next page.*

<sup>17</sup> It is possible for a child care program to have more children enrolled than what their capacity allows due to varying attendance schedules of the children.

Figure 4: Hiring Child Care Center Staff in Last 12 Months



Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

One (1) of the centers reported that in the last 12 months closed a classroom or limited enrollment due to not enough staff. In addition, all 3 centers said turned away families or put them on a wait list because of a lack of openings in their program.

Comments received pertaining to limiting enrollment due to not enough staff were:

- *We have closed the program once, due to lack of staffing (illness).*

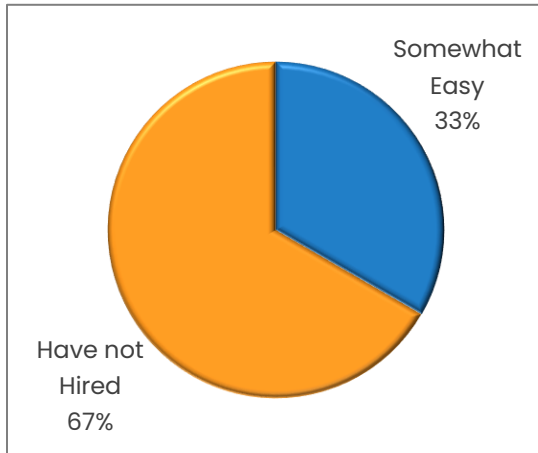
Comments received pertaining to turning away families or putting them on a waitlist because of lack of openings were:

- *We have turned away 5 school-aged children (approximately 6-8 years old) because of capacities in their age group. They will have the opportunity to register again in September.*
- *We currently run a waitlist that is approximately 25 children ranging from the ages of newborn up to 5 years. We typically start new children in the fall when children transfer to the school age room or age out of our program.*
- *I have turned away probably 20 families looking for care for children between the ages of 8 weeks to 5 years old.*

Three (3) home providers reported they have a total of 7 staff or assistants. Those staff or assistants are both part-time (5 total) and full-time (2 total). Turnover during the previous 12 months affected 1 home, with 1 part-time staff or assistants departing (voluntarily or involuntarily). Currently none of the homes have vacant staff or assistant positions. When it comes to hiring, 2 home provider reported it had been somewhat easy to hire during the last 12 months, while 4 reported they did not try to hire during the last 12 months. Comments from home providers related to hiring difficulty were:

- *My difficulty is finding full time staff year-round who is willing to be paid \$9 or less. I can find all the help in the summer which has worked out so far but have not found a staff during the school year.*
- *I am having my spouse join me to expand in the fall so he is becoming my co-provider. We will almost double the amount of children in our care.*

Figure 5: Hiring Home Staff in Last 12 Months



Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children’s Finance, ©2022

One (1) home provider also reported they limited enrollment due to not enough staff during the last 12 months. In addition, 5 home providers said they turned away families or put them on a wait list because of a lack of openings in their program. Participants that answered yes, were asked to provide details.

Comments received pertaining to limiting enrollment due to not enough staff were:

- *Anytime I have a doctor appointment or have vacation, I have to shut down.*
- *I get calls at least once a week asking about childcare but do not have any spots available until August due to being at number capacity.*

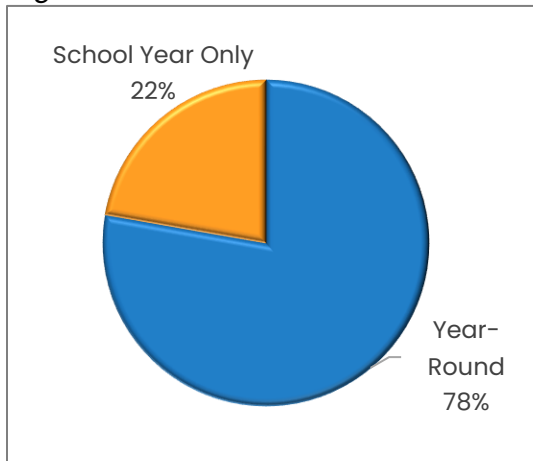
Comments received pertaining to turning away families or putting them on a waitlist because of lack of openings were:

- *The parents I had to turn away was because they needed care for multiple children and that would put me over my limit.*
- *Have 14 families on a waitlist.*
- *I have a very large waitlist of 15 families waiting to get in. I am completely full and have been trying to take in families on days I have low numbers but almost all of my waiting list needs more than just drop-in care.*

- I get calls at least once a week asking about childcare but do not have any spots available until August due to being at number capacity. Mostly babies but calls for all ages.

Seven (7) providers operate year-round, while 2 provide care during the school year only. The 2 programs that operate during the school year only consist of 1 center and 1 Registered Level B home provider.

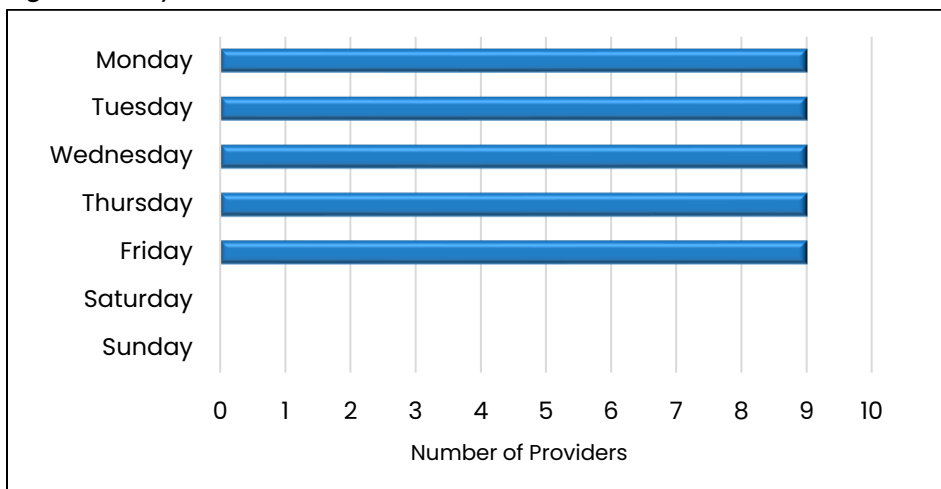
Figure 6: When Care is Provided



Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

All 9 child care providers indicate they provide child care on Monday through Friday. None of the survey participants provides care on Saturday or Sunday.

Figure 7: Days Care is Provided



Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

Eight (8) of the programs open, or start providing care, in the morning between 5:45 am and 7:45 am, while one program opens at 3:00 pm for after school care. When it comes to closing, all 9 close between 4:30 pm and 6:00 pm.

Providers were given a list of factors that parents may consider when looking for child care and asked to indicate which one factor seems most important to parents that contact them looking for child care. This question was answered by all 9 providers. Collectively the number one factor is available space or timing of enrollment (5 providers). The remaining factors were each selected by 1 provider: part-time options, tuition rates or price, upkeep or appearance of the facility and playground, and weekend care.

*Table 28: Factor Most Important to Parents Inquiring About Care*

	<b>Number of Providers</b>
Available space/timing of enrollment	5
Care includes preschool	0
Dependability	0
Drop-in or occasional care	0
Educational curriculum used	0
Evening or 2 <sup>nd</sup> shift care (after 7:00 pm)	0
Health and safety policies	0
Iowa Quality Rating System (QRS) rating	0
Location	0
Part-time options	1
Positive interactions between staff and children	0
Second-shift care	0
Secured entrance	0
Special needs care	0
Third shift/overnight care	0
Transportation to and from school or preschool	0
Tuition assistance or scholarships	0
Tuition rates or price	1
Upkeep or appearance of the facility and playground	1
Weekend care	1

*Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022*

Many providers will participate in programs that provide funding to off-set costs. Providers were asked about multiple federal and state level programs available to licensed centers, registered homes, and some nonregistered homes.

*See table on next page.*



Table 29: Child Care Programs Participation in Funding Opportunities

	<b>Current or Past Participant</b>	<b>Aware of, But Never Participated</b>	<b>Not Familiar With/Not Heard Of</b>
Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)	3 homes 1 center	2 homes 1 center	1 home 1 center
Iowa DHS Child Care Assistance	2 homes 2 centers	3 homes 0 centers	1 home 1 center
Agreement with school to provider Universal Preschool (4-year-old preschool)	0 homes 0 centers	2 homes 2 centers	4 homes 1 center
New IQ4K Quality Improvement Rating System	0 homes 1 center	4 homes 1 center	2 homes 1 center
Pervious Iowa QRS System	1 home 1 center	3 homes 1 center	2 homes 1 center
TEACH Scholarship Program	1 home 2 centers	3 homes 0 centers	2 homes 1 center
Child Care WAGE\$® salary supplement	1 home 1 center	3 homes 1 center	2 homes 1 center

Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

Child care providers were asked a few questions about how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected their program over the past 12 months, as well as changes they have made as a result.

Providers were first asked how COVID affected staffing. Responses received were:

- *Had to close for 3 days due to exposure*
- *I had to shut down for a week in February for getting Covid myself.*
- *Yes our family had COVID in January of 2022 and I had to shut down.*
- *One time we closed our program down due to illness.*
- *We struggled to find subs to cover our staff that had to quarantine do to covid exposure or testing positive for covid.*

Next, providers were asked how COVID has affected their enrollments over the last 12 months.

Responses received were:

- *Many parents have contacted Covid which affected the enrollments, due to the child absents.*
- *Have not been affected in the last 12 months, before that it did.*
- *Unsure.*
- *It hasn't.*

When asked how COVID affected their overall operations or business practices over the last 12 months, providers responded with:

- *Less leniency for sick policies.*

- *I've been overly cautious when it comes to colds.*
- *Cleaning a lot more, watching children for signs such as fevers, coughs, temps.*
- *I have not released staff from illness-related absences.*
- *It has not affected our daily routine we have been able to keep our facility open. We have had to change how we address staff time and covering shifts.*
- *There are different formalities and extra precautions to take but I think that's everywhere.*

Next, providers were asked how COVID has affected their overall operations over the last 12 months. Responses received were:

- *Overall operations have been affected due to Covid because many are very aware now of any sickness and do not bring the children to daycare, because I have changed my policies on sickness. I am not lenient on any sickness.*
- *More time and cleaning*
- *Just made everyone more captious when it comes to children being ill.*
- *I have not released staff from illness-related absences.*
- *We have struggled to find staff to cover shifts of staff that have been off due to covid exposure or testing positive for covid.*
- *The different formalities and extra precautions are what affects overall operations.*

When asked how COVID is directly affecting their child care business as of today, providers responded with:

- *The covid threat has calmed down a bit, but I still clean the daycare way more than I ever had before, due to the possible spread of someone having covid and unaware at that time.*
- *Covid has luckily not been an issue since February in my care.*
- *When COVID first hit and everything shut down I had no income coming in as I only had teacher's children in my care and all school were closed. I have since lost out of money anytime a family gets COVID and has to quarantine as I do not charge while they are gone or if I have to close as I don't charge for that either.*
- *I have not released staff from illness-related absences.*
- *Covid quarantine time and guidelines have been a struggle in that we don't have extra staff to cover the time off.*
- *There were shortage of supplies needed: gloves, sanitizer (spray and hand sanitizer), paper products and all in all everything has gone up in price so it's gotten much more expensive to run day to day operations and that causes us to charge our families more.*

The final question related to COVID was, as a result of COVID have you made permanent changes to any of your policies or procedures, or ways you provide child care? Four (4) homes said yes, all others said no. The following comments were received from both homes and centers:

- *Yes, I am not lenient on sickness. They usually have to have a doctor giving permission for them to return to daycare.*
- *stricter policies for sick children and siblings more cleaning*
- *I changed my sickness policy and added a Covid policy.*
- *I have changed the illness policy. If a child has a temperature of 100.4 or above, they have to stay home whereas before it was 101.*
- *We currently sanitize our building more often than prior to covid. Otherwise, things are as expected.*

Providers were asked a series of open-ended questions about being a child care provider in Lee County, 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. Five (5) of the homes and 2 of the centers said yes. Respondents that said yes were asked to explain how they would expand, and those that said no were asked to explain why not.

*Comments from those indicating yes:*

- *Open a facility and have helpers.*
- *I would love to offer before school opportunities.*
- *We are currently working on opening a daycare room at our West Point Campus.*
- *Would like to build a center, but too expensive.*
- *If I could find a new location I could expand.*
- *I would love to build a center in the next 5-10 years.*
- *I am planning on adding a co-provider to my program in August and we will provide transportation, plus a preschool setting in our care.*

*Comments from those indicating no:*

- *As of right now I don't think staffing another center would be possible. The amount of people who don't want to work is unreal.*

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

- *Finding property and putting a building up and help with the equipment for play area and fenced in yard.*
- *Financial.*
- *New location and an assistant.*
- *Reliable Staff available all year round.*
- *I would love to get support from the school system in providing a school approved preschool program in our care. (not sure how to go about that though).*
- *Additional funding, because we do not charge families.*
- *Currently, financial support or grants to provide the appropriate equipment and supplies for a childcare room. As well as being able to pay a competitive wage to have the staff for a building.*
- *Staffing, how to get people hired and to keep them employed.*

What is the greatest challenge or barrier for expanding an existing child care program in Lee County, and what solutions would help?

*Responses from home providers:*

- *Being licensed.*
- *finding and paying potential employees, a state program to help with benefits for providers and staff.*
- *Finding a location I can afford to open a childcare center.*
- *Staffing. Solutions would be for the government to be able to offer some sort of health benefits.*
- *Cost of expanding and feeding more children. Expanding to have more centers and activities for children and floor space. All of these things cost money in a field where you don't make a lot of money to begin with.*

*Responses from child care centers:*

- *Funding is number one, but number two is staffing.*
- *Staff and space or location. More incentives for employees of childcare centers. Support from business with employees that need childcare. Incentives of businesses supporting childcare centers.*
- *Staffing is the biggest issue. I currently have employees that will not show up or call when they don't come in. Arranging people to cover is a huge issue.*

What is the greatest challenge or barrier for starting a new child care program in Lee County, and what solutions would help?

*Responses from home providers:*

- *Getting a place for daycare other than my home.*

- *Getting a handbook and contract put together, making sure you have the proper paperwork in place.*
- *All the codes and guidelines you have to follow in order to build in a timely manner.*
- *I am not sure about a new program. I think educating parents on the importance of finding quality child care providers is very important and I feel we need to promote the quality providers that are available more.*

*Responses from child care centers:*

- *I believe that a large barrier is wages / cost to families to pay staff livable wages.*
- *Location and cost of building a new center or remodeling a building to meet guidelines. Financial assistance i.e. grants or other funding opportunities.*
- *Several people have reached out to me and I think a lot of it has to do with \$\$ now. There are loans and grants through DHS right now but finding an architect or engineer who will sign off on plans is quite expensive even when getting those loans or grants.*

How do you think the community could better support child care providers?

*Responses from home providers:*

- *Making sure that ALL daycares are recognized and not just the centers.*
- *Love the support we get from Ginger with Children First. Not sure what other support would be beneficial.*
- *Trying to get more people involved to open up in homes or centers and educate them on the importance of it.*
- *Educate parents on the qualifications on being a quality provider. Support and promote the quality providers that Lee County does have.*

*Responses from child care centers:*

- *More grant/funding opportunities. Not only for the classrooms but for staffing.*
- *I think Lee County does a wonderful job of supporting them! I think people may just need help finding the correct resources!*

What challenges do you see in the future for child care in Lee County?

*Responses from home providers:*

- *If I raise my rates as well as others have people tell me they can't afford it. As far as I know I'm cheaper than any of the others.*
- *Sometimes the requirements that we have are overwhelming and it seems that more are added on a regular basis.*
- *Quality programs with quality/trained staff.*

- *People doing it thinking it's an easy job. It's a very hard and strenuous job and it's not for everyone but there are lots of people out there that are naturals.*
- *I feel most of the money that Lee County and the state has been given to give to providers is going to centers. Although centers can have more children in care it is harder for centers to keep and maintain or get employees. Which then causes the centers to run below their capacity. I personally feel that many of the quality home providers needs to be acknowledged as much as the centers.*

*Responses from child care centers:*

- *I definitely think that the availability of child care seems to be decreasing, and that is a concern.*
- *Staffing will be a challenge. Facilities are able to pay enough to meet some of the wages that other businesses are able to pay. This then causes staff of 1. either not consider working for childcare facilities or 2. leaving childcare facilities due to find better paying jobs.*
- *I think there is a huge shortage of child care in our area. There is such a young population and that brings new kiddos into play that I don't think there will be care for.*

**What opportunities do you see in the future for child care in Lee County?**

*Responses from home providers:*

- *Things for kids to do would be good we all have to leave out of the area to have fun.*
- *I have noticed the gov. Reynolds has done a great job for daycare providers and hopefully this will continue into the future.*
- *With daycare centers closing there seems to be more opportunity for new centers to open their doors.*
- *More centers to be built.*
- *I would love for more providers or even more centers to open as long as they are providing quality care and doing what is best for the children. I feel right now there has been an increase of unregistered in-home providers that are not providing quality care for these children and I fear for what situation they may encounter.*

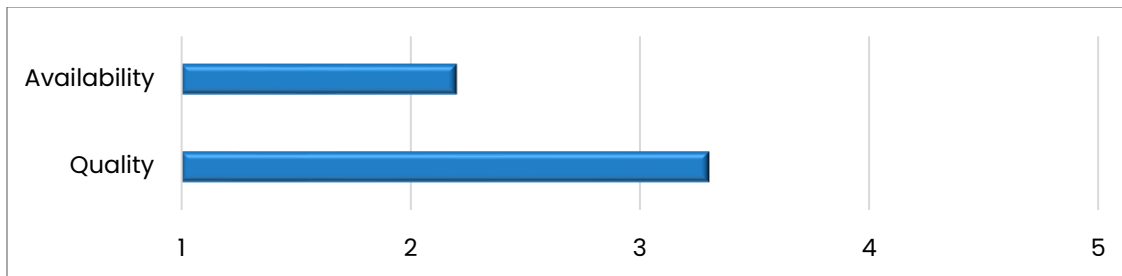
*Responses from child care centers:*

- *There are LOTS of opportunities for expansion.*
- *With the help of our community and changes that could be made I see the possibility of more childcare facilities opening to help meet the childcare demand.*
- *I think Lee County is working hard to get more child care into play for everyone who is in need of it!*

Child care providers were asked to rank the *availability* of child care in Lee County on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not available, 3 adequate, and 5 highly available (the higher the score, the more available). The weighted average was 2.2.

Providers were then asked to rank the *quality* of child care in Lee County on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being low quality, 3 adequate, and 5 highly quality (the higher the score, the higher quality). The weighted average was 3.3.

Figure 8: Child Care Provider Ratings of Child Care in Lee County



Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

The final question allowed providers to share any additional comments they had about child care in Lee County

*Responses from home providers:*

- *Just a Thank you.*
- *As an in home provider, I love what I do and am very good at what I do. My biggest concern is that we have such a high demand that I don't want to get worn out trying to help so many families get into my care when I can get them in.*
- *Help the providers that want to better their programs and expand if possible to continue to provide quality care. Stop just supporting or gearing grants towards centers whose goal is strictly to increase numbers. The amount of spots available is not the only important thing in childcare.*

*Responses from child care centers and preschools:*

- *There is a great need for childcare. I hope our community sees the need and is able to help in the solution.*

## Parent Survey Results

A total of 209 individuals that currently have children ages 12 or younger responded. This group is referred to as “current parents”. Of those 209 current parents, 32% indicated they plan to have or adopt more children in the next 5 years. An additional 12 respondents indicated they do not currently have children ages 12 or younger but plan to have or adopt children in the next 5 years, these are referred to as “future parents”. Current parents completed questions that provide information about both their current and future child care needs, while future parents completed only questions about their future child care needs. Some questions were required while others were not, therefore responses from all questions are included in the aggregate data, even if an individual did not complete all survey questions.

Using the most popular responses, a current parent would be described as married (75%) and living in Fort Madison or the 52627 zip code (44%). They work first shift Monday through Friday (70%) and the nature of their job is health care & social assistance (26%). Their spouse works first shift Monday through Friday (59%) in manufacturing (24%). They currently use child care in Fort Madison (41%), Monday through Friday, year-round. They use child care 40 to 49 hours per week for younger children, and less than 10 hours per week for before and after school care and 40 to 49 hours per week for older children during the summer. They are satisfied with their current child care provider (83%).

Using the most popular responses, a future parent would be described as married (90%) and living in West Point or the 52656 zip code. They work first shift Monday through Friday (90%) and the nature of their job is health care & social assistance (50%). Their spouse works first shift Monday through Friday (78%), and works in either agriculture, fishing, hunting (22%) or construction (22%).

Among current parents 205 (98%) are from Lee County and 4 are from outside Lee County, while 11 future parents are from Lee County and 1 is from outside. Overall, the largest number of respondents indicate they live in Fort Madison, followed by Keokuk.

*See table on next page.*



Table 30: Parents' Place of Residence

	<b>Current Parents</b>	<b>Future Parents</b>
<b>In Lee County</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>11</b>
Argyle (52619 Zip Code)	2	0
Denmark (52624 Zip Code)	5	0
Donnellson (52625 Zip Code)	21	2
Fort Madison (52627 Zip Code)	91	2
Keokuk (52632 Zip Code)	60	1
Montrose (52639 Zip Code)	5	1
West Point (52656 Zip Code)	13	5
St. Paul (52657 Zip Code)	1	0
Wever (52658 Zip Code)	7	0
<b>Outside Lee County</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>
Des Moines County, IA	1	1
Hancock County, IL	3	0

Source: Lee County, Iowa Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

Parents that live outside of Lee County were asked if the availability of child care in Lee County influenced their decision to live elsewhere. All 4 current parents and both future parents answered, no.

Parents were next asked what school district are your children enrolled in or most likely to be enrolled in when they become school aged. The following responses were provided:

Table 31: School District Where Children Are Enrolled

	<b>Current Parents</b>	<b>Future Parents</b>
Central Lee Community School District	43	4
Fort Madison Community School District	80	4
Holy Trinity Catholic Schools	21	0
Keokuk Christian Schools	4	0
Keokuk Community School District	50	1
Mount Pleasant Community School District	0	1
Van Buren Community School District	0	0
Other	9	0

Source: Lee County, Iowa Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

Those that selected other were asked to specify where. Answers provided were Keokuk Catholic Schools (4 respondents), WACO Community School District, Wayland, IA (1 respondent), Warsaw Community School District, Warsaw, IL (1 respondent), Danville Community School District,

Danville, IA (1 respondent), Hamilton Community Consolidated School District, Hamilton, IL (1 respondent), and homeschool (1 respondent).

When asked are you currently using or would you prefer to (now or in the future) use child care within Lee County, 208 parents indicated yes.

The most common industry or occupational nature for both current and future parents was health care and social assistance. The most common occupation among the spouses or partners for current parents was manufacturing, and among future spouses or partners was a tie between agriculture, fishing, hunting; construction; and other services.

*Table 32: Nature of Job or Occupation*

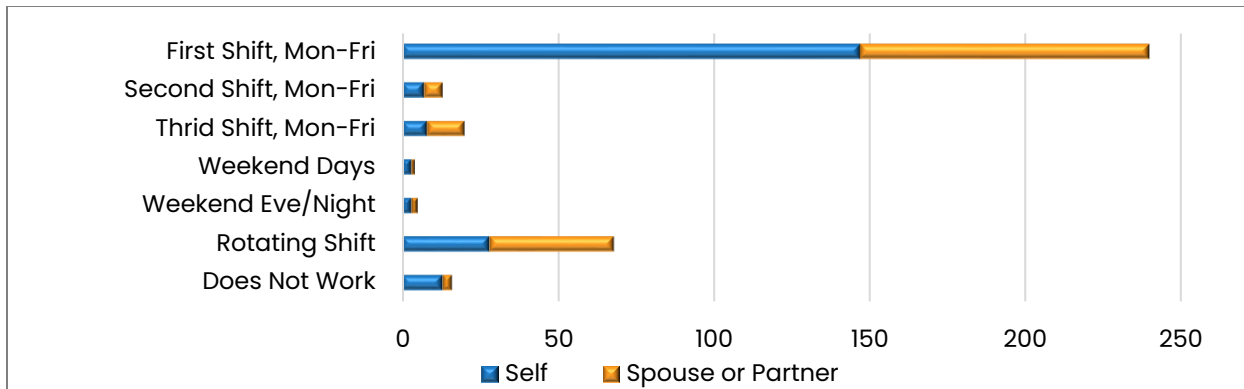
	Current Parents		Future Parents		Total
	Self	Spouse or Partner	Self	Spouse or Partner	
Accommodations & Food Service	8	3	0	0	<b>11</b>
Administrative & Waste Management	4	1	0	0	<b>5</b>
Agriculture, Fishing, Hunting	3	13	0	0	<b>16</b>
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	1	1	0	0	<b>2</b>
Construction	3	17	0	0	<b>20</b>
Educational Services	33	6	1	0	<b>40</b>
Finance & Insurance	16	2	0	0	<b>18</b>
Health Care & Social Assistance	55	5	0	1	<b>61</b>
Information	0	2	0	0	<b>2</b>
Management of Companies	3	1	0	0	<b>4</b>
Manufacturing	21	37	1	1	<b>60</b>
Mining, Quarrying, & Oil & Gas	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Professional, Scientific & Technical	8	8	0	0	<b>16</b>
Public Administration	8	2	0	0	<b>10</b>
Real Estate, Rental, Leasing	2	0	0	0	<b>2</b>
Retail Trade	9	5	0	0	<b>14</b>
Transportation & Warehousing	1	13	0	0	<b>14</b>
Utilities	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Wholesale Trade	1	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
Other Services	22	37	0	0	<b>59</b>
Do not work	11	3	0	0	<b>14</b>

Source: Lee County, Iowa Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

The majority of both current and future parents indicated they and their spouse or partner work first-shift, Monday through Friday. The next most common work schedule is rotating shift.

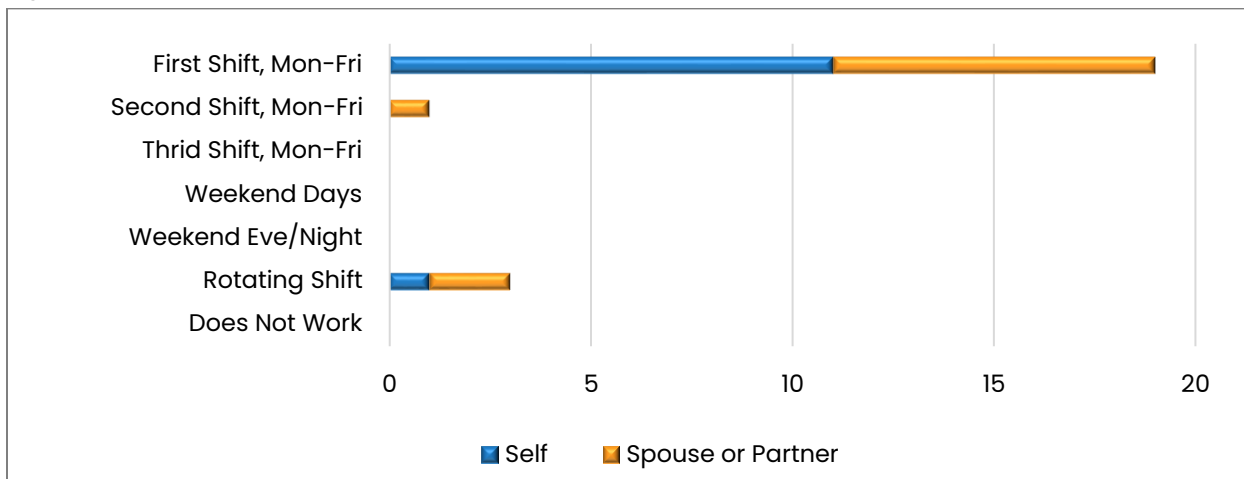
See figure on next page.

Figure 9: Current Parent Work Schedules



Source: Lee County, Iowa Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

Figure 10: Future Parent Work Schedules



Source: Lee County, Iowa Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

The most common child care benefit offered by employers of both current and future parents was dependent care flex spending accounts. Among future parents, the majority indicated they were unsure if their or their spouses or parent's employers offered any of the listed benefits.

See table on next page.

Table 33: Child Care Related Benefits Offered by Employer

	Current Parents	Future Parents
Dependent Care Flex Spending Accounts	55	4
Financial assistance to help employees pay for child care	1	0
Flexible schedule if regular care is not available	22	1
Work from home options if regular care is not available	15	0
Child care information included in employee orientation	21	1
Child care information included in employee handbook	1	1
Other	3	0
Unsure if employer offers any of these	31	2
Employer does not offer any of these	107	6

Source: Lee County, Iowa Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

Comments received by those that selected "other" included:

- *Employer offers childcare in the future but for day shift only. My spouse works out of town and state a lot and doesn't offer anything to help with childcare.*
- *Kids can come to the office with me.*

Current 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. Fifty-six (56) indicated "yes". Comments received were:

- *There have been times I have been unable to find child care for my children.*
- *Was unable to switch shifts due to no caregivers.*
- *We lost our child care and we're unable to find another option that had openings or were affordable.*
- *We lost our child care and we're unable to find another option that had openings or were affordable.*
- *I can't work full-time because child care isn't always available.*
- *Had to take off work due to lack of child care.*
- *Due to the lack of daycare and Before/After school programs... Job schedule is 5:15am - 3:15pm...travel time to Mt. Pleasant is 45 minutes which requires me to leave at 4:00am and return to Keokuk by 4:00pm. There is absolutely no certified daycare or private entity within a 200-mile radius that is willing to be available at such ridiculous early morning timeframe.*
- *Cannot get a job that I can pay for child care plus my bills, it would all go to child care.*
- *I worked for the KCSD year 2021-2022 but can't 2202-2023 due to child care cost.*
- *I have a two-year-old and there were no available daycare facilities.*

Comments continued: Parents, or their spouse or partner, who have declined employment or withdrawn from the workforce during the last 12 months due to child care.

- *I have had to both leave my job and turn down three separate factory jobs due to not having child care especially since my youngest has health issues.*
- *No child care available during work shifts.*
- *I was a retail manager. However, a couple months ago we lost our daycare due to lack of staffing. I had to quit my job and now am a stay-at-home mom.*
- *My husband has had to turn down more than one job due not being able to find child care.*
- *My son has health issues and I can't find daycare that will take him or my daughter.*
- *We have not declined work opportunities, but I have had to call off work to stay home with one of my children.*
- *Child care has gotten so expensive in this area that I am having to quit a perfectly good job because I can no longer afford to pay for it with our 2 children and summer care for our school aged child is out of the question. I can't leave her home alone. So due to costs. I'm quitting and we will live on one income which means much less money to spend in our local economy. And we shop local for literally everything.*
- *Dropped hours, denied overtime.*
- *Chose to have one stay at home parent while children needed full-time child care before school.*
- *No child care available to switch jobs or shift.*
- *I was working a seasonal job when the hours cut. I had to return home so my husband could pick up extra hours. I looked into child care and they want outrageous prices for just one child. It was between 5 to 7\$ an hour.*
- *I was working at a daycare to cover my son going to daycare. That daycare was forced to separate because it was difficult for the owner to get certified and they have had to jump over every mountain to try to either be certified as a center or in-home. Then the work that needs done to make it into a center is on hold because no one is available for construction. There are almost 30 kids being displaced and do not trust many adults to care for their kids. We had 3 full time employees, 2 part-time, 2 teenager helpers. We had ratios better than most daycare but it didn't matter. So now I sit at home with my son instead of working a full-time job because having to get young kids to and from school and a PreK at home most days. We can't afford daycare because the cost was close to a paycheck.*
- *Worked at [my employer] for 3 weeks and then was told after I went full-time I wouldn't have child care due to the in home not working for them.*

Comments continued: Parents, or their spouse or partner, who have declined employment or withdrawn from the workforce during the last 12 months due to child care.

- *Not so much in employment, but when it comes to picking up hours or having to leave due to lack of child care yes.*
- *Changed jobs to allow for child care due to not enough child care facilities or facilities to accommodate special needs children.*
- *Have had to miss several days though.*
- *We had to hire a lady to do an at-home daycare in order to work for about 2 years because we had a hard time finding childcare.*
- *Intermittently due to covid related childcare closures.*
- *Declined due to daycare being closed by DHS.*
- *My husband quit [job] because we had no one to take our child to and from school. We had no one to pick him up from those dreaded early outs Fort Madison does every week. I'm a teacher and cannot imagine doing this to our families in Carthage. [Employer] would not allow my husband to trade shifts and showed no flexibility. My husband worked there for at least 10 years. My husband currently works at [different company] because this is one of the only businesses that has hours that meets our child's school schedule. He has turned away several job opportunities in our community and in Burlington because it does not fit our scheduling and child care needs.*
- *Currently only working PT due to lack of child care.*
- *The daycare I was using had to downsize due to not being registered. That daycare was amazing and I'm not sure if I will find one as good. I felt like I was leaving my child in the care of family. I never wondered or worried when my child was there.*
- *Have had to miss many, many days of work due to child care.*
- *I quit my job after our second child because of overtime at work and no trustworthy child care could watch my children till 7 pm or (if I go on early) at 2am. Plus I have one in school and no one to pick him up. Also, we make too much for state help but can't afford the good daycares on our own.*
- *I've helped at my families' diner my whole life but since having my son two years ago and not having any luck finding trustworthy, dependable and affordable child care I've had to take a step back and only fill in on days my partner can get off work which are far and few in-between and has not been an easy adjustment.*
- *I have withdrawn from the workforce due to childcare issues.*

Current parents were asked if child care challenges are currently keeping them or their spouse or partner from working. Fifty-six (56) indicated “yes”. Comments received were:

- *Too expensive and hard to find trustworthy care.*
- *Only because my disabled mother is caring for them.*
- *Unable to switch shifts.*
- *Limiting working due to having limited resource for special needs daycare settings.*
- *Prevents us from picking up extra shifts.*
- *We are still unable to find child care options that have openings or are affordable.*
- *Hard to work overtime with wife working nights.*
- *Looking to return to work due to rising prices, but very limited child care offered in our area.*
- *I'm still working as of now, but my child has been displaying some unusual behavior and I feel like the only place that would be coming from is her sitter's house, which is a private home daycare. No centers in town have availability so I may not be able to work much longer.*
- *My parents are elderly and the only help I have for overnights. I may have to quit my job in the near future due to lack of childcare for overnight shift.*
- A babysitter isn't always available.
- Had to take of approximately two weeks of work off due to child care issues
- Due to the "Daycare Desert" and severe lack of after school programs that would allow parents the timeframe, they need to pick up their child. The cause and effect economically to households reduces income by 50% because it forces families to have one parent sitting home just to cover the time gap of the Daycare Desert and Zero After School programs.
- I would be working just to pay for child care.
- The answer is no because we were lucky and got two spots at [program]. Without that, I would not be able to work.
- Had to miss professional opportunities due to lack of child care in Keokuk area.
- Needing only part-time care and it's not available.
- I would need summer care for both my 6-year-old and my 4-year-old. Along with care for my daughter either before or after depending on what my hours end up being. Then my son will be in school 1/2 a day at central lee and would need care until I get off work. He has 3 airway disorders, epilepsy, asthma, and tracheal stenosis. Most in-home daycares I have spoken to find him as a risk just in case he would need to go to the hospital.
- No morning child care. Cannot make it to work at 6am.
- For now grandma is watching my child.
- Need childcare for both kids so I can go back to work now that my son's health is stable.
- Lack of childcare has made me change my schedule on some days.

Comments continued: Parents that child care challenges are currently keeping them or their spouse or partner from working.

- I work at a school. If I had child care I could work in the summer. I could use the money raising 4 grandkids.
- I can't work on the weeks I have my children.
- My husband is currently working from home because our childcare provider was exposed to someone with Covid.
- Hard to work overtime.
- Full time child care for two children is too expensive to justify trading the quality of child care a parent can provide vs. the benefit of a small amount of additional money that would be left over after paying for full-time child care.
- Cost and lack of availability for child care.
- Working closer to home, yes. Dad works in Des Moines and only travels to FM on the weekends to see his family because he cannot find a job in the area that pays enough to afford daycare.
- Prices for child care are outrageous with my son (now 10). When he was little it was 2\$ an hour I could work and pay bills and babysitter no problem, but now with the price triple or more you can't afford to work, pay bills and a babysitter. It's easier to stay home and have one parent work.
- The state makes getting certified into a center or a in home very time consuming and hard to figure out.
- Mother-in-law is retired and able to help at this time.
- Childcare is hard to find, and it is so expensive that I stay home with our children leaving one income to support a family of 4.
- We have to work special hours, and work around family members to help care for our children.
- Will be yes if our daycare decides to close, which she is considering.
- Occasionally the high school student that watches my child after school calls in and I have to leave work because there is no back up childcare for second shift workers in the school district.
- Keeping partner from changing shifts to better days off and more time with family
- If I'm unable to find care, I'm unable to work. In home options that were suggested to me did not have openings.
- Both mom and dad have to take significant amount of time off of work for childcare related issues. Closest family supports are 45 minutes to an hour away. We had to save 3 years' worth of savings to pay for 1 year of childcare.



Comments continued: Parents that child care challenges are currently keeping them or their spouse or partner from working.

- Our current daycare has closed several times due to staffing causing myself or my spouse to stay home from work.
- Only working 1.5 days due to lack of care.
- I have to have a flexible schedule so I can make sure my child is cared for.
- But its problematic to work.
- Not for us specifically (yet) but our options are limited for back-up daycare or unable to change to local daycare and use daycare in Des Moines County.
- I quit my job after our second child because overtime at work and no trustworthy child care could watch my children till 7pm or (if I go on early) at 2am. Plus I have one in school and no one to pick him up. Also, we make too much for state help but can't afford the good daycares on our own.
- Yes. Not only child care challenges but our child has a speech delay and an early diagnosis of level 1 Autism. There are little to no options for him, as for places that specialize in understanding his communication and emotional barriers. We are on a (3 year waiting list) for autism family support which can help us get on other waiting list in bigger cities around Iowa that have other options for him.
- No but if I can't get a sitter my son needs to come to work with me.

Parents were asked if child care challenges are currently limiting you or your spouse/partner's employment (Ex. Working part-time when full-time preferred or not working within preferred field). Ninety-five (95) selected, yes. Comments received were:

- *We have to take time off when our in-home provider calls out. We pay astronomical prices for childcare.*
- *Cannot work any overtime*
- *Not able to pick up extra hours to make ends meet*
- *I had to go to part-time 3rd shift because we can't afford full-time daycare.*
- *Because there aren't many daycares that operate on weekends or in the afternoons or take kids for 10-12 hour shifts. So, I work at a low paying job because the high paying factories and the hours at daycares don't match.*
- *I work 1<sup>st</sup>, wife works 2<sup>nd</sup>. Hard to find babysitter to work overtime.*
- *I am unable to pick up shifts for my employer due to lack of steady childcare.*
- *Can't work full time*
- *Had to miss professional opportunities due to lack of child care in Keokuk area. Unable to work overtime.*

Comments continued: Parents that child care challenges are currently limiting their or their spouse's or partner's employment.

- *I can only work a day shift. My job is typically a swing shift.*
- *Can only work when child is at school.*
- *I am unable to work at all and I am a single mother. I need to be able to work fulltime to support my kids and my savings account and credit cards have all hit their limits*
- *Yes, my wife.*
- *Need a full-time job.*
- *Have had to have child come to work with me.*
- *I have had to miss work do to no child care to get kids to school or someone to watch after school.*
- *I'm unable to be a team player working closing or weekends due to lack of child care.*
- *I am lucky enough to have my younger children in the program I work at, but the hours have kept me from going to a better paying job.*
- *I occasionally need to take PTO for the lack of child care.*
- *I'm a single parent who works a full-time job and a part-time job. Both jobs must have flexibility (able to bring child to work/work from home) as job hours are outside of daycare hours.*
- *Overtime challenge.*
- *Daycare closes at 4:30 so me or my spouse has to leave work early every day to get the children.*
- *I do not have daycare for the month of August which is one of my busiest times of year due to child attending Early Head Start for daycare. Short term daycare would be helpful for many people.*
- *Explained above.*
- *Yes. Keeping both of us from continuing education and advancing at work due to lack of childcare.*
- *Working part time instead of full time, not being able to pick up shifts.*
- *Denied Daycare - Have a special needs daughter. Daycare tried to implement a discriminatory rate for special needs after more than 5 years of attendance. Legal Counsel from Disability Rights Iowa deemed the actions discriminatory and made a demand for rescission The daycare responded by eliminating its school age program. We now have no daycare.*
- *I would not look for any jobs with 2nd or 3rd shift availability as there is no childcare for those shifts.*

Comments continued: Parents that child care challenges are currently limiting their or their spouse's or partner's employment.

- *Full-time child care for two children is too expensive to justify trading the quality of child care a parent can provide vs. the benefit of a small amount of additional money that would be left over after paying for full time child care.*
- *We do have to take off due to non-consistent care and also summers are very limited due to school age children.*
- *No childcare available early enough to switch shift*
- *I work 7:00 AM - 7:30 PM and my husband doesn't get off work until 5:30 PM sometimes later depending on service calls. So, we must rely on someone else to pick up our children because we are unable to make it on time to pick them up.*
- *You can only trust so many people who can handle children with disabilities. I learned a long time ago that you can't trust everyone. I have also seen parents desperate for care because providers couldn't handle them. The day care I worked at could. We took in the kids no one wanted, or they gave up on. These parents didn't want anyone else for them after being with us. They only wanted us. They are struggling for help.*
- *I usually work 4- 10-hour days but had to switch my schedule to 5 days a week in order to stay within daycare "open" hours*
- *I can't work dayshift due to 12-hour shifts and day care is not open past 5:30. Being on call is huge issue.*
- *Working part-time for flexibility of schedule.*
- *We're unable to pay bills working part time.*
- *Not yet but it did come close.*
- *Normal workday is 7 am to 8 pm. Often have to leave early due to childcare issues causing my paychecks to be less than 35-hour weeks. It's a financial burden to be missing out on those hours. Also, childcare is expensive for someone working in the medical field getting paid \$12/hr.*
- *Relying on family and working opposite to avoid the cost and be able to still see kids.*
- *Having to change part time schedule due to lack of childcare*
- *There are currently no child care facilities in Fort Madison that provide transportation to schools. My husband is very capable of earning more money; however he cannot take the positions because there is no transportation from daycare to school and school to daycare. We do not have family or the friends to help us. The businesses work shifts start too early or release too late. They are not very flexible when considering family needs.*
- *Amount of time away from work.*
- *Having to keep leaving work due to lack of flexible child care.*
- *Not yet.*

Comments continued: Parents that child care challenges are currently limiting their or their spouse's or partner's employment.

- *Yes, I became a stay-at-home mom and now we are struggling on 1 income.*
- *After leaving my job in childcare (where I had discounted child care), to pay full price out of pocket is a major drawback to going back into the workforce.*
- *Overtime or weekend work can be difficult and dependent on daycare hours and finding alternatives.*

Current parents were asked to indicate how many children were living in their household by age groups. The "Households" column of the following table shows how many parents indicated 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 each age group, the households column may be duplicative and therefore cannot be totaled. A total of 413 children are represented in the survey.

*Table 34: Children Represented in Parent Survey*

	<b>Households</b>	<b>Children</b>
0 to 5 (not started Kindergarten)	157	231
5 to 12	124	182
<b>Total</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>413</b>

*Source: Lee County, Iowa Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022*

A total of 82 respondents—76 current parents and 6 future parents, indicated that the availability of child care in Lee County has impacted their decision to have or adopt children or caused them to limit the size of their family.

*Comments received from current parents were:*

- *With the hours I work it is very hard to find child care. even when I was on 1st shift most childcare that I found were all full and had no openings.*
- *My husband & I foster children and always need to make sure we have daycare before we agree to a placement.*
- *Child care is too expensive for us to have any more children. We would be paying most of our after tax income to child care if we had any more children.*
- *Hard to find babysitter with 2 kids.*
- *Can't have more kids or adopt kids if there isn't any available daycares. Then I can't afford more kids if I can't work full time.*
- *I cannot take foster/adopt placements due to lack of care -especially for infants and/or need for child-care school transport.*

Comments continued: Parents that indicated that the availability of child care in Lee County has impacted their decision to have or adopt children or caused them to limit the size of their family.

- *Can't afford daycare.*
- *The cost is too high to have another child in daycare.*
- *I would love to foster or adopt but we struggle paying childcare while we both work full time.*
- *Expense and transportation to school.*
- *I would love to have another child but my child has been on a waiting list for 9 months for multiple child care centers.*
- *Not availability. The cost has.*
- *We considered having another after our daughter passed away. It was the cost of child care that made us decide we didn't want to start over again.*
- *The price and no availability in centers.*
- *We will not have any more children for several reasons, one being childcare is hard to find.*
- *In order to secure a spot in a daycare right now you need to prepare for years in advance. To plan expanding my family in nearly impossible to coincide with also planning child care that far in advance.*
- *I adopted my child and I would love to adopt another. Unfortunately, affording daycare for one child is already a strain and I would not be able to afford daycare for additional children.*
- *I took guardianship of my grandkids so they would not go to foster care.*
- *My mom currently watches my daughter (10 months old) and my nephew (1.5 years old) and I don't feel comfortable having another child until one or both of them are in preschool.*
- *Having infants and toddlers at the same time is challenging in finding providers to watch them due to age.*
- *We could afford to care for and love a fourth child. But we are not considering it at this time due to child care costs and availability.*
- *We have two children under two. My dream is to adopt two more, my husband working swingshift struggles with that idea as we struggle with childcare as it is.*
- *Cost of childcare and being able to find a place to take children when I work.*
- *Long waitlists at centers - especially for newborn care.*
- *I wanted to look into being a foster parent but I have 1 daycare I trust with kids who need special attention and they do not have space.*
- *Options for childcare with fosters are limited.*
- *Not going to have more kids until my older two are in school.*

- *Cost.*

Comments continued: Parents that indicated that the availability of child care in Lee County has impacted their decision to have or adopt children or caused them to limit the size of their family.

- *It is too expensive for childcare.*
- *I have not had more children due to lack of childcare in area.*
- *Would gladly adopt children or foster if reliable childcare was available.*
- *Price.*
- *Not planning on having a 3rd anytime soon because there are no openings for infants.*
- *None available = can't have more kids.*
- *We can't find reliable childcare for our 3yr old son. He has experienced abuse at a Lee County facility and now needs 1 on 1 care.*
- *We are a working family and it is very hard to find a QUALITY provider for young children.*
- *Too expensive to have anymore if you can find a trustworthy one with openings.*
- *Can't find good daycare that is affordable!! Both my kids are special needs as well.*
- *My boys went to live with there father because I was unable to find a reliable sitter for them.*

Comments received from future parents were:

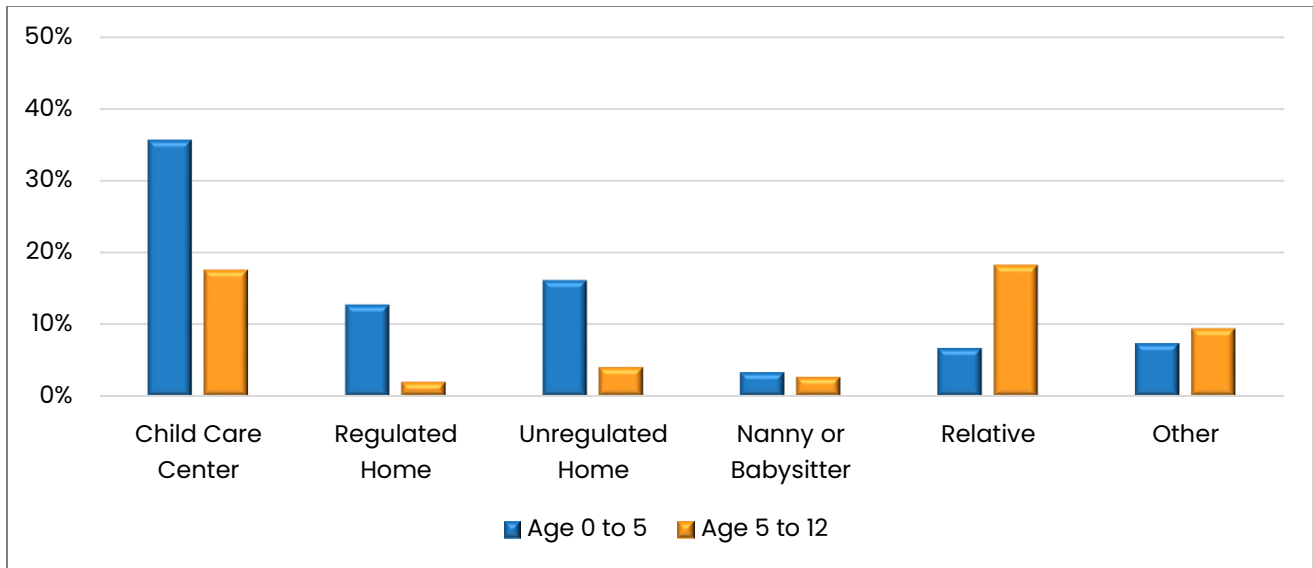
- *There is limited child care in Lee County and it is extremely expensive. It has limited our family in multiple ways.*
- *We are waiting until we can afford to either pay for quality care or drop our income levels to be single household or one F/T and one P/T.*

As of today, 120 (57%) of current parents indicate they are currently using some form of “outside” child care such as a child care center or home provider. Another 42 indicated that while they are not using outside care today, they have used some type of outside care in the last 12 months.

Among those not currently using outside care, 62 (30%) are currently using a relative (like older sibling or grandparent) or other unformal arrangement with no money exchanged, and 27 (13%) are not using any form of child care.

For parents that have children ages 0 to 5 (not in Kindergarten), the primary child care setting that was most commonly used during the last 12 months was a child care center (36%). The second most common was an unregulated home (16%), followed by a regulated home (13%). Among parents that have children ages 5 to 12 (school age), the primary child care setting that was most commonly used during the last 12 months was a relative (18%), followed by child care center (17%), and other (9%).

Figure 11: Primary Care Setting Used During the Last 12 Months



Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

Comments received from parents that indicated "Other" as their primary form of child care.

- *Early Head Start and also preschool.*
- *One in child care center, one with a relative.*
- *I have used a child care center/ head start or I have been home with them.*
- *Childcare center and relatives*
- *I am a stay at home mom.*
- *Relative until 6 months ago now goes to childcare center.*
- *And older sister.*
- *Use a center for my 4 & 5 year old and an in home daycare for my 8mo old.*
- *Half childcare center, half home.*
- *Center and grandma.*
- *None during School year Unregulated child care home during Summer.*
- *School while at work.*
- *She is old enough to be on her own for short amounts of time.*
- *After school program.*
- *School or I am home with them.*
- *Taking to school and afterschool programming.*
- *Daycare during summer- parents takes day off if no school day.*
- *Home alone till parent gets home. Early outs grandparent.*
- *None available.*
- *After school program.*
- *I work from home, so when he's not at school, I care for him.*

- *After school program.*
- *Mix between after school and family.*

Child care challenges have affected current parents' jobs over the last year. A list of possible affects was presented, and parents were asked to select all that apply to their own or their spouse's or partner's employment in the last 12 months. The most common effects were missing a day of work because the child care provider was closed, on vacation, or not available, which was experienced by 64% of parents, followed by having to leave work early (58%), and unable to work overtime (35%). Only 17% of respondents indicated they experienced no issues related to work as a result of child care.

*Table 35: Effects of Child Care Challenges on Job*

	<b>Percent of Parents</b>
Missed a day of work because provider was closed, on vacation, or not available	64%
Had to leave work early	58%
Unable to work overtime	34%
Arrived late to work	32%
Had to reduce the number of hours worked	27%
Had to supervise child while working from home	26%
Had to take child to work with me/them	23%
Unable to accept a different work schedule or shift	23%
Missed a day of work because the provider did not have room or space for child	22%
Unable to travel for work	19%
Lower productivity	15%
Did not accept a desired job offer	11%
Received disciplinary action (not including firing)	9%
Quit a job	9%
Had to change jobs to one that works with child care	6%
Had to leave child home alone to go to work	5%
Took a job that does not fit my/their skills	3%
Got fired	2%
Other (see comments below)	8%
Experienced no problems related to work and child care	17%

*Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022*



Comments received from parents selecting “other” were:

- *The main challenges are finding care providers you can absolutely trust, especially in home daycare.*
- *Daycare is more expensive because of rising prices.*
- *Had to find child care within my family for the first 9 months of my child’s life due to no spots in the baby’s room.*
- *Had to not work online so child could go to school online.*
- *He goes to daycare in summer only.*
- *Off due to covid.*
- *Had to rely on family members to help watch our son so we were able to work.*
- *Had to scramble to find alternative care during closure.*

Thirty-four percent (34%) of current parents indicated 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:

- *Kids aren’t allowed to be at daycare more than 9 hours a day. And I’m a supervisor at work and had to ask my job to drop some of my end of shift duties so I can pick her up before I go over the 9-hour limit that includes my 8.5 hour shift and drive time.*
- *Putting my child in a child care center where things are out in the open and monitored.*
- *I’d be able to work full-time if child care was more available.*
- *More openings available and stay open until 6:00pm.*
- *Be open on holidays.*
- *Yeah, I could not have to pay \$200 a week for the actual worst child care in town while they refer to themselves as nonprofit. This is the only daycare with an opening.*
- *Currently using after school program on Wednesdays, because the kids get out of school early. But they don’t offer it every Wednesday. For example, this month two Wednesdays it wasn’t offered, so I needed grandparents to come from 30 minutes away to watch my children.*
- *We are currently looking for daycare so I can return to work.*
- *Expanded options for summer care.*
- *Transportation from daycare to school for school aged kids.*
- *Less COVID restrictions. Our current center is not following the most recent CDC guidelines which is not only confusing but makes it difficult to work from home.*
- *A child center that took school age children with special needs.*
- *My child care plans to reduce hours in the fall, having a second shift daycare is rare- we need more of them.*
- *Hours need extended.*

Comments continued: Current parents that indicated there are changes that could be made to their current child care arrangements that would allow them to perform better at work.

- *I'm above the poverty line so I do not qualify for any assistance. Cost of daycare for me is a HUGE challenge as is the times that daycare are available. I work a second job on the weekends and must take my child to work with me. My full-time job doesn't have a regular schedule and I often have meetings during the week as late as 7 pm so I must take my child with me. My job also involves some traveling which I'm often unable to do due to lack of child care.*
- *It would be nice to have them open year-round, but that is not how the program is designed.*
- *Being open longer in the afternoon would help. And being open consistently.*
- *My husband and I both work 12-hour shifts- there is no childcare available for second or 3rd shift. We always have to make arrangements for after daycare is closed and we are still working.*
- *Stop discrimination at institutions that receive public funding.*
- *I currently have to travel outside of the county to find TRUSTED and affordable child care options.*
- *Adequate number of staff.*
- *expanded hours.*
- *Not closed during the week of Monday-Friday.*
- *Not having to worry about last minute closings. Later pickup times for different shifts other than just the standard first shift.*
- *More structure than a grandparent is willing to offer.*
- *Being open later, because a lot of jobs these days are 12-hour shifts and make it difficult for pick-up.*
- *Help find someone suitable to advocate for child care workers help them to achieve their goals so they can be certified quicker. Help find construction workers willing to help build another center in town or fix up the palms to turn that into a center.*
- *Charge less per child so people can accept a job to help support the family.*
- *More days/hours of availability.*
- *Currently have a good fit with childcare.*
- *Have more daycares available that bus kids to and from the daycare.*
- *Consistent hours and no closures.*
- *It was closer to work.*
- *We need an overnight childcare option.*
- *Transportation from daycare to schools and vice versa.*
- *If I could work from home or if there were better covid procedures.*

Comments continued: Current parents that indicated there are changes that could be made to their current child care arrangements that would allow them to perform better at work.

- *2nd shift hours.*
- *Open earlier, close later.*
- *Staying open consistently.*
- *Having childcare would allow me to work.*
- *I currently have to take my children to two different daycares due to availability. My daughter has been on a waitlist for the daycare my son goes to since I was 6 months pregnant, and my daughter is not 20 months old and still on that waiting list!*
- *Longer hours or more child care that can help in evenings/weekends.*
- *Help providers with the registration process.*
- *Child care for the "tween" phase or drop in options. I am so lucky to be able to bring my kids but that's also very challenging.*
- *Reliable child care closer to home; before/after school.*
- *More daycares in Fort Madison.*
- *No back up options if center or in home is closed.*
- *Flexibility Not paying when sick Lower rates.*
- *Earlier drop off time (630 or 7am) some days.*

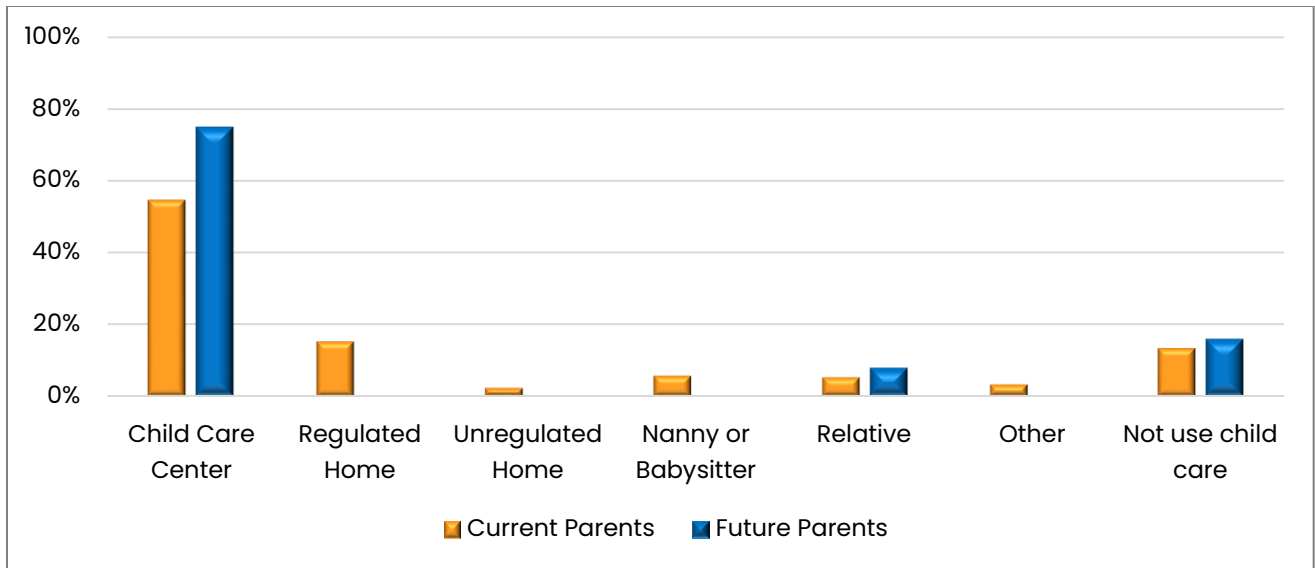
If all choices were available, 55% of current parents and 75% of future parents prefer to use a child care center. The second most preferred setting is a regulated home at 15%, and the third most preferred is to not use care—that they or their spouse or partner could be a stay-at-home parent or that they could adjust work schedules to not need child care (13%). The second most preferred setting among future parents is to not use care—that they or their spouse or partner could be a stay-at-home parent or that they could adjust work schedules to not need child care (16%).

Comments received from current parents choosing "other" were:

- *My grandson has Autism. Very picky where he would go.*
- *School District Daycare for Employees.*
- *Part-time, occasional daycare with provider having an idea of days needed for care outside of Early Head Start.*
- *Affordable SECURE center with properly trained employees who are monitored closely and can accommodate more shifts.*
- *Unregulated, but not friends and family.*

See figure on next page.

Figure 12: Preferred Child Care Setting



Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children’s Finance, ©2022

Less than half of current parents (40%) indicated their children are currently in their preferred child care setting. Parents were given a list of common reasons why children may not be in their referred type of care and asked to select the primary reason. The most common reason selected was not accepting enrollments (16%), followed by other (11%) (see reasons below), and prefer I or my spouse or partner could stay home, but need to work (9%).

Table 36: Reason Children are Not in Preferred Type of Care

	Total
Not accepting enrollments	16%
Other (comments below)	11%
Prefer I or my spouse or partner could stay home, but need to work	9%
Not able to afford	8%
Not open for extended or nontraditional hours	5%
Not conveniently located	3%
Prefer I or my spouse or partner could adjust schedule so care not needed	3%
Transportation to and from school/preschool not available	3%
My children are not the right age for preferred arrangement	1%
Location too far away	1%
Children are in my preferred type of care	40%

Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children’s Finance, ©2022

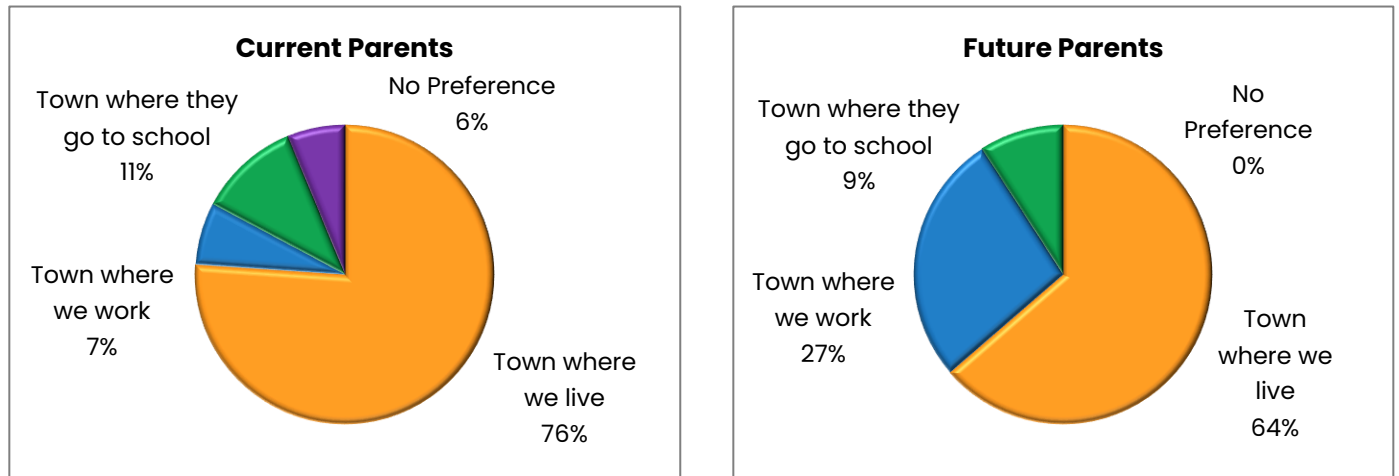
Comments from those that answered “other” were:

- *I use private babysitter that can take care of his needs. However, if she can no longer babysit then I would be looking. I do need a backup plan.*
- *Not accepting and the cost.*
- *School district does not offer this service.*
- *We haven't officially started the search for a summertime nanny.*
- *They are in my preferred type of care but I will have to take them to a different daycare due to transportation issues.*
- *They are enrolled where I'd like them to be.*
- *She was dismissed from her daycare due to having special needs and being school age.*
- *My daughter was kicked out of her daycare center because she has a peanut allergy.*
- *Could not find anyone willing to do part-time, occasional daycare.*
- *Was not affordable / closed to special needs.*
- *Not able to afford, not open for extended hours.*
- *Child in preferred care.*
- *Forced to separate kids after DHS closure, confusing on if we had care or not and where our kids were going.*
- *Some have access, some don't. I can't afford care for each of them.*
- *Location too far, not convenient, no transportation to/from school.*
- *Can't find help.*
- *Child care is expensive, and working doesn't offset the costs.*

Respondents were asked about their preferences of proximity of child care if they were selecting care today. Among current parents, the most preferred proximity is the town where they live (76%), followed by the town where the child attends or will attend school (11%). Among future parents, 64% prefer the town where they live, while 27% prefer the town where they or their spouse or partner works, and 9% prefer the town where the children will go to school.

*See figure on next page.*

Figure 13: Preferred Proximity of Child Care



Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

Parents were asked which community their current child care provider is located in, and which community they would prefer. Overall, 94% of current parents are currently using care in Lee County, but 99% of those participating in the survey prefer to. The most preferred towns by current parents are Fort Madison (46%) and Keokuk (28%). Future parents were also asked, which community they would prefer to take their child to for care. The top two choices among future parents are Fort Madison and West Point with 27% each.

Table 37: Location of Child Care

	Current Parents		Future Parents
	Current	Preferred	Preferred
Argyle (52619 Zip Code)	1%	1%	0%
Denmark (52624 Zip Code)	0%	2%	0%
Donnellson (52625 Zip Code)	14%	13%	19%
Fort Madison (52627 Zip Code)	41%	46%	27%
Keokuk (52632 Zip Code)	26%	28%	9%
Montrose (52639 Zip Code)	2%	2%	9%
West Point (52656 Zip Code)	7%	6%	27%
St. Paul (52657 Zip Code)	1%	0%	0%
Wever (52658 Zip Code)	2%	1%	0%
Other (Outside Lee County)	6%	1%	9%
<i>Burlington</i>	3%	0%	0%
<i>Hamilton, Il.</i>	1.5%	0%	0%
<i>Hancock County, Il.</i>	1.5%	0%	0%
<i>Nauvoo, Il.</i>	0%	0.5%	0%
<i>Warsaw, Il.</i>	0%	0.5%	0%
<i>Not specified</i>	0%	0%	9%

Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

Comments from those choosing “other” were:

- *I use daycare where I work in West Point because there is absolutely no daycare on the ll side of the river. That will also affect where we decide to send our children to school because there’s no daycare over here.*

Parents were asked several questions about the average number of hours of child care used per week, preferred child care schedule, and current and preferred drop-off and pick-up times. Most parents with children ages 0 to 5 are using child care full-time, with most using 30 hours a week or more. Parents with school age children are using 19 hours or less per week during the school year, and then 30 hours or more per week during the summer months.

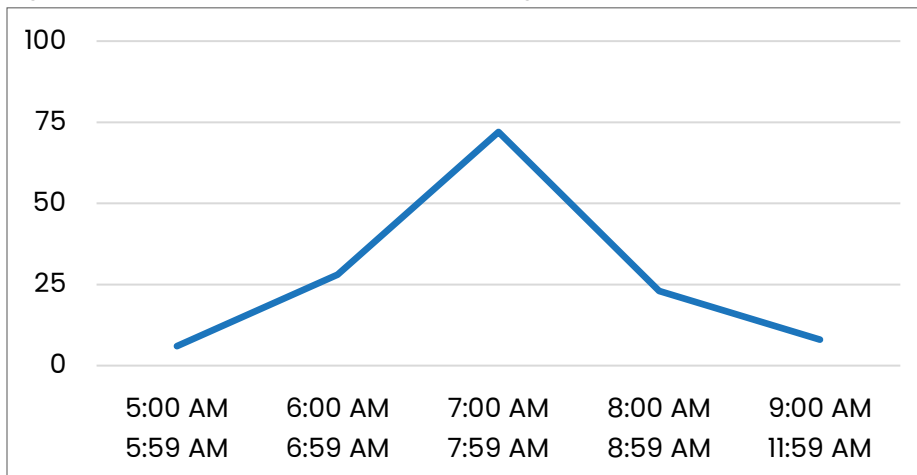
*Table 38: Average Hours per Week Child Care Currently Used*

	<b>Less than 10 Hours</b>	<b>10 to 19 Hours</b>	<b>20 to 29 hours</b>	<b>30 to 39 hours</b>	<b>40 to 49 hours</b>	<b>50 or more</b>
Age 0 to 5 (not Kindergarten)	5%	8%	9%	25%	48%	5%
Age 5 to 12 during school year	50%	28%	13%	6%	3%	1%
Age 5 to 12 during summer	9%	10%	14%	17%	44%	6%

Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children’s Finance, ©2022

Currently, the most popular hour to drop-off children is from 7:00 am to 7:59 am (72 families), followed by 6:00 am to 6:59 am (28 families), and then 8:00 am to 8:59 am (23 families). There are a handful of parents that currently drop-off (or their children start child care) in the afternoon. A total of 8 parents drop-off between 12:00 pm and 3:59 pm. These are a combination of those with school-age children needing after school care and parents that need care later in the day due to their work schedule. There were also 3 parents that indicated they drop-off between the hours 4:00 pm and 4:59 am, and 2 that drop-off between 10:00 am and 2:59 pm.

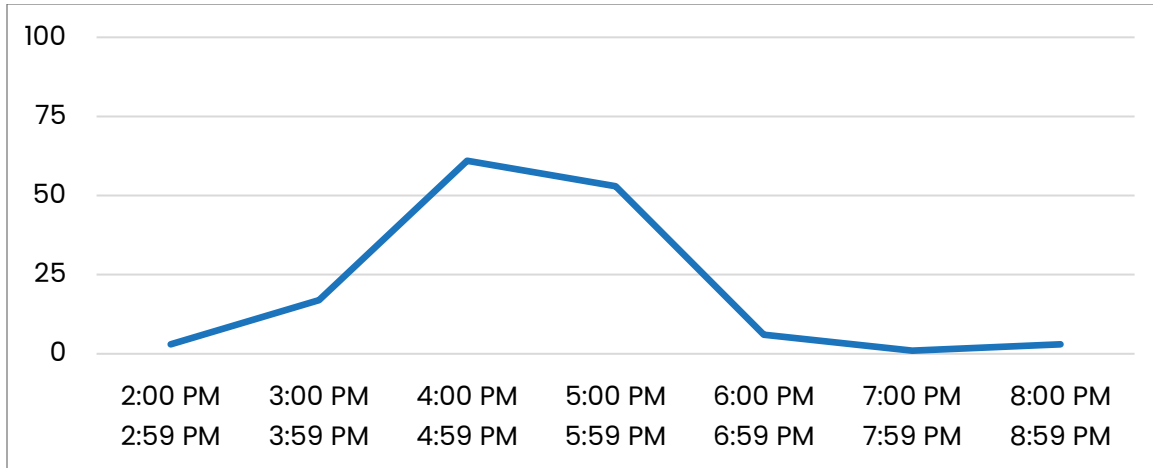
*Figure 14: Current Drop-off Times (All Ages)*



Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children’s Finance, ©2022

Currently, the most popular hour to pick-up children is 4:00 pm to 4:59 pm (61 families), followed by 5:00 pm to 5:59 pm (53 families), and then 3:00 pm to 3:59 pm (17 families). There were 6 parents that indicated they pick-up children up between 6:00 pm and 6:59 pm, 3 between 2:00 pm and 2:59 pm, 3 between 8:00 pm and 8:59 pm, and 1 between 7:00 pm and 7:59 pm.

Figure 15: Current Pick-Up Times (All Ages)



Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

Parents were asked their preferred drop-off and pick-up times by age, and school year versus summer for school age children. For children ages 0 to 5 (not in Kindergarten), the most preferred hour for drop-off is 7:00 am to 7:59 am (69 families), followed by 6:00 am to 6:59 am (37 families), and then 8:00 am to 8:59 am (26 families). There are 3 parents that would prefer to drop-off between 3:00 pm and 3:59 pm. Three (3) other parents indicated their preferred drop-off time being sometime between 4:00 pm and 11:59 pm.

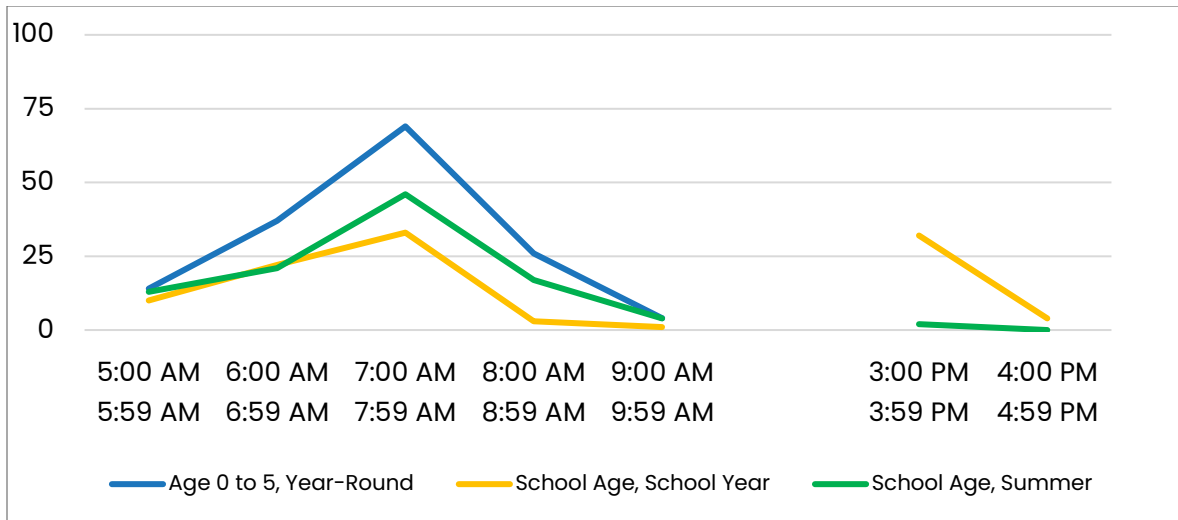
For school age children, parents are nearly evenly split on preferred drop-off or start time during the school year, with 33 families indicating 7:00 am to 7:59 am and 32 families indicating 3:00 pm to 3:59 pm. If families that indicate a preferred start time of 6:00 am to 6:59 am and those indicating 8:00 am to 8:59 am are added with the 7:00 am to 7:59 am, it appears that most parents want to use before school care.

During the summer months, the most preferred drop-off time is still 7:00 am to 7:59 am (46 families), followed by 6:00 am to 6:59 am (21 families) and 8:00 am to 8:59 am (17 families). During the summer only 2 families want care starting between 3:00 pm and 3:59 pm.

See figure next page.



Figure 16: Preferred Drop-off Times of Current Parents

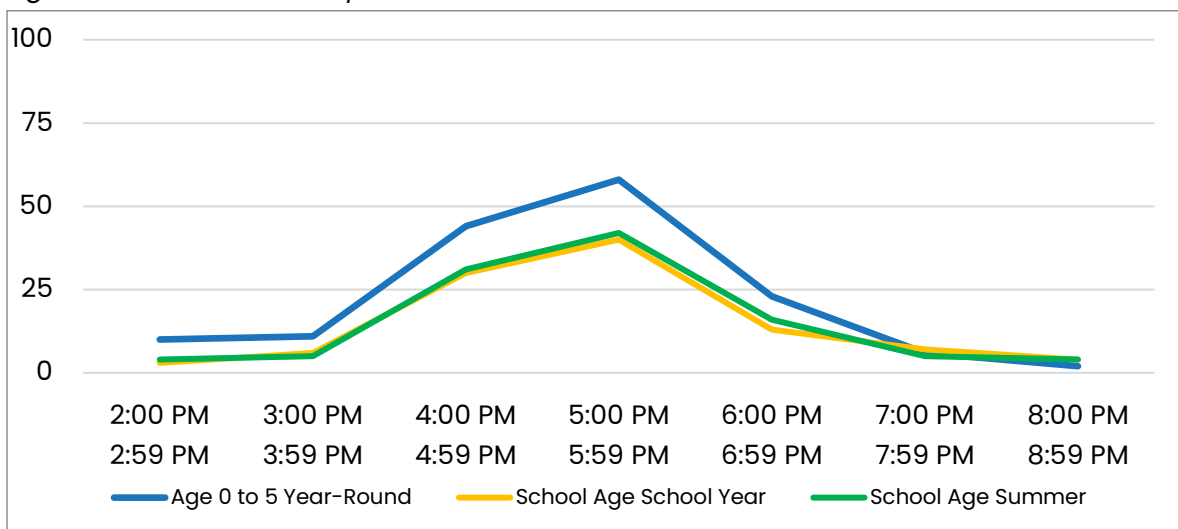


Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

For children ages 0 to 5 (not in Kindergarten), the most preferred hour for pick-up is 5:00 pm to 5:59 pm (58 families), followed by 4:00 pm to 4:59 pm (44 families), and then 6:00 pm to 6:59 pm. (23 families). Five (5) other parents indicated their preferred pick-up time being between 9:00 pm and 11:59 pm.

For children ages 5 to 12, the most preferred hour for pick-up during the school year is 5:00 pm to 5:59 pm, followed by 4:00 pm to 4:59 pm, and then 6:00 pm to 6:59 pm. During the summer months the most preferred pick-up times are the same.

Figure 17: Preferred Pick-Up Times of Current Parents



Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

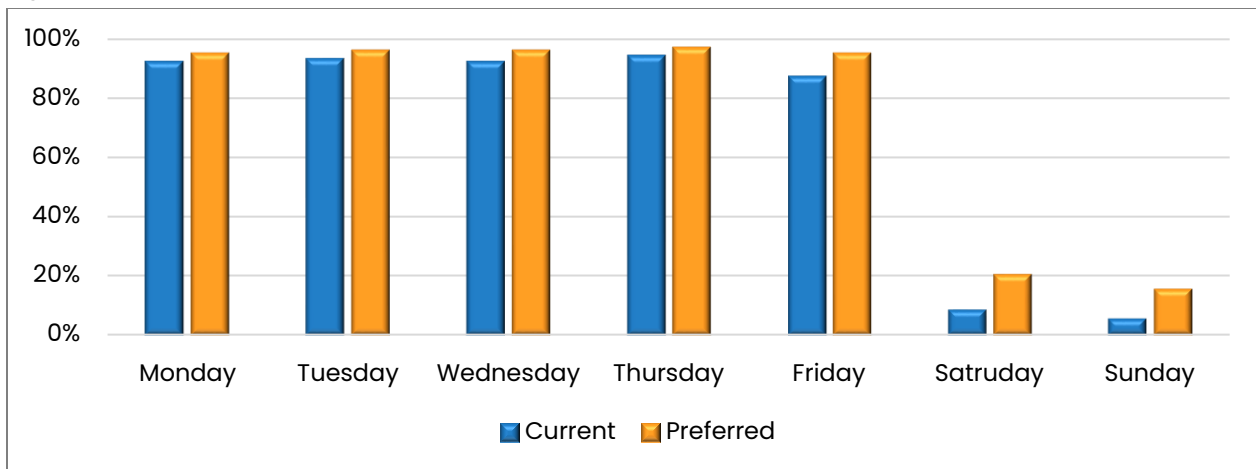
There were some parents that prefer a drop-off and pick-up schedule that would indicate they need overnight care. Based on the schedules provided, it does appear that a total of 5 families desire overnight care. The schedules provided by these parents were:

- 6:00 am to 4:00 am
- 5:00 pm to 8:00 am
- 5:30 pm to 6:30 am
- 8:00 pm to 7:00 am
- 9:00 pm to 7:00 am

Future parents were also asked, if selecting care today, what their preferred hours would be. Times for drop-off or starting care were all between 6:00 am and 8:30 am, while times for pick-up were all between 4:00 pm and 6:00 pm.

Most current parents indicated they currently use care Monday through Friday (ranging from 87% to 94% per day), while only 8% use care on Saturday and 5% on Sunday. When it comes to preferred days for care, Monday through Friday is still the most preferred, ranging from 95% to 97% per day. Meanwhile, 20% prefer Saturday care and 15% prefer Sunday care, which are more than what are currently using Saturday or Sunday care.

Figure 18: Days Parents Use Child Care vs. Prefer to Use Child Care

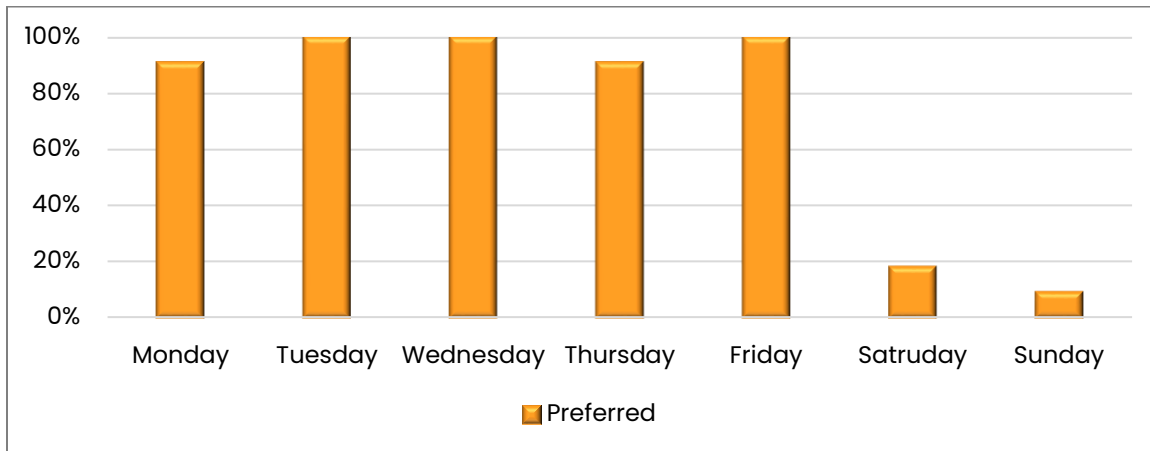


Source: Lee Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

Most future parents prefer to use care Monday through Friday, with 100% selecting Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, and one fewer parent (91%) selecting Monday and Thursday. Two (2) future parents selected Saturday and 1 future parent selected Sunday.

See figure next page.

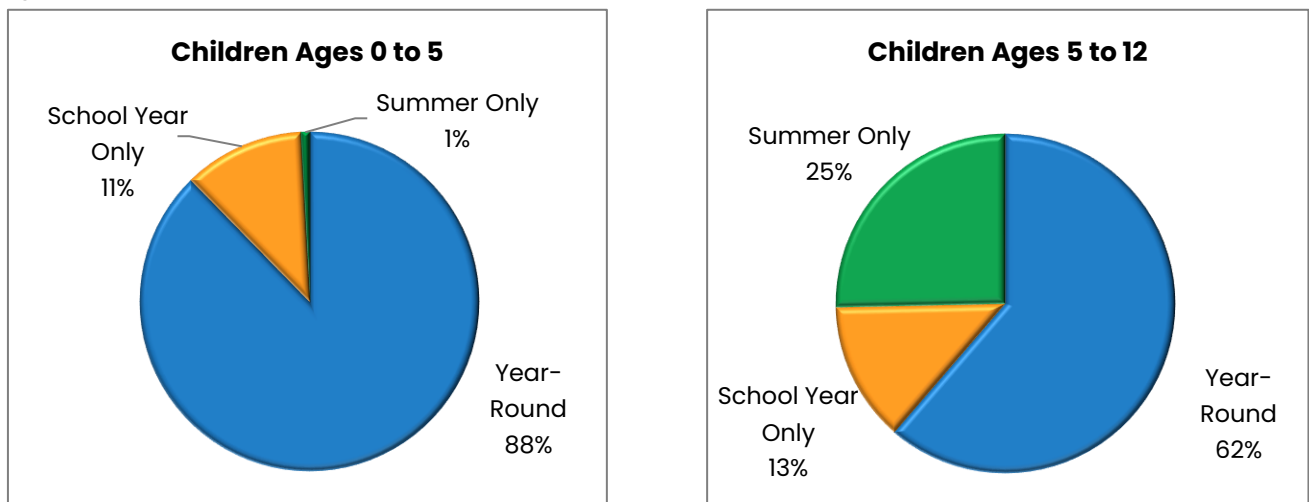
Figure 19: Days Future Parents Prefer to Use Child Care



Source: Lee Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

Eighty-eight percent (88%) of current parents with children ages 0 to 5, indicate they are currently using child care year-round, with 11% using care during the school year only, and 1% during the summer only. Most parents with children ages 5 to 12 indicate they are currently using child care year-round (62%), while 13% use care during the school year only, and 25% during the summer only.

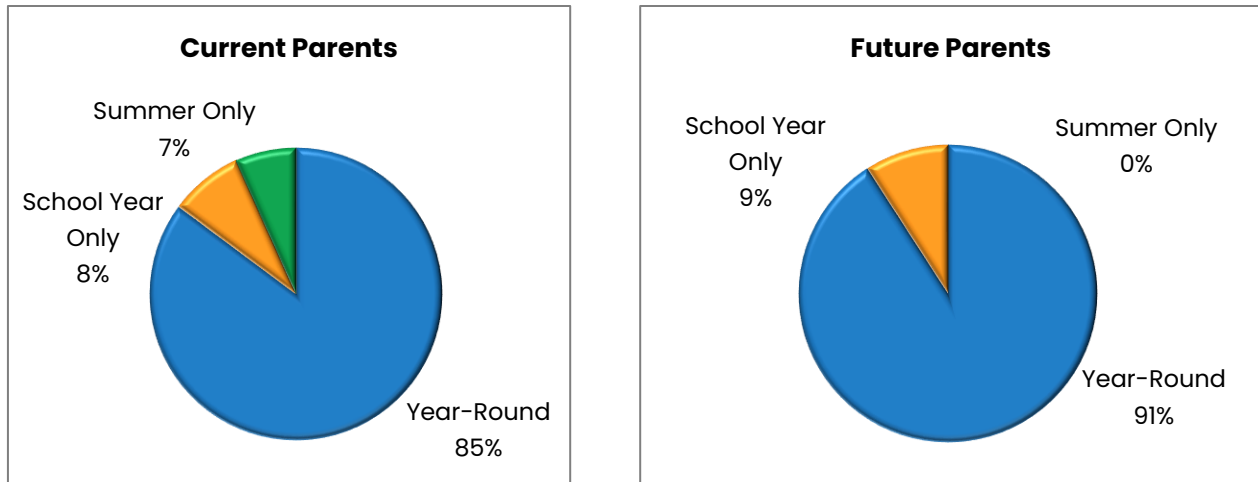
Figure 20: Time of Year Families Currently Use Child Care



Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

When asked what their preferences would be if they were selecting child care today, the majority of both current and future parents prefer year-round care for all ages. Eighty-five (85%) of current parents indicate they would prefer to use child care year-round, 8% during the school year only, and 7% during the summer only. Among future parents, 91% would prefer year-round, while 9% prefer school year only. No future parents prefer summer only care.

Figure 21: Time of Year Families Prefer to Use Child Care



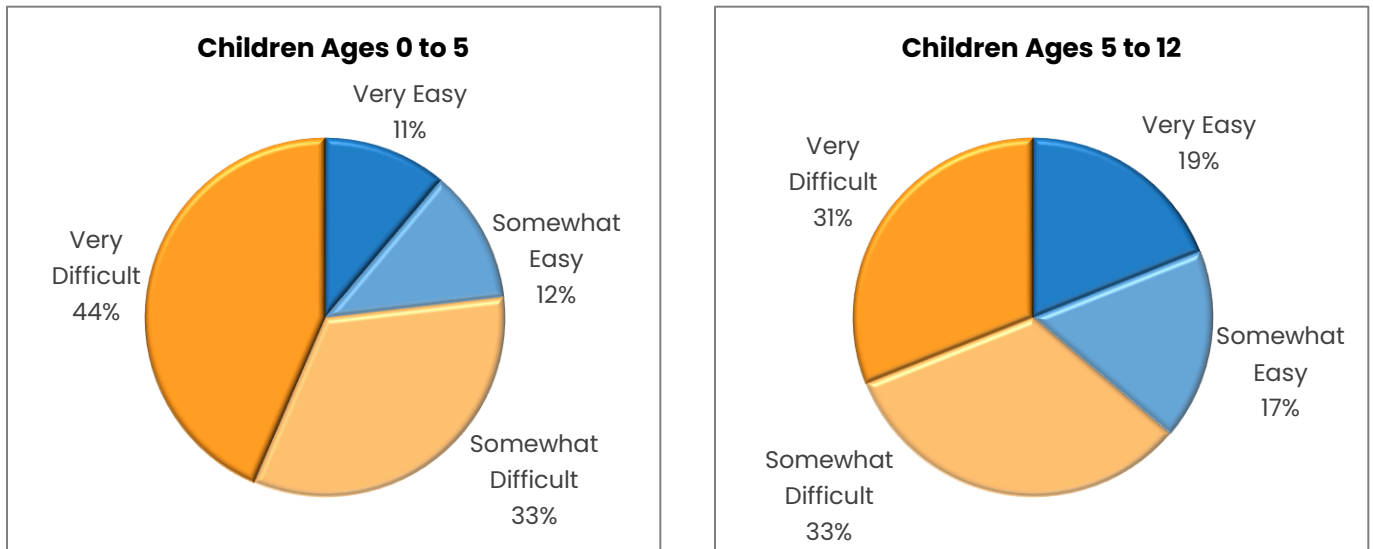
Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

When asked, if selecting care today, would your needs significantly fluctuate, 27% of current parents and 9% of future parents said yes. Those answering yes, were asked to explain when, how, and the cause. Comments received were:

- *At [company name] you never know when you'll get forced overtime. Also, we were working every other weekend and now it's here and there. So, with the overtime and weekends our hours tend to fluctuate.*
- *Days off fluctuate.*
- *Work different days each week.*
- *Our work schedules would be rotating so we would not have a set schedule. Therefore, some weeks we may need 5+ days of care and others we may need less.*
- *Wife works irregular shifts so some days during the week and maybe on weekend.*
- *I work freelance and I don't want to pay for care if I'm not working.*
- *If I tend to work overtime or not.*
- *Would just need care in the summer.*
- *School hours so I can work in our schools.*
- *I work on a tugboat. That's a 7-day, 12-hour rotation. My only help are my parents who are handicapped.*
- *My job is flexible and sometimes I work from home.*
- *I work at a hotel, we do not have set schedules, the shifts I work are 7am-3pm & 3pm-11pm and almost every weekend.*
- *I always work 7:00 am to 7:30 pm in Iowa City. So my husband would be doing the dropping off and picking up but I work three days throughout the week but the days rotate so I would need part time care three days a week!*

Current parents were asked how easy or difficultly it has been over the last 12 months to find child care, both for their children ages 0 to 5 (not in Kindergarten) and their children age 5 to 12. Of those that did look for care, a total of 77% of those with children ages 0 to 5, and 64% of those with children ages 5 to 12 experienced some level of difficulty finding child care. The most common obstacles named were related to lack of openings or available spots.

Figure 22: Ability to Find Child Care During Last 12 Months



Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

A summary of comments from those that experienced obstacles were:

- Price.
- Not accepting new kids, hours available etc.
- Center was full.
- Hours of operation.
- Our child has some learning hurdles and we had to find someone that was willing to deal with his needs.
- Finding Affordable reliable and trustworthy people to watch my child during the hours needed.
- No quality care available.
- Daycare places are full.
- Availability of spots/waiting lists.
- Money.
- No room in the baby rooms.
- No openings.
- Very few daycares in Warsaw and the few that there are full.
- The issue related to staffing and symptoms of illnesses with children.

Comments continued: Obstacles experienced by parents seeking child care in the last 12 months.

- *Cost and availability are huge issues. I currently work 4 days/week but would be charged for 5 full days even if my kids were not attending the fifth day.*
- *I called every daycare or child care in Keokuk and had to wait on list till there was a opening.*
- *All the places in town are full. Not accepting more kids.*
- *The school changed their Wednesday schedule during the middle of the school year.*
- *Unable to find suitable daycare. Most are already filled, and we are on waiting lists.*
- *Daycares are at max capacity.*
- *Full time daycare closed unexpectedly, unable to find a new provider. Grandmother is missing work to watch our youngest until school is out. This summer both kids will go to YMCA Summer Camp.*
- *Finding people available to care for our children that we knew and trusted.*
- *Limited options and long waiting lists.*
- *Transportation to and from school.*
- *Daycares are full had to be put on waiting lists.*
- *Finding affordable care for my 11-year-old during the summer.*
- *Trying to find a daycare to accept two children when one is getting ready to start kindergarten but neither daycare nor the school provide transportation.*
- *There were not many options to select from. I believe there is only one daycare center that accepts children under 18 months. Luckily, they had an opening for both of our children.*
- *We are in an established daycare.*
- *No issues in the past 12 months, but we were previously on a wait list for 19 months to get a spot at our daycare center. Now that we are established at the center there are no issues.*
- *A Center that is willing to take a school age child with special needs that doesn't get state funding.*
- *We have been using a family member for an extended amount of time due to the lack of available child care facilities and openings at the current local facilities.*
- *I got lucky and had someone I had previously worked with start an in-home daycare and was able to get a spot. Previously, it had been difficult to find a daycare with an opening or if a daycare had an opening, they had a bad reputation and I felt uncomfortable leaving my child with them.*
- *Dealing with my daughter's peanut allergy.*
- *No room, and not qualified or experienced, distance.*
- *Centers are full, or not open for my hours of employment.*

Comments continued: Obstacles experienced by parents seeking child care in the last 12 months.

- *Most providers do not have openings for under the age of 2 and I have 2 kids under 2 so had to be on a waiting list.*
- *Places were not willing or did not have space for part-time, occasional daycare.*
- *Affordability and availability.*
- *No one has openings and it is very expensive.*
- *No before school options available- we leave our kids home alone because of this. Very hard to find part time infant care- especially that accommodates our hours.*
- *No openings, out of budget.*
- *Had difficulty sending my 4-month-old to the same daycare as his siblings because of lack of staff. Daycare at his center had also had to cut hours because of lack of staff also.*
- *No spots available.*
- *Looking for a new provider and they are full.*
- *Finding good childcare in general and summer options.*
- *No openings for children available or not open due to other reasons.*
- *If my center is closed my other option for daycare is in-laws. If they are busy, I have no other choice but to miss work.*
- *Affordable, hours open, availability.*
- *Very limited childcare that avoids a commute and childcare is not affordable. A single mother that makes a decent wage, too much to qualify for assistance, so 100% responsible for ALL costs including food and health insurance still can't afford to pay \$200+/week for childcare. It's not even a matter of having money left over for wants, there isn't money left over to pay your necessary bills.*
- *There are no openings.*
- *No room for child when looking for child care at first.*
- *Providers we trust, quality.*
- *Unable to take on a baby due to lack of staff, or size of facility.*
- *Finding quality care while moving to the area in a pandemic was a challenge, especially care near West Point. Luckily, we found care close to my husband's employer, but there were no good local options here.*
- *The obstacles were not my our but parents of the daycare I worked at and used for my own child. Reliable, trustworthy and helpful employees is hard to find. Let alone the space to provide adequate care.*

- *Location. I currently drive 30 min in the opposite direction to drop our son off at daycare before driving 30 min back for work. It's made my commute longer and the only reason it is worth it is because we really love the center he was able to get in to.*
- *No available spots. Spot only for one child. Hours differed from job hours.*

Comments continued: Obstacles experienced by parents seeking child care in the last 12 months.

- *I am so afraid to change to a different child care or to pull them out for summer due to the fact they will lose their spot, for fall that I keep them. Child care is so hard to find I warn people as soon as they find out they are pregnant to start looking even then they are put on a waiting list.*
- *Someone who has the knowledge to deal with a child with an NG feeding tube.*
- *Far distance, didn't open soon enough/stay open long enough, too expensive, didn't have room, couldn't accept babies under 1.*
- *No available spots open, and limited options/choices on where to take my children. More choices provide competition and would have daycares in the area step up their game to attract children. Now, it's the case of "yes I have daycare" but that's not good enough, we as parents can't even consider the quality of daycare because there's no option for quality of daycare centers. We must take them where they have an available spot.*
- *Finding somewhere with openings for an infant.*
- *Finding childcare center that accepted children under the age of 2 or that did not have a waiting list. Also finding affordable childcare.*
- *No transportation to and from school is a huge one and difficult finding a daycare for both my kids. They are full. Price is very expensive for daycare when you don't have state aid.*
- *Hours of operation and cost.*
- *No availability in any better childcare settings. We are unhappy with our current childcare provider but unable to find anyone else.*
- *No openings for a backup provider.*
- *No openings for in-home settings.*
- *Everywhere is full. We were on waiting list for months. Some places have a three-year waiting list.*
- *Called 5 places, 4 in Lee Co and one in Henry all had no openings Finally after months of calling and being on a list I got a spot.*
- *No availability and or too expensive for a single parent.*
- *Space regularly staffed in a facility that is reputable.*
- *2nd shift hours.*
- *Providers don't have room. They are full.*



- *Daycare centers were at max capacity, was in waiting list greater than 14 months No school buses to get school aged kids to/from school while at daycare.*
- *Not enough room at daycares.*
- *Not any other providers in a close area besides the YMCA Donnellson site.*
- *Everyone is full or not accepting kids in my child's age group.*

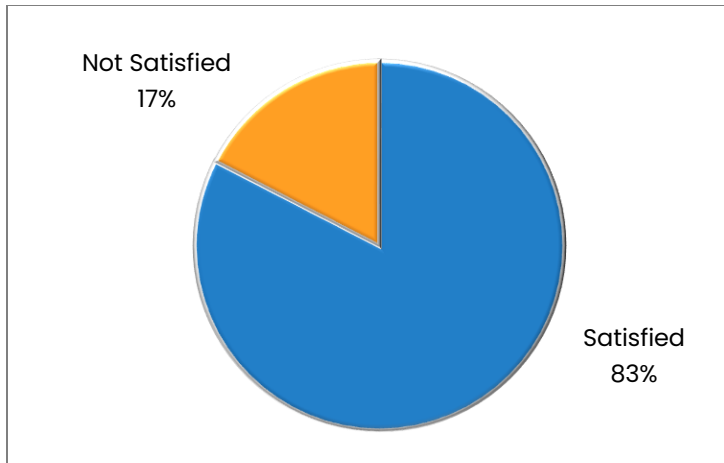
Comments continued: Obstacles experienced by parents seeking child care in the last 12 months.

- *Closing due to staff, closing due to ratios, having to switch daycares multiple times due to daycares only being able to watch my daughter for a couple month due to have such a long list. We need more options...everything is so full!*
- *Not many places accepting school-aged kids.*
- *Lack of available providers! And those that could had only part-time openings that had good facilities, healthy meal options, education items and caring attitudes.*
- *Lack of openings.*
- *Not me specifically but others I know who needed to find new provider could not. I stopped looking and kept current provider in Burlington.*
- *There weren't many options in the area or they didn't have an opening for my children.*
- *Mostly difficult to find childcare for infants.*
- *Few places have openings for babies and a 3 yr. old.*
- *Location Affordable Only 2 licensed centers that takes babies. Early heard start only has 8 openings and rarely I mean it is rare for 1 to get in and learning tree is TOO EXPENSIVE!! Flexible hours to work with my schedule Creative edge and other centers having a difficult time finding people to Stay employed at facility so they can offer more openings.*
- *Summer care for 8-year-old in Donnellson is a major challenge.*
- *Needing to work but there not being room for my child at the center so had to make other arrangements for childcare.*
- *No room for my drop-in child.*

Despite difficulty finding care, once families find care, they are satisfied with their provider.

Overall, 82% said they are satisfied with their current provider, while 18% said they are not.

Figure 23: Satisfaction with Current Provider



Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

Those that are not satisfied with their current provider were asked to explain. Reasons given were:

- *Currently yes, previously absolutely not. [program name] is a HORRIBLE facility!*
- *My daycare is amazing, and my child loves it there. She is 2 and has been going since she was 2 months old. Just the rules on how many hours a day can be there cause me to take a lower paying job.*
- *My child has been displaying unusual behaviors and the only place they could be coming from, is the provider, as nothing has changed at home.*
- *No permanent child care.*
- *I use private babysitter that can take care of his needs. However, if she can no longer babysit then I would be looking. I do need a backup plan.*
- *Want more of a school environment.*
- *The care is substandard, my child is always getting sick, and they have ridiculous rules.*
- *I would like to be able to return to work in the near future, however I am enjoying time at home with my youngest child.*
- *More times than not, we are satisfied. However, I think their preschool could be better. My son attended preschool in the Quad Cities before we moved (also within his daycare center) and since moving, there were areas where we think he regressed. Preschool is less days per week and for only a couple hours at a time. We also receive more notes at home with behavioral issues - being disruptive, not sitting still, etc. - and we think it's primarily because he is not being stimulated enough in the classroom.*
- *We have arrangements out of county for summer, but nothing within bussing limits for school next year.*
- *I'm using a family member when I would prefer a regulated home/facility provider so my child can interact with other children but there are no openings and few trusted child care places in the area 13 Because she just opened, she currently only has children enrolled under the age of 3 other than my child who is 8. This makes for a long day for my child with little interaction.*

- *It's a 30-minute drive out of the way twice a day to get there. Also, living conditions aren't the best. Dirty.*
- *My provider knows that she has the upper hand and uses it. She is closed frequently. And takes summers off. Which does not work for my year-round job. Hence why I am quitting. I can't take the financial and mental stress anymore.*
- *Yes and no. The staff is friendly, and the care is adequate. The hours are not good for our schedules.*
- *I think she is doing a great job with what she has to work with, but staffing is a real issue.*
- *I am satisfied with her as a grandmother but not a daycare provider.*
- *But would love for a facility to have availability closer to home.*

Comments continued: Reasons parents not satisfied with current child care provider.

- *I am my own provider for my child. I wanted to work but the cost and schedules would not work with my children's school schedule.*
- *Unsatisfied with lack of regulations, cleanliness, abrupt closures, the presence of multiple animals, inconsistent meals, use of tablets/devices/TV, overcrowded small space and no outside playing space.*
- *We love the people, but the chaos we could do without.*
- *Staffing is an issue, and we are frequently called to pick kids up early.*
- *It's family the one day they don't work that I do.*
- *I say no only because my kids are in different daycares and it's a lot to have to drop them off and pick them up in different towns.*
- *I love the provider I have but availability is unpredictable. I use her when she has an opening.*
- *Love the [program name] center my older two go to. There are pros and cons to my in-home provider for my infant.*
- *We both need to work to maintain the household, but I am unable to due to childcare issues.*
- *One is my mom, so I am fine there. The other is a center which is good for him and other is an in-home who takes off a lot. Difficult to arrange a sitter.*
- *Currently staying home due to cost of childcare.*

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 were dependability (83%), followed by positive interactions between staff and children (77%) and available space/timing of enrollment (70%). After identifying all factors that are important, current parents were asked to

select the single factor that is most important to them. The most important factor to current parents was positive interactions between staff and children, which was selected by 27%.

The overall top factors among future parents were split between available space/timing or enrollment and positive interactions between staff and children, with 82% of future parents selecting both. After identifying all factors that are important, future parents were given the same list and asked to select the single factor that is most important to them. The most important factor to future parents was dependability, which was selected by 28%.

*See table on next page.*

Table 39: Important Factors When Selecting Child Care

	Current Parents		Future Parents	
	All Factors that are Important	Single Most Important	All Factors that are Important	Single Most Important
Available space/timing of enrollment	70%	3%	82%	18%
Care includes preschool	33%	1%	45%	0%
Dependability	83%	17%	63%	28%
Drop-in or occasional care	41%	5%	45%	0%
Educational curriculum used	47%	0.5%	55%	0%
Evening or 2 <sup>nd</sup> shift care (after 6:30 pm)	25%	4%	27%	0%
Health and safety policies	60%	10.5%	72%	9%
Iowa Quality Rating (IQ4K/QRS)	33%	3%	36%	9%
Location	65%	3%	63%	18%
Overnight or 3 <sup>rd</sup> shift care	12%	1%	9%	0%
Part-time options	37%	3%	45%	9%
Positive interactions between staff and children	77%	27%	82%	0%
Secured entrance	47%	0.5%	45%	0%
Special needs care	17%	4%	27%	9%
Transportation to and from school or preschool	55%	7%	36%	0%
Tuition assistance or scholarships	22%	3%	18%	0%
Tuition rates or price	43%	6%	63%	0%
Upkeep or appearance of the facility and playground	60%	0.5%	55%	0%
Weekend care	24%	1%	18%	0%

Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

To better understand parents' preferences for extended or nontraditional hours, a comparison was done to see what the preferred child care setting is for those that indicated 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> shift as an important factor. Overall, 56 parents indicated 2<sup>nd</sup> shift and 26 also selected 3<sup>rd</sup> shift care. In a separate question when parents were asked what the single most important factor was to them, 8 indicated it is 2<sup>nd</sup> shift care and 2 indicated 3<sup>rd</sup> shift care.

Parents that included 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> shift in all factors that are important to them, represent 56 families, which collectively have 111 children. The most preferred setting collectively is a licensed center (36), followed by children being at home with a parent (8), and registered homes (6). The most preferred location is Fort Madison (26), followed by Keokuk (16), and Donnellson (10).

Narrowing responses even more, FCF looked at only the parents that selected 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> shift care as their single most important factor. Parents that indicated 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> shift is their most important factor represent 10 families, which collectively have 21 children. Eight (8) parents indicated 2<sup>nd</sup> shift as most important and 2 said 3<sup>rd</sup> shift was most important to them. Among parents wanting 2<sup>nd</sup> shift care, a licensed center is most preferred (6), followed by registered home (2). Among

parents wanting 3<sup>rd</sup> shift care, it was evenly split between preferring a relative (1) and children being at home with a parent (1). The most preferred location among all families that indicated 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> shift as their most important factor was Fort Madison (7), followed by Keokuk (2), and Donnellson (1).

Current parents were asked a few questions about how the COVID pandemic has affected child care for them over the past 12 months. Parents were given a list of a few possible affects and were asked to select all that apply. The largest group (48%) indicated they did not experience any of the affects. Among those whose child care arrangements were affected by COVID in the last 12 months, the most common affect was that their child care provider temporarily closed (44%).

*Table 40: Affects of COVID on Child Care Arrangement in Last 12 Months*

	<b>Percent of Parents</b>
Child care provider temporarily closed	44%
Child care provider permanently closed	5%
Child care provider limited capacity and my children could not attend	17%
None of the above	48%

Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

Parents were next asked if their child care needs had changed over the last 12 months as a direct result of COVID. Parents were given a list of a few possible changes and were asked to select all that apply. The majority (64%) indicated they did not experience any of the listed changes. Among those who did experience changes to their child care needs in the last 12 months due to COVID the most common change was needing more child care because of a change to own their job or work schedule (18%), followed by temporarily not needing care while they worked from home (13%).

*Table 41: Changes in Child Care Needs Due to COVID*

	<b>Percent of Parents</b>
Temporarily did not need care while working from home	13%
No longer need care because COVID changed job to work from home	0%
Needed more care because of changes to job or work schedule	18%
Needed less child care because of changes to job or work schedule	1%
Needed more care because child's school utilized online instruction	9%
Needed less child care because child's school utilized online instruction	0%
Other (see comments below)	3%
None of the above	64%

Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

Comments received from parents that indicated “other” were:

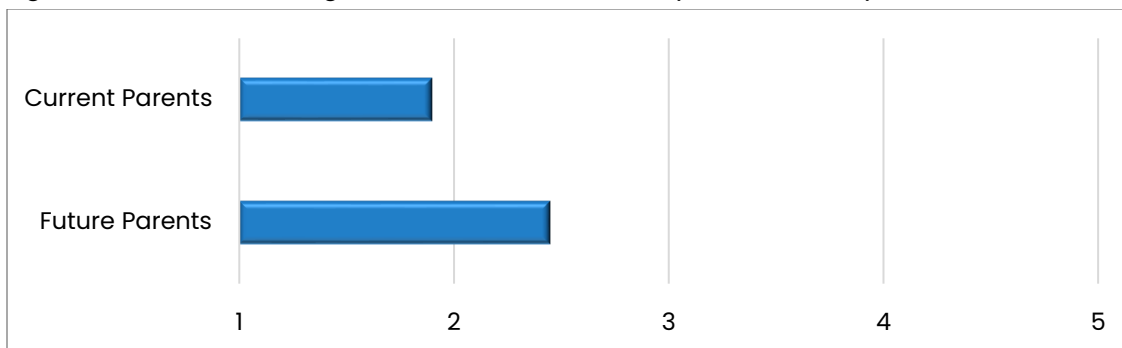
- *Was off work while my kids and I had COVID.*
- *Oldest child stayed home and completed schoolwork while I worked from home. My other child was not born yet.*
- *Previous provider shut down too much due to COVID.*
- *I work at health dept.*

The final question about COVID that parents were asked was, are your child care arrangements or child care needs being impacted today as a direct result of COVID. Nine percent (9%) indicated yes and were asked to explain. Comments received were:

- *Provider was sick.*
- *Daycare doesn't have enough staff so they can't take as many kids.*
- *Quarantine due to exposure, stricter rules on symptoms of illness. Staff issues.*
- *Child care prices went up significantly.*
- *Daycare currently closes on occasion due to being short staffed. They also are not open during times school is out for holidays such as Christmas break.*
- *Due to COVID my provider took on more kids because parents needed kids since the beginning of the year the provider has been separating children to try to keep parents able to work. Although over the limit on capacity she had enough employees to run it well within the guidelines for a center.*
- *Most closed during COVID making it impossible to find care that is not family.*

Parents were asked to rate the availability of child care in Lee County on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not available, 3 adequate, and 5 highly available (the higher the score, the more available). The weighted average from current parents was 1.90, and the weighted average from future parents was 2.45.

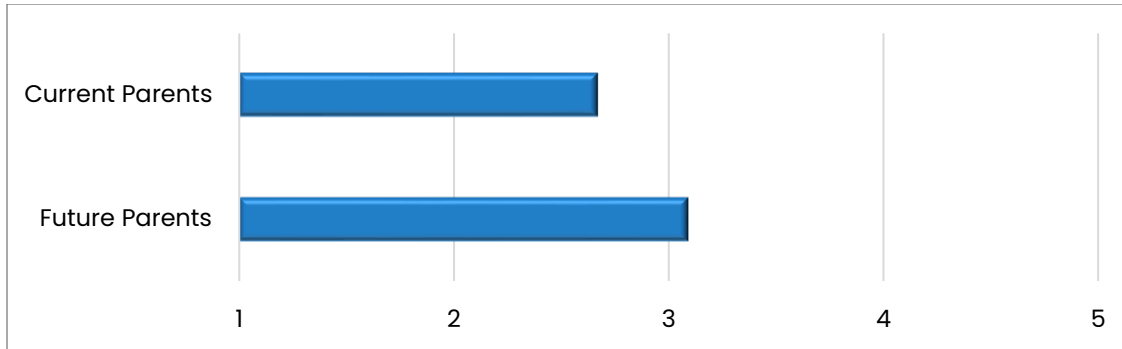
Figure 24: Parents' Ratings of Child Care Availability in Lee County



Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

Parents were then asked to rate the *quality* of child care in Lee County on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being low quality, 3 adequate, and 5 highly quality (the higher the score, the higher quality). The weighted average from current parents was 2.67, and the weighted average from future parents was 3.09.

Figure 25: Parents' Ratings of Child Care Quality in Lee County



Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

At the conclusion of the survey, parents were asked several open-ended questions about child care in Lee County. Summaries of these comments are on the following pages.

What do you think is the biggest challenge facing parents in Lee County today in regard to child care, and what will resolve that challenge?

*Comments from current parents were:*

- *The child care openings are very limited if any and the hours they are open does not help a 2nd shift worker much or 3rd shift worker at all.*
- *Lack of options. High cost of child care.*
- *Price.*
- *Not enough regulation on in home, not enough centers with transportation and rates are not affordable for large families.*
- *Lack of Daycare facilities.*
- *Not enough providers and price.*
- *Staff and options.*
- *Child care cost almost as much as I make a week. Change income guidelines for assistance.*
- *Location, availability, hours, price.*
- *Actually, availability at the facility.*
- *Daycare hours that work for parents regardless of the shift they work.*
- *Affordability and openings. There is not enough options in the area to accommodate the needs of parents. The cost of care is also very high and causes a large portion of our monthly income to be spent on child care.*



Comments continued: What do you think is the biggest challenge facing parents in Lee County today in regard to child care, and what will resolve that challenge?

- *The cost of care is the largest challenge, if you are not considered "low income" family you still have to pay a significant amount for child care. Our daughter is 170 a week and my son is 175 a week and that is not a minor amount that is close to 20% of our post tax income and that is before housing costs, utilities, and food.*
- *A 24-hour place that provides drop off and pick up anytime for people with flexible hours*
- *Finding reliable, QUALITY childcare in accountable facility with after school hours available.*
- *Finding reliable, safe, trustworthy, and affordable.*
- *Reliable child care, knowing parents will not have to miss work or find alternate care*
- *I think the biggest challenge is the quality of caretakers. More people in general would resolve the challenge and perhaps a licensing requirement for workers.*
- *Lower cost, work more, offer a better life.*
- *Not quality childcare. The daycare in [name of town] is now horrible. They used to work with your child and teach them something. Now they do nothing and close all the time.*
- *We don't have evening/overnight care available.*
- *Not enough child care centers or good ones.*
- *Cost.*
- *The cost of child care, but it's hard to place a price on good child care.*
- *Lack of availability.*
- *Single parents that work full-time do not get cut any slack if their kids are sick.*
- *Someone with special needs.*
- *After school program would be great.*
- *Legislation. You need to survey why and what companies are scheduling work times in order to formulate this question.*
- *Corrupt daycares, accidents.*
- *The lack of providers, dependability, trust.*
- *Parent's expectations of what they get from their childcare providers, misunderstanding of regulations by parents. Hours and Cost. People paying cash and do not qualify for any assistance are struggling in multiple ways. Most people are barely bringing any money home after paying daycare, therefore quitting their jobs.*
- *Times daycares are opening and closing. 24-hour daycares would resolve that.*
- *More availability, lower cost.*
- *Not to be able have drop off daycare when school is open.*
- *I think the cost is a big factor-- not everyone qualifies for assistance. Also, a reliable center -- I would not take my child to a home daycare.*

Comments continued: What do you think is the biggest challenge facing parents in Lee County today in regard to child care, and what will resolve that challenge?

- *Finding affordable safe childcare that fits with parent work schedules.*
- *Our local schools offer childcare to employees.*
- *Finding child care is a nightmare. And if you like me you are stuck with no options. I am unhappy with the daycare I am using and have no option but to use it. It was the same when my 7-year-old needed daycare.*
- *Wish they had options for children in 6th grade and older. Youth center afterschool options.*
- *The lack of options as well as the care the centers provide.*
- *Quality.*
- *There aren't enough centers or trustworthy people running daycares. And those daycares that are open may not have the space or operate during their work hours if they work 2nd shift or even 3rd shift.*
- *Staying healthy.*
- *Not enough openings that we can afford. transportation care for kids with special circumstances.*
- *Availability, hours, days open, drop-in options, price.*
- *No night or weekend child care available.*
- *Not enough licensed options.*
- *Finding a trustworthy and reliable daycare in our area that have enough staff to properly care for the children.*
- *Available safe child care.*
- *Parents need quality child care at affordable rates.*
- *Limited providers available, those running daycare are full. Centers are not financially feasible.*
- *Lack of child care and cost of child care compared to wages paid in area.*
- *Availability, dependability, location, enrollment opportunities and most importantly, engaging activities for our children.*
- *High daycare prices.*
- *Not enough choices and prices too high.*
- *Cost. To resolve - scholarships? Grants?*
- *Assistance with cost and transportation to school.*
- *Not enough facilities available and pricing.*
- *Someone to get him to school and pick up.*

Comments continued: What do you think is the biggest challenge facing parents in Lee County today in regard to child care, and what will resolve that challenge?

- *Finding quality childcare where you feel confident and safe with your child being in their care. Either more credible institutions open or the credible institutions that are here are able to grow and have more children.*
- *No centers have availability.*
- *School aged care/transportation to school. Having busses available to pick up school aged kids from other locations. Our daycare is located near the YMCA and I have a child to transport to Lincoln and the Middle school. I've had to find other, inopportune, care in the morning so they can get to school.*
- *Affordable and safety. Have more income based child care with health and safety requirements, and allow parents to shadow at the daycare, or come in to pick up children to see how they react to environment. Maybe pictures can be sent on special days? or throughout the day?*
- *Transportation to and from daycare to school and having someone before and after school.*
- *Availability/openings.*
- *We need more providers.*
- *Lack of available space and lack of transportation.*
- *The biggest challenge I think is the hours most child care centers operate. Expanding hours would resolve this issue.*
- *Child care center availabilities.*
- *Openings, 2nd/3rd shifts.*
- *There are not enough open spots in licensed trusted facilities. There are also not enough people willing to work in those facilities. Our current daycare provider has been trying to hire for an extended period but cannot find the staff.*
- *There are few if any centers that are willing to take children with special needs. If they have issues with children, they just cut their programs.*
- *Limited reliable places that provide childcare. More large daycare facilities that have openings and are heavily regulated to ensure safety.*
- *Finding daycares that are affordable, have a wide variety of open hours for every day of the week, and provide positive interactions between staff and children.*
- *The number of daycares open in Central Lee School district. Especially Montrose area. I believe there's one in home daycare actually in Montrose. Everyone else has to drive out of their way to drop their children off.*
- *We need more quality childcare providers.*
- *Dependable child care availability.*

Comments continued: What do you think is the biggest challenge facing parents in Lee County today in regard to child care, and what will resolve that challenge?

- *There is not enough daycares in Fort Madison. I have two special needs granddaughters that I cannot find daycare. My 77-year-old Mom is helping me with so I can work.*
- *Being able to afford daycare or babysitters.*
- *Availability and safety.*
- *Lee lack of child care centers or certified in home daycare providers for 2nd and third shift workers.*
- *The lack of child care facilities is the biggest problem and incentives to start new childcares would resolve that challenge.*
- *Cost of child care.*
- *Limited space in daycares. Hours are not realistic for the typical 8-5 workday due to such rural locations.*
- *Lack of available daycare spaces and time slots available.*
- *Finding available options.*
- *Cost and availability. Often the decent places cost too much and many of the centers are subpar at best. Also, the centers that are decent have huge waiting list. I myself have been on the wait list for HTC for over a year and a half.*
- *The biggest challenge is finding quality care and feeling that my child is safe while not in my care.*
- *Availability and price. Better communication about what there is and assistance to pay for it.*
- *Dependable, consistent, trusted care providers.*
- *The biggest problem is lack of availability in child care facilities because of lack of staffing. Families are having to travel further and split siblings up which is an inconvenience.*
- *Quality providers and availability.*
- *Dependable daycares with good employees to care for our children.*
- *Cost of child care. I feel financial support for low-income family, like ours, beyond what is already available.*
- *Summer options for school aged kids.*
- *Cost and availability - more childcare options.*
- *Very limited daycare options and long waitlists.*
- *Availability, price and quality.*
- *There are no options in our town. Cannot afford the one or two centers as well.*
- *Availability and good care providers. How expensive it is.*

Comments continued: What do you think is the biggest challenge facing parents in Lee County today in regard to child care, and what will resolve that challenge?

- *Financial assistance. My spouse and I pay over \$1,000 a month on childcare and do not qualify for childcare assistance.*
- *Available space, quality of staff. Creating new facilities, better wages for staff.*
- *Child care not being open later and on weekends.*
- *Lack of facilities or availability/enrollment.*
- *Prices.*
- *There aren't enough daycare options for what parents need. I am currently on a waitlist for a center hoping I will get a spot by August when the school year starts.*
- *Hard to find reputable, safe, clean, available child care environments.*
- *More centers, even Morton buildings that providers can lease to turn into centers.*
- *Reliable, affordable child care.*
- *Disbursed location in rural communities with enrollment openings— more in homes, centers, and providers Hours of operation for in homes- be more accommodating for nontraditional work schedules.*
- *Having providers who take the time to be certified or take proper safety measures.*
- *Number of options - incentives/space to provide.*
- *The high prices and availability.*
- *Cost and finding dependable people we trust.*
- *Finding childcare with qualified, dependable, engaged, caring providers and staff at an affordable price.*
- *All the daycares being on a waiting list... And no one qualified to work with children 1 on 1 for special needs.*
- *Biggest challenge is finding somewhere for your children to go so you can go to work. If there is no place to take your children for daycare, you must stay home from work. If I could not find daycare, I would have to quit work. I am also not going to not have children because of the lack of daycare. I will have to not work if it comes to that choice. Daycares need incentives to keep good employees, underscore on the "good" employees. There also needs to be incentives to open daycares, or incentives to be able to expand the ones that are open and improve the quality of facilities and attract employees.*
- *Daycare centers are too expensive. In home care providers are less dependable and concerning if not registered through the state. Availability is most challenging.*
- *Transportation. Getting kids to school or from school, after school activities, swim lessons etc.*

- *Finding a daycare with open spots and daycares not being able to find dependable and willing employees.*

Comments continued: What do you think is the biggest challenge facing parents in Lee County today in regard to child care, and what will resolve that challenge?

- *Finding quality child care in a timely manner. More childcare facilities.*
- *Not enough childcare centers with bus transportation to and from school and cost.*
- *The biggest challenge is that there aren't enough childcare spots because the centers that are there (like mine) can't hire quality staff to open their slots. And we can't hire quality staff because we can't afford to compete with the starting wage of other companies. We need some sort of stipend or grant or something to help raise our starting wage to at minimum \$11/hour to get the quality of staff we need to provide childcare to all of Lee County. Instead of opening 5 new centers we need help making the centers or in-homes we have to open their slots and provide quality care.*
- *Change hours of operation and lower cost of care.*
- *Factory schedules, flexibility with school schedule better support for alternate education option so parents can work and still see their kids.*
- *Reliable and affordable care that provides before/after school care and transportation so parents can continue to work.*
- *Price for a quality daycare.*
- *Limited opening for infants, more daycares and providers.*
- *Number of open spots, specifically for infants. Also, the pay of the providers makes it difficult to find good people from what I can tell.*
- *Licensed or registered child care available. Try to deter the people that watch children under DHS radar.*
- *More workers so they can facilitate more children.*
- *Availability, price, and transportation.*
- *Availability and price of daycare. Wages need to substantially increase and more availability for child care.*
- *Cost and reliability.*
- *2nd shift hours.*
- *Drop off times early enough to work shifts at 6am, availability of a spot. More dependable assistants.*
- *Having quality childcare options. There is a monopoly for services in the Donnellson area.*
- *Lack of facilities open especially for infants.*
- *Availability. There are no options...if someone isn't happy with their childcare they don't have an option to leave due to no other facilities having availability.*
- *Availability on a location close to home or work.*

- *Limited spots in registered centers, prices too high, assistance too hard to receive, limited hours.*

Comments continued: What do you think is the biggest challenge facing parents in Lee County today in regard to child care, and what will resolve that challenge?

- *Finding child care the there is a bond between the provider and child.*
- *Quality. Availability. Funding. I am not sure what the solution, but I know the rising cost of childcare almost makes it impossible to work.*
- *Too full. Too expensive. Not helpful to parents working in factories with mandatory overtime.*
- *Lack of quality childcare and in-homes allowing children past 4:30. Centers are full.*
- *Affordability being #1 and availability.*
- *Availability for evening/weekend daycare.*
- *Finding someone for later shifts.*
- *There aren't enough licensed daycares in the area.*
- *Finding care for infants. More options available for parents.*
- *Hour for childcare. Needing help getting to school.*
- *Transportation and affordable dependable and flexible registered in homes and we need more certified centers that take babies!!*
- *Cheaper care, friendly staff.*
- *The cost of child care in comparison to the average salary along with lack of availability.*
- *There are waiting lists for every provider I've checked with.*
- *Lack of options and lack of education in the preschool system causing a use abuse and fear around enrolling children into schools with over worked or mean adults. And long enrollment times to get your child into said daycare.*
- *Safe, reliable, affordable day care.*
- *Available spots.*

Comments from future parents were:

- *The lack of available care in Lee County.*
- *Finding childcare that's trustworthy and affordable.*
- *Spots. Either more centers or more workers and space at established center.*
- *Not enough space. Few people accept children under 18 months.*
- *Prices for care are high, there is virtually no care for children who are neurodivergent or have developmental disabilities, hours of operation of care do not cover my working hours which limits my working day, high turnover so children cannot depend on staff to be there consistently to become somewhat bonded to, etc.*
- *No workplace options.*

- *Availability of open spots during time care is needed.*

The next question asked parents, if they see any opportunities for the future of child care in Lee County?

*Comments from current parents were:*

- *Yes, I believe there are young entrepreneurs who would be willing to start a childcare business if they had the support to get the business started.*
- *I would like to see a large 24-hour facility open with lots of cameras everywhere.*
- *We need more options for care.*
- *Depends child care is expensive because running a facility is expensive. Lee County has the highest electrical rates in the state, some of the highest water rates in the state and extremely expensive connection rate with Mediacom as they have a monopoly in Keokuk. With all these it makes it fairly expensive to just keep the doors open so those costs are passed on to the users. If you want to make child care affordable you should make the cost of doing business and the cost of living affordable in Lee County. Until you do that nothing is going to truly resolve the issue.*
- *The opportunities are everywhere.*
- *Yes!*
- *Yes, for evening or overnights! It would help so many!*
- *I hope so.*
- *Need more schools to offer care since they are easier to get licensed.*
- *After school program that goes from the end of the school day until 5 or 5:30 pm.*
- *Nope. Moving is most desirable.*
- *Partnership with school districts.*
- *I do! With the right people involved, something can happen. Maybe for summer -- staff/older students could come together for cheap, reliable, help??*
- *It's obviously a lucrative business.*
- *I hope so & that its affordable.*
- *Pay increases for staff.*
- *Reaching out to every child care provider for ideas and support.*
- *It would be really cool if daycare centers could be connected to the elementary schools.*
- *I'm not sure.*
- *Hard to tell. Lee county is kind of run a little backwards.*
- *Is there a chance of having a Boys & Girls club type of place that can help to ease the strain of childcare on the community and help to provide essential services to one our community's most vulnerable population?*
- *Not at this time.*
- *Open a new facility.*



- *I think there are some very credible institutions in the area, but there are not enough people available to work at those institutions to grow class sizes or have more classes.*

Comments continued: Opportunities for the future of child care in Lee County.

- *Absolutely, if the school system could bus children to different locations.*
- *I see many vacant properties that would be good to build child care facilities.*
- *It would be great if the buses would pick the kids up and drop them off at daycare before and after school. I'm having to switch daycares because I have no way to get my grandson to and from school.*
- *Yes, but the funds need to go toward paying the staff not updating centers or going into the pockets of the business owners.*
- *Maybe during the school year, having a large afterschool program for all ages that acted like a daycare would be extremely helpful? I also think finding a way to encourage employers to help with daycare costs or allowing more schedule flexibility for parents would help.*
- *There needs to be a center opened in Montrose or between Montrose and Donnellson.*
- *Yes, if there were more people willing to take care for children they would be utilized in the work force.*
- *Drop-in and occasional daycare center.*
- *I'm not sure. I'm interested in learning more about after school programs one both of my kids are school aged next year.*
- *If you can build reputable place that hire quality workers, yes. Otherwise, no.*
- *Growth for regulated centers.*
- *Opening another center.*
- *Summer options and smaller centers focused on school curriculum.*
- *Absolutely. I was a registered provider for approximately 10 years, and I am unsure as to why we do not see more providers in the area.*
- *I do believe there are opportunities for child care in South Lee County, we have a large old Family Video building on Main St that sits empty, I know Henry County has remolded their old Family Video for a child care facility. We have plenty of churches that offer space to rent for child care also.*
- *It's very limited.*
- *Yes, we need more centers a place for parents to feel comfortable and the look of an income.*
- *A larger, more flexible, regulated facility. Old Jefferson school lot maybe or something else centrally located (For the FM area anyway).*
- *There is a lot of room for improvement.*

- *Daycare is such a demanding job; you are going to need incentives for people or somehow seek out people who are willing to open a daycare in the area.*
- *Yes, but need more trustful, capable people willing.*

Comments continued: Opportunities for the future of child care in Lee County.

- *Open more daycares.*
- *Yes, I think if we can better equip our current centers/in homes to open their slots and then work together to start adding more centers then we should be able to provide the child care, in turn getting people back to work.*
- *Yes—we need more daycare centers with availability, extended hours, and school transportation and before–after care programs.*
- *The main opportunities I see are Fort Madison and Keokuk to have an overnight and weekend care option for shift workers. Also, more availability of spots for children would be beneficial.*
- *This has been a big issue for many years. Funding needs to be made available for those that wish to be registered or open a licensed center.*
- *Yes, HTC is doing a daycare/preschool I believe.*
- *It would be nice if the schools would go back to picking students up from the daycares.*
- *It looks grim.*
- *Lee county can do better! Child care should never cost 2400 a month for 2 kids!!*
- *If busy bees is allowed to open up their new facility!*
- *Hopefully more centers or a center at the school.*
- *Absolutely.*
- *No. Thought about opening my own in-home daycare but don't know the process.*
- *I foresee this being something we know needs addressed, however will not be in a timely manner.*
- *I think another childcare center would be beneficial for Fort Madison. Infants to preschool aged kids and before and after school care.*
- *I'd love to see more daycares enrolled in QRS that receive early childhood education.*

Comments from future parents were:

- *More opportunities for children and parents with children who are neurodivergent or have disabilities, less expensive, offering transportation for children who have no way to get to child care, better early level education, more accessible.*
- *Lots more daycare options!!*

The final question asked parents to share any additional comments they have about child care in Lee County.

Comments from current parents were:

- *It costs A LOT for childcare. There aren't enough options.*
- *Definitely a need for child care in Lee County!*

Comments continued: Any additional comments about child care in Lee County.

- *I would like to see higher quality care at an affordable price. A lot of centers or homes allow children to watch a lot of TV and don't provide adequate physical activity, academic time, and healthy meals and snacks.*
- *I believe it's more difficult to find a spot for a baby than any other age.*
- *Child Care Desert...zero availability to working families.*
- *My mom has a home daycare, so I use hers and have for the last 17 years with all three of my kids. Beyond that, I don't know much about quality and availability.*
- *Keokuk community child development center is costs 200 a week for the worst care in town. Why does it require a mortgage payment for a babysitter?*
- *What child care?*
- *Lee county especially in the Central Lee district needs more childcare options. Care for kids with risky health issues needs to be available*
- *There needs to be more options available for parents. We had been using the YMCA Childcare in Donnellson. After the staffing issues they had we lost daycare without notice. Our family will not return to this care center. It is not reliable.*
- *I have been trying to get my child into inertia for months and they can't seem to get anyone hired for their new room. I've been calling and checking, and grandma can't handle my child much longer as she is having health issues. The available child care in town is just not available to working moms.*
- *Options for day camps that are subject-specific. Potential help with transportation could also ease some burden from parents.*
- *Openings in the central lee district especially need to be an option*
- *From previous experiences with a child care center that is now closed down, I am very lucky and fortunate to have find the one I use now.*
- *We are extremely happy with the quality of Inertia Boys and Girls center, but not all facilities or in home options in Lee County are to the same caliber of that center.*
- *This is just a very tough situation. Daycare providers need to make a certain amount of money to run, and they need quality employees (higher pay rate) which makes the daycare rate for parents higher. I also think it's hard to find employees in Lee County that truly care.*
- *The facilities we have are doing a great job but we need more affordable places as well. Seeing friends and family work for half or more of their check to go to child care is devastating. A parent wants to provide for their children but at what cost? Pay for*

*childcare and bills just to not have quality time to spend with your kids is a very disheartening exchange so many faces here. We can do better as a community.*

- *We need more daycare's and more that can handle special needs.*

Comments continued: Any additional comments about child care in Lee County.

- *With expenses rising, child care is needed for parents who have to work. I don't need child care every week because my ex-husband has them every other week and no one takes children on an every other week basis. Right now, who can afford anything? Babysitters are super expensive. Things are so bad I had to move back in with my mom to save money and have someone to watch my kids during the summer, but she has to work. So, this also limits the days and times I can work when I have the kids. Plus, I am having another child in a few weeks, no one wants to watch newborns.*
- *I would be willing to be a part of finding the solution to childcare in Lee County.*
- *I appreciate that Lee County is reaching out to the local people who are affect by this issue to get feedback. Thank you.*
- *I have children in both [program name] and [program name] in Fort Madison and I have been happy with both places. But I know many of my friends and co-workers struggle with finding dependable daycare options without a very long waitlist.*
- *Most of the daycare facilities are not dependable, have no openings or have too young of staff.*
- *I believe better wages would draw in better employees, I pray that the management looks closer into who they are allowing around young children. I would like to see the in home child care providers get certified so families would feel more comfortable using them. We are very limited on options for child care or even child friendly programs, it is something we are in great need of. With having two young children we often spend our weekends out of town in areas that have more to offer for them, I would like to see more opportunity in our community for this also.*
- *Child care should be open later and on weekends.*
- *There are so many newborns/infant parents (1<sup>st</sup> timers) that are struggling to find child care because families already enrolled are first served before waitlist families.*
- *We love [program name], but we were wholly unimpressed with some other places we toured when we moved here.*
- *I haven't looked for child care in some time so this is based on a few years ago and what other friends/parents have shared. Good on you all for being aware of the issue and attempting to correct it!*
- *We need more of the good that's already happening.*
- *Why is it so hard to get into a daycare? And waiting lists are so long.*

- *I would be happy to help come up with solutions or be a future committee member to help further Lee County's child care initiative. I am passionate about child care and hope to see all of the centers in our area thrive!*
- *We just need more providers.*

Comments continued: Any additional comments about child care in Lee County.

- *Thank you for taking the time to research and look into this. If you want to keep a vibrant community with young people coming back, you need child care. Child care also filters into keeping schools alive because working parents need child care for the hours they are working when the kids aren't in school. Employers also need to be accommodating for young employees/families by being able to offer benefits like flexible schedules, paid maternity/paternity leave, dependent care savings accounts, or paid health insurance for the time they are on leave. Those are SMALL gestures in the grand scheme of their businesses to keep young people in the workforce and attract them to come back to the community to work, knowing there's a place for their family.*
- *The quality depends on the center or home. Not all licensed centers operate with high quality care.*
- *Spaces are limited at our two daycare facilities. If you can get a spot, Learning Tree has been wonderful to us since the new owners. They have allowed us flexibility and discounts to make our situation more doable.*
- *If our wages do not increase along with better jobs, and more child care availability Lee County will continue to suffer and meet its demise.*
- *We need to do better. Middle class families are struggling so bad and can't maintain anymore. We need help! Childcare cost needs reduced, and we need space to bring our kids where we don't have to take off constantly to pick them up during working hours.*
- *The citizens outside of the bigger towns need more options. This could be a time to help citizens start a small business in the county helping to keep money and people in the area.*
- *I among many other friends really struggle to find infant care: the wait can be 6 months to a year. I know many people who have to go 3-5 different places during the week to cover care for a child.*
- *I just want to sincerely thank anyone who helped make this question possible and for addressing this huge issue.*
- *Besides the expenses and finding one with openings I find it hard to trust daycares after that little boy was left on the bus and the workers lied to the mom about it. Lots of horror stories. I don't trust home daycares because you never know what people do behind closed doors. So many addicts in the area also.*

- *I am lucky to have a provider I like in Des Moines County but my attempts to find one in Lee County several years ago weren't successful. I work at a manufacturer and one of the top reasons individuals work is daycare reliability. (Employees live in Lee Co and Des Moines Co) Individuals not available for evening positions because lack of daycare spots.*

*Comments from future parents were:*

- *I have heard that there is no / limited care for special needs children.*

## CHILD CARE GAP ANALYSIS

Calculating the true gap in a child care market needs to take 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 will 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 was 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 spaces available in programs currently regulated by Iowa DHS<sup>18</sup> for Lee County as a whole and for each individual community.

As of July 2022, there are 36 DHS regulated child care programs offering a total of 1,147 spaces in Lee County. Of the 1,147 spaces, only 1,035 are available for full-time, year-round child care. There are 18 DHS licensed centers and preschools (941 licensed spaces), offering varying hours, between 5:30 am and 6:30 pm, Monday through Friday. Among those programs, there are four preschool programs that only operate during the school year, and several of those only offer limited part-time hours. There are also 16 Registered Child Development Homes (196 registered spaces) and 2 Child Care Homes (10 spaces). The majority of homes offer care 5:30 am to 6:30 pm, Monday through Friday. There are 4 homes that offer extended hours care, 3 of those are willing to provide care 24-hours a day, 7 days a week.

In Lee County, there are 4,810 children ages 0 to 11. Of those, First Children's Finance (FCF) estimates 3,782 have all parents working. If it is assumed these families are represented by the child care needs survey responses, then 70% or approximately 2,646 are likely to be from families that would prefer to use a DHS regulated child care setting. According to Iowa DHS, there are currently 1,131 spaces in Lee County, of which, 1,035 are available year-round. That means there are enough DHS regulated spaces to serve approximately 39% of the children whose parents need full-time, year-round care in order to work. That means the child care gap could be as high as 1,611 spaces.

The following table shows the number of children likely to use DHS regulated care versus the number of spaces available. There are gaps among all age groups if part-time and school year only preschool spaces are excluded, however the greatest needs are school age and infant/toddler care.

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<sup>18</sup> Includes all Iowa DHS Licensed Centers and Preschools, Registered Child Development Homes, and Child Care Homes listed with Iowa DHS as of July 2022.

Table 42: Estimated Child Care Gap in Lee County

	<b>Children w/All Parents Working</b>	<b>Likely to Use Regulated Care</b>	<b>DHS Listed Spaces<sup>19</sup></b>	<b>Child Care Gap</b>	<b>Year-Round Spaces</b>	<b>Child Care Gap</b>
Age 0 to 2	839	587	357	-230	353	<b>-234</b>
Age 3 to 4	691	483	553	+70	461	<b>-22</b>
Age 5 to 11	2,257	1,576	221	-1,355	221	<b>-1,355</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,782</b>	<b>2,646</b>	<b>1,131</b>	<b>-1,515</b>	<b>1,035</b>	<b>-1,611</b>

Source: Child Care Market Analysis of Lee County, Iowa. Copyright ©2022, First Children's Finance.

In Lee County there is a need for more regulated child care spaces. The majority of parents indicated a desire for child care year-round, Monday through Friday. The majority prefers to be able to drop their child off 7:00 to 7:59 am and to pick them up 5:00 to 5:50 pm. When selecting care, the most important factors to current parents are positive interactions between staff and children. Parents prefer care within a licensed child care center, in the town where they live. Seventy percent (70%) prefer to enroll their children in an Iowa DHS regulated setting.

Breaking down the same information by community can help give a more detailed picture. Some communities will also serve families from neighboring communities, which if there is already a shortage could be worsened. Serving families from other communities should also be considered if a community appears to have a surplus. See the following pages for a breakdown by community.

<sup>19</sup> Only full-time, year-round child care spaces were included. Part-time or school year only preschool spaces were not included.



### Summary of Child Care in Donnellson

In Donnellson 79.3% of families with children ages 0 to 5 and 89.7% of families with children ages 6 to 17, have all parents in the labor force. Based on that, First Children’s Finance estimates approximately 125 children have all parents working. Taking into consideration parent preferences shared through the child care needs survey, FCF estimates 87 of those are likely to use regulated child care. There are currently 4 DHS regulated child care settings with a total of 81 spaces available year-round, and an additional 13 preschool and Head Start spaces available during the school year only.

Table 43: Donnellson Child Care Supply and Demand

<b>Children</b>	<b>Total Children</b>	<b>Children w/All Parents Working</b>	<b>Likely to Use Regulated Child Care</b>
Age 0 to 2	24	19	13
Age 3 to 4	26	20	14
Age 5 to 11	98	85	60
<b>Total children</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>DHS Regulated Providers</b>			
	<b>Ages Served</b>	<b>Total Capacity</b>	<b>Year-Round Capacity</b>
Miss Janet’s Preschool	2-4 yrs.	13	0
Fort Madison Family YMCA Early Learning Center	0-12	35	35
Fort Madison Family YMCA Learning Center	5-12	30	30
Christa Bronnenberg, Reg. Home C	0-12	16	16
<b>Total child care spaces</b>	---	<b>94</b>	<b>81</b>

Source: Child Care Market Analysis of Lee County, Iowa. Copyright ©2022, First Children’s Finance.

Donnellson has more child care spaces than children likely to use care, however, is not likely the community is actually facing a surplus because families that live in other communities are seeking care in Donnellson. According to preferences among parents completing the child care needs survey, 13% of current parents county-wide prefer care in Donnellson, regardless of where they live.

## Summary of Child Care in Fort Madison

In Fort Madison 70.7% of families with children ages 0 to 5 and 76.6% of families with children ages 6 to 17, have all parents in the labor force. Based on that, FCF estimates approximately 994 children have all parents working. Taking into consideration parent preferences shared through the child care needs survey, FCF estimates 696 of those are likely to use regulated child care. There are currently 14 DHS regulated child care settings with a total of 339 spaces available year-round, and an additional 56 preschool and Head Start spaces available during the school year only.

Table 44: Fort Madison Child Care Supply and Demand

<b>Children</b>	<b>Total Children</b>	<b>Children w/All Parents Working</b>	<b>Likely to Use Regulated Child Care</b>
Age 0 to 2	281	199	139
Age 3 to 4	284	201	141
Age 5 to 11	780	594	416
<b>Total children</b>	<b>1,345</b>	<b>994</b>	<b>696</b>
<b>DHS Regulated Providers</b>			
	<b>Ages Served</b>	<b>Total Capacity</b>	<b>Year-Round Capacity</b>
Carousel Preschool	3-4	20	0
Creative Edge Child Care	2-12	34	34
Eichacker Center (Head Start)	3-5	36	0
Holy Trinity ECC	2-12	100	100
Learning Tree Daycare Center, LLC	0-12	100	100
Richardson Head Start	0-4	31	31
Angelick Houge, Reg. Home A	0-12	8	8
Jennifer Pope, Reg. Home A	0-12	8	8
Kataya Todd, Reg. Home A	0-12	8	8
Beth Lumino, Reg. Home B	0-12	12	12
Tabitha Hall, Reg. Home B	0-12	12	12
Tanya Hurley, Reg. Home C	0-12	16	16
Dorsheana Nikodijevic, Non-Registered Home	0-12	5	5
Elizabeth Garcia-Hidalgo, Non-Registered Home	0-12	5	5
<b>Total child care spaces</b>	<b>---</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>339</b>

Source: *Child Care Market Analysis of Lee County, Iowa*. Copyright ©2022, First Children's Finance.

Fort Madison has a shortage of child care for the families that live in the community and that gap may be worsened by families that live in other communities seeking care there. According to preferences among parents completing the child care needs survey, 46% of current parents county-wide prefer care in Fort Madison, regardless of where they live.

### Summary of Child Care in Franklin

In Franklin 100% of families with children ages 0 to 5 and 81.0% of families with children ages 6 to 17, have all parents in the labor force. Based on that, FCF estimates approximately 7 children have all parents working. Taking into consideration parent preferences shared through the child care needs survey, FCF estimates 6 of those are likely to use regulated child care. There are currently no DHS regulated child care settings.

Table 45: Franklin Child Care Supply and Demand

<b>Children</b>	<b>Total Children</b>	<b>Children w/All Parents Working</b>	<b>Likely to Use Regulated Child Care</b>
Age 0 to 2	5	5	4
Age 3 to 4	0	0	0
Age 5 to 11	3	2	2
<b>Total children</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>DHS Regulated Providers</b>			
	<b>Ages Served</b>	<b>Total Capacity</b>	<b>Year-Round Capacity</b>
N/A		0	0
<b>Total child care spaces</b>	---	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Source: Child Care Market Analysis of Lee County, Iowa. Copyright ©2022, First Children's Finance.

While there are some children in Franklin likely to use child care, there is likely not enough for it to be feasible for a child care program to operate in the community, unless it were a home-based provider.

### Summary of Child Care in Houghton

In Houghton 100% of families with children ages 0 to 5 and 100% of families with children ages 6 to 17, have all parents in the labor force. Based on that, FCF estimates approximately 15 children have all parents working. Taking into consideration parent preferences shared through the child care needs survey, FCF estimates 10 of those are likely to use regulated child care. There are currently no DHS regulated child care settings.

Table 46: Houghton Child Care Supply and Demand

<b>Children</b>	<b>Total Children</b>	<b>Children w/All Parents Working</b>	<b>Likely to Use Regulated Child Care</b>
Age 0 to 2	9	9	6
Age 3 to 4	0	0	0
Age 5 to 11	6	6	4
<b>Total children</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>DHS Regulated Providers</b>			
	<b>Ages Served</b>	<b>Total Capacity</b>	<b>Year-Round Capacity</b>
N/A	---	0	0
<b>Total child care spaces</b>	---	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Source: Child Care Market Analysis of Lee County, Iowa. Copyright ©2022, First Children's Finance.

While there are some children in Houghton likely to use child care, there is likely not enough for it to be feasible for a child care program to operate in the community, unless it were a home-based provider.

## Summary of Child Care in Keokuk

In Keokuk 78.0% of families with children ages 0 to 5 and 82.6% of families with children ages 6 to 17, have all parents in the labor force. Based on that, FCF estimates approximately 1,302 children have all parents working. Taking into consideration parent preferences shared through the child care needs survey, FCF estimates 912 of those are likely to use regulated child care. There are currently 11 DHS regulated child care settings with a total of 419 spaces available year-round, and an additional 27 preschool and Head Start spaces available during the school year only.

Table 47: Keokuk Child Care Supply and Demand

Children	Total Children	Children w/All Parents Working	Likely to Use Regulated Child Care
Age 0 to 2	386	301	211
Age 3 to 4	262	204	143
Age 5 to 11	973	797	558
<b>Total children</b>	<b>1,621</b>	<b>1,302</b>	<b>912</b>
<b>DHS Regulated Providers</b>			
	Ages Served	Total Capacity	Year-Round Capacity
Inertia Boys and Girls Center Inc	0-12	86	86
Keokuk Christian Preschool	3-5	27	0
Keokuk Community Child Development Center	0-12	80	80
Keokuk Head Start	0-5	104	104
The Giving Tree Childcare Center	0-12	73	73
Leslie Teeters, Reg. Home B	0-12	12	12
Pamela Ragar, Reg. Home B	0-12	12	12
Sandra Clay, Reg. Home B	0-12	12	12
Sara Clay, Reg. Home B	0-12	12	12
Susan Morgan, Reg. Home B	0-12	12	12
Jessie Olsen, Reg. Home C	0-12	16	16
<b>Total child care spaces</b>	---	<b>446</b>	<b>419</b>

Source: Child Care Market Analysis of Lee County, Iowa. Copyright ©2022, First Children's Finance.

Keokuk has a shortage of child care for the families that live in the community and that gap may be worsened by families that live in other communities seeking care in Keokuk. According to preferences among parents completing the child care needs survey, 28% of current parents county-wide prefer care in Keokuk, regardless of where they live.

### Summary of Child Care in Montrose

In Montrose 83.3% of families with children ages 0 to 5 and 64.5% of families with children ages 6 to 17, have all parents in the labor force. Based on that, FCF estimates approximately 92 children have all parents working. Taking into consideration parent preferences shared through the child care needs survey, FCF estimates 64 of those are likely to use regulated child care. There is currently 1 DHS regulated child care setting with a total of 16 spaces available.

Table 48: Montrose Child Care Supply and Demand

<b>Children</b>	<b>Total Children</b>	<b>Children w/All Parents Working</b>	<b>Likely to Use Regulated Child Care</b>
Age 0 to 2	30	25	17
Age 3 to 4	23	19	13
Age 5 to 11	72	48	34
<b>Total children</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>DHS Regulated Providers</b>			
	<b>Ages Served</b>	<b>Total Capacity</b>	<b>Year-Round Capacity</b>
Colleen Calvert, Reg. Home C	0-12	16	16
<b>Total child care spaces</b>	---	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>

Source: *Child Care Market Analysis of Lee County, Iowa*. Copyright ©2022, First Children's Finance.

Montrose has more children likely to use regulated child care than spaces available. Despite this deficit, care should be taken if the community looks into expanding the supply of regulated child care. There may only be enough demand to make it feasible to support additional home-based care.

### Summary of Child Care in St. Paul

In St. Paul 70.0% of families with children ages 0 to 5 and 100% of families with children ages 6 to 17, have all parents in the labor force. Based on that, FCF estimates approximately 12 children have all parents working. Taking into consideration parent preferences shared through the child care needs survey, FCF estimates 9 of those are likely to use regulated child care. There are currently no DHS regulated child care settings.

Table 49: St. Paul Child Care Supply and Demand

<b>Children</b>	<b>Total Children</b>	<b>Children w/All Parents Working</b>	<b>Likely to Use Regulated Child Care</b>
Age 0 to 2	6	4	3
Age 3 to 4	4	3	2
Age 5 to 11	5	5	4
<b>Total children</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>DHS Regulated Providers</b>			
	<b>Ages Served</b>	<b>Total Capacity</b>	<b>Year-Round Capacity</b>
N/A	---	0	0
<b>Total child care spaces</b>	---	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Source: Child Care Market Analysis of Lee County, Iowa. Copyright ©2022, First Children's Finance.

While there are some children in St. Paul likely to use child care, there is likely not enough for it to be feasible for a child care program to operate in the community, unless it were a home-based provider.

### Summary of Child Care in West Point

In West Point 85.0% of families with children ages 0 to 5 and 100% of families with children ages 6 to 17, have all parents in the labor force. Based on that, FCF estimates approximately 92 children have all parents working. Taking into consideration parent preferences shared through the child care needs survey, FCF estimates 64 of those are likely to use regulated child care. There are currently 5 DHS regulated child care settings with a total of 184 spaces available year-round.

Table 50: West Point Child Care Supply and Demand

<b>Children</b>	<b>Total Children</b>	<b>Children w/All Parents Working</b>	<b>Likely to Use Regulated Child Care</b>
Age 0 to 2	45	38	27
Age 3 to 4	26	22	15
Age 5 to 11	33	32	22
<b>Total children</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>DHS Regulated Providers</b>			
	<b>Ages Served</b>	<b>Total Capacity</b>	<b>Year-Round Capacity</b>
Holy Trinity ECC-West Point	3-4	32	32
Kiki's Kids Learning Center and Preschool	0-12	51	51
Little Sprout's Preschool	3-4	30	30
Sunshine Childcare Inc	0-12	59	59
Tiny Town Daycare, Reg. Home B	0-12	12	12
<b>Total child care spaces</b>	---	<b>184</b>	<b>184</b>

Source: *Child Care Market Analysis of Lee County, Iowa*. Copyright ©2022, First Children's Finance.

West Point appears to have more child care spaces than children that are likely to use care, however, there are families that live in other communities that are seeking care in West Point which creates demand for those spaces. According to preferences among parents completing the child care needs survey, 6% of current parents county-wide prefer care in West Point, regardless of where they live.



## KEY FINDINGS

These key findings are based on research and conditions of the current child care market in Lee County, Iowa as of July 2022. If the county or the child care environment changes significantly, current findings may be affected.

### Parents are in the Labor Force and Need Child Care

According to the US Census Bureau as of 2022, 77% of families with children ages 0 to 5, and 80% of families with children ages 6 to 17 living in Lee County have all parents in the labor force. All parents in the labor force means if a family is headed by a couple, both parents are working and if it is a headed by a single parent that parent is working. The state-wide averages are 76% and 81%, respectively.

When households with children ages 6 to 17 have a higher percentage of all parents working than households with children ages 0 to 5 in the same market, it may indicate that a parent stays home while the children are very young and (re)enters the labor force after the children are in school.

Figure 26: Lee County Families with All Parents in the Labor Force



Source: *Child Care Market Analysis of Lee County, Iowa*. Copyright ©2022, First Children's Finance.

The number of households with all parents in the labor force varies by individual community, and by ages of children in the home. Those with children ages 0 to 5 and all parents in the labor force, varies from a low of 70.7% in Fort Madison, to a high of 100% in both Franklin and Houghton, while those with children ages 6 to 17 ranges from a low of 64.5% in Montrose to a high of 100% in Houghton, St. Paul, and West Point.

See table on next page.

Table 51: Percentage of Households with All Parents Working, 2020

	With Children Age 0 to 5	With Children Age 6 to 17
Donnellson	79.3%	89.7%
Fort Madison	70.7%	76.6%
Franklin	100%	81.0%
Houghton	100%	100%
Keokuk	78.0%	82.6%
Montrose	83.3%	64.5%
St. Paul	70.0%	100%
West Point	85.0%	100%
Lee County	62%	76%
State of Iowa	76%	81%

Source: Child Care Market Analysis of Lee County, Iowa. Copyright © 2022, First Children's Finance.

### Parents Prefer DHS Regulated Child Care Settings

The most preferred child care arrangement chosen by parents on the child care needs survey was a licensed center, and the second most preferred arrangement is registered home, both of which are regulated by Iowa Department of Human Services.

If all choices were available, 55% of current parents prefer a licensed child care center. The next most popular answers were a DHS registered child development home (15%), followed by not using child care- either my spouse/partner or I stay home or we adjust our schedules to not need to use child care (13%).

Table 52: Preferred Child Care Settings

	Percent of Parents
Licensed Center	55%
Registered Child Development Home	15%
Not use care (Stay home parent/adjust work schedules)	13%
Nanny or Babysitter	6%
Relative, Sibling, etc.	5%
Other	3%
Unregulated Home	2%

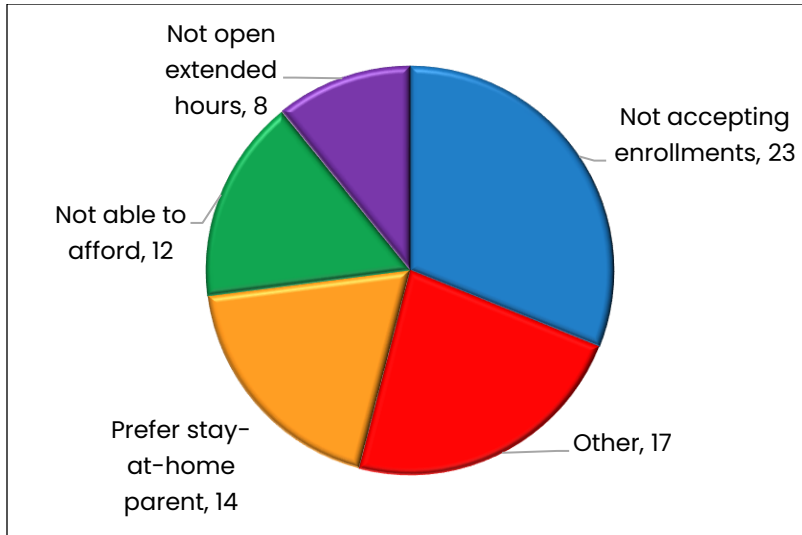
Source: Child Care Market Analysis of Lee County, Iowa. Copyright ©2022, First Children's Finance.

### Less Than Half of Parents Currently Using their Preferred Child Care Setting

Only 40% of current parents indicated their children are currently in their preferred child care setting. Of those that indicated their children are not in their preferred setting and they are interested in "outside care", the most common reason given was that the preferred provider not

accepting enrollments. The next most given reason was “other” which included a variety of explanations, followed by a prefer a stay-at-home parent but that the parents need to work. The following figure shows the top reasons parents selected, and the number of parents selecting that reason.

Figure 27: Reasons Why Children are Not Enrolled in Preferred Child Care Setting



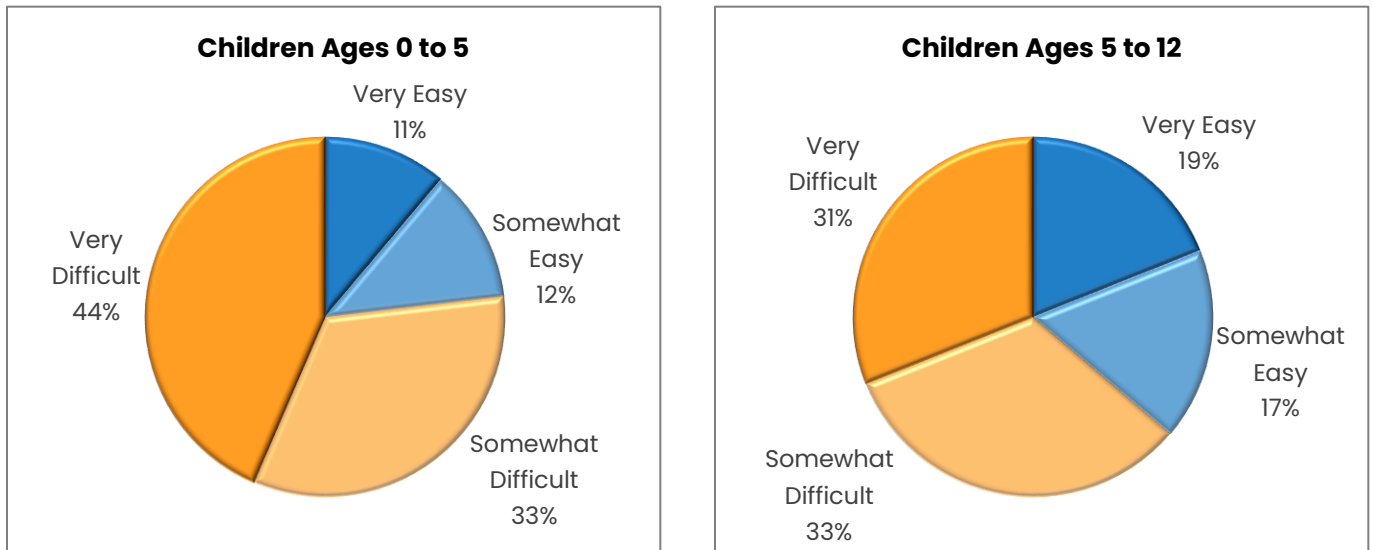
Source: *Child Care Market Analysis of Lee County, Iowa*. Copyright ©2022, First Children's Finance.

### Parents Are Having Difficulty Finding Child Care

Results of the child care needs survey indicated that in the last 12 months, 77% of parents with children ages 0 to 5 (not in Kindergarten) and 64% of parents with children ages 5 to 12 that looked for care, found it somewhat difficult or very difficult to find child care. Obstacles named were almost exclusively related to lack of openings or not enough spaces.

If an adequate supply of child care is not available, parents may look for care outside the community, consider moving, or limit the number of children they have. Eighty-two (82) parents indicated the current child care supply in Lee County has impacted their decision to have or adopt children or has caused them to limit the size of their family.

Figure 28: Ability to Find Child Care During Last 12 Months



Source: Lee County Child Care Needs Survey by First Children's Finance, ©2022

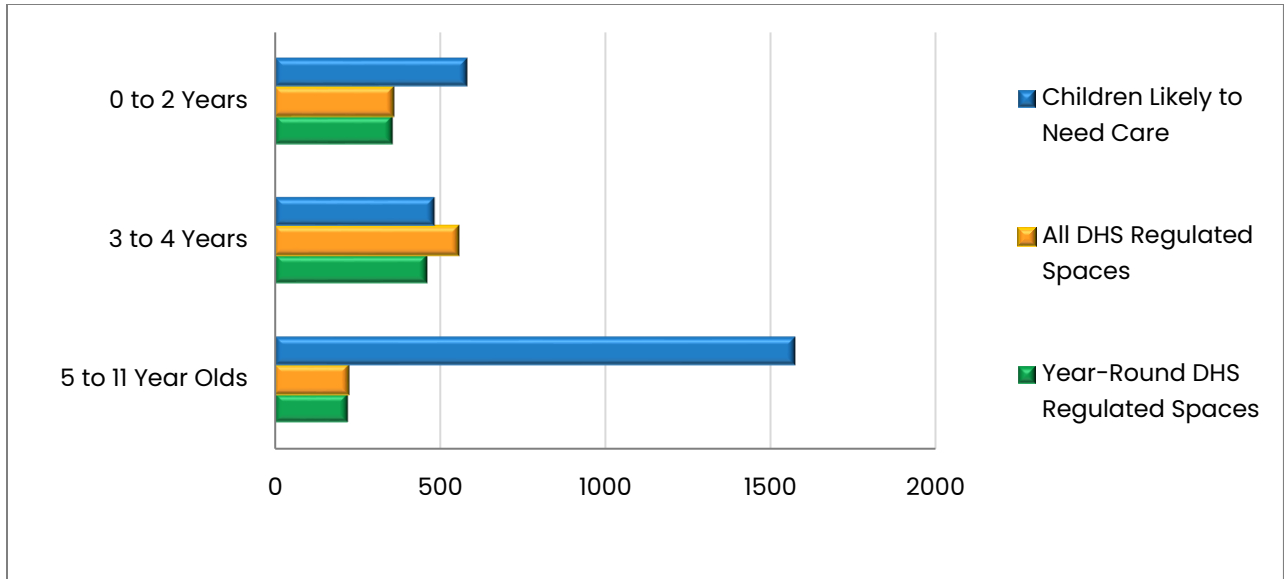
### Shortage of Child Care Spaces

There are an estimated 4,810 children ages 0 to 11 living in Lee County as of 2020. Based on the percentage of families that have all parents working, and parents' preferences of child care settings, First Children's Finance estimates that approximately 2,646 children are from families that would likely use regulated child care, if their preferred setting was available. With only 1,131 DHS regulated spaces (as of July 2022) and only 1,035 of those available full-time and year-round, the deficit could be as high as 1,611 spaces.

It should be recognized that this gap only takes into account trying to serve the families that live in the Lee County, therefore it may be worsened by families that live in outside of the county that are seeking care here or if there is future population growth.

The following figure shows a comparison of the children likely to use regulated child care, the total DHS regulated spaces, and the year-round DHS regulated spaces, by age groups.

Figure 29: Children Need Care vs. DHS Regulated Spaces<sup>20</sup>



Source: *Child Care Market Analysis of Lee County, Iowa*. Copyright ©2022, First Children's Finance.

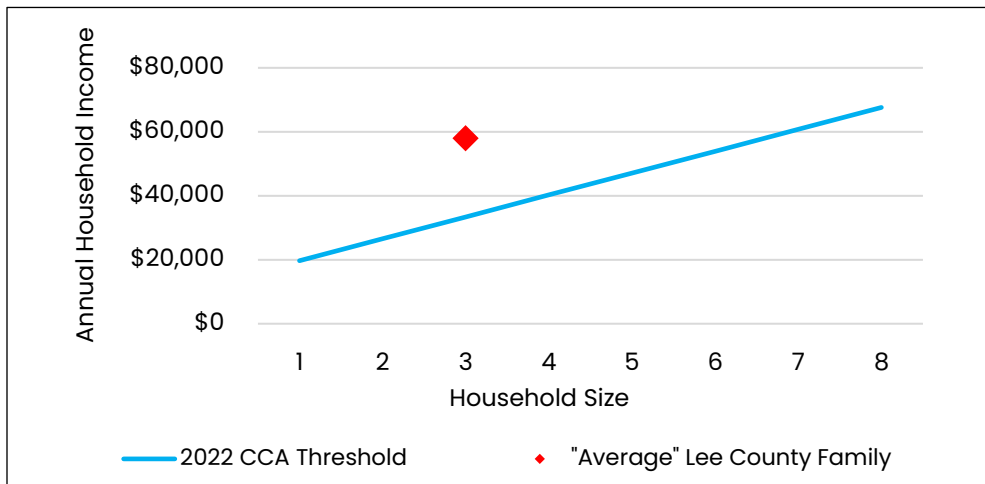
### Median Family Income is Higher than the Child Care Assistance Threshold

The median annual income in Lee County for families with children under the age of 18 is \$57,928. To be eligible for tuition assistance under the Iowa Child Care Assistance (CCA) program a family's income must not exceed 145% of poverty. According to the federally determined poverty threshold that went into effect in January 2022, 145% of poverty is \$33,393 for a household of 3, and \$40,238 for a household of 4. While many households with children in Lee County exceed these incomes, it is possible they still struggle to pay child care expenses out of pocket.

The following figure plots the median income of households with children under 18 for Lee County using the family size of 3 (rounding the county average of 2.76 up). The diagonal line shows 145% of poverty based on the household size. The affordability gap between the median income for a family with children in Lee County (\$57,928) and the 145% of poverty for a family of 3 (\$33,393) is easily visible by comparing the red diamond and the blue line directly below the diamond.

<sup>20</sup> Spaces do not include school district programs such as Statewide Voluntary Preschool if they are not licensed by Iowa Department of Human Services, or after school activities that are exempt from DHS Child Care Licensing.

Figure 30: Child Care Assistance Thresholds vs. Median Income of Family with Children

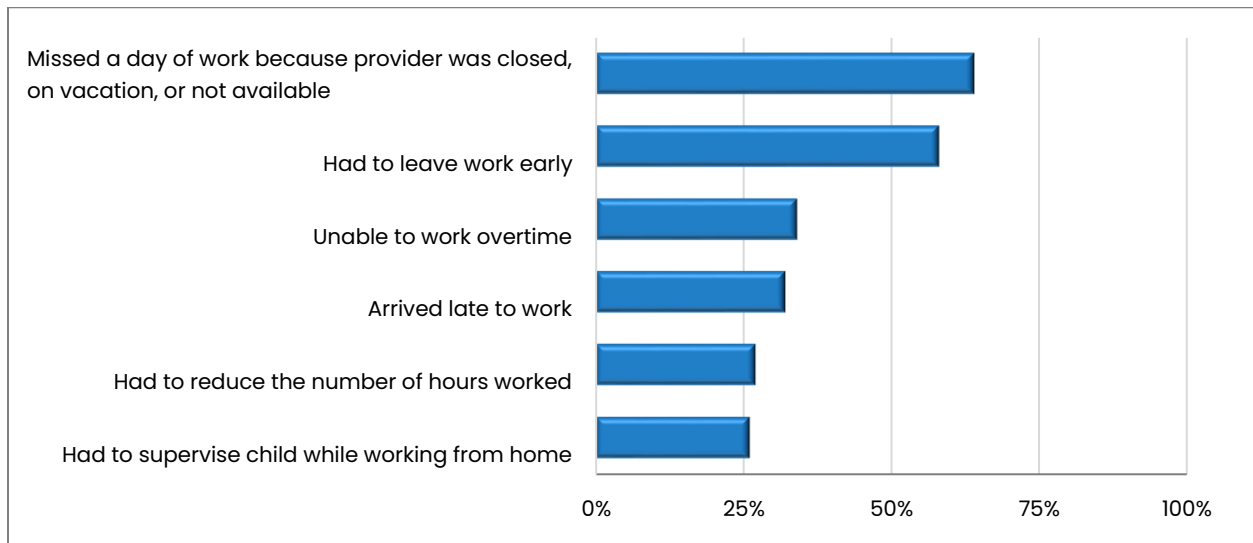


Source: Child Care Market Analysis of Lee County, Iowa. Copyright ©2022, First Children's Finance.

### Parents Indicate Child Care is Affecting their Employment

Over the last 12 months, parents have experienced child care challenges that have in turn affected their employment. The effects experienced most often parents were, missing work because the provider was closed (64%), having to leave work early (58%), and unable to work overtime (34%). The following figure shows the effects experienced by at least 25% of current parents.

Figure 31: Most Common Effects of Child Care Challenges in the Last 12 Months



Source: Child Care Market Analysis of Lee County, Iowa. Copyright ©2022, First Children's Finance.

Separately, 56 parents indicated that they or their spouse or partner has declined employment or withdrawn from the workforce in the last 12 months due to child care. In addition, 56 parents indicated child care challenges are keeping them or their spouse or partner from working (36 of

these parents also answered yes to declining employment or withdrawing from the workforce). And 95 parents indicated child care challenges are limiting their or their spouse's or partner's employment, such as forcing them to work fewer hours or only being able to accept positions that have hours when they can secure child care.

### **Employers Indicate Child Care is Affecting Productivity and Attendance**

Employers in Lee County are seeing the affect child care challenges has on their employees. Through the child care needs survey, 53% of employers indicated their business has experienced challenges related to productivity due to parents' child care challenges (besides COVID), while 47% indicated they had experienced challenges related to employee absenteeism because of employee's child care challenges (besides COVID).

Employer comments indicate productivity was affected when parents had to work from home to be at home with a child that could not attend care. When it comes to attendance, employer multiple comments were related to employees not being able to find child care spaces or child care programs being closed.

### **Employers Willing to Participate in Child Care in Lee County**

Employers that participated in the child care needs survey indicated they are willing to get involved with child care in Lee County through various actions. Five (5) were willing to appoint someone to serve on the Board of Directors of a child care program, while 3 were willing to make financial donations to support the operations of a child care program.

No providers indicated a willingness to either own and operate on-site child care, or to provide space for a different entity to own and operate on-side child care at their facility.

### **Child Care Providers Willing to Expand**

Child care providers that participated in the child care needs survey were asked a series of questions about the current child care environment and their willingness to expand and serve more children. Two (2) licensed centers and 5 homes indicated they are willing to expand to serve more children. Those programs did indicate to expand they would need support in the areas of staffing, appropriate spaces or location, and funding.

## **PUTTING THIS STUDY INTO USE**

Based on First Children's Finance's analysis, it can be concluded that the current child care options in Lee County are not meeting the needs of all parents. The data and analysis show that the families in Lee County have varying needs and preferences, and each community has a different supply and demand for child care.

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.