



FIRST CHILDREN'S FINANCE

**Child Care Market Analysis for
Union County, Iowa**

Prepared by First Children's Finance
December 2020

Child Care Market Analysis for Union County, Iowa

December 2020

Prepared for:

Quad Counties for Kids Early Childhood Iowa
Creston, Iowa

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Introduction

In 2020, First Children's Finance was commissioned by Quad Counties for Kids (QC4K) Early Childhood Iowa to conduct this *Child Care Market Analysis*. This analysis provides relevant child care data, child care market analysis, First Children's Finance's key findings, and recommendations for meeting the child care needs of Union County, Iowa.

The data in this report has been collected from two original surveys developed by First Children's Finance and from 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 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 Heidi@FirstChildrensFinance.org.

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Executive Summary

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.

The US Census Bureau estimates the total population of the Union County and the total children ages 0 to 12 has been increasing. As of 2018, the total population of the county is 12,453 and the total children ages 0 to 12 is 2,290. Taking into consideration the percentage of households that have all parents in the labor force, First Children's Finance estimates 1,504 of those children had all parents working, and 823 of those are from families that desired to use some form of "outside" child care.

In Union County, the average family size is 2.95 people and the median income for families with children under the age of 18 is \$60,787 per year. According to Iowa Workforce Development, as of Quarter 1 of 2020, there were 5,824 people employed by companies in Union County. The average weekly wage among those, was \$754 per week. The industry that employed the most people was manufacturing, followed by Health Care & Social Assistance.

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 the fall of 2020, it was determined that most Union County parents that are likely to use "outside" care want their child in a setting that is regulated by the Iowa Department of Human Services. Parent's top preference for child care setting is a Registered Child Development Home; the next most preferred setting is a Licensed Child Care Center.

Iowa Department of Human Services data shows that as of October 2020 there were 613 spaces in DHS Licensed Child Care Centers and Registered Child Development Homes in Union County. Of those spaces, only 443 are available on a year-round basis, the remaining 170 are school year only spaces. With only 443 spaces but an estimated 823 children likely needing outside care, it is reasonable to conclude there is a shortage of regulated child care spaces within Union County.

A key part of this analysis was a survey to gain input from parents on how child care affects them. Of the parents that participated, 81 reported they currently have children age 12 or younger. Using the most typical responses, a parent that participated would be described as female, married, ages 25-34, and living in the 50801 zip code (Creston). They work full time and are employed in health care & social assistance and have an annual household income of \$50,000-\$74,999. They currently use child care in Creston, Monday through Friday, year-round. They use care 35-40 hours per week for younger children, and 12-16 hours per week for before and after school care. They rate the availability of child care in Union County as 2.16 (out of a possible 5), and the quality as 2.81 (out of a possible 5).

Participants in the Child Care Needs Survey confirmed there is a shortage of child care spaces in Union County. When asked if they had difficulty finding child care, 64% of those with children ages 0 to 5 (not in Kindergarten) and 67% of those with children ages 5 to 12 (school age children) indicated

they had. Obstacles named include lack of openings-especially for infants, the cost or affordability, and lack of regulated care.

Key Findings of This Analysis

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

Growing Population Among Children Ages 0 to 12. As of 2018, there were a total of 2,290 children ages 0 to 12 living in Union County, an increase of 150 since 2010.

Parents are in the Labor Force and Need Child Care. According to the US Census Bureau, as of 2018, 67% of families living in Union County with children ages 0 to 5, and 89% of families with children ages 6 to 17, had all parents in the labor force.

Median Family Income is Higher than the Child Care Assistance Threshold. The median annual income for families in Union County with children under the age of 18 is \$60,787, while according to the 2020 eligibility criteria, the annual household income for a family of 3 must be below \$31,494, and below \$37,990 for a family of 4 to qualify for Iowa's Child Care Assistance program.

Area Child Care Supply is Declining. From 2015 to 2020, Union County lost a total of 20 regulated child care providers and 80 regulated child care spaces.

Shortage of Child Care Spaces. There are 823 children in Union County that likely need child care. With only 443 year-round child care spaces in DHS regulated programs, there is an estimated deficit of 380 spaces.

Parents Have Difficulty Finding Child Care. Sixty-four (64%) of parents with children ages 0 to 5 (not in Kindergarten) and 67% of with children ages 5 to 12 found it somewhat difficult or very difficult to find child care.

Parents Prefer Regulated Child Care Settings. The most preferred child care arrangement by parents in Union County is a Registered Child Development Home, followed by a Licensed Center. Thirty-nine percent (39%) of parents with children age 0 to 5 (not in school) and 30% of parents with children ages 5 to 12 for summer care prefer a registered home, while the top choice for parents with children ages 5 to 12 during the school year is a licensed center at 21%.

Parents Indicate Child Care is Affecting Their Employment. Over the last 12 months, parents in Union County have experienced child care challenges that have caused them to miss a day of work because their current child care provider was closed, on vacation, or not available.

Employers Indicate Child Care is Affecting Productivity and Attendance. Through the child care needs survey, 56% of employers indicated they experienced challenges with productivity due to employee's child care challenges, while 50% indicated they experienced absenteeism due to employee's child care challenges.

First Children's Finance Recommendation

First Children's Finance's research has provided valuable information that can help shape the future of child care in Union County. Based on our analysis, it can be concluded that more quality child care spaces are needed. To meet demand and provide the services desired by parents, First Children's Finance has the following recommendations. Complete details of these recommendations are contained in this report.

Make Use of this *Child Care Market Analysis* for Decision Making. Information in this report can help both existing and future child care programs make decisions related to what ages to provide care for, hours of operation, what factors are important to parents when selecting child care, and what child care settings are most preferred by parents.

Add Spaces within Registered Child Development Homes. According to the Child Care Needs Survey completed by parents, most preferred child care within a Registered Child Development Home. There are two ways to increase the number of spaces available within Registered Child Development Homes, the first is for currently registered providers to increase their capacity and the second is to recruit new providers to become registered.

Add DHS Licensed Center Spaces. Based on the preferences of parents for child care setting and location, along with local population growth, employment centers, and school district boundaries, the child care markets in both Afton and Creston could add more spaces in Licensed Child Care Centers. These new spaces could be a combination of current programs expanding by adding more spaces at their current or a second location, or new child care centers opening.

Consider Options for Additional Year-Round Care. The majority of parents that participated in the child care needs survey indicating they need year-round care. Yet, during the summer months, there are 170 fewer spaces available in Licensed Child Care Centers. Spaces already licensed by existing child care and preschool programs that operate only during the school year, could be possible opportunities to expand year-round capacity.

Encourage Employers to Provide Child Care Information to Employees. To help the workforce be more productive, employers can help by providing information to employees on where to find information about child care, such as Iowa DHS "Child Care Families" Provider Search or information Child Care Resource & Referral. Additionally, employers may consider how they can partner with local child care providers to benefit their employees and support these programs, which are often either nonprofit organizations or small locally-owned (often women owned) businesses.

Market Description

Market Area

Union County is located in South Central Iowa. The largest community and county seat is Creston. Other incorporated communities within the county are Afton, Arispe, Cromwell, Lorimor, Shannon City and Thayer. For this report, data referenced as a particular city includes only the city limits. The surrounding unincorporated areas are included in “balance of county”.

There are two major transportation routes in the county, US 34 and Iowa Highway 25. Both of these routes are ideal for local industries as well as commuters. US 34 runs east-west connecting Union County, to Adams and Clarke Counties, and giving residents access to Interstate-35. Iowa Highway 25 runs north-south, giving easy access to both Adair and Ringgold Counties.

Population and Demographics

According to the US Census Bureau, as of 2018 the total estimated population of Union County was 12,453, which is an increase of 144 since 2000. Census data shows two incorporated communities plus the unincorporated balance of the county experienced a population gain, while the remaining 4 incorporated communities experienced a net population loss. Creston experienced the largest net change, with an increase of 235 residents. The population changes for each community are shown in the following table.

Table 1: Population Change by Community

	2000	2010	2018	Net Change	Percent Change
Afton	917	817	900	-17	-1.85%
Creston	7,597	7,545	7,832	+235	+3.09%
Cromwell	120	107	97	-23	-19.17%
Lorimor	427	360	369	-58	-13.58%
Shannon City	70	71	81	+11	+15.71%
Thayer	66	59	43	-23	-34.85%
Balance of County	3,058	3,223	3,131	+73	+2.39%
Total	12,309	12,182	12,453	+144	+1.17%

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2000, 2010, 2018)

Children Ages 0 to 12

Collectively, from 2000 to 2018 the communities in Union County experienced an increase in children ages 0 to 12. In 2000 there were 1,998 children in these age groups, and in 2018 there were 2,290, an increase of 292. Among the incorporated communities, Creston experienced an increase of 249 children. The unincorporated areas of Union County saw an increase of 131 children. While the other communities show a decrease in the number of children ages 0 to 12, it does not mean that child care is not needed in those communities, and in some cases a lack of child care could be one of the contributing factors to outmigration of residents.

The table on the next page shows a breakdown of children ages 0 to 12 by community.

Table 2: Population Ages 0 to 12 by Community

	2000	2010	2018	Net Change
Afton				
Age 0 to 4	65	56	41	-24
Age 5 to 9	66	66	32	-34
Age 10 to 12	37	47	41	+4
Total Ages 0 to 12	168	169	114	-54
Creston				
Age 0 to 4	464	551	465	+1
Age 5 to 9	433	500	541	+108
Age 10 to 12	304	297	444	+140
Total Ages 0 to 12	1,201	1,348	1,450	+249
Cromwell				
Age 0 to 4	3	7	5	+2
Age 5 to 9	14	9	5	-9
Age 10 to 12	6	3	1	-5
Total Ages 0 to 12	23	19	11	-12
Lorimor				
Age 0 to 4	30	18	22	-8
Age 5 to 9	35	18	31	-4
Age 10 to 12	23	17	18	-5
Total Ages 0 to 12	88	53	71	-17
Shannon City				
Age 0 to 4	4	5	6	+2
Age 5 to 9	4	3	0	-4
Age 10 to 12	1	3	9	+8
Total Ages 0 to 12	9	11	15	+6
Thayer				
Age 0 to 4	4	1	0	-4
Age 5 to 9	3	5	0	-3
Age 10 to 12	4	2	0	-4
Total Ages 0 to 12	11	8	0	-11
Balance of County (Unincorporated)				
Age 0 to 4	155	191	182	+27
Age 5 to 9	204	212	227	+23
Age 10 to 12	139	129	220	+81
Total Ages 0 to 12	498	532	629	+131
Total	1,998	2,140	2,290	+292

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2000, 2010, 2018)

Fertility

The number of births is one important indicator of the possible number of children entering child care years later. As of 2018 there were 2,572 women ages 16 to 50 living in Union County. The US Census Bureau estimates that 225 of them gave birth in the prior 12-month period. Among those, only half (111) were in the labor force. When broken down by community, both percent of women giving birth and in the labor force varies. The largest community, Creston experienced the greatest number of women giving birth with 137, however Afton had the highest percentage with 15%. Although Creston had the most births, it has the lowest percent of women that gave birth and are in the labor force, with only 47%.

Table 3: Fertility by Community, 2018

	Women 16-50	Gave Birth	% Gave Birth	Gave Birth and In Labor Force	% Gave Birth That are in Labor Force
Afton	214	32	15%	29	91%
Creston	1,727	137	8%	65	47%
Cromwell	17	1	6%	1	100%
Lorimor	75	2	3%	2	100%
Shannon City	14	0	0%	0	0%
Thayer	14	0	0%	0	0%
Balance of County	511	53	10%	14	26%
Total/Overall	2,572	225	9%	111	50%

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2018)

Working Families

From 2010 to 2018, Union County has experienced a decrease in the total number of households, family households, and family households with children under 18 present. At the same time, there has been an increase in the average size of both households and family households (average size for family households with children present is not available). The tables on the next page show household types and characteristics for Union County as well as the individual incorporated communities.

As of 2018, there were 5,194 households in Union County, of which 3,164 were family households. The average size of all households was 2.34 persons, while the average family household was slightly larger with 2.95 persons. Over half of all households were family households (61%), yet less than half (43%) of family households have children under the age of 18 present.

The number of families with children and all parents working varies greatly by individual community. According to the US Census bureau, for all of Union County, 67% of families with children ages 0-5 had all parents working, while 89% of families with children ages 6-17 had all parents working. All parents working means if there are two parents living in the home they both work, or if the child lives with a single parent that parent is working.

The median income¹ for all households in the county as of 2018 was \$47,518, while the median income of families was \$66,848, and \$60,787 for families with children under the age of 18. Since 2010, the median income for each type of household increased. An increase in median income can be

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

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.

Table 4: Household Types and Characteristics, Union County

	2010 Total	2018 Total
Total Households	5,326	5,194
Average household size	2.28	2.34
Median household income	\$40,879	\$47,518
Family Households	3,466	3,164
Average family size	2.76	2.95
Median family income	\$50,546	\$66,848
Households w/children ages 0 to 5, and all parents working	89%	67%
Households w/children ages 6 to 17, and all parents working	79%	89%
Family Households w/children under 18	1,431	1,375
<i>Married couples</i>	934	950
<i>Male householder (no wife)</i>	148	113
<i>Female householder (no husband)</i>	349	312
Median income for families w/children under 18	\$45,428	\$60,787
<i>Median family income married couples</i>	---	\$79,202
<i>Median family income male (no wife)</i>	---	\$28,021
<i>Median family income female (no husband)</i>	---	\$25,655

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2010, 2018)

The table on the next page shows the same household types and characteristics for each incorporated community. Not all data was available for all cities. Creston had the most family households with children under 18, followed by Afton. Family household sizes ranged from 2.36 in Thayer to 3.17 in Cromwell. Median income for families with children under 18 was available for only 4 of the communities and varied greatly between those cities. Shannon City was the highest at \$65,625, while Lorimor was the lowest at \$36,094.

Table 5: Household Types and Characteristics by Community, 2018

	Afton	Creston	Cromwell	Lorimor	Shannon City	Thayer
Total Households	383	3,299	43	149	36	19
Average household size	2.28	2.30	2.26	2.48	2.25	2.26
Median household income	\$47,344	\$43,432	\$45,625	\$36,932	\$46,667	---
Family Households	265	1,830	24	104	25	11
Average family size	2.80	2.99	3.17	2.88	2.60	2.36
Median family income	\$61,420	\$61,373	\$71,250	\$39,375	\$50,625	---
Households w/children ages 0 to 5, and all parents working	73.0%	54.9%	44.7%	100.0%	100.0%	95.7%
Households w/children ages 6 to 17, and all parents working	76.3%	65.2%	78.1%	100.0%	100.0%	88.1%
Family HH w/children under 18	103	876	7	35	11	6
<i>Married couples</i>	78	544	7	18	8	0
<i>Male householder</i>	4	71	0	10	0	6
<i>Female householder</i>	21	261	0	12	3	0
Median income families w/children	\$60,536	\$51,270	---	\$36,094	\$65,625	---
<i>Median family married couples</i>	\$66,429	\$77,727	---	\$61,250	---	---
<i>Median family male</i>	---	\$28,144	---	\$29,167	---	---
<i>Median family female</i>	\$25,893	\$25,821	---	---	---	---

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2018)

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 October 2020 the total labor force (residents age 16 or older that could work) living in Union County was 6,010. Of those, 5,800 were employed, while 200 (3.4%) were unemployed. In comparison, in October 2019 the total labor force was 6,410, with 6,260 employed and 160 (2.4%) unemployed.

Place of Work and Time Leaving Home

According to the US Census Bureau the number of adults living in Union County that are in the labor force is declining. As of 2018, there were a total of 5,923 workers age 16 and over living in Union County. Of those, 82.5% worked in Union County, 16.8% worked outside the county, and another 0.7% worked outside the state. The most popular hour to leave home to go to work was 7:00 am to 7:59 am with 28.2%, followed by 6:00 am to 6:59 am with 22.6%.

A comparison of 2010 and 2018 data shows that both where residents work and what time they leave home to go to work has changed. Today, more residents out-commute to other counties or even out of state for work. Additionally, more resident leave home between 12:00 am and 4:59 am than did in 2010, which could be an indication that more residents are working third-shift or overnight, or residents are leaving earlier to commute to first shift jobs outside of the area.

Table 6: Place of Work and Time Leaving Home to Go to Work, Union County

	2010	2018
Total workers 16 years and over	6,196	5,923
Workers who did not work at home	5,927	5,709
12:00 a.m. to 4:59 a.m.	3.8%	6.0%
5:00 a.m. to 5:29 a.m.	4.4%	4.5%
5:30 a.m. to 5:59 a.m.	7.5%	5.5%
6:00 a.m. to 6:29 a.m.	8.3%	7.2%
6:30 a.m. to 6:59 a.m.	18.0%	15.4%
7:00 a.m. to 7:29 a.m.	11.7%	13.6%
7:30 a.m. to 7:59 a.m.	15.5%	14.6%
8:00 a.m. to 8:29 a.m.	5.9%	5.4%
8:30 a.m. to 8:59 a.m.	3.7%	3.8%
9:00 a.m. to 11:59 p.m.	21.2	24.0%
Mean travel time (minutes)	13.7	17.4
<i>Place of Work</i>		
Within county of residence	87.9%	82.5%
Outside county of residence	11.9%	16.8%
Outside Iowa	0.3%	0.7%

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2010, 2018)

Union County Employees and Wages

According to Iowa Workforce Development, as of Quarter 1 of 2020, there were 5,824 people employed by companies located in Union County, down from 6,114 during the same period in 2015. The average weekly wage of those working at these companies was \$754 per week, up from \$663 during the same period in 2015.

Of all the industries based in Union County, the industry that employed the most people was manufacturing (1,370), followed by Health Care & Social Assistance (1,033), and Retail Trade (731). Average weekly wages ranged from a low of \$226 per week for Accommodations & Food Service up to \$1,361 per week for Utilities.

The table on the next page shows a comparison of Quarter 1 2015 and Quarter 1 2020, for employees and Wages in Union County.

Table 7: Union County Employees and Wages

	2015 Quarter 1		2020 Quarter 1	
	Average Employees	Average Wk. Wage	Average Employees	Average Wk. Wage
Accommodations & Food Service	357	\$210	305	\$226
Administrative & Waste Management	326	\$499	292	\$565
Agriculture, Fishing & Hunting	---	---	---	---
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	20	\$113	---	---
Construction	126	\$681	208	\$964
Educational Services	720	\$634	724	\$693
Finance & Insurance	190	\$1,003	158	\$1,119
Health Care & Social Assistance	923	\$639	1,033	\$837
Information	70	\$682	69	\$580
Management of Companies	---	---	---	---
Manufacturing	1,539	\$836	1,370	\$854
Mining, Quarrying, & Oil & Gas	---	---	---	---
Other Services (except Public Admin)	195	\$335	145	\$510
Professional, Scientific, Technical	83	\$611	77	\$701
Public Administration	218	\$756	187	\$935
Real Estate, Rental, Leasing	34	\$579	29	\$758
Retail Trade	751	\$438	733	\$482
Transportation & Warehousing	135	\$760	164	\$758
Utilities	101	\$1,109	96	\$1,361
Wholesale Trade	327	\$953	234	\$1,150
Total	6,114	\$663	5,824	\$754

Note: Data from Iowa Workforce Development (2015, 2020)

Child Care and Preschool Labor Force 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”², “Education and Childcare Administrators, Preschool and Daycare”³, or “Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education”⁴.

² 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.

³ 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.

⁴ 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.

According to the 2018 Iowa Wage Report from Iowa Workforce Development (IWD), for Region 14⁵, the entry wage⁶ for Childcare Workers in the region was \$8.74, while the mean⁷ wage was \$8.75 and experienced wage⁸ was \$8.75. IWD did not disclose how many childcare workers there were within the region but did report there were 8,770 across the state.

There were 30 Education and Childcare Administrators, Preschool and Daycare positions in the region, and 810 across the state. The entry wage in the region for this occupation was \$14.54, the mean wage \$27.78, and experienced wage \$34.41.

There were 160 Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education in the region and 4,770 across the state. The entry wage in the region for this occupation was \$8.43, the mean wage \$10.67, and experienced wage \$11.79.

⁵ Aggregate data for the counties of Calhoun, Hamilton, Humboldt, Pocahontas, Webster, and Wright.

⁶ Entry Wage is the average of the lowest third of reported wages for the occupation.

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

⁸ 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 Services⁹

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 Assistance¹⁰ Provider Agreement and may participate in the voluntary Iowa Quality Rating System (QRS)¹¹.

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

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

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

¹¹ 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.

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 Net¹² 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).

The table on the next page shows a comparison of the requirements for child care providers in Iowa.

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. Due to legislation changes, many of those programs now 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.

Legal Unregulated Care

In Iowa, parents may choose care such as “family, friend, or neighbor care” or having an unrelated caregiver such as a nanny or au pare. This type of care is not regulated and is 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 above. Because these providers are “off the radar” and data is not available, this report does not include unregulated providers.

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

Table 8: 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 ¹³	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 ¹⁴		•	•	•	•	•	•
Iowa criminal records check ⁷		•	•	•	•	•	•
National (FBI) Fingerprint-based records check		•	•	•	•	•	•
Experience required				2 years or 1 year w/child related degree	5 years or 4 year w/child related degree	5 years or 4 year 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		•	•	•	•	•	•
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. Retrieved February 2019 from <https://ccmis.dhs.state.ia.us/providerportal/ChildCareRequirements.aspx>.

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

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

Early Care and Education Supply

The total number of child care providers and child care spaces across Iowa has seen changes over the last few years. According to Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral data, from 2015 to 2020 the total number of child care providers in Iowa declined by 33%, yet the total number of child care spaces increased by 1%.

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 longer exempt from DHS licensing. In some communities, this resulted in a shift, with some spaces previously counted under Department of Education now being counted under Department of Human Services.
- Starting in September 2016, all child care center staff, Registered Child Development Home operators, and Child Care Home operators that accept Child Care Assistance are required to take the 12-hour “Essential Child Care Preservice” training.
- As of July 2017, Child Care Home operators that accept Child Care Assistance are required to complete preservice training, have their home inspected at least once a year, and meet other regulations that have 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, from 2015 to 2020 Union County experienced a loss of 20 child care programs and 80 spaces. The most significant change was among Child Care Homes which lost 75 spaces, followed by Department of Education programs which lost 63 spaces, and Registered Child Development Homes which lost 16 spaces. Collectively, there are 20 fewer providers within these three categories. During the same time period there was an increase of 74 spaces within Child Care Centers, however there was no change in the number of child care centers during that time.

Table 9: Programs and Spaces in Union County Listed with Child Care Resource & Referral

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Net Change
Total Programs	54	45	40	34	36	34	-20
DHS Centers & Preschools	8	9	9	8	8	8	0
Dept. of Ed. Programs	4	2	2	2	2	2	-2
Registered Child Dvmt. Homes	24	25	24	20	20	21	-3
Child Care Homes	18	9	5	4	6	3	-15
Total Spaces	792	778	746	721	719	712	-80
DHS Centers & Preschools	335	433	433	409	409	409	+74
Dept. of Ed. Programs	127	32	32	64	64	64	-63
Registered Child Dvmt. Homes	240	268	256	228	216	224	-16
Child Care Homes	90	45	25	20	30	15	-75

Note: Data from Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral

Looking at the net change in the supply of child care in Union County only tells part of the story. It is possible to see some of the changes in the early care and education industry in Iowa reflected in the changes that occurred within Union County during the same time period. Specifically:

- From 2015 to 2016, there was a loss of 95 Iowa Department of Education (DoE) spaces but an increase of 98 Iowa Department of Human Services spaces. This aligns with the timing of changes in which some DoE spaces were no longer “license exempt” and had to become licensed with DHS.
- From 2015 to 2017, 13 of the 18 Child Care Homes (45 spaces) in Union County were lost. The timing of this aligns with the implementation of new regulations that required these providers to start completing specific trainings as well as having their home inspected annually. It is possible some of these providers did not go out of business, but simply dropped off the radar by not renewing their CCA agreements and are no longer tracked.

Iowa DHS shows that as of October 2020, there were 27 DHS regulated programs with 613 spaces in Union County. These programs offer a variety of services including child care, preschool, Head Start, before and after school care, and programs for school age children. They breakdown as follows:

- Licensed Child Care Centers and Preschools- There are 8 DHS Licensed Child Care Centers, which account for 409 (67%) of the spaces.
- Registered Child Development Homes- There are 19 DHS Registered Child Development Homes which account for the remaining 204 (33%) of spaces.
- Child Care Homes - There are no Child Care Homes.

The following two tables show the child care programs within Union County as of October 2020 that are tracked by Iowa DHS. It is possible there are additional home providers in the area that are not listed because they are not regulated.

Table 10: DHS Licensed Child Care Centers and Preschools in Union County, October 2020

Program Name & Location	Hours	Capacity	Child Care Assistance	QRS Level	Ages	Year-Round
Creston Head Start, Creston	8:00 am-3:15 pm Mon-Fri	60	N/A	4	3-4	No
Discovery Kids Preschool, Creston	8:00 am-3:30 pm, M-Th 8:00-11:00 am, Fri	25	Yes	4	3-5	No
East Union ASPIRE Before & After School Program, Afton	6:30 am-5:30 pm Mon-Fri	50	Yes	4	K-5th	No
East Union Early Childhood Center, Afton	6:30 am-6:00 pm Mon-Fri	78	Yes	4	2 ½-12	Yes
I Think I Can Child Care, Creston	5:30 am-5:45 pm Mon-Fri	111	Yes	3	0-5	Yes
I Think I Can Child Care Before & After School Program, Creston	5:30 am-6:00 pm Mon-Fri	50	Yes	3	5-12	Yes
Joyful Sparks Preschool, Afton	8:00 am-3:30 pm Mon-Wed	15	Yes	4	3-5	No
Trinity Preschool, Creston	8:30 am-3:30 pm Mon-Thur	20	No	4	2 ½-5	No

Note: Data from Iowa Department of Human Services. Retrieved October 2020 from <https://ccmis.dhs.state.ia.us/clientportal/providersearch.aspx>.

Table 11: DHS Registered Child Development Homes in Union County, October 2020

Provider Name & Location	Hours	Registration Level	Capacity	Child Care Assistance	QRS Level
Tammi Ornelis Creston	24 hours Mon-Fri	A	8	Yes	0
Amanda Creighton Creston	6:30 am-4:45 Mon-Fri	B	12	Yes	3
Ashley Graham Creston	5:00 am-5:00 pm Mon-Sun	B	12	Yes	0
Brenda Walker Creston	7:30 am-5:30 pm Mon-Fri	B	12	Yes	4
Kathryn Adams Creston	6:00 am-5:30 pm Mon-Fri	B	12	Yes	4
Linda Birchard Creston	7:30 am-5:00 pm Mon-Sun	B	12	Yes	4
Lori Ann Clayton Creston	5:00 am-5:30 pm Mon-Fri	B	12	Yes	0
Schultz Daycare Creston	6:45 am-4:00 pm Mon-Fri	B	12	Yes	4
Sheena Keeler Creston	5:00 am-5:00 pm Mon-Fri	B	12	Yes	2
Stacy Tucker Lorimor	6:00 am-5:00 pm, Mon-Fri 24 hours, Sat-Sun	B	12	Yes	4
Adamson Child Dvpmnt. Home Creston	6:30 am-5:30 pm Mon-Fri	C	16	Yes	4
Jon Ann Beede Creston	5:45 am-5:15 pm Mon-Fri	C	16	Yes	5
Anita Wardenburg Creston	7:00 am-4:30 pm Mon-Fri	C1	8	Yes	0
Becky Hagen Creston	6:00 am-6:00 pm Mon-Fri	C1	8	Yes	4
Cindy Briner Creston	6:30 am-5:30 pm Mon-Fri	C1	8	Yes	0
Jenny's Tot Stop Creston	5:30 am-11:59 pm, Mon-Sat 6:00 am-11:59 pm, Sun	C1	8	Yes	4
Mary Wichhart Creston	7:15 am-4:45 pm Mon-Sun	C1	8	Yes	4
Mendy Suzette Ritzman Creston	6:00 am-6:15 pm Mon-Sun	C1	8	Yes	4
Tammy Rhine Creston	6:30 am-5:30 pm Mon-Fri	C1	8	Yes	0

Note: Data from Iowa Department of Human Services. Retrieved October 2020 from

<https://ccmis.dhs.state.ia.us/clientportal/providersearch.aspx>.

Price Point

In addition to individual providers changing their rates, changes in 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 to DHS 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, if it does 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 for specific items or require parents to furnish supplies, snacks, or other items.

According to Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral, as of July 2020, the average weekly rates for care in a DHS Licensed Child Care Center in Union County, ranged from a low of \$129 for a school-age child to \$158 for infants and toddlers. Before and After School care averaged \$75.50 a week.

Table 12: Average Weekly Tuition Rates of DHS Licensed Centers in Union County

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Infant	\$144.90	\$149.00	\$153.00	\$153.00	\$158.00	\$158.00
Toddler	\$144.90	\$149.00	\$153.00	\$153.00	\$158.00	\$158.00
Two Year Old	\$124.95	\$120.00	\$133.00	\$129.00	\$137.00	\$137.00
Three Year Old	\$120.80	\$122.00	\$133.00	\$124.00	\$137.00	\$137.00
Four & Five Year Old	\$120.80	\$120.00	\$129.00	\$122.00	\$133.00	\$133.00
School-Age (full time)	\$108.25	\$125.00	\$99.50	\$99.50	\$129.00	\$129.00
Before & After School	\$87.75	\$79.00	\$75.50	\$75.50	\$81.00	\$75.50

Note: Data from Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral. Retrieved August 2020 from <https://iowaccrr.org/>.

As of July 2020, average weekly rates for care in a DHS Registered Child Development Home in Union County ranged from a low of \$127.37 for a two-year-old to \$138.00 for a school-age child. Before and After School care averaged \$75.00 a week.

Table 13: Average Weekly Tuition at Registered Homes in Union County

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Infant	\$115.68	\$114.64	\$118.14	\$124.44	\$127.11	\$133.89
Toddler	\$115.68	\$114.64	\$118.14	\$124.47	\$127.11	\$133.42
Two Year Old	\$114.77	\$114.64	\$118.14	\$123.95	\$125.58	\$127.37
Three Year Old	\$114.77	\$114.64	\$118.79	\$124.74	\$127.34	\$134.21
Four & Five Year Old	\$114.77	\$114.23	\$117.05	\$123.16	\$125.79	\$132.63
School-Age (full time)	\$112.92	\$114.23	\$117.02	\$121.47	\$125.88	\$138.00
Before & After School	\$76.79	\$77.00	\$75.53	\$78.53	\$75.88	\$75.00

Note: Data from Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral. Retrieved August 2020 from <https://iowaccrr.org/>.

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. Average weekly tuition at DHS Licensed Centers varies greatly from county-to-county. As of 2020, Madison County had the highest overall average in the area, with infant and toddler care averaging \$190.67 per week and four-and-five year old care averaging \$150.00 per week. In contrast, Adair County had the lowest overall average in the area, with infant and toddler care averaging \$140.00 per week and ages three and older averaging \$120.00 per week. Clarke County had the highest average for before and after school care in a center at \$105.00 per week, while Taylor County is the lowest at \$32.00 per week.

The average weekly tuition rates for care in both DHS Licensed Child Care Centers and Registered Child Development Homes for Union County and surrounding counties are in the following two tables. The supply and demand and family demographics can also be very different from county to county and can influence local child care supply and operations, therefore some data on neighboring counties is also included.

Table 14: Average Weekly Tuition at DHS Licensed Centers in Surrounding Counties, 2020

	Adair	Adams	Clarke	Decatur	Madison	Ringgold	Taylor	Union
Infant	\$140.00	\$150.00	\$145.00	\$150.00	\$190.67	\$150.00	\$138.00	\$158.00
Toddler	\$140.00	\$150.00	\$145.00	\$150.00	\$190.67	\$150.00	\$138.00	\$158.00
Two Year Old	\$130.00	\$150.00	\$135.00	\$135.00	\$182.67	\$145.50	\$128.00	\$137.00
Three Year Old	\$120.00	\$150.00	\$125.00	\$125.00	\$156.25	\$142.50	\$118.00	\$137.00
Four & Five Year Old	\$120.00	\$150.00	\$120.00	\$125.00	\$150.00	\$141.50	\$118.00	\$133.00
Full time School-Age	\$120.00	\$150.00	\$110.00	\$115.00	\$158.75	\$139.00	\$102.00	\$129.00
Before & After School	\$70.00	\$60.00	\$105.00	\$30.00	\$96.67	\$71.50	\$32.00	\$75.50
Total Centers	5	2	3	2	6	2	2	8
Spaces w/in Centers	212	74	288	144	446	153	200	409
All Parents Working-0 to 5	74%	68%	62%	62%	85%	87%	79%	67%
All Parents Working-6 to 17	78%	76%	59%	80%	82%	83%	82%	89%
Median Income w/Children	\$61,094	\$65,850	\$55,119	\$54,758	\$81,571	\$69,773	\$64,208	\$60,787

Note: Data from Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral (2020) and US Census Bureau (2018)

Average weekly tuition at DHS Registered Child Development Homes does not vary as much from county to county, but there are still variations. As of 2020, Madison County had the highest overall average in the area, with infant care averaging \$150.83 per week and school-age care averaging \$139.77 per week. In contrast, Decatur County had the lowest average in the area, with infant through five-years-old averaging \$120.00 per week and school-age averaging \$111.67 per week. Madison County has the highest average for before and after school care at \$77.92 per week, while Decatur County is the lowest at \$43.33 per week.

Table 15: Average Weekly Tuition at Registered Homes in Surrounding Counties, 2020

	Adair	Adams	Clarke	Decatur	Madison	Ringgold	Taylor	Union
Infant	\$125.00	\$130.00	\$129.55	\$120.00	\$150.83	\$137.50	\$121.25	\$133.89
Toddler	\$125.00	\$130.00	\$125.45	\$120.00	\$148.83	\$137.50	\$121.25	\$133.42
Two Year Old	\$116.67	\$122.50	\$122.27	\$120.00	\$146.83	\$137.50	\$121.25	\$127.37
Three Year Old	\$116.67	\$116.25	\$120.00	\$120.00	\$146.83	\$137.50	\$121.25	\$134.21
Four & Five Year Old	\$116.67	\$116.25	\$119.09	\$120.00	\$144.83	\$137.50	\$121.25	\$132.63
Full time School-Age	\$125.00	\$108.75	\$117.50	\$111.67	\$139.77	\$137.50	\$121.25	\$138.00
Before & After School	\$50.00	\$51.25	\$64.44	\$43.33	\$77.92	\$50.00	\$52.08	\$75.00
Total Reg. Homes	7	5	14	8	15	4	4	21
Spaces w/in Reg. Homes	88	52	168	104	180	36	44	224
Parents Working-0 to 5	74%	68%	62%	62%	85%	87%	79%	67%
Parents Working-6 to 17	78%	76%	59%	80%	82%	83%	82%	89%
Median Income w/Children	\$61,094	\$65,850	\$55,119	\$54,758	\$81,571	\$69,773	\$64,208	\$60,787

Note: Data from Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral (2020) and US Census Bureau (2018)

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 rate to qualify for assistance. According to the federally determined 2020 poverty rate, that would mean a family of three must have an annual household income below \$31,494 and a family of four must have an annual household income below \$37,990 to qualify.

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).

Table 16: Half-Day Maximum CCA Reimbursement Rates

Age Group	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 ¹⁵	\$17.00	\$51.94	\$19.75	\$51.94	\$20.50	\$51.94	\$21.90	\$51.94
Preschool	\$14.75	\$30.43	\$15.50	\$30.43	\$16.40	\$30.43	\$18.69	\$30.43
School Age	\$12.18	\$30.34	\$12.50	\$30.34	\$13.50	\$30.34	\$15.00	\$30.34

Note: Data from Iowa Department of Human Services (2019).

¹⁵ As of July 1, 2020, the age group Infant/Toddler for CCA includes two-year-olds, and Preschool includes children from the age of 3 until they begin Kindergarten.

Child Care Needs Survey

In August 2020, two electronic surveys, developed by First Children’s Finance, were distributed for the purpose of determining how child care affects employers and parents in Union County. To assure there were no biases and to maintain confidentiality, surveys were distributed electronically and then collected and analyzed by First Children’s Finance.

Employer Survey

A total of 17 employer surveys representing 16 different companies were received. Employers that responded are located in the towns of Afton, Creston, and Osceola. The companies represented in the survey are from the following industries:

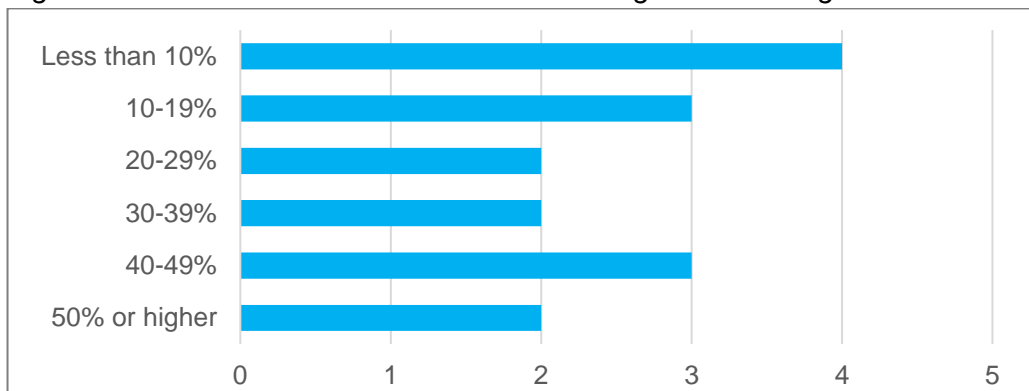
Table 17: Industry of Employers

	Total Employers
Finance & Insurance	5
Education	2
Government	2
Health Care & Social Assistance	2
Manufacturing	2
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	1
Retail	1
All Other	1

Source: “Union County Child Care Needs Survey” by First Children’s Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

Collectively, those that have a physical location in Union County, employ a total of 1,457. The majority (9) indicated their labor force is primarily female, while 2 indicated it is primarily male, and 3 indicated it is an even 50/50 split. Four (4) indicated that less than 10% of their employees have children age 12 or younger, while 3 indicated 10-19%, 3 others indicated 40-49%, 2 indicated 20-29%, 2 indicated 30-39%, and 2 indicated 50% or higher.

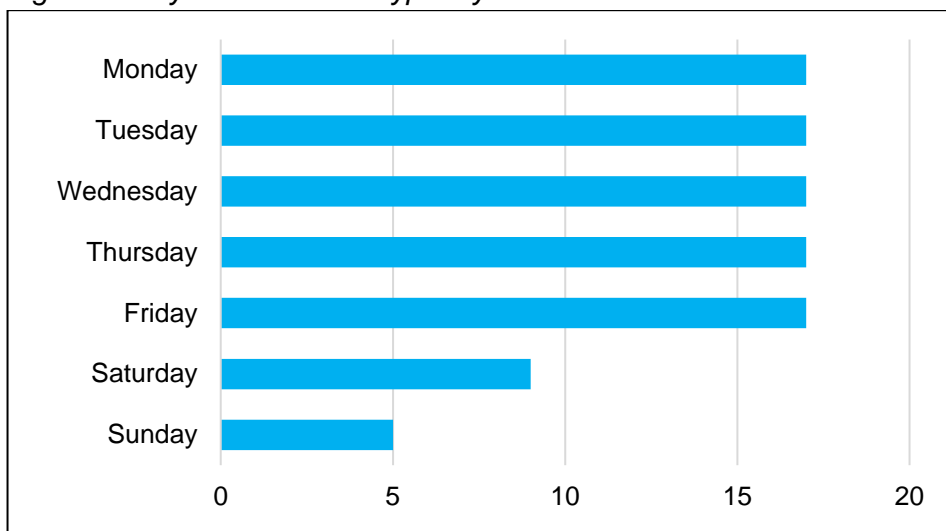
Figure 1: Estimated Labor Force with Children Age 12 or Younger



Source: “Union County Child Care Needs Survey” by First Children’s Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

When asked which days of the week their labor force typically works, all employers indicated they operate Monday through Friday, 9 operate on Saturday, and 5 on Sunday. Five (5) operate 24-hours a day, 7 days per week. The remaining 11 have varying hours between 6:00 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.

Figure 2: Days Labor Force Typically Works



Source: "Union County Child Care Needs Survey" by First Children's Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

Eight (8) of the employers indicated that there are some times their schedules fluctuate in hours or days. Those that said they have changes or fluctuations gave reasons such as higher workload, special events, and meetings.

Comments received about schedule fluctuations were:

- *Overtime.*
- *Daily and weekly overtime.*
- *Occasional overtime when work load is busy, including some Saturday's.*
- *Overtime and/or Saturdays are needed during busy production schedules.*
- *Some departments work 7-4, some 24/7, some 8 -5.*
- *Special events will impact the hours along with weather and meetings.*
- *Occasional needs for staff to come in early, work late, or work on weekends.*

Out of the 16 employers represented, 56% indicated they had challenges related to productivity due to employee's child care challenges, while another 19% were unsure. Comments received about productivity were:

- *When school age children have to quarantine due to COVID19 exposure our employees are out of work to stay home with their child.*
- *Operating 3 shifts, if someone is transferred to an off shift, occasionally they have to quit because of childcare issues.*
- *The only issue we've had is when an employee's child is sick at day care the employee has to leave work to watch their child.*
- *Not that I know of, but employees may have undesirable child care out of necessity.*
- *We have lost employees so they can stay home with children.*
- *Parents sometimes bring children to work which affects productivity. Sometimes someone has to leave work to go pick children up from school or sitter.*
- *When school cancels or care taker is sick.*
- *Staff unable to work full or partial days because of child care needs are typical. Some difficulty recruiting new staff to the area because of a lack of child care.*

- *The recent pandemic has posed more challenges. I also know that when new employees are hired, they have difficulty finding child care.*
- *Challenges with Child Care availability at early start times (6AM) and if school starts late/out early/snow/etc. no child care available for drop ins.*

When asked about absenteeism due to employee's child care challenges, 50% indicated they had experienced challenges, while another 12% were unsure. Comments received about absenteeism were:

- *When school age children have to quarantine due to COVID19 exposure our employees are out of work to stay home with their child*
- *Through COVID, we have seen an increase in absenteeism. Employees were eligible for FMLA paid leave.*
- *The only issue we've had is when an employee's child is sick at day care the employee has to leave work to watch their child.*
- *Parents have to stay home to care for children when they cannot attend school or sitter*
- *Same as above*
- *Absenteeism for child care needs is common.*
- *If child is ill, parent has to stay home to care for them, so cannot work. If school is off, parent needs to stay home to care for child. If school is let out early or start late, delays them working.*

In a separate question, 38% indicated they had experienced difficulty hiring employees due to child care options or challenges, while another 6% were unsure. Summary of comments about challenges related to hiring:

- *Applicants have been unable to find reliable and consistent childcare.*
- *Hard to recruit with a lack of quality child care and preschool options.*
- *Unavailable care for shift differences. Unable to get consistent care, so cannot take position.*
- *No daycare in Afton, we have the early childhood center, but not daycare for infant.*

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 challenge was having to leave work early, followed by missing a day of work, and arriving late to work.

Table 18: Affects of Child Care Challenges on Employees

	Percent of Employers
Had to leave work early	88%
Missed a day of work because their provider was closed, on vacation, or not available	81%
Arrived late to work	81%
Unable to work overtime	44%
Unable to accept a different work schedule or shift	38%
Had to bring their child to work with them	38%
Missed a day of work because their provider did not have room or space for a child	31%
Unable to travel for work	31%
Have had to reduce the number of hours worked	31%
Had to leave their child home alone to go to work	25%
Quit a job	25%
Lower productivity	19%
Received disciplinary action (not including firing)	13%
Had to change jobs to one that works with their child care arrangement	13%
Did not accept a desired job offer	13%
Took a job that does not fit their skills	6%
Got fired	0%
Our employees experienced no issues related to work and child care	18%

Source: "Union County Child Care Needs Survey" by First Children's Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

Employers were asked if their company currently offered any child care related benefits or supported child care programs (they were asked to select all that applied). The most common child care related benefit offered is a dependent care flex spending accounts, followed by flexible schedules or work-from-home options when a family's regular child care arrangement is not available. None of the responding employers indicated "none of the above", showing that all employers offer some child care related benefit to their employees.

Table 19: Child Care Related Benefits Currently Offered

	Percent of Employers
Dependent Care Flex Spending Accounts	75%
Flexible schedule if regular care is not available	69%
Work from home option if regular care is not available	38%
Child care information included in orientation	6%
Financial assistance to help employees pay for child care	0%
Child care information included in employee handbook	0%
None of the above	0%

Source: "Union County Child Care Needs Survey" by First Children's Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

Although all employers indicate they provide some benefits, they were still asked if there were reasons why their company does not offer some of these benefits listed above. Comments received were:

- *Large corporate chain.*

- *Work from home not an option.*
- *No demand or problems from employees, and cost. Employees find a way to obtain child care, although some options may not be ideal.*
- *Cost*
- *Fairness to other employees.*
- *Expensive*
- *Finances*
- *Funding, we have had some work from home (with COVID)- but disruptions occur if very young child.*

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

- *We are flexible and accommodating to employees needs with scheduling.*
- *They bring the children with them.*
- *Provide scheduling flexibility as available.*
- *We allow "Ill Child Care" if child is not contagious, if a room is available on our inpatient floor and the child is old enough to stay in the room by themself.*

Employers were asked “If a new community-based child care solutions were explored, which of the following would your business consider?” and asked to select all that apply. Half of employers indicated their business might be willing to make a donation or financial contribution for the construction of a new child care center, or for the general operations of a child care center.

Table 20: Solutions Employers are Willing to Consider

	Percent of Employers
Donation or financial contribution for general operating of a child care center	50%
Donation or a financial contribution for the construction of a new child care center	50%
Donation or financial contribution for child care scholarships for your employees	30%
Donation or financial contribution for child care scholarships for all children	0%
Other (please specify)	40%

Source: “Union County Child Care Needs Survey” by First Children’s Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

Comments shared by those selecting “other” were:

- *Volunteer services*
- *Consider sitting on a Board (if formed) and/or assist with operations if needed.*
- *I am unsure of the college's ability to contribute financially to this endeavor.*
- *Space and support. As public entity we cannot make donations.*

Employers were asked to provide thoughts about their employees’ needs related to child care, the supply of child care in Union County, and how child care affects their company and/or employees. A sampling of comments were:

- *Flexible schedules, convenient options for drop-off & pickup, slightly before and after work hours.*
- *Quality of care is not considered good. Most staff look for an in-home provider, but the positions are limited.*

- *A majority of our employees prefer private (in-home) child care options.*
- *Highly needed!*
- *We need daycare in Afton.*

The final question asked employers to provide any additional thoughts about the supply of child care in Union County. A sampling of comments were:

- *Our understanding is that more providers are needed.*
- *Demand is much greater in Union County than there is supply. This is especially true for non-school aged children. Infant and toddler care is highly needed in Union County!*
- *I am concerned about the cost and quality of childcare in the County.*
- *Supply is the biggest concern of our staff. If they do get an in-home provider, they often run into issues with the provider not being open and/or the provider stops providing care.*
- *Need to provide a solution before we die on the vine.*
- *We, as a community, HIGHLY need more consistent, clean, coordinated, constructive activities/learning and healthy child care to attain the best talent and staff for ... all of Creston businesses. We need to take care of our children! It takes a village!*

Parent Survey

A total of 135 individuals answered at least one question of the child care needs survey. Of those, 81 have children ages 12 or younger and completed questions that provide information about both their current and future child care needs. From this group, responses that were received for each question are included in the aggregate data, even if an individual did not complete all survey questions.

Most respondents are from Creston (58). The next largest group is from Afton (9), followed by Cromwell (4). A total of 5 respondents that live outside of Union County participated. All of the out of county parents indicated that they currently use child care in Union County and prefer to use child care in Union County, therefore their responses were included within the aggregate.

Table 21: Respondents Place of Residence

	Total
Union County Residents	76
Afton area (50830 zip code)	9
Arispe area (50831 zip code)	0
Creston area (50801 zip code)	58
Cromwell area (50842 zip code)	4
Lorimor area (50149 zip code)	2
Shannon City area (50861 zip code)	1
Thayer area (50254 zip code)	2
Residents from Other Counties	5
Lenox	1
Lorimor	1
Orient	2
Villisca	1

Source: "Union County Child Care Needs Survey" by First Children's Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

Using the most typical responses, a survey respondent with children age 12 or younger would be described as female (93%), married (78%), ages 25-34 (59%), and living in the 50801 zip code (72%). They work full time (89%) and are employed in health care & social assistance (42%), and have an annual household income of \$50,000-\$74,999 (32%).

They currently use child care in Creston (81%), Monday through Friday, year-round. They use child care 35-40 hours per week for younger children, and 12-16 hours per week for before and after school care. They rate the availability of child care in Union County as 2.16 (out of a possible 5), and the quality as 2.81 (out of a possible 5).

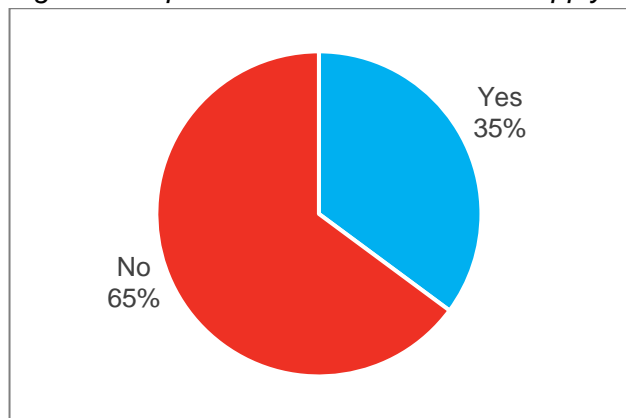
A total of 26 respondents indicated that the availability of child care in Union County has impacted their decision to have or adopt children, or caused them to limit the size of their family. Those sharing comments noted reasons related to either the availability of child care spaces or the cost of child care.

Comments received about child care impacting having or adopting children were:

- *Finances too!*
- *Finding someone reliable and trustworthy is difficult.*
- *I take my children to Orient because it is cheaper (including gas mileage).*

Overall, 35% of respondents indicated they plan to have or adopt more children in the next 5 years. Of those, 13 also indicated that the availability of child care in Union County has impacted their decision to have or adopt children, or caused them to limit the size of their family

Figure 3: Impact of Current Child Care Supply on Having or Adopting Children



Source: "Union County Child Care Needs Survey" by First Children's Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

Overall 11 (14%) respondents indicated that the availability of child care has impacted their decision of where to live. Comments received about the availability of child care impacting parent's decision of where to live were:

- *Yes, lack of acceptable options in Creston, so moving to Afton in the next year.*
- *I need to have convenient access to childcare in order to work. Union county is known as a child care desert, and it makes living anywhere but Creston a hassle.*
- *Live by grandparents for help.*
- *Having a daycare provider nearby allows me to live where we do.*

- Or at least to stay/open enrollment in EU. Early Childhood program influenced our decision. The boys could be in school and the before /after school was amazing so we can work our full time job.

The majority of respondents are married or living with a partner, making them a “family” household, according to US Census Bureau definition.

Table 22: Marital Status

Married	63
Living with a partner	6
Divorced	5
Widowed	0
Separated	2
Never been married	5

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Respondents were asked to indicate how many children were living in their household among the following age groups: 0 to 11 months, 12 to 36 months, 3- to 5-year-old (not started Kindergarten), 5- (started Kindergarten) to 9-year-old, and 10- to 12-year-old. The “Households” column of the table below shows how many parents indicated they have at least one child in each age category, while the “Children” column reflects how many total children are represented in the survey. The closer the together these two numbers are, the more households there are with only one child within that age category. For example, 20 households and 22 infants (0 to 11 months old) shows that at least one household has more than one infant. Because parents may have children in more than one age group, the households column may be duplicative, however the children column is not. A total of 165 children are represented in the survey.

Table 23: Total Children Represented

	<i>Households</i>	<i>Children</i>
0 to 11 months	20	22
12 to 35 months	31	33
3 to 5 Yr Old ¹⁶	31	32
5 to 9 Yr Old ¹⁷	42	60
10 to 12 Yr Old	14	18
	N/A	165

Source: “Union County Child Care Needs Survey” by First Children’s Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

Most respondents work full-time (89%), while 11% work part-time. Respondents that indicated they are married or living with a partner were also asked the employment status of their spouse or partner. Results were similar, with 90% working full-time, followed by as-needed or on call (4%), part-time (3%), and don’t work (3%). The following table shows employment status of the respondents and their spouses or partners.

¹⁶ Includes children age 5 that have not started Kindergarten.

¹⁷ Includes children age 5 that have started Kindergarten.

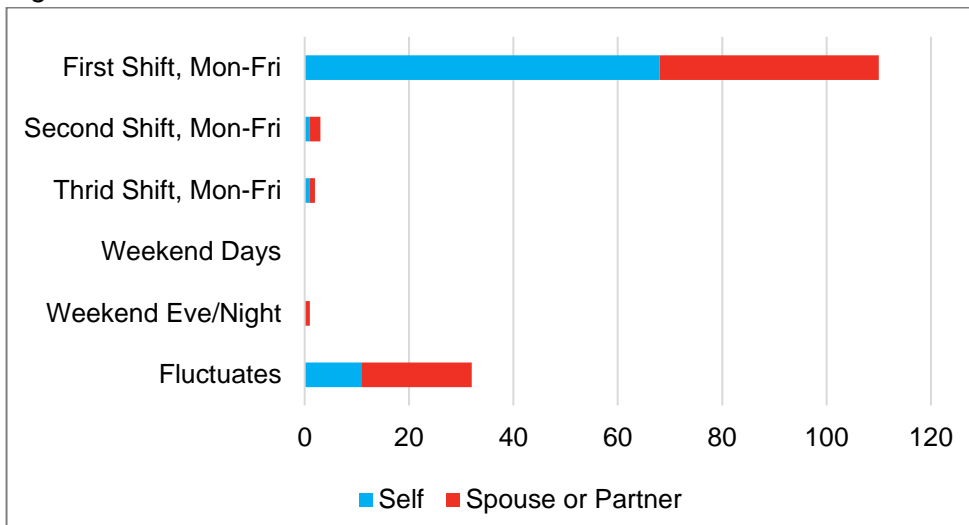
Table 24: Employment Status

	Self	Spouse or Partner
Full-Time	72	62
Part-Time	9	2
As-needed or on call	0	3
Don't work	0	2

Source: "Union County Child Care Needs Survey" by First Children's Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

The majority of respondents indicated they and their spouse or partner work first-shift, Monday through Friday. The next common work schedule is those that fluctuate, all shifts and all days. A few other respondents indicated that they or their spouse or partner work second-shift, third-shift, or weekend evenings or nights. No respondents indicated they work primarily weekend days.

Figure 4: Parent Work Schedules



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A total of 13 indicated they or their spouse or partner is attending school, with 7 saying they attend full-time and 6 saying they attend part-time. The majority (10) take their courses online or as self-study with no set schedule, while 3 take classes during the day, and 1 takes classes during the evenings.

Health care & social assistance is the largest overall industry of employment among respondents with 34 indicating that is the nature of their positions, followed by educational services (15), and manufacturing (5). Among their spouses or partners, the largest overall industry of employment is agriculture, fishing, and hunting (14), followed by manufacturing (9), and then health care & social assistance (8).

Table 25: Industry of Employment of Current Parents

	Self	Spouse or Partner
Accommodations & Food Service	2	2
Administrative & Waste Management	2	0
Agriculture, Fishing, Hunting	1	14
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	0	2
Construction	1	6
Educational Services	15	4
Finance & Insurance	5	0
Health Care & Social Assistance	34	8
Information	0	1
Management of Companies	1	1
Manufacturing	5	9
Mining, Quarrying, & Oil & Gas	0	0
Professional, Scientific & Technical	3	4
Public Administration	3	3
Real Estate, Rental, Leasing	1	1
Retail Trade	1	2
Transportation & Warehousing	1	2
Utilities	1	5
Wholesale Trade	0	0
Other Services	5	3

Source: "Union County Child Care Needs Survey" by First Children's Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

The most common child care benefits available to respondents though their employer was dependent care flex spending accounts, followed by flexible schedule if regular care is not available. Nearly ¾ of the respondents indicated their spouse's or partner's employer does not offer any of the benefits listed or they were unsure what the employer offered.

Table 26: Child Care Related Benefits

	Own Employer	Spouse's or Partner's Employer
Dependent Care Flex Spending Accounts	44%	19%
Financial assistance to help employees pay for child care	2%	0%
Flexible schedule if regular care is not available	21%	6%
Work from home options if regular care is not available	11%	5%
Child care information included in employee orientation	2%	0%
Child care information included in employee handbook	1%	2%
Unsure if employer offers any of these	15%	22%
Employer does not offer any of these	32%	52%

Source: "Union County Child Care Needs Survey" by First Children's Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

Respondents were asked if child care challenges keeping them or their spouse or partner from working. Overall, 17 (21%) indicated that "yes" it has affected them, their spouse or partner, or even both. Comments received from those indicating yes, were:

- *No one available in evenings.*

- *Affects opportunities for secondary income when co-parent already works many evenings, often away.*
- *If we don't have childcare one of us will have to not work as we have no family in the area to care for our children.*
- *Dependable childcare, scheduling conflicts, frequent need for a 2nd option, affordability.*
- *If child is ill or no available backup provider available when regular child care is out, I must stay home to care for my child.*
- *At times this has become an issue due to opposite shifts and out of town travel for meetings.*
- *Not currently but it will by winter.*
- *Must leave with every illness or injury.*
- *I've lost hours due to not having more daycare providers offer 2nd and 3rd shift daycare services.*
- *I want to get a full time job and we do not have affordable childcare options in our county.*
- *Hard to find care for flex shifts.*

Separately, respondents were asked if child care challenges are limiting their or their spouse's or partner's employment. A total of 19 (23%) indicated "yes" it has limited them, their spouse or partner, or even both. Comments from those indicating yes, were:

- *Can only work certain times during the day.*
- *Hard for him to work 2nd job when needed because no one to care for kids.*
- *Currently having to take more time off of work due to family illness and inability to find quality certified childcare.*
- *Having to leave work early to pick him up.*
- *I require employment that can be flexible and offer time off benefits to accommodate for doctor appoints and various events.*
- *I can only look at jobs that line up with childcare hours and can't look at taking overtime pretty much ever.*
- *I work night shift due to the difficulties of finding reliable child care in this area.*
- *I've lost hours due to not having more daycare providers offer 2nd and 3rd shift daycare services.*
- *It costs almost the same amount for the child care after deductions so it is pointless to have child care. We work separate schedules and less hours which allows us to care for our own children.*
- *He has to change his office hours to accommodate childcare sharing.*

Child care challenges have affected respondent's jobs or their spouse or partner's job in the last 12 months. A list of possible affects were presented and respondents were instructed to select all that apply. The most common effects were missing a day of work because the provider was closed, on vacation, or not available. Only 22% of respondents indicated they experienced no issues related to work as a result of child care.

Table 27: Effects of Child Care Challenges on Job

Missed a day of work because provider was closed, on vacation, or not available	52%
Had to leave work early	51%
Unable to work overtime	27%
Arrived late to work	26%
Unable to accept a different work schedule or shift	22%
Had to reduce the number of hours worked	19%
Had to take child to work with me/them	14%
Did not accept a desired job offer	12%
Missed a day of work because the provider did not have room or space for child	10%
Unable to travel for work	10%
Lower productivity	9%
Had to leave child home alone to go to work	6%
Other (see comments below)	5%
Had to change jobs to one that works with child care	2%
Took a job that does not fit my/their skills	2%
Received disciplinary action (not including firing)	1%
Quit a job	0%
Got fired	0%
I experienced no problems	22%

Source: "Union County Child Care Needs Survey" by First Children's Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

Comments received about child care challenges affecting respondent jobs were:

- *Rely on others to pick child up from daycare.*
- *Due to COVID exposure.*
- *Had to call out of work.*
- *COVID shut down center.*

Twenty-eight percent (28%) indicated that there are changes that could be made to their current child care arrangements that would allow them to perform better at work. Frequently named changes were longer hours, transportation to and from school/preschool; and more space within regulated programs.

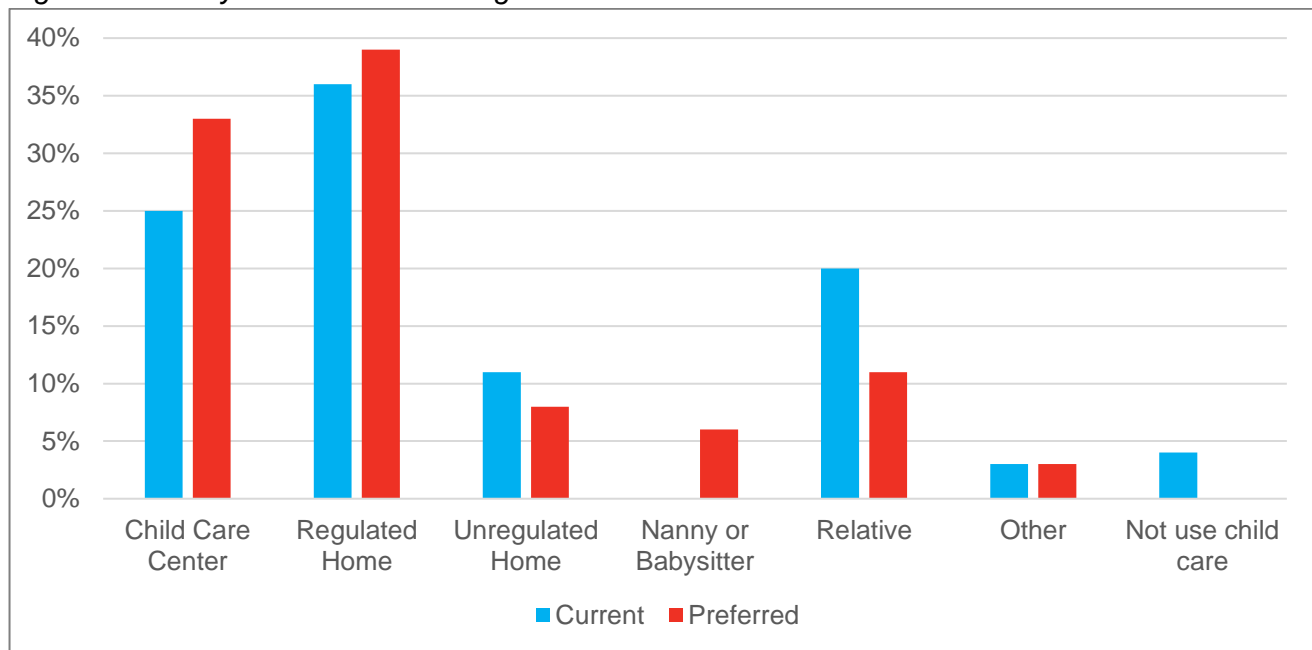
Comments received about how changes to child care would improve work performance were:

- *Longer hours of childcare so I could work an 8hr work day.*
- *If preschool went all day.*
- *They refuse to take care of issues independently and call me to pick up my kids frequently.*
- *Open later than 5:45 pm.*
- *More affordable care so that I don't have to live paycheck to paycheck.*
- *More dependable schedule.*
- *5 days a week instead of 4.*
- *It would be nice if there were higher quality options in Creston where I felt comfortable leaving my child at. Now I drive 20+ miles a day to take and pick up child from school/BASP.*
- *Lower cost, less children at daycare.*
- *Extended hours. Day care closes at 4, I work till 6:30 pm. No daycares open late enough.*

- Need a provider open late hours.
- If it was in Creston (and specifically for teachers/coaches/students).
- An affordable child care provider.
- Open earlier.

Among respondents that have children ages 0 to 5 (not yet in Kindergarten), the most common setting currently being used is a regulated child care home (36%). The second most common is a child care center (25%), followed by a relative (20%). More respondents would prefer a regulated child care home or child care center than currently are. If all choices were available, 39% of parents with children ages 0 to 5 would prefer a regulated child care home, followed by a child care center with 31%.

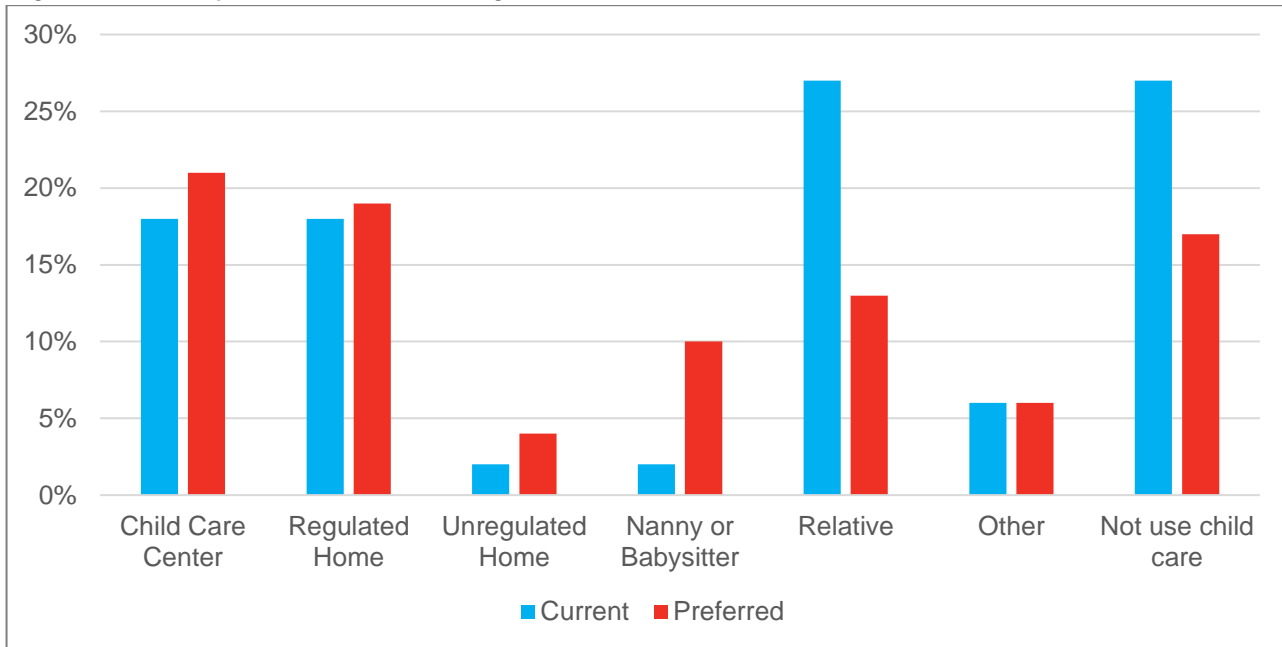
Figure 5: Primary Care for Children Ages 0 to 5



Source: “Union County Child Care Needs Survey” by First Children’s Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

Among respondents that have children ages 5 to 12 (school age) that use some form of care, the most common setting during the school year is a relative (27%), followed by a child care center (18%) and a regulated home (18%). If all choices were available, 21% prefer a child care center, followed by a regulated home with 19%. Also noteworthy, is the number of respondents that indicate they currently do not use care (27%) vs. how many would prefer to not use care (17%). This may be an indication that some respondents currently not using care would prefer to be using one of the child care options listed.

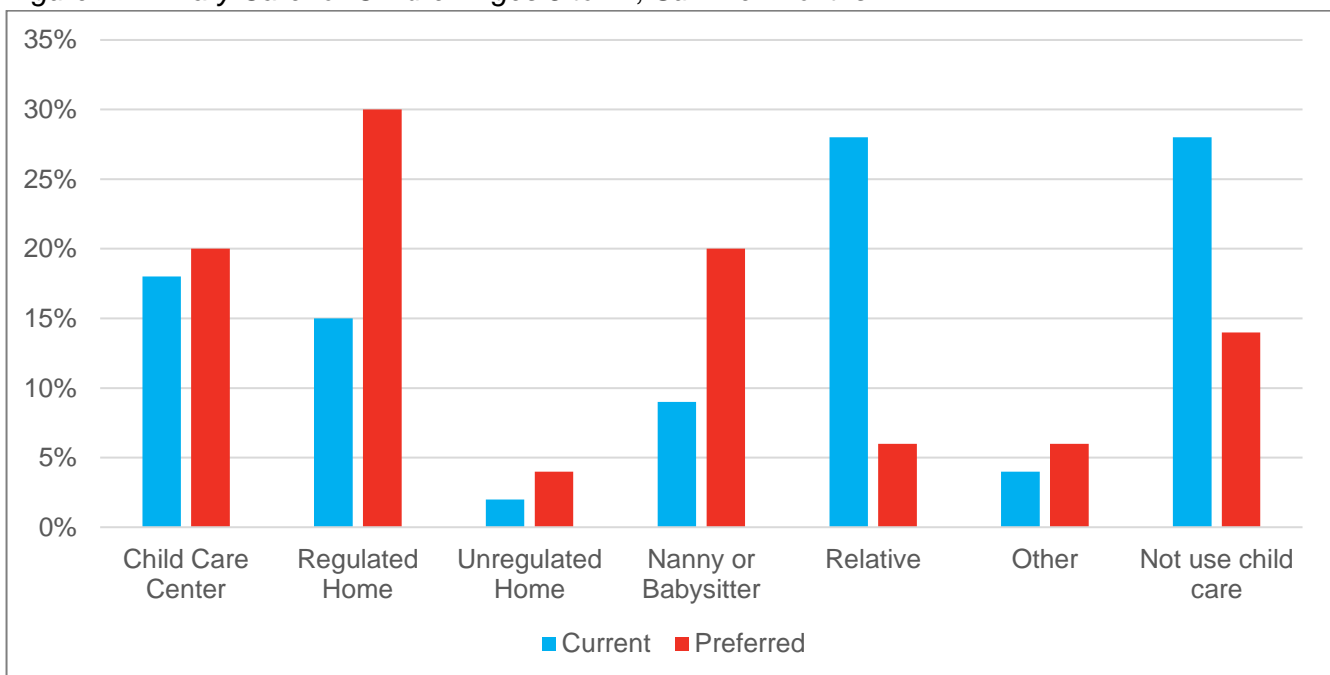
Figure 6: Primary Care for Children Ages 5 to 12, School Year Months



Source: "Union County Child Care Needs Survey" by First Children's Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

During the summer months, the most common setting is a relative (28%), followed by a child care center (18%) and a regulated home (15%). If all choices were available, 30% of respondents would prefer a regulated home, followed by licensed center or nanny/babysitter with 19% each. The largest difference is the number of respondents currently using a relative that would prefer not to. Currently 28% are using a relative, but only 6% indicated this would be their preference if they were choosing today.

Figure 7: Primary Care for Children Ages 5 to 12, Summer Months



Source: "Union County Child Care Needs Survey" by First Children's Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

Only 56% of respondents indicated their children are currently in their preferred type of child care. Respondents were given a list of common reasons and were asked to select the primary reason their children are not currently in their preferred type of care. The most common reason given was not able to afford, followed by the provider is not accepting enrollments.

Table 28: Reason Children are Not in Preferred Type of Care

	Total
Not able to afford	15%
Not accepting enrollments	9%
Prefer I or my spouse or partner could stay home, but need to work	7%
Prefer I or my spouse or partner could adjust schedule so care not needed	5%
Other (comments below)	5%
Not conveniently located	3%
Not open for extended or nontraditional hours	1%
Location too far away	0%
My children are not the right age for preferred arrangement	0%
Children are in my preferred type of care	56%

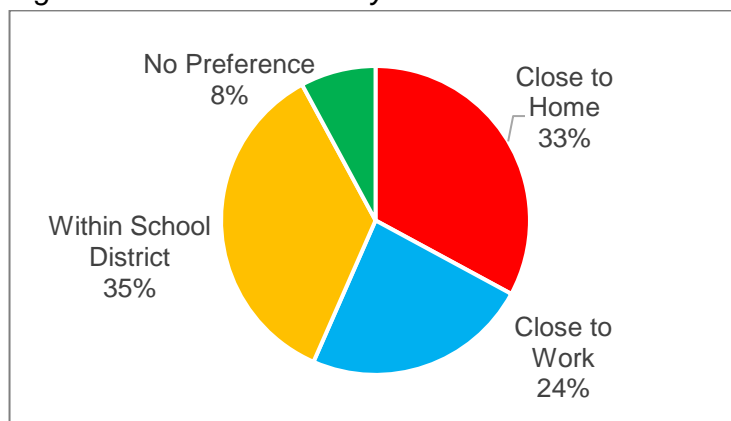
Source: “Union County Child Care Needs Survey” by First Children’s Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

Reasons given by those that selected “Other” were:

- *Son is special needs we have always stayed home with him when not in school.*
- *I disliked the care center options. DHS licensed care center was not high quality, not enough care providers appropriate for licensing ratios and not enough supervision and structure.*
- *We do love our in-home, but perfect scenario would be a center with childcare groups that transitions into preschool offerings & kids stay at that location for daycare after preschool is completed. With the current set up in Creston, I don’t plan to utilize preschool (until age 4) because the timing is right in the middle of the work day and it’s almost impossible for me to run kids not once, but twice per day due to the nature of my hob. My husband works overnights so would be unable to make those pick-up’s/drop-off’s too.*
- *Poor experiences with the existing child care center, very unprofessional.*

Respondents were asked about their preferences of proximity of child care if they were selecting care today. The most popular answer was within the school district child attends or will attend (35%), followed by close to home (33%), and close to work (24%). Only 8% said they had no preference.

Figure 8: Preferred Proximity of Child Care



Source: “Union County Child Care Needs Survey” by First Children’s Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

Respondents were also asked which town they would prefer for the location of their child care. More parents would prefer both Afton and Creston, then what are currently using care within those communities. Currently 81% of respondents are using care in Creston, but 83% would prefer to. The difference between current and preferred is the greatest in Afton. Currently 9% are using care in Afton, but 16% would prefer to.

Table 29: Location of Child Care

	Current	Preferred
Afton	9%	16%
Arispe	0%	0%
Creston	81%	83%
Cromwell	1%	0%
Lorimor	3%	1%
Shannon city	0%	0%
Thayer	1%	0%
Other	5%	0%

Source: “Union County Child Care Needs Survey” by First Children’s Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

The average amount of child care paid per week varies by age group. Collectively, the parents participating in the child care needs survey pay \$121.44 per week on average for infant care, \$126.61 for toddler care, and \$110.48 preschool age care (3 to 5, but not yet in Kindergarten). Parents indicate they pay an average of \$96.94 per week for ages 5 to 9 and \$129.33 for ages 10 to 12 for summer care. Tuition paid for before and after school care for children ages 5 to 9 averaged \$65.55 per week, while before and after care for children ages 10 to 12 averaged \$35.50 per week.

Table 30: Average Weekly Tuition paid by Parents

Age	Weekly Average
Infant- 0 to 11 months	\$121.44
Toddler- 12 to 35 months	\$126.61
Preschool- 3 to 5 years	\$110.48
5-9 years, Summer Care	\$96.94
10-12 years, Summer Care	\$129.33
5-9 years, Before/After School	\$65.55
10-12 years, Before/After School	\$35.50

Source: “Union County Child Care Needs Survey” by First Children’s Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

Respondents were asked several questions about their average number of hours of child care used per week, preferred child care schedule, and current and preferred drop-off and pick-up times. On average, children ages 0 to 5 (not in Kindergarten) are in care between 35 and 39 hours per week. School age children are in care on average 12 to 16 hours per week during the school year, and then 32 to 34 hours per week during the summer months.

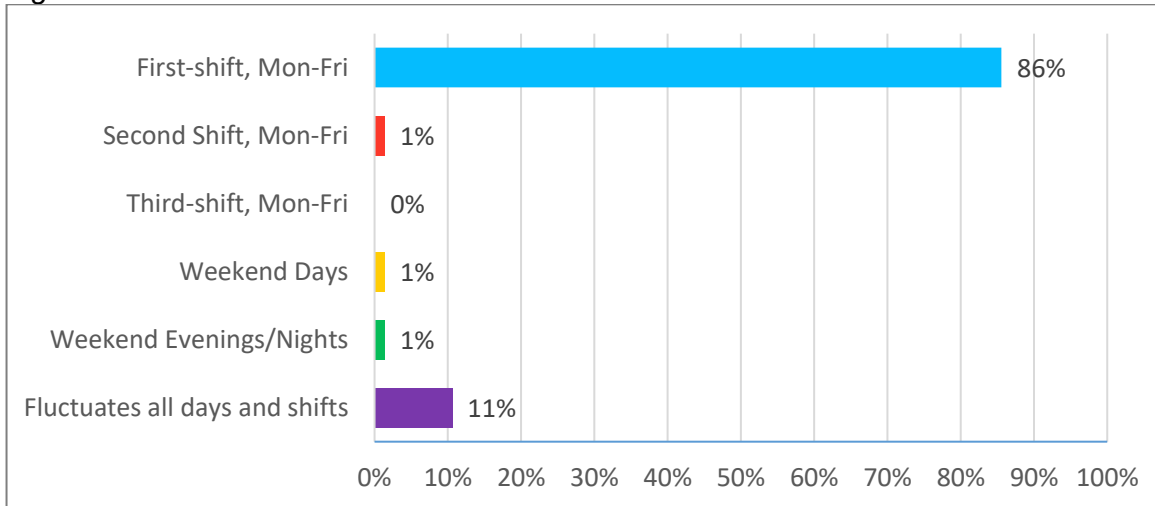
Table 31: Average Hours per Week Child Care Used

Age	Average Hours
0 to 11 months	39
12 to 35 months	36
3 to 5 years	35
5-9 years, Summer Care	34
10-12 years, Summer Care	32
5-9 years, Before/After School	12
10-12 years, Before/After School	16

Source: "Union County Child Care Needs Survey" by First Children's Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

The overwhelming majority (86%) of respondents indicated they need child care first-shift (days), Monday through Friday. The next most preferred schedule is fluctuating all days and shifts (11%). Only 1% indicated they prefer to use child care during second shift or weekends. No respondents indicated they would prefer to use child care during third shift.

Figure 9: Preferred Child Care Schedule

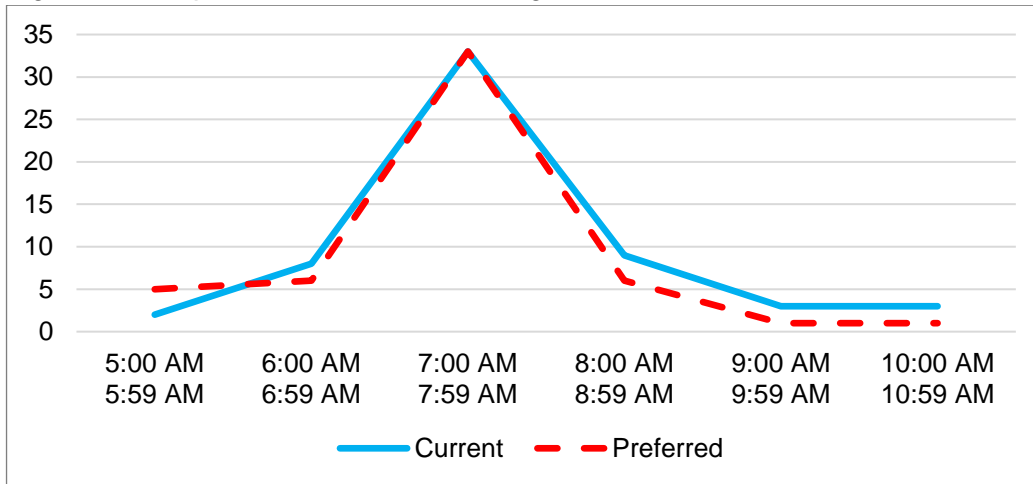


Source: "Union County Child Care Needs Survey" by First Children's Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

Currently, the most popular hour to drop-off children ages 0 to 5 (not in Kindergarten) is from 7:00 to 7:59 am, followed by 8:00 to 8:59 am. Preferred drop-off times are very similar, with the most preferred still being 7:00 am to 7:59 am, followed by 8:00 am to 8:59 am and 6:00 to 6:59 am, which received an equal number of responses. As a whole, there is very little difference in current versus preferred times, however more respondents indicated they would prefer to drop-off before 6:00 am than currently do.

The figure below shows a comparison of drop-off times currently versus preferred. Anytime the preferred time (represented by the dotted line) is higher than the current time (solid line), it indicates more respondents prefer that time than are currently dropping-off during that time.

Figure 10: Drop-off Times for Children Ages 0 to 5

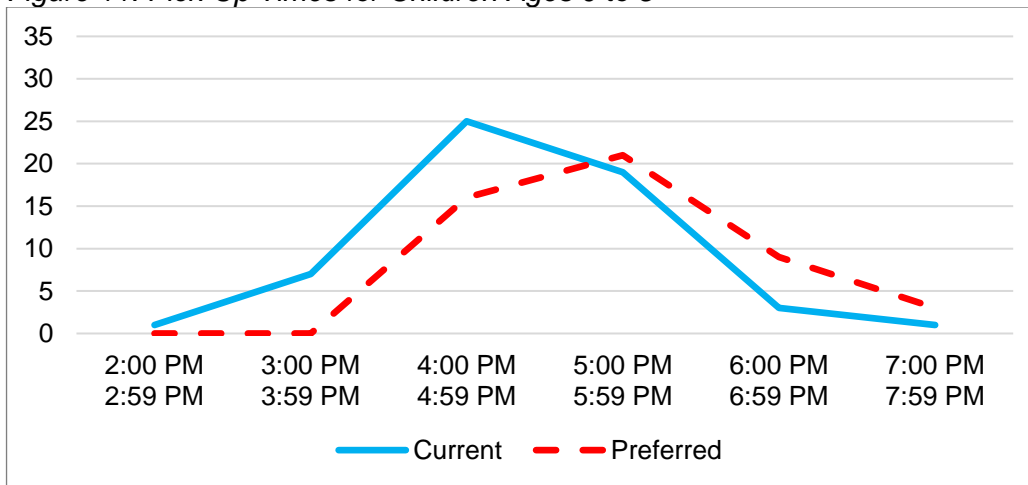


Source: "Union County Child Care Needs Survey" by First Children's Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

Currently, the most popular hour to pick-up children is from 4:00 to 4:59 pm, followed by 5:00 to 5:59 pm. Preferred pick-up times are very similar, with the most preferred being 5:00 to 5:59 pm, followed by 4:00 to 4:59 pm. As a whole, more respondents would prefer to pick-up their child after 5:00 pm than currently do.

The figure below shows a comparison of pick-up times currently versus preferred. Anytime the preferred time (represented by the dotted line) is higher than the current time (solid line), it indicates more respondents prefer that time than are currently are picking-up during that time.

Figure 11: Pick-Up Times for Children Ages 0 to 5

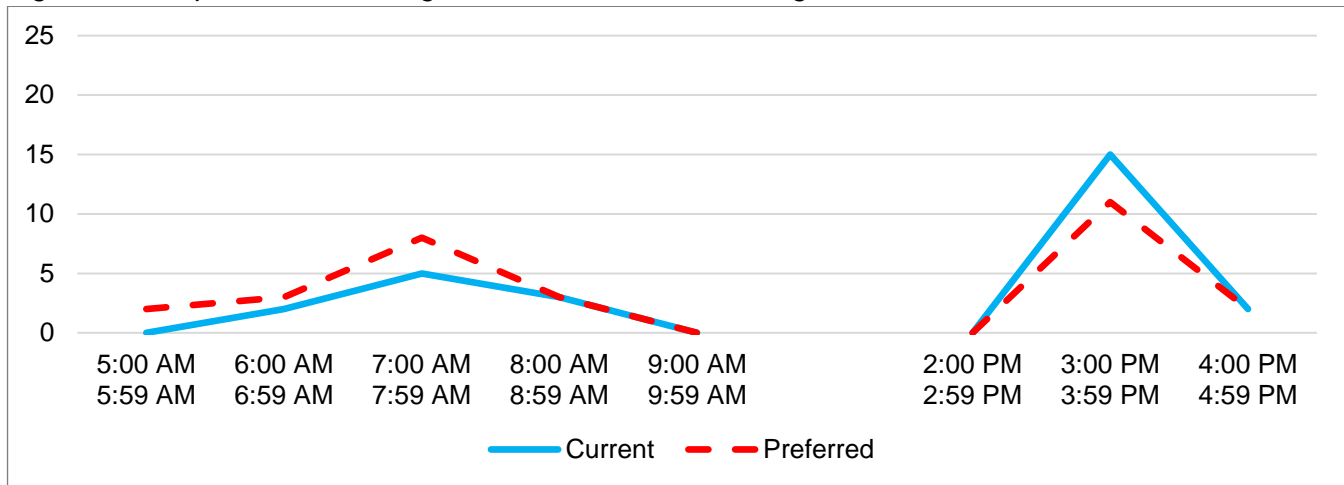


Source: "Union County Child Care Needs Survey" by First Children's Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

Currently, the most popular hour to drop-off children is from 3:00 to 3:59 pm, indicating they are using after school care. Preferred drop-off times are the same, with the most preferred from 3:00 to 3:59 pm, followed by 7:00 to 7:59 am. As a whole, more respondents indicated they would prefer to drop children off before 8:00 am than currently do.

The figure below shows a comparison of drop-off times currently versus preferred. Anytime the preferred time (represented by the dotted line) is higher than the current time (solid line), it indicates more respondents prefer that time than are currently dropping-off during that time.

Figure 12: Drop-off Times During School Year for Children Ages 5 to 12

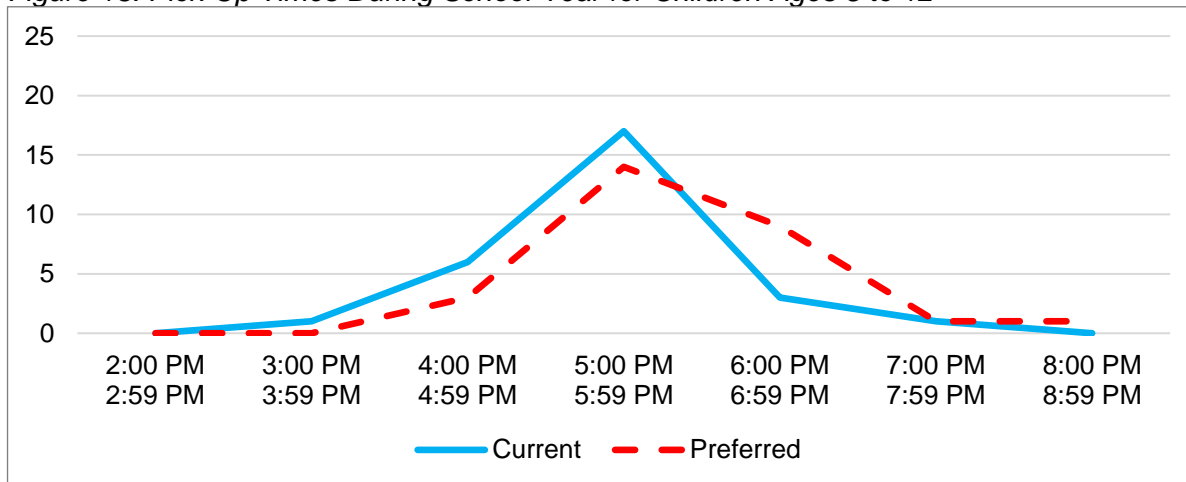


Source: "Union County Child Care Needs Survey" by First Children's Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

Currently, the most popular hour to pick-up children is from 5:00 to 5:59 pm, followed by 4:00 to 4:59 pm. Preferred pick-up times are the same, with the most preferred still being 5:00 to 5:59 pm, but fewer respondents prefer this than the number currently picking-up during this time. As a whole, more respondents would prefer to pick-up their child between 5:00 and 7:00 pm than currently do.

The figure below shows a comparison of pick-up times currently versus preferred. Anytime the preferred time (represented by the dotted line) is higher than the current time (solid line), it indicates more respondents prefer that time than are currently are picking-up during that time.

Figure 13: Pick-Up Times During School Year for Children Ages 5 to 12



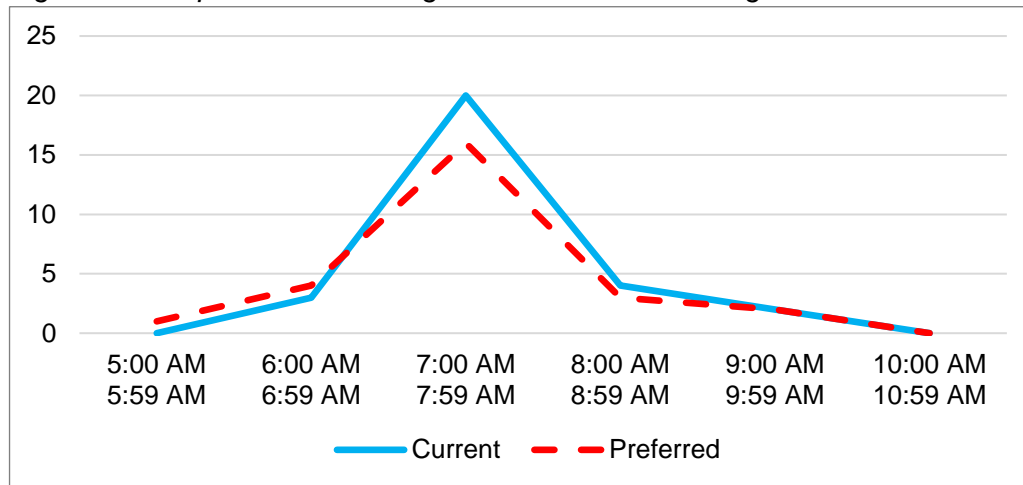
Source: "Union County Child Care Needs Survey" by First Children's Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

Currently, the most popular hour to drop-off children is from 7:00 to 7:59 am, followed by 6:00 to 6:59 and 8:00 to 8:59 am, which received an equal number of responses. Preferred drop-off times are very similar with the most preferred still being 7:00 am to 7:59 am, followed by 6:00 to 6:59 am. As a

whole, there is very little difference in the total numbers for current care versus preferred, however a few more respondents indicated they would prefer to drop-off before 6:00 am than currently do.

The figure below shows a comparison of drop-off times currently versus preferred. Anytime the preferred time (represented by the dotted line) is higher than the current time (solid line), it indicates more respondents prefer that time than are currently dropping-off during that time.

Figure 14: Drop-off Times During Summer for Children Ages 5 to 12

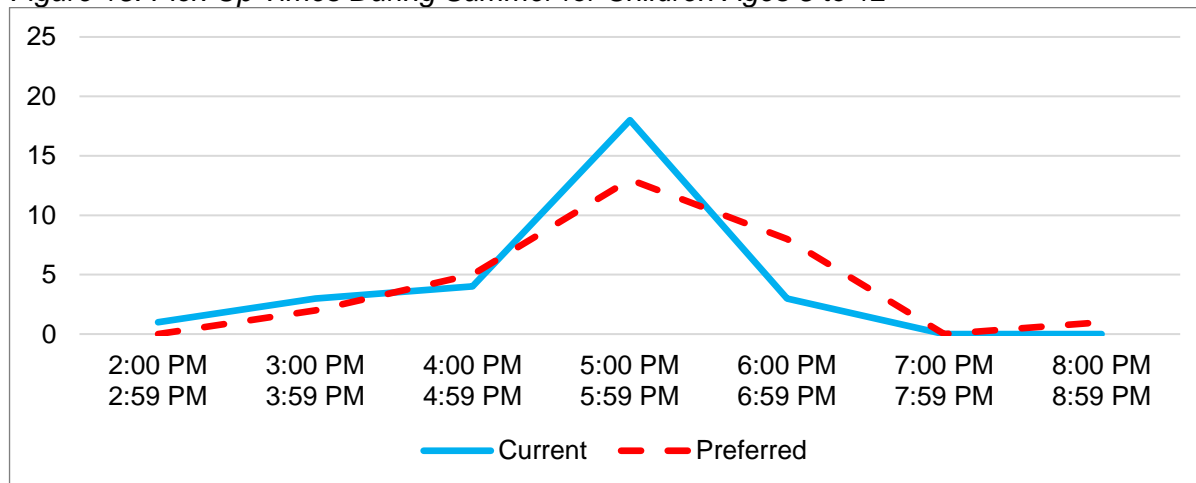


Source: "Union County Child Care Needs Survey" by First Children's Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

Currently, the most popular hour to pick-up children is from 5:00 to 5:59 pm, followed by 4:00 to 4:59 pm. Preferred pick-up is the same, with the most preferred being 5:00 to 5:59 pm, however fewer respondents prefer that time than are currently picking-up during that time. As a whole, more respondents would prefer to pick-up their child between 5:00 and 7:00 pm than currently do.

The figure below shows a comparison of pick-up times currently versus preferred. Anytime the preferred time (represented by the dotted line) is higher than the current time (solid line), it indicates more respondents prefer that time than are currently picking-up during that time.

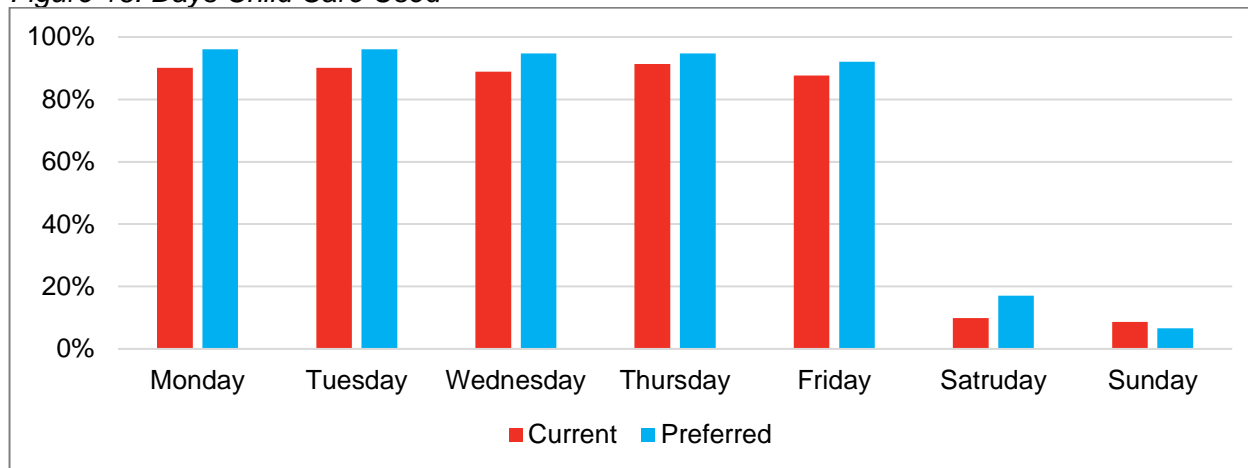
Figure 15: Pick-Up Times During Summer for Children Ages 5 to 12



Source: "Union County Child Care Needs Survey" by First Children's Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

Most respondents indicated they currently use care Monday through Friday (ranging from 88% to 91% per day), while only 10% of respondents say they use care on Saturday and 9% on Sunday. When it comes to preferred days for care, Monday through Wednesday were equally preferred, while fewer respondents prefer Thursday and Friday. Monday through Friday ranges from 92% to 96% per day. Meanwhile, 17% of respondents prefer Saturday care, which is more than are currently using Saturday care, and 7% prefer Sunday care, which is fewer than are currently using Sunday care.

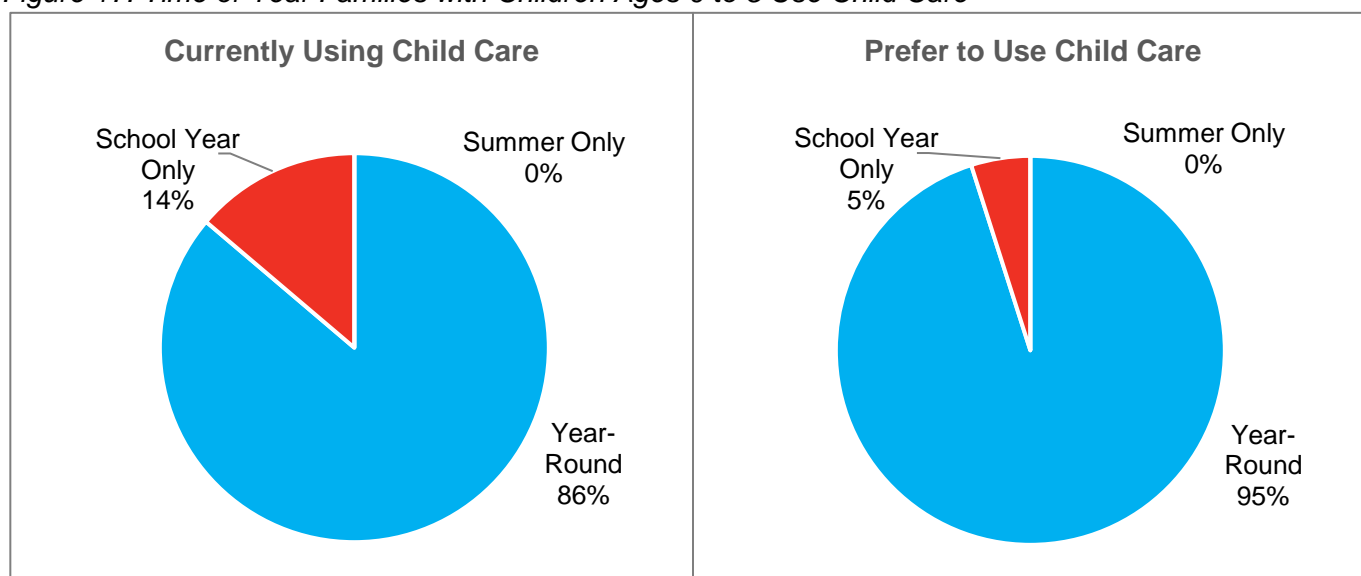
Figure 16: Days Child Care Used



Source: "Union County Child Care Needs Survey" by First Children's Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

Eighty-six percent (86%) of respondents with children ages 0 to 5, indicate they are currently using child care year-round, with the remaining 14% preferring the school year only. When asked what their preferences would be if they were selecting child care today, those numbers shift with 95% indicating they would prefer to use year-round care for their children ages 0 to 5, and only 5% prefer school year only. No respondents use or would prefer to use child care during the summer only for their children in this age group.

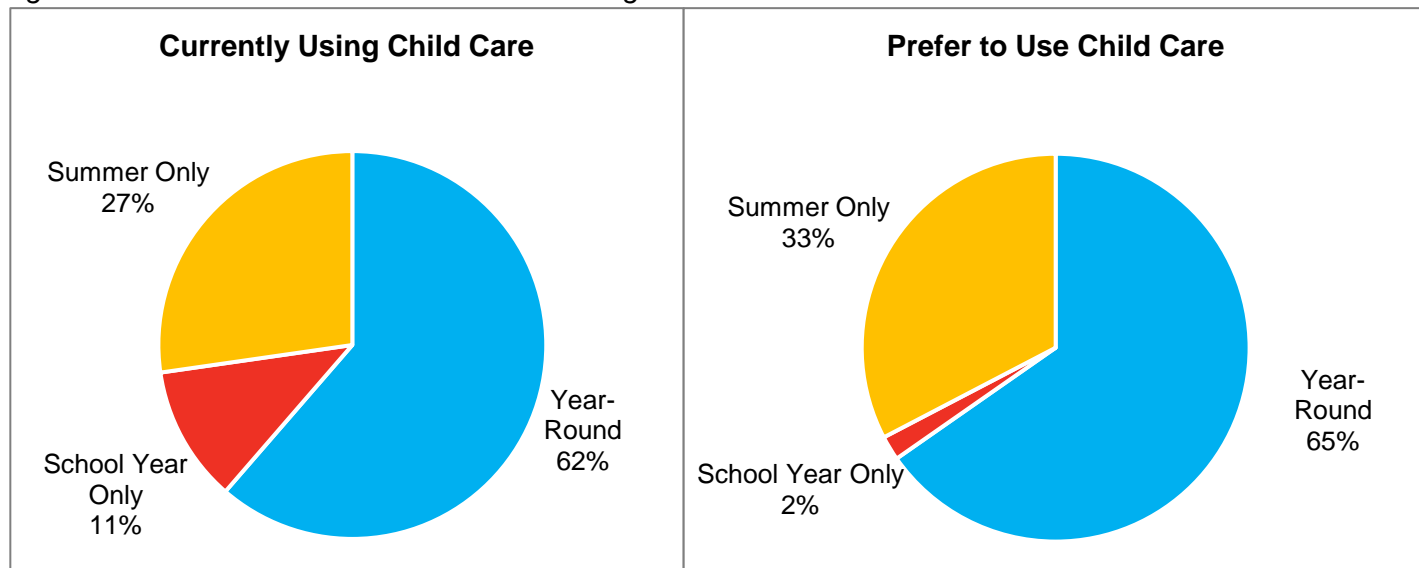
Figure 17: Time of Year Families with Children Ages 0 to 5 Use Child Care



Source: "Union County Child Care Needs Survey" by First Children's Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

Sixty-two percent (62%) of respondents with children ages 5 to 12 (school-age) indicate they currently use child care year-round, 27% use child care during the summer only, and 11% during the school year only. When asked what their preferences would be if they were selecting child care today, 65% would prefer year-round, 33% summer only, and only 2% school year only.

Figure 18: Time of Year Families with children ages 5 to 12 Use Child Care



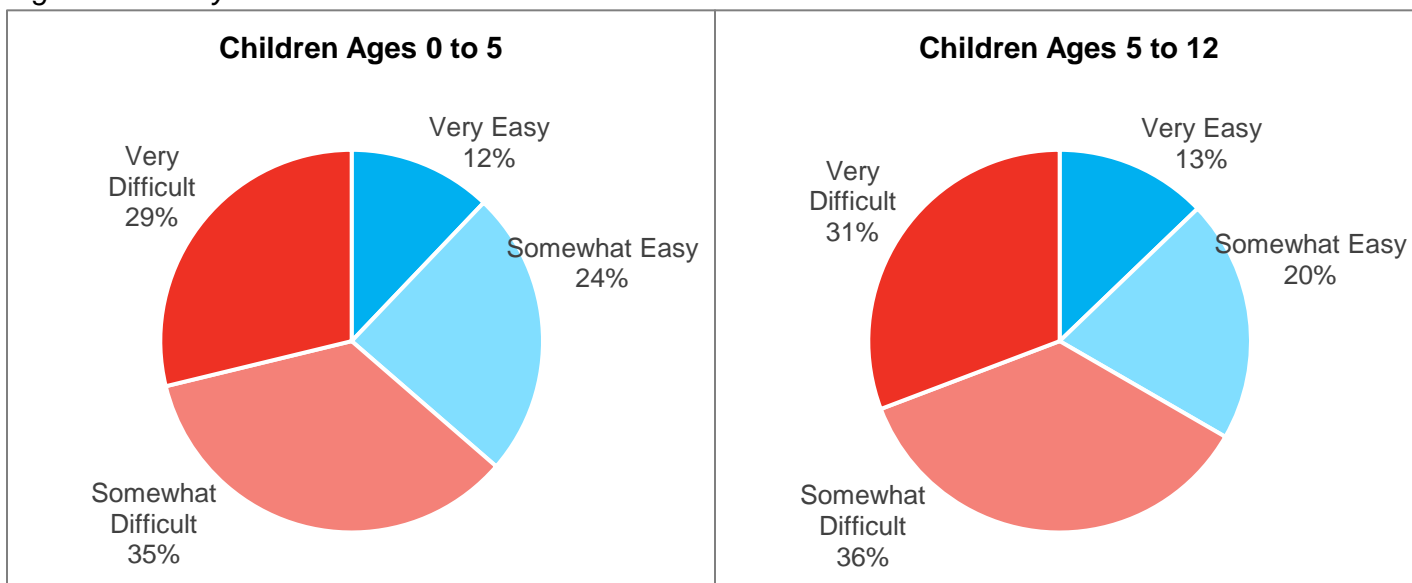
Source: "Union County Child Care Needs Survey" by First Children's Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

When asked, if selecting care today, would your needs significantly fluctuate, 25% said yes. Comments received from those indicating yes were:

- Summers would be longer hours.
- Seasons, possible addition of secondary job.
- Nurse working 12 hour shifts.
- Spouse goes on seasonal lay off in winter months, more available to help with child care.
- Husband works for farmer.
- Work 3 days a week, different days each week. Dad works seasonal with no consistent pattern.
- Depending on availability of daycare, I could change employment to different hours.
- My husband works all days/shifts at a soybean plant so his busy season is different from me (a teacher). As a teacher I also need to lesson plan/grade so it would be helpful to be able to have childcare for occasional weekend hours.
- Only need care during summer.

The majority of respondents indicated they experienced difficulty finding child care, both for their children ages 0 to 5 (not in Kindergarten) and their children age 5 to 12 (school age). A total of 64% of those with children ages 0 to 5, and 67% of those with children ages 5 to 12 experienced some level of difficulty finding child care. The most common obstacle named was openings or available spots, especially for infants.

Figure 19: Ability to Find Child Care



Source: "Union County Child Care Needs Survey" by First Children's Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

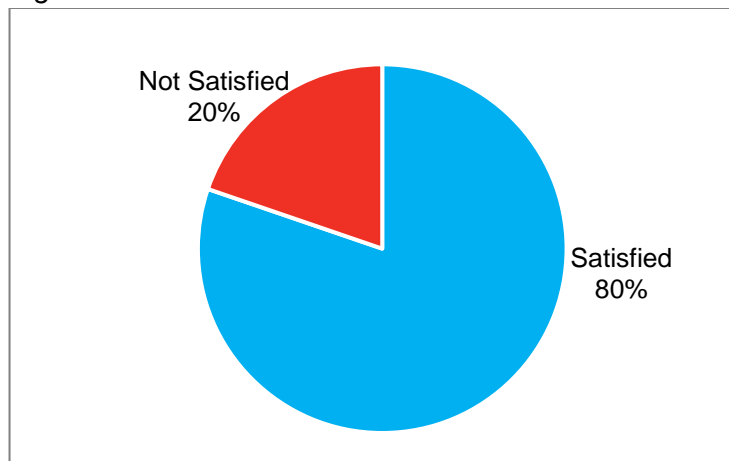
Comments from those that experienced obstacles were:

- *No openings.. did not know anyone from the area when moved here to find people I trusted to care for my children*
- *Can't afford*
- *Already full to capacity*
- *Lack of available in-home providers in the area, specifically around Afton.*
- *No backup sitters.*
- *We took the first person with an opening prior to my child being born, so we could have a spot. There are not dependable after school and summer programs for school age kids.*
- *Trusted care, specialization in trauma.*
- *Hard to find a place for newborns/babies.*
- *Children with special needs.*
- *Couldn't find available providers.*
- *Not certified, poor reputation, only one true quality program is hard to get in to.*
- *Not affordable*
- *Too far away*
- *Special needs child*
- *Available state certified providers*
- *No one wanted to take a 3.5 month old.*
- *Coordination of family schedules to be available.*
- *Availability, dependability*
- *Couldn't find a provider that had openings.*
- *Not good quality care.*
- *Finding someone with an opening and hours that work with my regular work schedule.*
- *It was difficult to find daycare for an infant. Then once you are in that daycare, it is easier for the second child.*
- *Everything was Great until COVID.*

- *Space was limited. Had to wait until about a month before return to work to find out that she had space.*
- *Every child care option is full, always. Child care that is available can take as many days off as they would like and there is nothing families can do because once you find a full time spot you won't find another.*
- *Hours, cost*
- *Current concern is if in-home has too many kids.*
- *No safe, reliable options available. Centers neglecting children, multiple in-home options have treated my or my family's children poorly.*
- *Hours*
- *Finding openings*
- *Money and trustworthy options*
- *No childcare is available in Afton for children under 2.*
- *Center is no longer an option for my family, in home daycares don't have room.*
- *Trained in behaviors and ADHD.*
- *There was not enough part time openings in Creston, so I personally had to seek child care in Orient.*
- *Proximity to home and work.*
- *Wait lists*
- *Low options*
- *All daycares full.*
- *Daycare was Full.*
- *We don't live near family to rely on.*
- *Have not looked.*
- *None available or too expensive.*
- *Openings*

Despite difficulty finding care, once families find care, they are satisfied with their current child care provider. Overall 80% said they are satisfied with their provider, while 20% said they are not. Respondents that indicated they are not satisfied were asked to share why, those reasons are shared below the chart.

Figure 20: Satisfaction with Current Provider



Source: "Union County Child Care Needs Survey" by First Children's Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

Those that are not satisfied were asked to explain. Reasons given were:

- *Would prefer non relative for care.*
- *However not readily available back up.*
- *Cannot afford and do not have relatives who can help. Parent must provide the child care at the expense of employment.*
- *They frequently call me to pick up my children early but still charge me.*
- *Frequent absences (paid to provider as well as secondary provider during main providers absence).*
- *Distance located but otherwise care and preschool is phenomenal in Afton.*
- *Taking a lot of days off requiring parents to miss work.*
- *I would prefer to only have a hand full of children at the daycare. She has to watch several kids because there are no other options in town.*
- *Love my daycare provider, however hours are inconvenient. Will be difficult finding childcare for 2.5 hours with a 4yr old and newborn.*
- *My parents are getting older and have too much on their hands.*
- *Would be great if my employer offered child care that actually met my needs as a night shift employee. Before and after school programs should be at the children's school building, so no transport needed.*
- *I had to switch daycares due to my youngest his behaviors and ADHD was kicked out. The new daycare has hours that close earlier than previous daycare and I lost work hours because of that. I'm a single mom and I rely heavily on having reliable childcare with hours that are late in evenings along with after school.*
- *Difficult to get to daycare in time to pick up kids due irregular schedule requiring overtime at work.*
- *Besides they are not available on no school days or early outs.*
- *I want an affordable childcare provider.*
- *The lack of ambition and motivation isn't there anymore. We feel our child deserves to feel cared for and nurtured instead of an inconvenience.*

Respondents were given a list of factors and asked to select all that are important to them when choosing child care. The top choices were dependability (61 respondents), positive interactions between staff and children (56 respondents) and upkeep/appearance of the facility and playground (54 respondents).

After identifying all factors that are important, respondents were given the same list and asked to select the single factor that is most important to them. Those factors were, positive interactions between staff and children (27 respondents), followed by dependability (19 respondents).

The table on the next page shows what factors selected parents, as well as which were the single most important.

Table 32: Important Factors When Selecting Child Care

	All Factors that are Important	Single Most Important
Available space/timing of enrollment	42	3
Care includes preschool	21	2
Dependability	61	19
Drop-in or occasional care	36	1
Educational curriculum used	33	3
Evening care (after 6:30 pm)	13	1
Iowa Quality Rating System (QRS) rating	29	4
Location	47	2
Part-time options	31	3
Positive interactions between staff and children	56	27
Second-shift care	5	1
Secured entrance	19	0
Special needs care	5	2
Third shift/overnight care	5	0
Transportation to/from school or preschool	17	0
Tuition assistance or scholarships	15	0
Tuition rates or price	34	5
Upkeep/appearance of the facility and playground	54	1
Weekend care	14	2

Source: "Union County Child Care Needs Survey" by First Children's Finance, 2020. Copyright © 2020.

As a whole, respondents think the availability of child care in Union County is less than adequate. Respondents were asked to rate the availability of child care in Union 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 average rating was 2.16.

Respondents were then asked to rank the quality of child care in Union 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, respondents indicated they think the quality of child care in Union County is less than adequate, with an average rating of 2.81.

Additional comments shared about child care in Union County were:

- *I am very lucky to have found my child care in Creston when I did. I couldn't imagine how different my career and life would have been if I didn't.*
- *Not enough reputable providers.*
- *We have been very frustrated with the lack of quality providers in Union County that have openings-whenver we have been looking for childcare it has been impossible to find an opening anywhere and we have always resorted to a child care center.*
- *We have been fortunate to be with the same in home provider for several years. But there are very few quality in home providers and the center did not provide the level of care we expect.*
- *I ended up getting lucky with my childcare provider, but it was very difficult and stressful to find options that were available.*
- *We would not live in Creston if family did not provide childcare.*

- *There are few options in Union County.*
- *Not many choices for young ones. Will have to think hard about having a second as I don't think Grandpa could do 2.*
- *We need more daycare options that are top quality.*
- *Our provider is AMAZING. I would pay her whatever because I trust her with my baby. We are so lucky she had space.*
- *High Quality for the EUCC Hope Hall's program.*
- *I take my child to Orient because the daycare quality is better.*
- *Lacking back up child care for when regular child care takes day off for appointments.*

Child Care Gap Analysis

Calculating the true gap in a child care market needs to take into consideration multiple factors. Not only are the current number of child care spaces and children considered, but also how many families prefer to use child care, in combination with how many want or need care full-time versus part-time. Based on full or part-time factors, one child care space might actually be adequate supply for two or three children. When preferences are considered, not all families who work need child care, and not all child care slots meet the needs of every child.

The following summary of the supply and demand provides an estimation of the gap between the number of children likely to use child care and the number of spaces available in programs currently listed by Iowa DHS¹⁸. 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.

In Union 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 between 7:00 and 7:59 a.m., and to pick them up by 6:00 p.m. When selecting care, the most important factor to most was positive interactions between staff and children. Parents prefer care located within the school district their child attends or will attend, and the most preferred arrangement is a Registered Child Development Home. Seventy percent (70%) with children ages 0 to 5 prefer some type of regulated child care, while 50% of those with children ages 5 to 12 prefer some type of regulated child care.

As of October 2020, there are 27 regulated child care programs offering a total of 613 spaces in Union County. Of the 613 spaces, only 443 provide full-time, year-round child care. The remaining 170 spaces are available school year only. There are 8 DHS licensed centers (409 licensed spaces), offering care varying hours, between 5:30 am and 6:00 pm, Monday through Friday. Among those programs, only 3 offer full-time, year-round child care, which accounts for 239 of the 409 licensed spaces. Among the 19 home providers, which account for 204 of the total child care spaces in Union County, 1 operates 24-hours Monday through Friday while the remaining 18 operate between 5:00 am and 6:15 pm Monday through Friday. Of those 18, five (5) also offer day-time hours on Saturday or Sunday and 1 offers 24-hour care on the weekends.

In Union County, there are 2,290 children ages 0 to 12. Of those, FCF estimates 1,504 have all parents working. If it is assumed these families are represented by the Child Care Needs Survey responses, and 70% ages 0 to 4 and 50% ages 5 to 12, are from families that prefer to use regulated child care while they are at work, then approximately 823 are likely to need child care in a DHS regulated setting. According to Iowa DHS, there are currently 613 child care spaces in Union County, of which, 443 are available year-round. That means there are enough DHS regulated spaces to serve approximately 53% of the 823 children likely needing child care, leaving a gap of 380 spaces.

¹⁸ Includes all Iowa DHS Licensed Centers and Preschools, Registered Child Development Homes, and Child Care Homes listed with Iowa DHS as of October 2020.

The following table shows the number of children likely to use DHS regulated care versus the number of spaces available. There are gaps among two specific age groups- infants & toddlers (age 0 up to 23 months) and school age (age 5 to 12).

Table 33: Estimated Child Care Gap in Union County

	Children w/All Parents Working	Prefer Regulated Care	DHS Listed Spaces ¹⁹	Child Care Gap	Year-Round Spaces	Child Care Gap
Infant & Toddler	166	116	74	-42	74	-42
Two-Year-Old	86	60	85	+25	85	+25
Three- & Four-Year-Old	169	118	254	+136	134	+16
Five- to Nine-Year-Old	554	277	100	-177	75	-202
Ten- to Twelve-Year-Old	503	252	100	-152	75	-177
Total	1,504	823	613	-210	443	-380

Source: Child Care Market Analysis for Union County, Iowa. Copyright © 2020, First Children's Finance.

Breaking down the same information by community can help give a more detailed picture. Some communities may have a greater shortage than others, and some communities with a shortage of their own will also serve families from neighboring communities.

Afton

Afton has approximately 85 children that have all parents working. Based on parent preferences shared through the Child Care Needs Survey, FCF estimates 48 of those are likely to use regulated child care. Afton is where the East Union School District's elementary building is located; therefore, families from surrounding communities also depend on child care and before and after school programs for their children. Currently there are 2 options for DHS regulated child care. Combined those programs offer a total of 128 spaces during the school year and 78 spaces in the summer.

Table 34: Afton Child Care Supply and Demand

Children with All Parents Working	Children w/All Parents Working	Likely to Use Regulated Child Care
Age 0 to 4	30	21
Age 5 to 9	24	12
Age 10 to 12	31	15
Total children	85	48

DHS Regulated Programs	Ages Served	Total Capacity	Year-Round Capacity
East Union ASPIRE Before & After	K-5 th grade	50	0
East Union Early Childhood Center	2 ½ to 12	78	78
Joyful Sparks Preschool	3 to 5	15	0
Total child care spaces		143	78

Source: Child Care Market Analysis for Union County, Iowa. Copyright © 2020, First Children's Finance.

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

Creston

Creston has approximately 885 children that have all parents working. Based on parent preferences shared through the Child Care Needs Survey, FCF estimates 494 of those are likely to use regulated child care. Creston is the largest city in the county and home to several of the area's largest employers; therefore, families from surrounding communities also depend on child care in Creston for their children. Currently there are 5 DHS licensed centers or preschools and 18 Registered Child Development Homes. Combined those programs offer a total of 458 spaces during the school year and 353 spaces in the summer.

Table 35: Creston Child Care Supply and Demand

Children with All Parents Working	Children w/All Parents Working	Likely to Use Regulated Child Care		
Age 0 to 4	255	178		
Age 5 to 9	341	171		
Age 10 to 12	289	145		
Total children	885	494		
DHS Regulated Providers	Ages Served	Total Capacity	Year-Round Capacity	
Creston Head Start	3 to 4	60	0	
Discovery Kids Preschool	3 to 5	25	0	
I Think I Can Child Care	0 to 5	111	111	
I Think I Can Before & After School	5 to 12	50	50	
Trinity Preschool	2 ½ to 5	20	0	
Registered Home Providers X 18	0 to 12	192	192	
Total child care spaces		458	353	

Source: *Child Care Market Analysis for Union County, Iowa*. Copyright © 2020, First Children's Finance.

Cromwell

Cromwell has approximately 7 children that have all parents working. Based on parent preferences shared through the Child Care Needs Survey, FCF estimates 3 of those are likely to use regulated child care. There are currently no DHS regulated child care settings in Cromwell.

Table 36: Cromwell Child Care Supply and Demand

Children with All Parents Working	Children w/All Parents Working	Likely to Use Regulated Child Care		
Age 0 to 4	2	1		
Age 5 to 9	4	2		
Age 10 to 12	1	0		
Total Children	7	3		
DHS Regulated Providers	Ages Served	Total Capacity	Year-Round Capacity	
None	N/A	0	0	
Total child care spaces		0	0	

Source: *Child Care Market Analysis for Union County, Iowa*. Copyright © 2020, First Children's Finance.

Lorimor

Lorimor has approximately 71 children that have all parents working. Based on parent preferences shared through the Child Care Needs Survey, FCF estimates 40 of those are likely to use regulated child care. Currently there is 1 Registered Child Development Home with a total of 12 spaces.

Table 37: Lorimor Child Care Supply and Demand

Children with All Parents Working	Children w/All Parents Working	Likely to Use Regulated Child Care	
Age 0 to 4	22	16	
Age 5 to 9	31	15	
Age 10 to 12	18	9	
Total children	71	40	
DHS Regulated Providers	Ages Served	Total Capacity	Year-Round Capacity
Registered Home Providers X 1	0 to 12	12	12
Total child care spaces		12	12

Source: *Child Care Market Analysis for Union County, Iowa*. Copyright © 2020, First Children's Finance.

Shannon City

Shannon City has approximately 15 children that have all parents working. Based on parent preferences shared through the Child Care Needs Survey, FCF estimates 8 of those are likely to use regulated child care. There are currently no DHS regulated child care settings in Shannon City.

Table 38: Shannon City Child Care Supply and Demand

Children with All Parents Working	Children w/All Parents Working	Likely to Use Regulated Child Care	
Age 0 to 4	6	4	
Age 5 to 9	0	0	
Age 10 to 12	9	4	
Total children	15	8	
DHS Regulated Providers	Ages Served	Total Capacity	Year-Round Capacity
None	N/A	0	0
Total child care spaces		0	0

Source: *Child Care Market Analysis for Union County, Iowa*. Copyright © 2020, First Children's Finance.

Thayer

Thayer has no children that have all parents working. There are currently no DHS regulated child care settings in Cromwell.

Table 39: Thayer Child Care Supply and Demand

Children with All Parents Working	Children w/All Parents Working	Likely to Use Regulated Child Care	
Age 0 to 4	0	0	
Age 5 to 9	0	0	
Age 10 to 12	0	0	
Total children	0	0	
DHS Regulated Providers	Ages Served	Total Capacity	Year-Round Capacity
None	N/A	0	0
Total child care spaces		0	0

Source: *Child Care Market Analysis for Union County, Iowa. Copyright © 2020, First Children's Finance.*

Balance of County

In the unincorporated areas of Union County, there are approximately 416 children that have all parents working. Based on parent preferences shared through the Child Care Needs Survey, FCF estimates 231 of those are likely to use regulated child care. These children utilize the child care settings listed with the individual communities above.

Table 40: Balance of County Child Care Demand

Children with All Parents Working	Children w/All Parents Working	Likely to Use Regulated Child Care
Age 0 to 4	106	75
Age 5 to 9	155	78
Age 10 to 12	155	78
Total children	416	231

Source: *Child Care Market Analysis for Union County, Iowa. Copyright © 2020, First Children's Finance.*

Key Findings

These key findings are based on research and conditions of the current child care market in Union County, Iowa as of December 2020. If the community or the child care environment changes significantly, current findings may be affected.

Growing Population Among Children Ages 0 to 12

As of 2018, there were a total of 2,290 children ages 0 to 12 living in Union County, which is up just slightly from 1,998 in 2000. Creston, Shannon City, and the unincorporated areas of the county experienced an increase, while the remaining communities have seen a decline.

Table 41: Population Ages 0 to 12 by Community, 2018

	Ages 0 to 4	Ages 5 to 9	Ages 10 to 12	Total	Change since 2000
Afton	41	32	41	114	-54
Creston	465	541	444	1,450	+249
Cromwell	5	5	1	11	-12
Lorimor	22	31	18	71	-17
Shannon City	6	0	9	15	+6
Thayer	0	0	0	0	-11
Balance of County	182	227	220	629	+131
	721	836	733	2,290	+292

Source: Child Care Market Analysis for Union County, Iowa. Copyright © 2020, First Children's Finance.

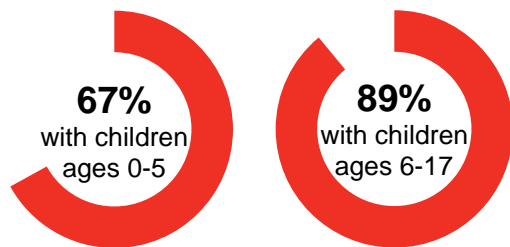
Parents are in the Labor Force and Need Child Care

According to the US Census Bureau, 67% of families with children ages 0 to 5, and 89% of families with children ages 6 to 17 living in Union 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. This state-wide averages are 75% and 80% respectively.

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 45% in Cromwell, to 100% in both Lorimor and Shannon City, while those with children ages 6 to 17 ranges from 65% in Creston, to 100% in both Lorimor and Shannon City.

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. Thayer is the only market where the percentage of all parents working is higher when the children are very young and lower when children are of the age they would be in school.

Figure 21: Union County Families with All Parents in the Labor Force



Source: *Child Care Market Analysis for Union County, Iowa. Copyright © 2020, First Children's Finance.*

Table 42: Percentage of Households with All Parents Working, 2018

	With Children Age 0 to 5	With Children Age 6 to 17
Afton	73%	76%
Creston	55%	65%
Cromwell	45%	78%
Lorimor	100%	100%
Shannon City	100%	100%
Thayer	96%	88%
Union County	67%	89%
State of Iowa	75%	80%

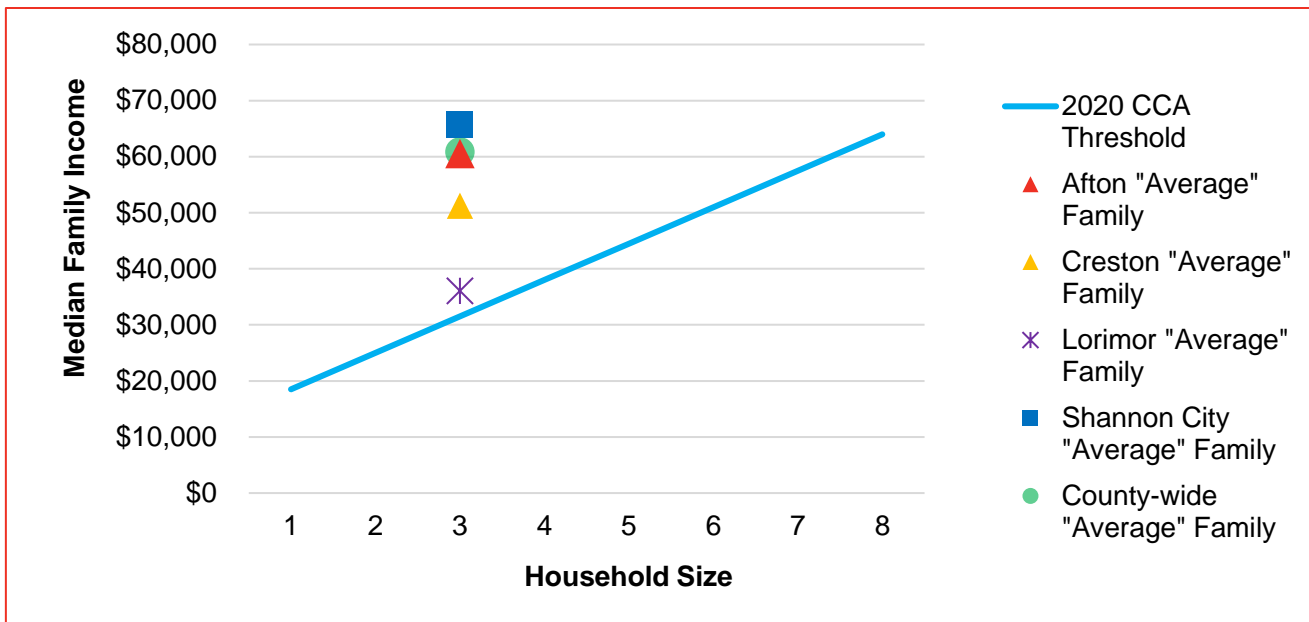
Source: *Child Care Market Analysis for Union County, Iowa. Copyright © 2020, First Children's Finance.*

Median Family Income Higher than the Child Care Assistance Threshold

The median annual income for families in Union County with children under the age of 18 is \$60,787. To be eligible for tuition assistance under the Iowa Child Care Assistance (CCA) program according to the 2020 eligibility criteria, a family of 3 must have an annual household income below \$31,494 and a family of 4 must have an annual household income below \$37,990. While many households with children in Union County exceed these thresholds, it is possible they still struggle to pay child care expenses out of pocket.

The figure on the next page plots the median income of households with children under 18 for each community, as well as the CCA threshold by family size. Each of the community median incomes is plotted to reflect a family size of 3, to reflect the average family household sizes for each, which ranges from 2.36 to 2.99 (see *Table 5 for details*).

Figure 22: Child Care Assistance Thresholds vs. Median Income of Family with Children²⁰

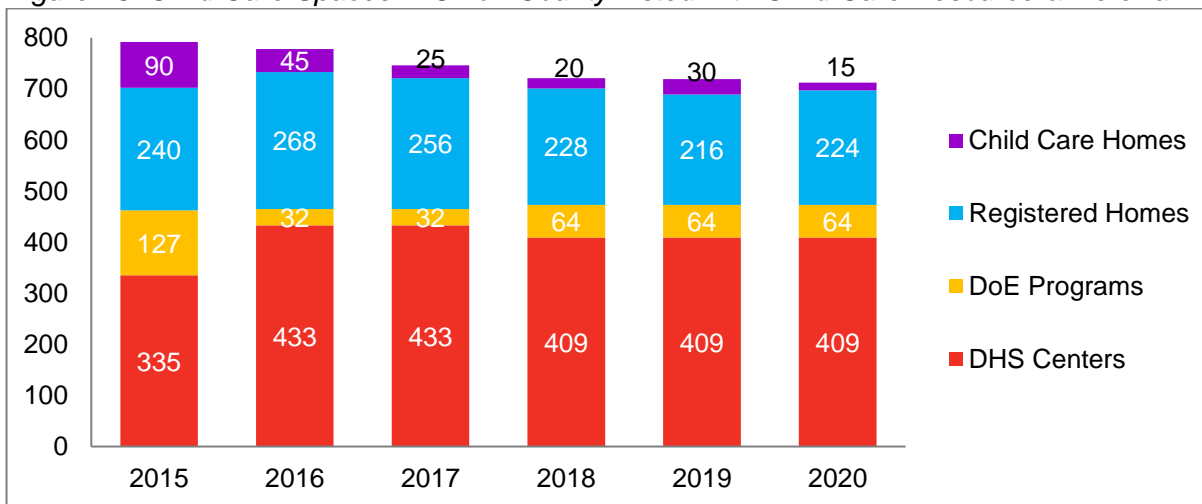


Source: Child Care Market Analysis for Union County, Iowa. Copyright © 2020, First Children's Finance.

Area Child Care Supply is Declining

Data from Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral indicates that over the last 5 years, the supply of regulated care in many Iowa communities has declined. From 2015 to 2020, Union County lost a total of 20 regulated child care providers and 80 child care spaces²¹. As of July 2020, there were 712 spaces in among 34 regulated child care providers and programs. This is down from 792 and 54 respectively in 2015. The most significant change was the loss of 75 spaces among Child Care Homes. While the Department of Education Programs appear to have a significant loss in 2016, these spaces are believed to have been shifted and are now counted as Department of Human Services Centers.

Figure 23: Child Care Spaces in Union County Listed with Child Care Resource & Referral



Source: Child Care Market Analysis for Union County, Iowa. Copyright © 2020, First Children's Finance.

²⁰ Median income for families with children is not available for Cromwell or Thayer for 2018.

²¹ Historical data is not available on the individual community level.

Shortage of Child Care Spaces

There are an estimated 2,290 children ages 0 to 12 living in Union County as of 2018. Based on the percentage of families that have all parents working, the number of children that have all parents working, and parents' preferences, First Children's Finance estimates that approximately 823 children likely need care within a DHS regulated setting. With only 613 DHS regulated spaces (as of October 2020) and only 443 of those available full-time and year-round, there is a deficit of 380 spaces in Union County. Specifically, there are deficits in the number spaces for infants & toddlers and school age children.

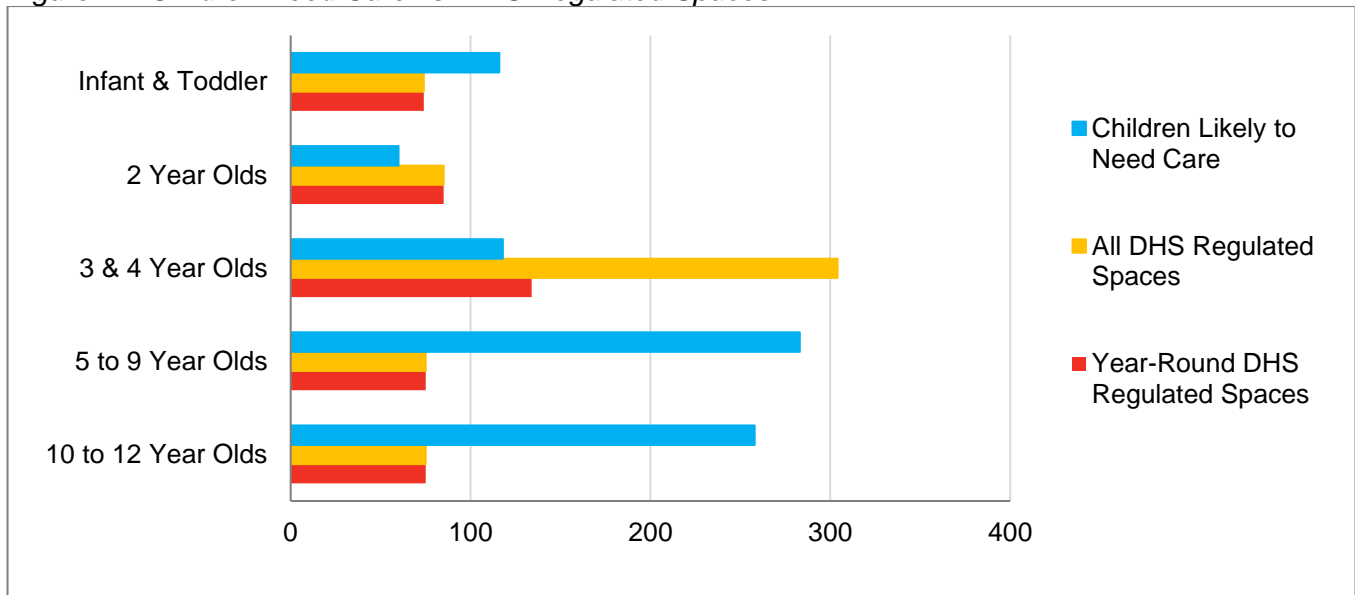
Table 43: Child Care and Preschool Spaces in Union County

	Children Needing Care	Total Spaces ²²	Deficit	Year- Round Spaces	Year- Round Deficit
Infant & Toddler	116	74	-42	74	-42
Two-Year-Old	60	85	+25	85	+25
Three to Four-Year-Old	118	254	+136	134	+16
School Age (5 to 12)	529	200	-329	150	-379
Total	823	613	-210	443	-380

Source: Child Care Market Analysis for Union County, Iowa. Copyright © 2020, First Children's Finance.

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

Figure 24: Children Need Care vs. DHS Regulated Spaces²³



Source: Child Care Market Analysis for Union County, Iowa. Copyright © 2020, First Children's Finance.

²² Includes all DHS Licensed Child Care Centers and Preschools and Registered Child Development Homes.

²³ 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.

Parents Have Difficulty Finding Child Care

The Child Care Needs Survey indicates that 64% of parents with children ages 0 to 5 (not in Kindergarten) and 67% of parents with children ages 5 to 12 found it somewhat difficult or very difficult to find child care. Obstacles that were experienced included lack of openings-especially for infants, the cost or affordability, and lack of regulated care.

If an adequate supply of child care is not available, parents may look for care outside the county, consider moving, or limit the number of children they have. Thirty-five percent (35%) of parents participating in the Child Care Needs Survey indicated the current childcare supply in Union County has impacted their decision to have or adopt children or has caused them to limit the size of their family.

Parents Prefer Regulated Child Care Settings

The most preferred arrangement chosen on the Child Care Needs Survey was a DHS Registered Child Development Home or Licensed Center, depending on the age of the child and whether the care is for the school year or summer. Parents with children ages 0 to 5 (not started Kindergarten) and those with children ages 5 to 12 for summer care, prefer a DHS registered home. During the school year, parents prefer their children ages 5 to 12 are in a licensed center.

Table 44: Preferred Child Care Settings

	Age 0 to 5 (Not in School)	Ages 5 to 12 School Year	Ages 5 to 12 Summer
Registered Home	39%	19%	30%
Child Care Center	33%	21%	20%
A relative	11%	13%	6%
Nanny or Babysitter	6%	10%	20%
Other	3%	6%	6%
Unregulated Home	8%	4%	4%
Not use child care	0%	17%	14%

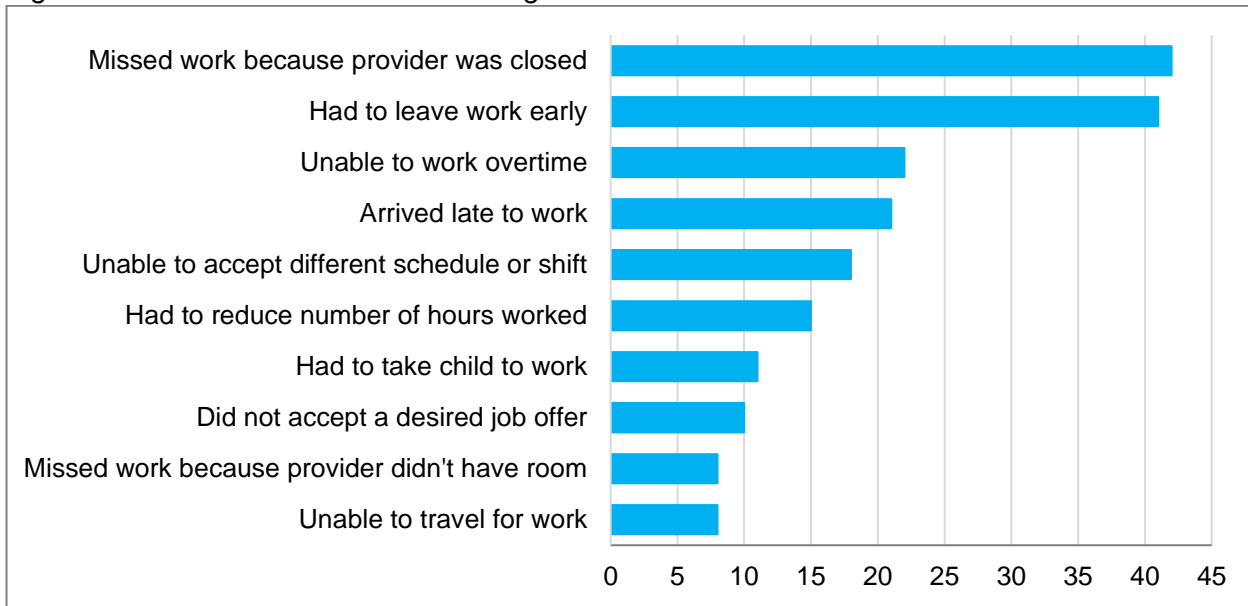
Source: *Child Care Market Analysis for Union County, Iowa. Copyright © 2020, First Children's Finance.*

Parents Indicate Child Care is Affecting their Employment

Over the last 12 months, parents in Union County have experienced child care challenges that have in turn affected their employment. The most commonly named challenge was missing a day of work because their child care provider was closed, on vacation, or not available. Other challenges experienced by parents were having to leave work early, unable to work overtime, and arriving late to work.

The figure on the next page shows the effect of child care challenges on parent's employment.

Figure 25: Effects of Child Care Challenges on Current Parents in the Last 12 Months



Source: *Child Care Market Analysis for Union County, Iowa*. Copyright © 2020, *First Children's Finance*.

In addition to the challenges listed above, 21% indicated child care challenges are keeping them or their spouse or partner from working, while 23% indicated child care challenges are limiting their or their spouse's or partner's employment.

Employers Indicate Child Care is Affecting Productivity and Attendance

Employers in Union County are seeing the affect child care challenges has on their labor force. Through the child care needs survey, 56% of employers indicated they experienced reduced productivity due to employee's child care challenges, while 50% also indicated they had experienced challenges with absenteeism due to employee's child care challenges. In both cases some of the child care challenges named were child care provider or child is sick, school cancelations, and COVID-19.

First Children's Finance Recommendation

First Children's Finance's research has provided valuable information that can help shape the future of child care in Union County. Based on our analysis, it can be concluded that more quality child care spaces are needed. To meet demand and provide the services desired by parents, First Children's Finance has the following recommendations.

Make Use of this *Child Care Market Analysis* for Decision Making

The data in this report shows that each community has different needs, and each family has different preferences for their child's care. The research collected for this analysis, along with both the employer and parent survey results can guide future decisions when addressing the child care gap in Union County. Information in this report can help both existing and future child care programs make decisions related to what ages to provide care for, hours of operation, what factors are important to parents when selecting child care, and what child care settings are most preferred by parents.

Add Spaces within DHS Registered Child Development Homes

According to the Child Care Needs Survey completed by parents, most preferred child care within a Registered Child Development Home. There are two ways to increase the number of spaces available within Registered Child Development Homes; the first is for currently registered providers to increase their capacity and the second is to recruit new providers to become registered.

For each existing Registered Child Development Home that changed their registration from Level A to Level B, Level B to Level C, or Level C1 to Level B, there would be an addition of 4 spaces. While it is unknown exactly which registered providers would be interested, if just half of the 16 homes that are currently registered as something other than Level C were to change their registration and add 4 spaces, it would result 32 new spaces (8 providers X 4 spaces each).

There are residents of Union County providing legal unregulated care that is sometimes referred to as friends, family, and neighbor care. By becoming registered, these child care providers would gain access to resources and training, become listed on the Iowa Department of Human Service's "Child Care Families: Provider Search" database so they can easily be found by parents, be included when parents contact their local Child Care Resource & Referral office for a list of area providers, and the provider becomes eligible to receive direct pay from the state for families they care for that are eligible for tuition assistance. Families would also benefit because there would be additional providers they can feel secure sending their child to for care.

To increase the number of Registered Child Development Homes in Union County, local communities should reach out to those they know that are currently providing care but are not registered and encourage them to become registered. Data in this report and from the parent surveys can be used to show potential providers the need and to help them make decisions about their future child care operations. Providers that are interested can get more information through Iowa Department of Human Services (<http://dhs.iowa.gov/licensure-and-registration/registered-home>) or contact the local Child Care Resource & Referral staff (<https://iowaccrr.org/>).

Add DHS Licensed Center Spaces

Based on the preferences of parents for child care setting and location, along with local population growth, employment centers, and school district boundaries, the child care markets in both Afton and Creston could add more spaces in Licensed Child Care Centers. These new spaces could be a

combination of current programs expanding by adding more spaces at their current or a second location, or new child care centers opening.

While there is a great demand in these communities, before more spaces are added or new centers are started, interested individuals or organizations should take time to do careful business planning. Child care centers are a great way to provide a service to families; however, there are many regulations that have to be carefully balanced with a good business model to be financially sustainable. Iowa Department of Human Services provides information on the requirement of becoming a Licensed Child Care Center at <http://dhs.iowa.gov/licensure-and-registration/center-licensure>.

Consider Options for Additional Year-Round Capacity

The majority of parents that participated in the child care needs survey indicating they need year-round care. Yet, during the summer months, there are 170 fewer spaces available in Licensed Child Care Centers. Most of these spaces are intended to provide preschool for three- and four-year-old children during the school year, however, these spaces, which have already met Iowa DHS licensing regulations, could be possible opportunities to expand year-round capacity.

Encourage Employers to Provide Child Care Information to Employees

To help the workforce be more productive, employers can help by providing information to employees on where to find information about child care, such as a link to the Iowa DHS “Child Care Families” Provider Search (<https://ccmis.dhs.state.ia.us/clientportal/providersearch.aspx>) or information to contact the local Child Care Resource & Referral Office (<https://iowaccrr.org/>). Including information in new employee orientation, in an employee handbook, or other internal information sharing locations such as Human Resources can be beneficial for both the employee and employer.

Additionally, employers may consider how they can partner with local child care providers to benefit their employees and support these programs, which are often either nonprofit organizations or small locally-owned (often women owned) businesses. Partnerships can range from child care providers agreeing to offer a discount to employees of a partner company, to employers providing scholarships for tuition assistance, and do not always have to cost the child care provider or the employer money.