



# Grow Up IN West Central Indiana

A Regional Child Care Strategic Plan  
2024 - 2029



INDIANA STATE  
UNIVERSITY



Report by  
RJL Solutions



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# West Central Indiana Child Care Task Force

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# Acknowledgements



Lilly Endowment Inc.



Chances and Services for Youth  
(CASYS)



Ivy Tech Community College



Indiana State University



Parke County Early Care and  
Education Coalition



United Way of the Wabash Valley -  
Success By 6 Council





# Message from Indiana State University

Dear West Central Indiana,

I am pleased to report on the significant progress made through our collaborative efforts in crafting a strategic plan to address the child care needs of West Central Indiana. Supported generously by the Lilly Endowment's College and Community Collaboration Initiative, this initiative underscores our deep commitment to enhancing the welfare of every member of our region.

The culmination of rigorous qualitative and quantitative research during this project has yielded invaluable insights into our community's needs and aspirations. Our primary objective is to equip the six-county region of West Central Indiana with data-driven solutions that will catalyze substantial improvements in the child care landscape.

Central to this endeavor has been the active engagement of our region's constituents through surveys, focus groups, and forums. Their input has been instrumental in shaping a comprehensive plan that extends beyond academic realms to address the broader challenges and opportunities of family life in our area. This strategic blueprint reaffirms our dedication to fostering an environment where all individuals can thrive. We invite you to explore the tailored initiatives emerging from this collaborative effort, ranging from flexible child care solutions to community-driven support networks, designed to empower families, caregivers, and child care providers alike.

A pivotal component of our strategy is the Bayh College of Education at Indiana State University, which stands as a cornerstone for early education support in our region. Faculty members are dedicated to advancing innovative teaching methodologies and emphasizing the critical role of early education in laying a solid foundation for academic and social development. Through cutting-edge research, impactful community engagement, and robust partnerships with local schools, the Bayh College of Education ensures that future educators are well-prepared to excel in the dynamic field of early childhood education.

Our university's approach aims for enduring positive transformations in child care through comprehensive community outreach and educational initiatives. At its core, "Grow Up in West Central Indiana" aims to leverage local engagement and educational leadership to significantly enhance the quality and accessibility of child care services for years to come.

Indiana State University and our partners are committed to leaving a lasting impact on the child care landscape and the workforce of West Central Indiana, thereby enhancing our region's overall quality of life. We strive to establish a legacy of improved educational opportunities and well-being for future generations.

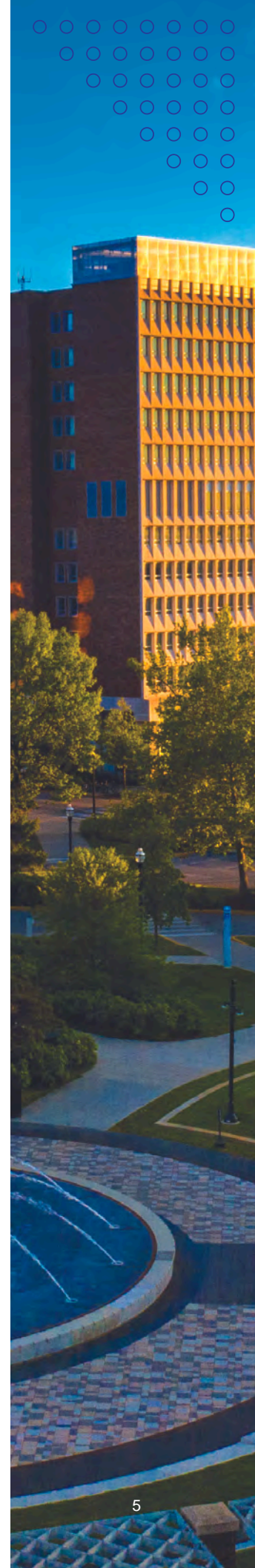
I extend sincere gratitude to all who contributed to this initiative. Through your dedication, we have charted a clear path forward to enhance child care and elevate the quality of life across West Central Indiana.

Sincerely,



**Dr. Mike Godard**

President, Indiana State University





# Message from Ivy Tech Terre Haute

Dear West Central Indiana,

I'm thrilled to announce a significant accomplishment that underscores our region's dedication to well-being: Grow Up in West Central Indiana: A Regional Child Care Strategic Plan. As we come together to navigate the intricate landscape of child care, we do so with a profound sense of regional unity, empathy, and shared responsibility.

Throughout this journey, your voices, narratives, and experiences have shaped the insights intricately woven into this strategic blueprint. Your participation in surveys, engaging discussions in regional forums, and heartfelt dialogues with local child care groups have collectively crafted a vision that is uniquely ours. This plan mirrors the diverse tapestry of our region and recognizes the varied needs of parents, the commitment of child care providers, and our aspirations for our children. It signifies a commitment to cultivate an environment in West Central Indiana where families and providers feel supported, valued, and interconnected.

This commitment to child care begins in our, and many other institutions of higher learning, classrooms. Ivy Tech is proud to play a pivotal role in advancing the pipeline of certified early childhood educators, creating a profound and positive impact on the landscape of quality child care in West Central Indiana. Through its rigorous and comprehensive programs in early childhood education (ECED), Ivy Tech not only equips aspiring educators with the essential knowledge and skills but also fosters a commitment to excellence in the field. Our graduates contribute significantly to the workforce of certified early childhood educators, addressing the critical need for well-trained professionals in the West Central region. This concerted effort elevates the standard of child care services in West Central Indiana, ensuring that children receive the highest quality of care and education during their formative years. By nurturing a skilled and dedicated cohort of early childhood educators, Ivy Tech Terre Haute becomes a keystone in the community's pursuit of enhancing the overall well-being and developmental outcomes for the region's youngest members. The institution's commitment to excellence in

early childhood education resonates as a driving force behind the elevation of child care standards, marking a transformative and enduring impact on the educational landscape of West Central Indiana.

I extend my deepest gratitude to the Lilly Endowment's College and Community Collaboration Initiative for their generous support in this endeavor and the partnership forged with Indiana State University to bring this plan to fruition. I also want to express my thanks to every community member who contributed to this collaborative effort. Your input has been invaluable, and this plan stands as a testament to the resilience of our collective commitment.

As we embark on the implementation of these strategic initiatives, let us continue to uphold one another, nurture our children, and build a region that flourishes together. Our collective journey toward improved child care services reflects the care and dedication that defines our university community.

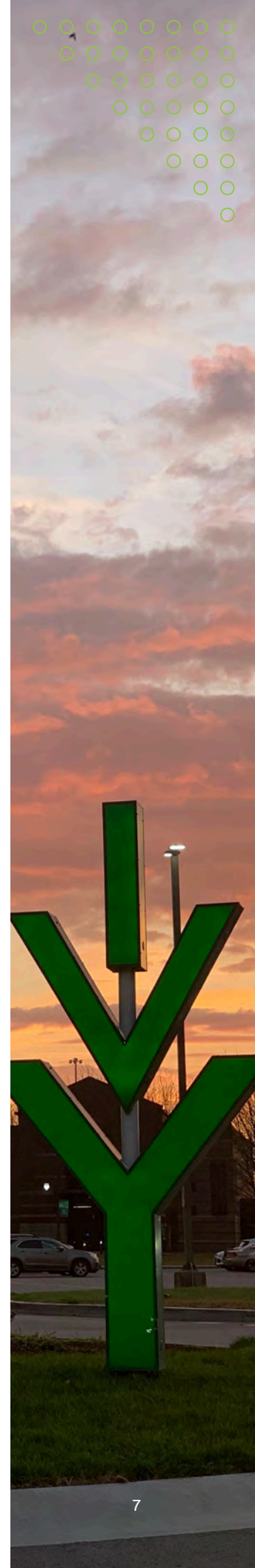
Thank you for being an integral part of this transformative endeavor.

Sincerely,



**Dr. Lea Anne Crooks**

Chancellor, Ivy Tech Community College - Terre Haute



# Introduction

The Lilly Endowment Inc.'s College and Community Collaboration (the "CCC") Initiative, is designed to foster partnerships between colleges or universities and their surrounding communities. The CCC aims to promote collaboration and mutual support between higher education institutions - offering four-year degree programs with a physical presence in the state – and the communities they serve, with a focus on addressing local needs and enhancing quality of life in those communities. Among the 35 eligible Indiana colleges and universities who were invited to participate, Indiana State University ("ISU"), serving as a regional anchor institution, eagerly embraced the initiative. To kick-start the strategic planning work, ISU submitted a proposal for the noncompetitive Phase 1 planning grant.

Recognizing the critical role these services play in the community, ISU focused on improving access to high-quality child care and early learning. The collaborative ethos extended to a strategic alliance with Ivy Tech Community College – Terre Haute ("Ivy Tech Terre Haute"), thereby magnifying the efficacy of their collective endeavors in the domain of early childhood development.

The significance of early childhood development in the region became apparent in light of the broader conversation at both regional and state levels. A July 2023 CNBC article highlighted Indiana's ranking as the 7th worst state to live in, citing factors such as inclusivity, workforce, and quality of life.[1] According to Child Care Aware of America, an advocacy group engaged on child care issues, Indiana holds the record as the second-worst state in the nation for child care – only behind Louisiana – in terms of access and affordability. It states, "[w]ith fewer than 10 licensed child care facilities per 100,000 residents, [Indiana] is making it hard for some families to fully participate in the workforce."

With a population of 221,757, West Central Indiana Region has an unemployment rate of 4.1% (9,092 individuals). The results of the survey conducted throughout this regional planning process indicate that 16.45% of respondents are in need of or are actively seeking childcare for their family. Assuming this number holds true for the region, approximately 1,495 individuals could be added to the local workforce if they had access to safe, reliable and quality childcare.

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[1] "America's 10 worst states to live and work in for 2023."

<https://www.cnbc.com/2023/07/14/these-are-americas-10-worst-states-to-live-and-work-in.html>

[2] "Brain Development and Role of Experience in the Early Years."

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3722610/>

The COVID-19 pandemic certainly magnified these challenges, drawing attention to further issues as high child care costs, limited access, and kindergarten readiness. Understanding that the first three years of a child's life are crucial for development[2], ISU collaborated with local and regional stakeholders to formulate a strategic plan that addresses affordability, accessibility, early childhood workforce, talent attraction and retention.

It is crucial to recognize that these aspects transcend the immediate realm of early childhood education; they are integral to broader conversations surrounding local business attraction, retention and expansion, and regional economic development. In West Central Indiana, strategic initiatives are continuously identified to enhance the region's quality of life. Aligned with regional stakeholders, ISU aims to guide stakeholder engagement, ensuring that early childhood education becomes a pivotal element in the region's developmental narrative.

With immense gratitude for the Endowment's unwavering commitment to Indiana, ISU was honored to spearhead this strategic planning initiative in partnership with Ivy Tech Terre Haute. With a steadfast dedication to excellence and a robust partnership with local and regional stakeholders, ISU aspires not only to guide conversations but to lead the charge in shaping the trajectory of the region's future. Through collaborative efforts, ISU seeks to make a significant, positive impact on the vitality, resilience, and prosperity of West Central Indiana, setting a precedent for sustainable growth and fostering a thriving region for generations to come.



# West Central Indiana Region

West Central Indiana is identified as a six-county region located along the Illinois border, including the counties of Clay, Parke, Putnam, Sullivan, Vermillion, and Vigo. In response to the state's emphasis towards regionalism, leaders within West Central Indiana determined a regional approach to addressing these challenges was best solved through a unified front, aligning strategies and resources to move the region into the future. Within the region, three groups work collaboratively with higher education institutions and other key stakeholders, to promote West Central Indiana as a place to live, work, play, and raise a family.



Thrive West Central – serves as the region's direct connection to the Economic Development Association (EDA) and serves as the key organization in creating a better quality of life for the aging population. Thrive offers technical assistance, data collection, and support to 13 counties. Their core counties of service include Clay, Montgomery, Parke, Putnam, Sullivan, Vermillion, and Vigo Counties.



Wabash River Regional Development Authority – pursues economic development opportunities in partnership with the State of Indiana. The RDA represents Clay, Parke, Sullivan, Vermillion, and Vigo Counties.



West Central Indiana Partnership – focuses on the region's overall quality of life metrics. West Central Indiana Partnership represents Clay, Parke, Putnam, Sullivan, Vermillion, and Vigo Counties.

Grow Up in West Central Indiana continues to embody collaboration, recognizing the importance of early childhood development as instrumental to the overarching vision of the region to enhance the workforce, quality of life, quality of place, and quality of opportunity for those choosing to call West Central Indiana home.

# Executive Summary

Supported by the Endowment's CCC initiative, ISU and Ivy Tech Terre Haute proudly announced the launch of Grow Up in West Central Indiana: A Regional Child Care Strategic Plan in September 2023. This strategic endeavor aimed to identify key objectives and strategies that would bolster employers, families, and child care providers in the region, propelling early learning and childhood development.

In defining the scope of Grow Up in West Central Indiana, ISU and Ivy Tech Terre Haute focused on the counties of Clay, Parke, Putnam, Sullivan, Vermillion, and Vigo. These counties hold representation within the West Central Indiana Partnership, the Wabash River Regional Development Authority, and Thrive West Central – three regional organizations committed to advancing the quality of life, place, and opportunity within West Central Indiana.

Through a thorough data collection process, Grow Up in West Central Indiana engaged with numerous local and regional stakeholders to pinpoint gaps, current trends, and opportunities in early learning and childhood development. The resulting strategic plan offers a comprehensive overview of the collected data, incorporating benchmarked communities and case studies, and identifying strategic objectives and actionable strategies to address child care for the region.

## Mission

The mission of Grow Up in West Central Indiana is to provide a safe, stimulating, and supportive environment where every child in the region thrives and allows for the community to organically grow through workforce, population, and opportunities. Through innovative programming, education, and collaborative partnerships, the aim is to foster holistic development, laying the foundation for accessible and high-quality child care in the surrounding communities, the region, and beyond.

## Vision

The vision of Grow Up in West Central Indiana is to become a beacon of excellence in the State of Indiana for early childhood education and care, inspiring future generations of confident, curious, and compassionate learners who are kindergarten ready by age 5. The goal is to create an inclusive, dynamic region where children flourish, families are valued, workforce thrives, and educators are recognized for their dedication and expertise.



# Methodology

The Grow Up in West Central Indiana strategic plan was developed through an extensive process including community and stakeholder engagement, research, and data collection to identify gaps and trends within the region. The planning effort followed a four-step process, which included the following:

- Phase I: Data Collection and Analyzation
- Phase II: Content Development
- Phase III: Stakeholder Feedback
- Phase IV: Finalization of Report

## **Phase I: Data Collection and Analyzation (September 2023 – November 2023)**

The initial phase of Grow Up in West Central Indiana unfolded with the announcement of its ambitious goals through a widely disseminated press release. This public introduction not only outlined the purpose and objectives of the initiative but also actively encouraged community engagement. The data collection included a dynamic survey (Appendix D), community forums, and stakeholder interviews.

The Grow Up in West Central Indiana survey, strategically disseminated across multiple platforms including email correspondence, social media channels, university and college bulletins, and local community advertisements, garnered a noteworthy 839 individual responses. The responses represent a diverse respondent cohort comprised of employers (10.85%), families availing child care services (38.26%) [of which 23.6% utilize familial resources and 76.4% engage child care providers], individuals/families in search of child care options (16.45%), and child care service providers (4.65%). The remaining respondents (29.8%) do not require child care services.

In tandem with the survey, a series of community forums were held across the region in each of the counties: Clay, Parke, Putnam, Sullivan, Vermillion, and Vigo.

In addition to the survey and community forums, one-on-one interviews were conducted with regional child care groups, including Chances and Services for Youth (CASY), Western Indiana Community Action Agency, Inc. (WICAA), YMCA of the Wabash Valley, and the Parke County Early Education Coalition. These interviews provided a thorough exploration of local and regional endeavors, yielding insightful viewpoints on the challenges and

barriers encountered by families, institutions, and employers within the sphere of child care and early education.

This thorough collection of data, through various methods, ensures a wide-ranging and representative grasp of the region's needs, while also establishing the groundwork for informed decision-making in the later stages of the strategic planning process.

## **Phase II: Content Development (November 2023 – January 2024)**

Following the data collection and analysis, the focus transitioned to developing an initial draft plan, harnessing the insights gained during Phase I and weaving them into a comprehensive tapestry that would shape a variety of strategic initiatives for the region.

The content development phase began with an examination of the data compiled in the previous phase, providing a thorough analysis of findings that encompassed various facets of child care within the region. This included a clarification of terminology, an in-depth child care industry analysis, a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis specifically tailored to the child care landscape in the region, and a thorough examination of relevant benchmarks and case studies. Each component of this comprehensive overview contributed to the creation of a robust and well-informed plan.

The initial content draft was the product of the collective insights, needs and attitudes of the region, marking a crucial milestone in the planning process. To ensure a holistic and inclusive approach, ISU's West Central Indiana Child Care Committee (the "Committee"), representing diverse perspectives and expertise related to the subject, reviewed, and offered invaluable feedback on the analysis, diagnosis and strategic direction of the plan.

Through collaborative discussions within the Committee, emphasis was placed on recognizing the significance of stakeholder feedback as an indispensable step in the final plan. The insights and perspectives gleaned from this iterative process not only enriched the content but also ensured that the plan resonated with the needs and aspirations of the region it aimed to serve.

As Phase II drew to a close, the groundwork laid in content development set the stage for the subsequent steps, seamlessly propelling the strategic plan initiative towards its ultimate goal of enhancing early learning, child care, and childhood development in West Central Indiana.

### **Phase III: Stakeholder Feedback (February 2024)**

Following the completion of the content draft, the Committee gathered for a collaborative and interactive working session. This two-hour session was designed to elicit valuable feedback and insights from the stakeholder group, serving as a critical step in refining the planning efforts.

Ahead of the meeting, committee members were provided with an in-depth draft of the Strategic Plan, allowing each member an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the proposed strategies and initiatives. The meeting was structured strategically around two main objectives:

#### **1) Refinement and Finalization of Strategies and Tactics**

Providing an opportunity for open dialogue between the stakeholder group and the project consultants allowed them to contribute their expertise to enhance and finalize the strategies and tactics outlined in the plan; and

#### **2) Identification of Collaborative Partners**

The stakeholder group was also able to identify various organizations and entities considered crucial for the successful execution of the plan's tactics, creating a collaborative approach aimed to cultivate a supportive network for ISU and its partners.

Feedback received from this session played a vital role in shaping the final content of the Strategic Plan, marking a critical milestone in the journey toward comprehensive and impactful child care solutions for West Central Indiana.

### **Phase IV: Finalization of Report**

Following the Committee review in the previous step, Grow Up in West Central Indiana underwent a meticulous refinement process based on the valuable feedback gathered from stakeholders and the collaborative efforts of ISU and Ivy Tech Terre Haute. The feedback, which was carefully analyzed and thoughtfully considered, served as a compass guiding the revisions in preparation for the second draft.

This phase marked a significant juncture where the plan evolved in response to the dynamic insights and perspectives shared by stakeholders during the Child Care Task Force meeting. The iterative process of revisiting and adjusting content ensures a strategic alignment with the diverse needs and aspirations of the region. As the content reached its

final iteration, the document transformed from a black and white draft to a fully designed report. This step not only brought forth a cohesive and polished design but also infused the document with branding elements, reinforcing the commitment to excellence and professionalism.

In the culmination of Phase IV, Grow Up in West Central Indiana emerged as a comprehensive and refined document, ready to serve as a guiding beacon for the region's journey towards accessible, high-quality child care and early learning. The strategic alignment achieved through meticulous feedback analysis and design considerations solidified the plan's readiness to empower communities, support families, and inspire future generations in West Central Indiana.



# Terminology

The definitions, acronyms, and terminology contained herein are commonly employed throughout this document, and within the common discourse related to child care.



## **Chances and Services for Youth (CASY)**

Headquartered in Terre Haute, Indiana, CASY serves as the Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agency for West Central Indiana counties. CASY functions as a local hub for family outreach and support, actively engages with crucial stakeholders to promote advancements in the quality, accessibility, and affordability of early childhood education, and diligently monitors local developments, discussions, and events pertaining to the field.



## **Child Care Development Fund (CCDF)**

A federal initiative designed to facilitate access to child care services for low-income families, enabling their access to higher cost and high-quality programming. The fundamental objective of the CCDF is to augment the accessibility, affordability, and quality of child care provisions.



## **Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R)**

Provides local family outreach and support; engages with key audiences to advance early childhood education quality, access, and affordability; and monitors for local changes, conversations and happenings related to early childhood education. The CCR&R agency for West Central Indiana counties is Chances and Services for Youth (CASY), located in Terre Haute, Indiana.



## **Early Childhood Educator**

Individuals who work as child care providers and are responsible for child well-being and care.





### **Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA)**

Funding agency established by the Indiana General Assembly to consolidate and better integrate the delivery of human services by state government. The different sectors of FSSA include Division of Family resources, Office of Medicaid Policy and Planning, Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services, Division of Mental Health and Addition, Division of Aging, Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning, The Disability Determination Bureau, and Indiana 211.



### **High-Quality Care**

Level 3 and 4 of the PTQ rating system (see Paths to QUALITY below).



### **On-My-Way Pre-K**

Program administering grants tailored for 4-year-olds hailing from low-income households, facilitating their enrollment in high-quality pre-K programs during the year preceding kindergarten entry.



### **Paths to QUALITY (PTQ)**

Indiana's statewide quality rating and improvement system for early care and education. It consists of four levels; each level is built on the foundation of the previous one. Providers start at Level 1 and work their way towards national accreditation at the highest level, Level 4. Licensed and unlicensed providers are not required to earn a PTQ ranking. PTQ rankings are as follows:

- Level One: Health and safety needs of children met.
- Level Two: Environment supports children's learning.
- Level Three: Planned curriculum guides child development and school readiness.
- Level Four: National accreditation (the highest indicator of quality) is achieved.



### **West Central Indiana**

Region in Indiana made up of Clay, Parke, Putnam, Sullivan, Vermillion, and Vigo Counties.

# Industry Analysis

In navigating the data gathered from the surveys, community forums, and stakeholder interviews, the preliminary child care data serves as a compass, guiding the trajectory towards an enhanced response to the child care ecosystem. By comprehensively understanding the current state of child care services, invaluable insights are gained into the pulse of the region's needs.

The significance of this preliminary data lies in its potential to unravel nuanced patterns, revealing areas of strength and highlighting gaps that demand strategic interventions. It acts as a diagnostic tool, allowing us to identify specific challenges faced by families, providers, and employers in accessing quality child care. In seeking to analyze the region through an economic sustainability lens, the data becomes a crucial ally, empowering us to tailor initiatives to address the unique contours of the local landscape.

Furthermore, the data not only informs, but it also inspires. It sparks conversations, fostering a shared commitment to addressing the identified needs collaboratively. With a clear understanding of the demand for child care services, targeted solutions can be created, channeling resources where they are most needed. This preliminary data serves as a catalyst for a transformative journey towards a community where every child's developmental needs are met, families thrive, and the workforce flourishes.

## **Preliminary Child Care Data**

The preliminary data presented serves as a foundational cornerstone for understanding the prevailing challenges and opportunities in the region's child care landscape. Through quantitative representations and statistical insights, this preliminary dataset aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of child care in West Central Indiana and the surrounding counties. By analyzing factors such as capacity, quality, accessibility, and affordability this preliminary data illuminates the multifaceted nature of the region's child care needs, laying the groundwork for subsequent in-depth analyses and targeted interventions to address identified gaps and enhance the overall child care services in the region.

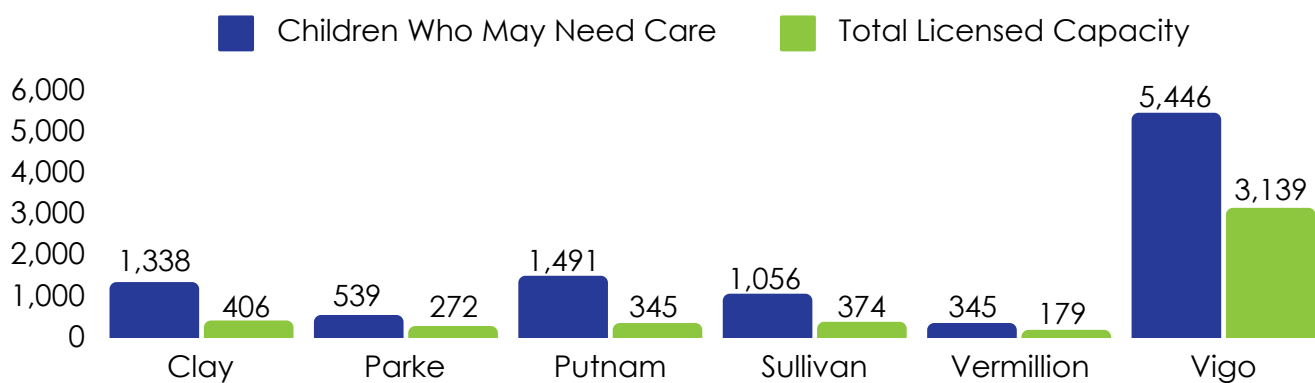
### Quality and Capacity

Figure 1 delineates the existing child care capacity within the West Central Indiana region.

Similar to other communities across the State of Indiana, West Central Indiana has grappled with the challenge of meeting the escalating demand for child care services while maintaining benchmarks of adequacy, quality, and affordability. Figure 1 illustrates a growing gap between the number of children in need and the constrained capacity of extant child care providers within each county. This incongruity underscored a pronounced shortfall in the availability of child care spots, raising concerns about the region's capacity to cater to its youthful demographic.

While the graphic effectively highlighted the substantial gap between the number of children in need of care and the existing capacity, it must also be recognized that the statistics depicted in the chart offered only a surface-level understanding of the child care demand within the West Central Indiana region. The shortfall was further exacerbated by the absence of nontraditional options for child care, thus omitting from consideration a substantial number of children who required care beyond the standard work hours (8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.) or children with special needs. This dual issue, encompassing both the shortfall of conventional capacity and the absence of nontraditional child care options, presented a complex and multifaceted challenge faced by West Central Indiana in addressing the diverse needs of families. The implications of these data sets called for a comprehensive and strategic approach to address the gaps in child care and the development of a robust and inclusive child care infrastructure tailored to the unique dynamics of the region.

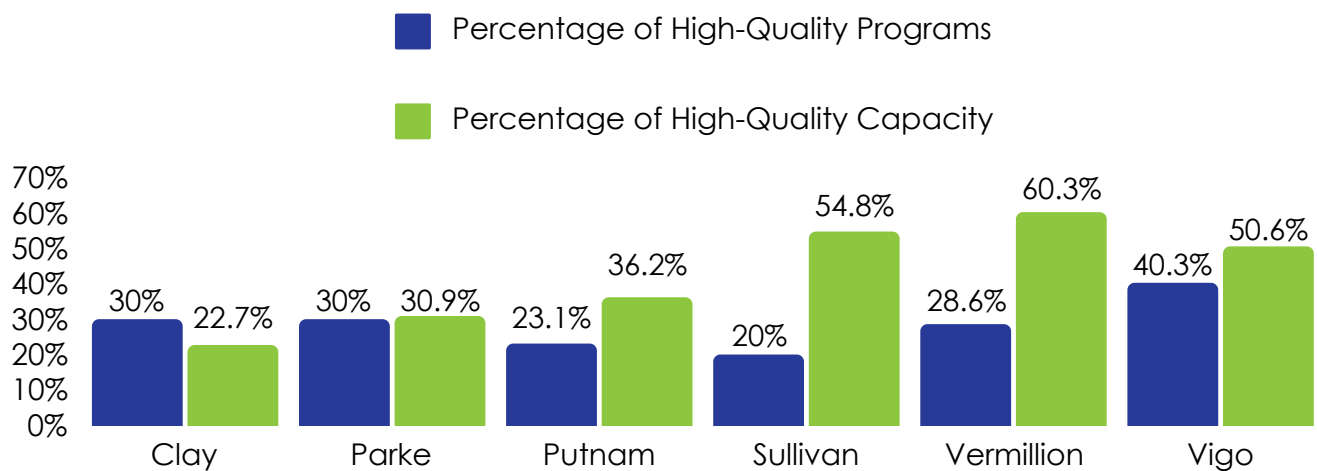
**Figure 1: Children Under 6 in Need of Care vs. Total Licensed Capacity**



Source: [Brighter Futures Indiana](#)

Beyond the overall capacity deficit, West Central Indiana also exhibited a need for augmented availability of high-quality child care services. Although certain counties within the region boasted higher capacities for delivering high-quality care, the overarching challenge arose from a deficiency in the number of providers who met the criteria for ensuring a standard of excellence. The scarcity of high-quality providers exposed issues pertaining to transportation, access, and cost throughout all counties. For example, if a high-quality provider was located on the south side of a county, those on the north side could not access the provider. This scenario not only underscored the critical need for enhancing the overall provision of high-quality care but also emphasized the essential requirement for strategic interventions geared towards establishing accessible high-quality placements across the entire region. The interplay between capacities at the county level and the limited availability of providers meeting rigorous quality benchmarks highlighted the urgency for a comprehensive and targeted approach to strengthen the high-quality child care infrastructure in West Central Indiana.

**Figure 2: Percentage of High-Quality Programming and High-Quality Capacity**



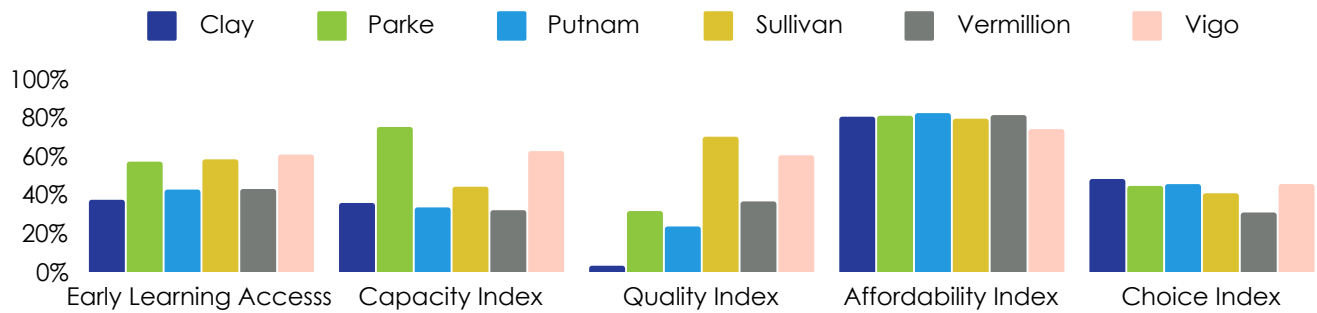
Source: [Brighter Futures Indiana](#)

Early Learning Access Index

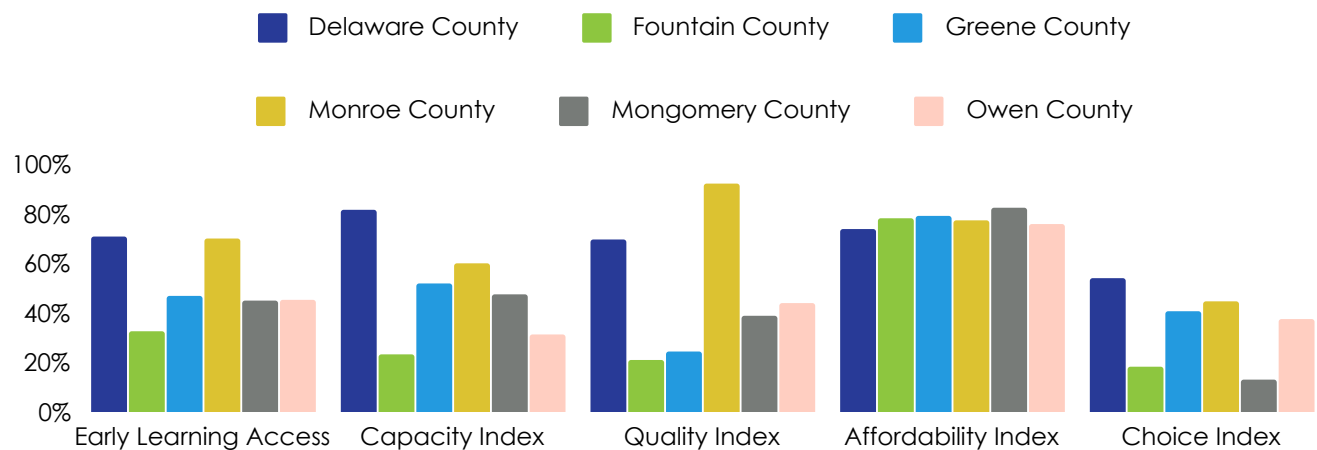
Each year, Early Learning Indiana (ELI) issues the Closing the Gap Report, a comprehensive examination of the child care landscape across the State of Indiana. This report employed a sophisticated index to evaluate various dimensions, assigning a rating to each county based on a scale ranging from 1 to 100, where 100 signified the highest rating and 1 the

lowest. In the report for the year 2023, the broader region garnered an average rating of 49.93 for overall early learning access, 47.21 for capacity, 37.58 for quality, 79.82 for affordability, and 42.58 for choice. Figures 3 and 4 depict the individual ratings for each category across the counties within the region, along with those neighboring counties identified in the benchmarking section of the report (refer to page 13). Noteworthy was the similarity in ratings between West Central Indiana and its adjacent counties; however, select counties such as Delaware and Monroe notably surpassed West Central Indiana in all evaluated categories, indicative of varying degrees of child care quality and accessibility across the state.

**Figure 3: West Central Indiana Counties Early Learning Access**



**Figure 4: Surrounding and Comparative Counties Early Learning Access**



Source: [Early Learning Indiana](#)

## Cost

Despite the lower child care costs in West Central Indiana in comparison to the overall state average, a significant number of families within the region have continued to grapple with affordability challenges in accessing child care services. In the 2016 analysis of child care costs conducted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for the Child Care and Development Fund (the "CCDF"), it was recommended that child care costs not exceed 7% of households' annual income. However, the subsequent chart delineates the average weekly expenses and the proportion of income allocated to child care expenses, specifically tailored to families with a single child. This comparative analysis, seen in Figure 5, highlights the disparity between recommended affordability benchmarks and the prevailing financial burden experienced by families in West Central Indiana, despite the lower regional child care costs.

**Figure 5: Average Weekly Cost and Annual Cost**

County	Average Weekly Child Care Cost	Average Annual Cost (%)
Clay	\$126.02	7.4%
Parke	\$103.20	8.1%
Putnam	\$129.08	8.5%
Sullivan	\$115.64	10.2%
Vermillion	\$108.39	10.2%
Vigo	\$140.09	13.8%

Source: [Brighter Futures Indiana](#)

## Child Care Employment

A major barrier to enhancing the child care capacities within West Central Indiana lay in the deficiency of a qualified employment pool to fill educator vacancies, attributable to a lack of interest in the profession, inadequate compensation, and the absence of standard

employer-sponsored benefits, such as health care and retirement/savings plans. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the sector of early childhood educators is expected to witness a 2% decline nationwide from 2022 to 2032. Paradoxically, despite this anticipated contraction, the BLS projected an annual demand exceeding 150,000 openings for early childhood educator positions. Presently, early childhood educators in Indiana are paid a mean hourly wage of \$12.69 (\$26,395 annually), marginally below the national average of \$14.22 per hour (\$29,578 annually) for their counterparts across the United States. The complex interplay between workforce dynamics, wage structures, and industry projections underscored the multifaceted challenges inherent in sustaining a robust and qualified workforce in the field of early childhood education.

### Surrounding Communities

While the primary scope of Grow Up in West Central Indiana remained concentrated on Clay, Parke, Putnam, Sullivan, Vermillion, and Vigo Counties, it was imperative to recognize the broader regional impact. Surrounding counties in both Indiana and Illinois have been interconnected with West Central Indiana, not only in terms of child care but also as a vital hub for employment opportunities. Understanding this interconnected regional dynamic was essential for a comprehensive assessment. Consequently, the following section aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of data pertaining to child care services in the proximate counties surrounding the focal region, thereby offering a unique perspective that extended beyond the immediate purview of the aforementioned core counties. This broader exploration enabled a holistic comprehension of the regional dynamics influencing child care and employment, underscoring the collaboration necessary for fostering an integrated approach to early childhood development and workforce engagement.

**Figure 6: Surrounding County Child Care Statistics**

County	Children Under 5	Licensed Providers	Total Capacity	High-Quality Providers	Average Annual Cost of Care
Edgar Co, IL	932	18	275	0 (Gold & Silver Rating)	\$13,802 (infants) \$10,377 (pre-K)
Clark Co, IL	1,130	8	97	0 (Gold & Silver Rating)	\$13,802 (infants) \$10,377 (pre-K)
Greene Co, IN	915 (Children Under 6)	25	426	7 (172 capacity)	\$12,490 (infants) \$9,447 (pre-K)

Source: IECAM (Illinois), Brighter Futures Indiana (Indiana)

## West Central Indiana Child Care SWOT Analysis

The following analysis stands as a keystone in the comprehensive assessment of the child care landscape within West Central Indiana. A synthesis of preliminary data and insights gained from dynamic surveys, forums, and stakeholder conversations had laid the groundwork for this strategic examination. To determine the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats inherent in the regional child care infrastructure, quantitative and qualitative information was considered. This approach, integrating empirical evidence and firsthand insights, ensured a thorough analysis that was attuned to the intricacies and exigencies of the child care ecosystem in West Central Indiana.

### Strengths

- **Community Interest:** There is a discernible surge in community interest, reflecting a collective dedication to fostering a better environment for families in West Central Indiana.
- **Stakeholder Prioritization:** Child care goals are prioritized among stakeholders and various community organizations, showcasing a cohesive commitment to the well-being and development of early childhood education.
- **Higher Education Infrastructure:** The region benefits from an extensive higher education infrastructure, contributing to a knowledge base that enhances the quality of child care services.
- **Strong Provider Network:** A resilient network of current child care providers adds to the robustness of the child care ecosystem.
- **Active Child Care Advocacy Groups:**
  - Chances and Services for Youth (CASy)
  - Parke County Early Care and Education Coalition (LAUNCH)
  - United Way's Success By 6 Council

### Weaknesses

- **Limited Access to Child Care Spots:** A undeniable lack of access to child care spots accentuates a pressing supply-demand disparity.
- **Insufficient High-Quality Care:** There is a noticeable deficit in high-quality child care services.
- **Financial Strain:** The high percentage of annual child care costs relative to income poses financial challenges for families.

- **Lack of Employer Support:** A lack of employer-supported child care initiatives contributes to the existing challenges.
- **Limited Understanding:** An inadequate understanding of the profound economic implications of child care deficiencies hampers strategic planning.

## Opportunities

- **County-Level Initiatives:**
  - Parke County Early Care and Education Coalition (LAUNCH)
  - Ernie Pyle Childhood Facility Feasibility Study (Vermillion County)
  - Sullivan County Coalition
  - Indiana State University Early Childhood Education Center
- **External Funding Sources:**
  - American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)
  - Regional Economic Acceleration & Development Initiative (READI)
  - FSSA's Employer Sponsored Child Care Fund
- **Legislation and Committee Initiatives:**
  - Legislation for State-Initiated Financial Programming and Wages
  - Indiana General Assembly's Interim Study Committee on Public Health Child Care Recommendations
- **Leveraging Low-Income Households:** The region's high rate of low-income households presents an opportunity for child care providers to leverage Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) reimbursements, particularly for those delivering high-quality services.

## Threats

- **Population Decline:** The ominous specter of a declining population poses challenges to the stability and viability of child care services in West Central Indiana.
  - 2020 Population: 221,757
  - 2010 Population: 277,729
  - Percent Population Change: -20.15%
- **Child Care Deserts:** The presence of child care deserts, wherein communities encounter a scarcity of accessible child care options, amplifies the risks associated with meeting the needs of the local workforce.

## Indiana Birth-5 Strategic Plan 2020 - 2022 and Other Initiatives

In 2019, the State of Indiana secured a Preschool Development Grant from the Federal Administration for Children and Families, catalyzing an expansive undertaking. This initiative entailed the formation of a planning committee, comprising a diverse array of stakeholders, united with the overarching objective of creating a comprehensive plan that examined the current child care landscape across the State of Indiana, focusing on children from birth to 5 years old. The formulation of System Focus Areas and the articulation of corresponding goals emerged as the result of a collaborative endeavor, integrating insights from prominent Indiana organizations dedicated to child care and well-being, including FSSA, ISDH, DCS, and IDOE. Furthermore, non-profit entities sharing aligned objectives actively participated in this collaborative effort.

To ensure a comprehensive understanding of the needs and perspectives of families with children in the specified age bracket, the committee implemented a multifaceted approach. Two family focus groups were established to facilitate direct interaction and feedback from the state. Additionally, a meticulously crafted questionnaire was distributed to solicit input, reaching out to various segments of the state including families, providers, and relevant community organizations. The questionnaire, disseminated through the committee's extensive network, elicited a robust response with 1,075 insightful contributions.

The entire process of conceiving and crafting the Birth-5 Strategic Plan, from its inception in February to its culmination in September 2019, underscored a commitment to thoroughness, inclusivity, and responsiveness to the diverse needs of the community. During this process, the committee used the plan to identify four System Focus Areas and twelve strategic goals. The System Focus Areas included the following:

1. Grow High-Quality Birth-5 Programs and Supports.
2. Support Strong Transitions to School and Kindergarten Readiness.
3. Promote Birth-5 Family and Community Engagement.
4. Increase Collaboration and Coordination in the Birth-5 Service Array.

With the establishment of goals, the Birth-5 committee proceeded to chart a timeline spanning the years 2020 - 2022, during which distinct focus areas were delineated for each objective. Subsequently, the committee meticulously strategized the ensuing steps by discerning actionable items and mechanisms for regular updates to facilitate progress.

However, the adoption of the plan in 2019 preceded the novel challenges brought on by

the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, bringing to the forefront issues pertaining to child care. Against this backdrop, in January 2023, the Family and Social Services Administration's (FSSA) Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning secured a substantial \$42 million federal grant. This grant, allocated over a three-year period, is poised to play a transformative role in fortifying child care and early learning initiatives throughout the State of Indiana. The intersection of federal influence, state-level strategic planning, and responsive grant allocations exemplifies a dynamic approach to addressing the evolving needs of families and children in the realm of child care. To invest these funds in needed areas, FSSA has outlined the following funding priorities:

- Building upon stakeholders' understanding of the needs, gaps and inequities in Indiana's birth-through-age-5 mixed delivery system, especially as they relate to underserved populations
- Refreshing Indiana's birth-through-age-5 strategic plan to reflect the current environment and the existing opportunities to drive system-level change
- Amplifying the voices of families in decision-making and introducing new services and educational supports that empower them as their child's first and most important teacher
- Introducing new workforce recruitment and career pathways, building the operational capacity of early childhood care and education providers, and enhancing workforce conditions and compensation
- Strengthening instructional practices, quality measures and birth-to-age-8 coordination efforts
- Investing in the expansion of high-quality programs in underserved geographies

In conjunction with the grant obtained through FSSA, Indiana has embarked on a multifaceted strategy aimed at fortifying the foundations of child care through strategic investments in education, benefits, and enhanced compensation. This holistic approach not only elevates the Hoosier workforce but also extends its positive impact to families by affording them access to high-quality care. Moreover, the state is committed to bolstering kindergarten readiness and ensuring that child care is accessible to underserved populations.

The outlined goals within the Birth-5 Strategic Plan, coupled with endeavors at the state legislature, have wielded a discernible influence over FSSA's allocation of funds earmarked for early childhood initiatives. This strategic allocation, in turn, is shaping efforts within local communities throughout Indiana. Echoing the overarching state-level initiatives, individual counties and employers are proactively delving into innovative opportunities and initiatives

that offer creative solutions to the myriad challenges entwined with child care (See Appendix B). Demonstrating this proactive approach, counties like Monroe, Montgomery, Rush, and Kosciusko are leading the way by forming alliances among stakeholders, employers, and regional nonprofits. These coalitions serve as dynamic forums for the identification of opportunities to bolster family support in the pursuit of high-quality child care solutions.

At the micro-level, businesses and organizations within Indiana are actively exploring novel approaches to contribute to the child care landscape. This includes the provision of child care-related benefits and assistance, the supply of essential child care materials to families, initiatives to attract child care providers to local communities, and the facilitation of on-site child care services. This multifaceted engagement reflects a concerted effort to address the diverse needs of families and employees, acknowledging the integral role that accessible and high-quality child care plays in fostering a thriving region.

As West Central Indiana endeavors to fortify its child care solutions and implementation strategies, a pivotal step involves harmonizing the regional objectives and strategies with the broader landscape of initiatives unfolding across the state. This deliberate synchronization ensures a unified and synergistic approach, facilitating collective progress in the pursuit of comprehensive solutions to address the multifaceted child care needs prevalent within the region.



## West Central Indiana Workforce

In the dynamic landscape of West Central Indiana, the workforce has stood as the backbone of the regional vitality, propelling economic growth and community prosperity. At the heart of this thriving workforce lies a crucial factor often overlooked—the significant impact of child care. The interplay between child care accessibility, quality, and affordability is woven into the fabric of the workforce, influencing recruitment, retention, and overall employee well-being. In examining the dynamics of child care within the region, it became evident that addressing the needs of working families and fostering a supportive child care infrastructure was paramount to sustaining and fortifying the West Central Indiana workforce.

Over the past decade, West Central Indiana had faced significant economic challenges, marked by the departure of Pfizer, the downsizing of Sony DADC, the closure of the Wabash Valley River Generating Station, and the recent decline in coal-related employment. Utilizing data from the 2020 U.S. Census, it was evident that all six counties in the West Central Indiana region had experienced a decline in population, underscoring the pressing need for initiatives that stimulated economic growth and job creation. In 2022, the region had faced a 4.1% unemployment rate, while the State of Indiana had faced a 3.1% unemployment rate, further highlighting the urgency of efforts to reinvigorate the local workforce and economic landscape.

In order to achieve this, it was necessary to take a comprehensive approach that recognized the fundamental role of basic amenities, notably child care, in fostering economic resilience. Accessible and high-quality child care not only supports working families but also can contribute to increased workforce participation and productivity. Initiatives focusing on child care accessibility could serve as a catalyst for attracting and retaining skilled professionals, promoting the overall well-being of the community, and positioning West Central Indiana as an attractive region for both current residents and prospective talent. In navigating the path toward workforce revitalization, prioritizing child care emerged as a strategic imperative for cultivating a robust and prosperous local economy.

In West Central Indiana, each county boasts a distinctive economic landscape. Clay County has been marked by a robust manufacturing sector, with major employers like Great Dane contributing significantly to the region's industrial sector. Parke County had also showcased a diverse economic profile, with top employers such as Taghleef Industries.

Putnam County has thrived on a mix of manufacturing and education, with DePauw University and automotive industries standing as major employers. Sullivan County's economic fabric has been shaped by health care, led by Sullivan County Community Hospital, while Vermillion County has been characterized by its manufacturing industry, exemplified by Elanco. Vigo County, home to Terre Haute, has featured an array of employers, including four institutions of higher education and Union Hospital, contributing to its diverse economic ecosystem. Identifying the key players in each county has laid the groundwork for understanding the unique workforce dynamics influenced by these prominent entities. The following lists the top employers for each county, as identified by Hoosier by the Numbers:

## Clay County

- Great Dane
- Process Development and Fabrication
- Ascension St. Vincent Clay Hospital
- Morris Manufacturing & Sales
- Walmart
- Kroger
- North Clay Middle School
- Northview High School
- PPG Industrial Coatings Inc.
- Cloverleaf Healthcare

## Putnam County

- Walmart Distribution
- DePauw University
- Putnamville Correctional
- Heartland Automotive
- Walmart Supercenter
- Putnam County Hospital
- Lone Star Industries
- South Putnam Community School Corporation
- Chiyoda USA Corporation

## Parke County

- Taghleef Industries Inc.
- Formflex
- Rockville Correctional Facility
- Scott Pet Inc.
- Futurex (Marshall)
- Futurex (Bloomington)
- Superior Hardwoods
- Turkey Run Inn
- Rockville IGA #381
- Parke County Sheriff

## Sullivan County

- Raybestos Powertrain LLC
- Hoosier Energy Rural Electric Company
- Peabody Energy Corporation (Sullivan)
- Peabody Energy Corporation (Carlisle)
- Sullivan County Community Hospital
- Northeast School Corporation
- Walmart
- Good Samaritan Home Care
- Sullivan High School
- McDonald's

## Vermillion County

- Elanco
- South Vermillion School Corporation
- South Vermillion Transportation
- Union Hospital Clinton
- Walmart
- Vermillion Convalescent Center
- Clinton Gardens
- Our Caring Hands Inc.
- Washington Nursing Center
- South Vermillion Middle School

## Vigo County

- Vigo County School Corporation
- Union Health
- Indiana State University
- Vigo County Government
- U.S. Federal Correctional Complex
- City of Terre Haute government
- Amcor
- Hamilton Center
- ADVICS
- Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology

The region is made up of a diverse mosaic of employers, weaving together a myriad of industries to employ Hoosiers. In the West Central Indiana region, also known as Economic Growth Region 7, the following are identified as the top industry sectors:

1. Manufacturing
2. Health Care and Social Services
3. Retail Trade
4. Educational Services
5. Accommodation and Food Services
6. Public Administration
7. Transportation and Warehousing
8. Construction
9. Administration, Support, and Waste Management

According to the Indiana Department of Workforce Development, Economic Growth Region (EGR) 7 is poised to experience a noteworthy surge in its base employment. Reaching a total employment of 88,022 in the year 2021, projections for the near future suggest a continued upward trajectory, with an anticipated growth to 90,986 jobs by the year 2031, thereby augmenting regional employment by 2,964 positions. This positive trend underscores the resilience and attractiveness of the region for businesses and serves as a testament to the flourishing economic climate that continues to unfold.

In recent years, the West Central region has initiated the groundwork to welcome future major employers and is already experiencing economic growth because of it. In 2019,

Saturn Petcare announced its plans to build its first facility in the United States in Terre Haute, Indiana. The plant sought to create 200 jobs by 2024 and involved an investment of more than \$30 million.[3]. Terre Haute is also slated to experience an economic upshift, soon, thanks to the new Terre Haute Casino Resort, opening Spring 2024. The project, which began construction in 2023, was a \$290 million investment in the region and will bring an estimated 500 jobs[4]. The construction of the facility itself generated an estimated 1,000 jobs. Once completed, the revenue from the casino, an estimated \$190 million annually, will allow for \$10 million to be integrated back in the Vigo County community. Breaking it down, \$5 million will be invested in the City of Terre Haute; \$3 million to nonprofit foundations; and \$2 million will be distributed across Vigo County, the Vigo County School Corporation, and regional planning.

Looking to the future, the region stands to benefit from major manufacturers seeking a home in the West Central region. In March 2023, Entek, a producer of lithium batteries, announced a \$1.5 billion investment in the City of Terre Haute, located in Vigo County, to build a lithium battery separator plant[5]. The facility, once completed in 2027, will bring 642 new jobs to the region. In addition to Entek, in early 2024, Amazon announced plans to build a delivery center in one of Vigo County's industrial parks, investing nearly \$10 million and bringing in up to 100 jobs[6]. Parallel to Vigo County's recent investments, in 2022, Sullivan County announced a \$700 million investment from Maple Creek Energy to construct a new facility[7]. The energy facility will maintain an estimated 20 full-time jobs as well as provide additional employment through engineering, management, and operational positions. The future construction of the facility, slated to begin in 2024, will bring up to 550 construction jobs.

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[3] "German-based pet food co-manufacturer opening US plant." <https://www.petfoodprocessing.net/articles/12854-german-based-pet-food-co-manufacturer-opening-us-plant>

[4] "Community update: From ENTEK to Terre Haute Casino Resort, a lot on the table to boost economy." [https://www.tribstar.com/news/local\\_news/community-update-from-entek-to-terre-haute-casino-resort-a-lot-on-the-table-to/article\\_a4832886-4cd8-11ee-8897-27bee8cef786.html](https://www.tribstar.com/news/local_news/community-update-from-entek-to-terre-haute-casino-resort-a-lot-on-the-table-to/article_a4832886-4cd8-11ee-8897-27bee8cef786.html)

[5] "Entek Announces Location of First Lithium Battery Separator Plant in Indiana to Power Growing Domestic Electric Vehicle Market." <https://entek.com/news/posts/entek-announces-location-of-first-lithium-battery-separator-plant-in-indiana-to-power-growing-domestic-electric-vehicle-market/>

[6] "Amazon to build delivery center in Vigo County." <https://www.insideindianabusiness.com/articles/amazon-to-build-delivery-center-in-vigo-county>

[7] "A \$700M energy investment coming to Sullivan County." <https://www.mywabashvalley.com/news/local-news/700m-energy-investment-coming-to-sullivan-county/>

The growing job market within West Central Indiana not only signifies an economic upswing but also serves as a strategic opportunity to address the challenge of declining population within the region. This opportune moment prompts the region to proactively position its communities as appealing destinations for younger families and individuals, endeavoring to foster an environment conducive to settling down and establishing roots. Among the key determinants, child care emerges as a critical factor, playing a pivotal role in shaping the perceived attractiveness and livability of the region for prospective residents.

Acknowledging that child care stands among the most critical offerings for new families, this initiative is integral to retaining and attracting skilled employees. The anticipation surrounding major investments and prospective employers, such as Entek, Amazon, and Maple Creek Energy, signals a moment of excitement and cautious consideration for the West Central Indiana region. While these significant ventures bring promises of economic growth, increased job opportunities, and heightened regional development, there is a palpable concern about the potential strain on the existing child care infrastructure. As these employers look to establish themselves in the region, the demand for reliable child care services is expected to surge, presenting a unique set of challenges and opportunities in order for the region to attract and retain the employees needed to make these investments a success.

In 2018, Indiana University's (IU) Public Policy Institute published a study regarding the impact of child care on Indiana's workforce and economy. The study, titled *Lost Opportunities: The Impact of Inadequate Child Care on Workforce Productivity & Indiana's Economy*, examined various Indiana counties, which included a specific focus on West Central Indiana's Parke County. The report meticulously dissected the economic ramifications stemming from inadequate child care provisions on employers and delved into the potential Return on Investments (ROI) achievable through strategic investments in child care. The document cited viable solutions, paving the way for a comprehensive exploration of opportunities for Indiana to consider and potentially adopt.

Leveraging data sourced from the U.S. Census Bureau, the IU study analyzed the child care landscape on a statewide scale, with the primary objective to gain profound insights into the economic implications associated with employee absences and turnover precipitated by child care challenges. The report, drawing on statistical rigor, revealed a staggering average of 13.3 missed workdays for parents with children under the age of 5, attributing these absences to child care-related issues. Furthermore, a notable 2.8% of working parents were compelled to resign from their jobs due to the persistent challenges posed by inadequate child care options, including availability and costs. In a localized context, such as Parke County, the financial toll on employers became particularly evident, as seen in the

chart below, with the report estimating multimillion-dollar losses annually, encompassing both direct costs and tax revenues.

**Figure 7: Financial Losses in Parke County due to Lack of Child Care**

	Absences	Turnover	Total
Direct Employer Costs of Absences and Turnover due to Lack of Child Care	\$3,134,933	\$202,781	\$3,337,714
Economic Impact of Child Care Related Employee Absence and Turnover	\$1,096,131	\$979,616	\$2,075,747
Impact of Child Care Related Absences and Turnover on Tax Revenue	\$118,382	\$224,181	\$342,563

Source: Indiana University Public Policy Institute

Converting these losses into a more tangible metric, the report highlighted that Parke County has experienced an average loss of 70 full-time equivalent employees, costing employers more than \$3.13 million annually, due solely to the constraints imposed by insufficient child care infrastructure. This underscored the critical need for strategic interventions to fortify workforce stability and economic resilience within the region.

The persisting challenges associated with inadequate child care were not isolated to Parke County alone; rather, they reverberated across the entirety of West Central Indiana, instigating profound workforce implications. Parke County, despite having the smallest workforce in the region, already bore a significant burden due to child care-related workforce declines. Extrapolating this scenario to larger counties within West Central Indiana, such as Vigo and Putnam, the potential impact on the workforce is magnified, as the inherent link between accessible child care and workforce stability becomes more apparent in larger populations. In contemplating the broader regional implications, it was evident that proactively addressing child care challenges was not only an essential workforce strategy but also a foundational element for fostering sustained economic growth across the entire West Central Indiana region. A comprehensive and collaborative

approach is required to ensure a robust and resilient workforce ecosystem for the future.

Delving into the intricate data points, the following analysis detailed the number of families in the remaining counties of the region where parents were gainfully employed and concurrently grappled with the responsibility of caring for children under the age of 6.

Figure 8 below delineates the number of families with children in the workforce, providing a visual representation of the families at the intersection of workforce engagement and child care considerations.

**Figure 8: Labor Force Impact by Child Care**

County	Labor Force	Own children of householder under 6 years, all parents in family in labor force	Own children of householder 6-17 years, all parents in family in labor force
Clay	12,312	1,216	2,992
Parke	6,765	483	1,101
Putnam	17,213	1,392	3,666
Sullivan	9,412	888	1,993
Vermillion	7,366	600	1,431
Vigo	51,945	5,134	9,582
<b>Total</b>	<b>105,013</b>	<b>9,713</b>	<b>20,765</b>
		<b>Percentage of labor force with children under 6 years</b>	<b>Percentage of labor force with children 6-17 years</b>
West Central Indiana		9.2%	19.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, DP03

The statistics presented an extensive summary of the demographic realities in each county, shedding light on the significant number of households that face the challenge of balancing professional commitments with child care responsibilities. The percentages appended at the end of the chart underscore the magnitude of this phenomenon, revealing that 9.2% of the workforce in West Central Indiana comprises parents with children under 6 years, while a substantial 19.8% consists of parents with children aged 6 to 17 years, emphasizing the critical role that child care considerations play within the workforce dynamics of the region.

The West Central Indiana Region has a population of 221,757 and an unemployment rate of 4.1% (9,092 individuals). Survey results indicate that 16.45% of respondents are in need of or are actively seeking childcare for their family. Assuming this number holds true for the region, approximately 1,495 individuals could be added to the local workforce if they had access to safe, reliable and quality childcare.

These challenges are not new to the West Central Indiana Community. In 2023, Ivy Tech Terre Haute, submitted a grant to the Lilly Endowment. This grant sought to impact the local workforce by reinforcing and enhancing child care programming in the West Central Indiana region. The components of this grant included the development of a Community Strategic Plan, eliminating barriers and creating opportunities for more individuals to enter the early childhood education workforce, strengthening retention of ECED students and relationships with early childhood workforce partners, and providing opportunities for child care facilities to increase capacity and serve more families in West Central Indiana.

The multifaceted components embedded within this grant hold immense potential to directly address and positively impact the burgeoning workforce needs in West Central Indiana. The development of a Community Strategic Plan is a pivotal element, serving as a guided framework that aligns community efforts with the specific demands of the growing early childhood education sector. By eliminating barriers and fostering opportunities for individuals to enter the early childhood education workforce, the grant aims to augment the pool of skilled professionals, meeting the escalating demand for qualified educators in the region. Moreover, the focus on strengthening retention of Early Childhood Education (ECED) students and nurturing relationships with workforce partners not only ensures the sustainability of the workforce but also enhances the overall quality of education provided. Additionally, the grant's provision of opportunities for child care facilities to increase capacity serves as a strategic response to the rising need for child care services, enabling these facilities to cater to a broader spectrum of families in West Central Indiana. In

essence, the grant's comprehensive approach, encompassing strategic planning, workforce development, and capacity building, stands poised to significantly contribute to addressing the workforce needs in the region, ensuring a robust and sustainable early childhood education landscape for West Central Indiana.

The enduring consequences of insufficient child care in the Indiana workforce have not escaped attention. The IU report delineates potential economic opportunities that, if harnessed properly, could foster the growth of child care, thereby yielding a favorable return on investment for the State of Indiana. As articulated in the report, the investment in high-quality early childhood education programming funded by Indiana is anticipated to generate substantial returns, with an estimated benefit range of \$3.83 to \$4.00 for every \$1.00 invested.

An enhanced child care infrastructure in the West Central region serves as a strategic catalyst for both employee retention and attraction. A robust child care system not only addresses the immediate needs of existing workforce participants but also contributes significantly to the region's appeal for prospective employees. By offering accessible, high-quality child care services, the region positions itself as a family-friendly community, thereby fostering an environment conducive to retaining skilled workers and attracting new talents. The availability of reliable child care options alleviates the challenges faced by the high percentage of working parents, reducing absenteeism and turnover rates. Moreover, it establishes a supportive ecosystem that bolsters the overall well-being of families, creating a positive ripple effect on workforce stability and economic vitality within the West Central Indiana region.



# Benchmarking

The following benchmarking section serves an important component within Grow Up in West Central Indiana's comprehensive plan. This systematic analysis allows us to gauge the region's standing within the broader child care landscape, identify areas for improvement, and adopt best practices that align with the region's overarching goals. Through this endeavor, the plan seeks to not only measure current performance but also to discern a path toward continuous enhancement and the attainment of standards of excellence in child care.

The plans identified include Wabash County, Indiana's "Wabash County Early Childhood Education Committee Strategic Plan 2017 - 2021"; the state of Iowa's "We are Early Childhood Iowa Strategic Plan 2023 - 2026"; and the state of Kentucky's "Kentucky Early Childhood Advisory Council 2019 - 2024 Strategic Plan." This plan also examines the recent success of Monroe County and Muncie, Indiana in expanding high-quality care. To align with similar communities in the State of Indiana and take inspiration from other communities who have successfully assessed the state of its child care and created actionable goals, Grow Up in West Central Indiana will implement similar practices to coincide with state-wide efforts for improved child care and utilize strategies that have proven successful.

## **Statewide Child Care Plans**

### [We Are Early Childhood Iowa \(ECI\) Strategic Plan 2023 - 2026](#)

An example of a post-COVID-19 child care strategic initiative, the state of Iowa's "We are ECI" stands as an exemplary roadmap committed to the overarching aspiration of ensuring that "Every child, beginning at birth, will be healthy and successful." This strategic plan, initiated under the guidance of the appointed Stakeholders Alliance and the Steering Committee, is characterized by a comprehensive approach that integrates data and studies. The foundation of this initiative is rooted in the analysis of the state's Iowa Families with Young Children: 2022 Statewide Family Survey. This survey, notable for garnering over 2,000 responses across 95% of Iowa counties, serves as a source of firsthand insights, offering a panoramic understanding of familial needs and perceptions. Complementing this comprehensive survey is a dedicated study titled "Advancing Connectivity for Families During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Evaluation of Iowa's Phones and Families Program," further

contributing to the strategic depth of the "We are ECI" initiative.

The strategic plan facilitated by ECI and its collaborating stakeholders successfully identified a spectrum of outcomes encompassing legislative priorities, guiding principles, and overarching objectives. Among the pivotal goals articulated by ECI are:

1. Promote a coordinated infrastructure to advance the early childhood system.
2. Build public will for investing in young children and families.
3. Transform the early childhood workforce through formal education, improved professionalization, increased skills and competence, and new approaches to implementing best practices.
4. Ensure that young children and families receive services they need when they need them.
5. Improve the quality of early childhood services for young children and their families across early care and education; health, mental health, and nutrition; and family support services.

#### Kentucky Early Childhood Advisory Council 2019 - 2024 Strategic Plan

In the year 2018, the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) initiated a comprehensive evaluation of the state's approach to child care and early education. Commencing this undertaking, the ECAC began the development of a needs assessment, orchestrating facilitated discussions and actively soliciting feedback from diverse community members and stakeholders.

Through these deliberative discussions and extensive feedback, the ECAC successfully identified a spectrum of needs resonating across the state's diverse communities. Among these needs were imperatives such as the enhancement of educational accessibility, improved health care provisions, increased availability of child care services, an elevation in the quality of care, and the establishment of robust communication channels. The impact of these identified needs was particularly pronounced, as they further impact the holistic well-being and development of young children.

By analyzing the insights garnered from this needs assessment, the ECAC not only gained a nuanced understanding of the challenges and aspirations within the state's child care and early education landscape but also laid the groundwork for strategic initiatives aimed at addressing these identified needs comprehensively and effectively.

The goals identified by the ECAC include (in alphabetical order):

- Advance comprehensive early care and education through strategic messaging.
- Grow and strengthen the early care and education workforce by providing a career pathway for advancement and professional learning opportunities.
- Increase coordination, program quality, and service delivery by fostering effective collaboration between agencies and stakeholders.
- Promote a comprehensive framework to effectively partner with families.
- Inform funding and resource allocations, policy recommendations, and programming by consistently applying data driven systems and processes.
- Secure new, diverse funding and utilize existing resources more effectively.

## **County-Wide Child Care Plans and Initiatives**

### Wabash County Early Childhood Education Committee Strategic Plan 2017 - 2021

In an effort to comprehensively address the child care needs within its community, Wabash County, situated in northeastern Indiana, initiated a strategic planning endeavor. Spearheaded by the Community Foundation of Wabash County, this ambitious undertaking was further fortified by a strategic collaboration with a consulting group, which collectively formed the Wabash County Early Childhood Education Committee. The overarching objective of this committee was to assess the landscape of early childhood education programs in Wabash County, aligning with the articulated goals of the strategic plan. Central to its mission was the thorough examination of the availability and affordability of child care, with the aim of identifying key areas for enhancement and strategic intervention. This collaborative initiative exemplifies Wabash County's commitment to proactively addressing the child care needs of its community through a systematic and research-driven approach.

Through data collection and research, the committee identified 5 key goals to help improve the child care landscape of Wabash County, which included the following:

1. Increase Capacity
2. Increase Accessibility
3. Improve Quality
4. Create an Early Learning Scholarship Program
5. Increase Parent and Community Engagement

Each goal within the strategic framework is accompanied by a set of discernible action steps, a comprehensive exploration of potential funding resources, clearly delineated timeframes for execution, robust indicators for progress measurement, and the explicit identification of stakeholders and groups vested with the responsibility of ensuring the successful accomplishment of each action step. This systematic approach not only establishes a clear roadmap for implementation but also underscores the strategic foresight inherent in the plan, ensuring accountability, transparency, and the seamless execution of each defined objective.

### Monroe Smart Start & Muncie/Delaware By5 Coalition

During engagements with community stakeholders, Chances and Services for Youth (CASY) prominently highlighted the commendable achievements of Monroe County's Monroe Smart Start and Muncie/Delaware County's BY5 coalitions. These exemplary groups have demonstrated noteworthy success in enhancing the accessibility of child care by systematically augmenting capacity and placing an emphasis on the need for high-quality child care programming.

By aligning qualitative insights with quantitative data sourced from the Early Years Initiative's data dashboard, Delaware and Monroe Counties emerge as exemplary models within the State of Indiana. According to the data, these counties have secured positions in the top five among Indiana counties for child care rankings, specifically lauded for the percentage of children benefiting from high-quality care. Delaware County presently holds the 4th position, with an impressive 44% of children enrolled in high-quality programs. Simultaneously, Monroe County ranks 5th with 43.4% of children benefiting from high-quality programs. This data not only validates the success stories shared by CASY but also underscores the pivotal role played by strategic initiatives such as Monroe Smart Start and BY5 coalitions in strengthening the landscape of child care accessibility and promoting quality programming within these communities.

### **State Initiatives**

The following information represents the solutions provided by the Indiana University Public Policy Institute's report, *Lost Opportunities: The Impact of Inadequate Child Care on Workforce Productivity & Indiana's Economy*.

## Illinois

In 2014, the City of Chicago unveiled a groundbreaking initiative by introducing a Social Impact Bond (SIB) in collaboration with Chicago Public Schools and Goldman Sachs. This pioneering bond, valued at \$16.9 million, allocated funds to support the Child-Parent Center early education model. Focused on fostering family engagement and enhancing kindergarten readiness, the program demonstrated tangible outcomes. The City of Chicago secured financial backing for this venture from the Goldman Sachs Social Impact Fund Trust and the JB MK Pritzker Family Foundation, symbolizing a strategic alliance between public and private entities for the advancement of early education initiatives.

The implementation of the Social Impact Bond (SIB) in Chicago brought about positive transformations in the city's educational landscape and broader community. By directing substantial funding towards the Child-Parent Center early education model, the initiative aimed to elevate the quality of early childhood education and increase family involvement. As a result, the city experienced improved kindergarten readiness among participating children, setting a foundation for their future academic success. The collaborative effort between Chicago Public Schools, Goldman Sachs, and the JB MK Pritzker Family Foundation underscored the potential for public-private partnerships to drive positive change within the child care landscape. The success of the SIB not only enhanced educational outcomes but also served as a model for progressive financing approaches to address critical social issues, showcasing Chicago and Illinois's commitment to advancing early education and community development.

- Opportunities:
  - Research opportunities for financial partnerships and opportunities to assist local families with child care costs.

## Iowa

In the strategic design of its educational funding framework, the State of Iowa integrated pre-K into the established school funding formula, resulting in the creation of the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program (SWVPP). This initiative facilitates access to quality early childhood education for 4-year-olds by intertwining pre-K considerations into the established formulas supporting K-12 programs. Through the SWVPP, eligible 4-year-old participants can receive financial support amounting to up to 50% of the K-12 aid. This approach showcases Iowa's commitment to fostering early childhood development by

incorporating preschool support within the broader educational funding structure, exemplifying comprehensive strategy to promote accessible and high-quality pre-K programming.

- Opportunities:
  - Continue to foster and promote On My Way Pre-K and advocate for needed changes and opportunities to include more families.

### Vermont

In a proactive response to the financial challenges associated with high-quality child care, The Permanent Fund, a philanthropic organization, has introduced a business consortium model in two cities, Burlington and Montpelier. This initiative establishes a collaborative framework wherein a collective of companies contributes to an annual fund dedicated to mitigating the financial burden of high-quality child care.

The creation of The Permanent Fund's business consortium model in Burlington and Montpelier signifies a forward-thinking approach to addressing the financial constraints associated with high-quality child care. By mobilizing a collaborative effort among businesses to contribute to an annual fund, this model effectively spreads the financial responsibility for child care support across multiple sectors. This shared commitment not only diversifies the sources of funding but also fosters a sense of collective responsibility within the community. By proactively engaging the private sector, The Permanent Fund's initiative not only provides immediate financial relief but also lays the foundation for a more inclusive, community-driven approach to child care that can adapt and evolve to meet the changing needs of families over time.

- Opportunities:
  - Establish business consortium model to adapt for counties based on their size, economics, and child care needs.
  - Assess the feasibility of a local fund among employers to help offset child care costs.

### Nebraska

Nebraska's innovative approach to supporting Early Childhood Education (ECE) professionals reflects a strategic and comprehensive effort to elevate the quality of child care in the state. The state offers a distinctive opportunity for ECE professionals to benefit from tax credits tied to their educational attainment and employment. To qualify,

professionals must achieve a minimum qualification of a Child Development Associate Credential and work in a program that actively participates in the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). The credit structure, ranging from \$500 to \$1,500, takes into account the individual's qualifications, providing a nuanced and personalized incentive framework.

Beyond individual professionals, Nebraska extends its commitment to quality child care by offering tax credits to providers who achieve a Level 3 rating in the QRIS. This additional layer of support is designed to recognize and reward providers for their dedication to maintaining high standards in child care. The credit, ranging from \$250 to \$750 per child, takes into consideration both the program's rating and the number of children receiving subsidies. Nebraska's multifaceted tax credit system not only acknowledges the efforts of individual professionals but also actively promotes the enhancement of child care quality across diverse ECE settings. This Act is modeled after Louisiana and their child care efforts.

- Opportunities:
  - Research tax credit opportunities for early childhood educators and local child care providers to help alleviate education and operational costs.
  - Advocate for legislative opportunities related to tax credits for early childhood educators and child care providers.



# Legislation

The following section examines current legislation related to child care on a federal and state level. At the federal level, legislative measures wield the power to sculpt a broad framework, influencing accessibility, affordability, and quality of child care services across the nation. Simultaneously, state-level legislation, attuned to the unique needs of local communities, refines and contextualizes these regulations. The dynamic relationship between federal and state legislation shapes the landscape within which child care operates, impacting providers, families, and the broader community. This exploration aims not only to decipher statutory language but to uncover the tangible ramifications of these regulations on the ground. Through this dual-layered analysis, the goal is to discern how legislative initiatives resonate within the realm of child care, paving the way for strategic insights that enhance standards and contribute to the holistic well-being of the community.

## Federal Legislation

National and state-level initiatives shape the broader landscape of child care policies, funding, and quality standards. By examining these overarching trends, local initiatives gain invaluable insights into prevailing best practices, legislative advancements, and emerging challenges. An understanding of the broader context enables the alignment of regional strategies with larger policy frameworks, fostering coherence, and maximizing the potential impact of localized interventions. Additionally, a thorough examination of national and statewide trends provides a benchmark for assessing regional performance, identifying areas for improvement, and leveraging successful strategies implemented elsewhere. This strategic approach ensures that regional child care plans are not only responsive to local needs but also aligned with broader objectives, contributing to a more cohesive and effective child care ecosystem.

The landscape of child care has become a matter of significant national concern in the United States, attracting heightened attention from both the legislative and executive branches. A thorough analysis by the Center for American Progress<sup>[8]</sup> indicates a substantial increase in legislative initiatives pertaining to child care, signaling a heightened commitment to addressing this critical issue compared to previous years. The 117th Congress, for instance, introduced a total of 54 bills specifically addressing child care,

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[8] "Federal Child Care Legislation Over the Past Decade."

<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/federal-child-care-legislation-over-the-past-decade/>.

and this momentum has persisted into the 118th Congress, with 23 child care-related bills proposed as of May 2023.

On the Executive front, President Joseph Biden has demonstrated a concerted commitment to reshaping the landscape of child care, as evidenced by a series of impactful plans and executive orders. The American Families Plan, unveiled in April 2021, represents a pivotal milestone, earmarking a substantial \$200 billion investment towards the realization of free universal preschool and an additional \$225 billion to enhance the affordability of high-quality care. This transformative initiative, designed to fortify the workforce across the nation, underscores the administration's dedication to ensuring that child care is not only accessible but also economically viable for American families.

President Biden's commitment to child care has further been underscored through his budget announcement in March 2023, which included significant financial allocations to bolster child care and early learning initiatives. In April 2023, the President signed a consequential executive order specifically focused on advancing the landscape of child care. This order emphasizes the improvement of child care quality and accessibility by addressing workforce compensation and benefits, signifying a comprehensive approach to fortifying the foundations of child care nationwide. This multifaceted engagement at both the legislative and executive levels exemplify a concerted effort to weave substantive and enduring changes into the fabric of child care across the United States.

Also worthy to acknowledge is the federal government's recent interest in increasing the child tax credit, recognizing the repercussions of inflation as it relates to the cost of raising children. On January 31, 2024, Congress passed a bill that would expand the child tax credit. Currently, the legislation is being considered by the Senate and is still under review. The bill would increase the maximum refundable amount from \$1,600 to \$1,800 per child, for the tax year 2023, and to \$1,900 for the tax year 2024, with an additional increase to \$2,000 in 2025.

## **Indiana Legislation**

In January 2024, Indiana Governor, Eric Holcomb announced that two programs would be added to the state's workforce training program. These programs included early childhood education and child care credential training in an effort to prioritize early childhood education in the State of Indiana. During this announcement, Gov. Holcomb specifically identified child care as a key issue negatively impacting the workforce. Through the program, individuals looking to enter the early childhood education workforce may receive

funding for tuition and fees covered through qualifying programs. The employer training grant will reimburse employers who train, hire, and retain workers. This comes after child care was identified as a top need in the Governor's Next Level agenda, a popular program in Indiana that prioritizes funding for broadband, jobs, trails, and more, across the 92 counties through investments and grant programs.

Indiana's legislature has exhibited a discernible commitment, evidenced by the increasing number of child care-related bills introduced in each legislative session. A significant milestone in this trajectory was reached in August 2023 when the Indiana General Assembly's Interim Study Committee on Public Health released a comprehensive set of recommendations aimed at enhancing child care across the state (See Appendix A). These recommendations encompass strategies to streamline provider administrative duties, optimize state financial programs such as the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) and On My Way Pre-K, introduce workforce and employer incentives, and create opportunities to provide crucial support to Hoosier families.

Anticipating the trajectory set by these recommendations and in alignment with the broader goals outlined in the Birth-5 Strategic Plan, the 2024 Indiana Legislative Session saw a surge in child care-related bills introduced by legislators, child care advocacy groups, and employers statewide.

- SB 2 (Alive)
  - Aimed to reduce the minimum work age for early childhood educators. The ages would be reduced to 18 for infant and toddler care and 16 for school-aged children. This effort sought to help reduce the current stressors on providers who lack adequate staffing by expanding the hiring pool. It will also help to build the workforce by giving students experience that inspires them to pursue careers in early childhood education.
  - Qualified child care workers who are seeking child care for their children for state programs such as CCDF and On-My Way Pre-K. This helps to alleviate financial burdens as well incentivizes individuals into the early childhood education workforce.
  - Launch a pilot program in rural communities for the creation of micro-facilities. These facilities would seek to alleviate child care deserts by serving up to 30 children under the supervision of FSSA.
  - Change certain early childhood education workforce requirements and help reduce costs by eliminating the requirement that employees receive CPR training each year and instead abide by the standard 2 years that the certification is good for.

- HB 1102 (Alive)
  - Increase the number of children, from five to seven, that are allowed in a child care home. Also allows for child care homes to care for kids longer, increasing that number from four hours a day to six.
- SB 147 (Dead)
  - Makes for-profit child care providers tax exempt and grants a partial property-tax exemption for businesses offering onsite child care.
- SB 197 (Dead)
  - Create a child and dependents refundable tax credit for taxpayers whose gross income is no more than 250% of the federal poverty level. The credit provides:
    - An amount ranging from \$200 to \$1,000, depending on the extent to which the taxpayer's adjusted gross income exceeds the federal poverty level; or
    - 20% of the taxpayer's employment related expenses.

## Neighboring State Legislation

### Illinois

- HB3566 "Child care – Min Standards" (Alive)
  - Amends the Child Care Act of 1969. Provides that the minimum standards for child care licensing include regulations to allow for staffing flexibility of qualified early childhood assistants to enable the early childhood assistants to supervise a classroom outside of the core developmental hours of the day, which shall not exceed more than 3 consecutive hours.
  - House Floor Amendment No. 1: In provisions concerning minimum standards, provides that the Department of Financial and Professional Regulation may adopt provisions to allow for staffing flexibility of qualified early childhood assistants to enable the early childhood assistants to supervise a classroom outside of the core developmental hours of the day, which shall not exceed more than 3 consecutive hours or make up a majority of the hours an individual classroom is open in a single day (rather than which shall not exceed more than 3 consecutive hours).
  - Senate Committee Amendment No. 1: In provisions concerning minimum standards for licensing that apply to the various types of facilities for child care, provide that a qualified child care director must be present at the open or close of the facility. Provides that a qualified early childhood teacher who has been employed by the facility continuously for at least 24 months may otherwise be present for the first or last hour of the workday.

- Senate Floor Amendment No. 3: Replaces everything after the enacting clause. Amends the Child Care Act of 1969. Provides that the minimum standards for child care licensing include regulations to allow for staffing flexibility of qualified early childhood assistants to enable the early childhood assistants to supervise a classroom outside of the core developmental hours of the day, which shall not exceed more than 3 hours in a single day and shall be documented in the program's Enhanced Staffing Plan. Amends the Illinois Administrative Procedure Act to provide for emergency rulemaking by the Department of Children and Family Services.

## Kentucky

- SB 203 "Horizons Act" (Alive)
  - Calls for \$300 million in state-funding to be set aside over the next two years to address funding, staffing, and other needs within the early childhood education system.
  - Creates expanded qualifications for child care providers to receive child care assistance.
  - Expands grant funding for providers to increase availability of open seats.
  - Makes financial support only available to entities licensed or certified by the Cabinet for Health and Family Services.
  - Establishes an Associate Degree program for "interdisciplinary early childhood education entrepreneurship" in the Kentucky Community and Technical College system.
  - Adds a new agency, the Division of Early Childhood Education, to the Cabinet for Health and Family Services.

## Michigan

### "Expanding Access to Child Care" (All bills enacted)

- HB 5041
  - Allows home-based child care providers that have a proven record of success to serve more children.
  - A family home provider will be eligible to serve seven children, instead of six.
  - A group home provider will be eligible to serve 14 children, instead of 12.
  - The bills prioritize safety while increasing access to quality child care.
- HB 5043
  - Increases support for home-based child care providers by establishing Family Child Care Networks.

- HB 5044
  - Expands access to child care for infants and toddlers by requiring the Michigan Department of Education to establish family child care networks in every region of the state to equitably support home-based child care providers.

Common Sense Regulatory Reform" (All bills enacted)

- HB 5042
  - Aids in allowing quality and caring providers to thrive by amending disclosure requirements for child care center applicants, cracking down on bad actors who try to "game the system" and evade regulations.
- HB 5045
  - Ensures families can more easily access licensing reports for a provider by expanding the type of information Michigan Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) is required to compile and make publicly available regarding any special investigation conducted in the last three years for child care centers, family child homes, and group child care homes.
- HB 5046
  - Gives child care providers at least 90 days to comply with new health and safety rules.
- HB 5047
  - Reduces administrative burden on child care providers by allowing their health and safety record to be shared with parents online.
- HB 5048
  - Helps child care providers locate where families live and work by giving child care providers a safe path to operate in multi-use buildings.

Ohio

- HB 114 (Alive)
  - A bipartisan bill which would allow political candidates to use their campaign funds to pay for child care while on the campaign trail.
  - If the bill passes, Ohio will become the 31st state to authorize the use of campaign funds for child care.
- HB 290 (Alive)
  - Would provide a tax credit of up to \$1,000 per child aged 0-5 years old.
  - Would provide a tax credit of \$500 per child aged 6-17 years old.
  - Families earning less than \$65,000 annually would qualify for the full benefit amount, with benefits tapering off for families earning \$65,000 - \$85,000.

- An estimated 1.8 million children statewide would benefit from the passage of this bill.
- Publicly Funded Child Care (Enacted)
  - The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) offers financial assistance to eligible parents to pay for child care while they engage in work or approved school or training activities.
  - ODJFS is also responsible for regulating home-based child care settings and for licensing and inspecting child care facilities.
  - Publicly funded child care allows income parents to both find and keep jobs.
  - Publicly funded child care also ensures that eligible parents' children will have access to early care and education programs they need to succeed in school.



# Overview of Findings

Through a comprehensive data collection process, Grow Up in West Central Indiana delved into the gaps and trends within child care and early childhood education. The dynamic survey, active region participation in forums, and insightful conversations with child care groups provided a high-level overview, revealing overarching barriers and challenges centered around key themes: affordability/funding, availability, quality of care, and workforce retention. It is crucial to recognize that these challenges and barriers are interconnected; shifts in one area have cascading effects on others. The following section encapsulates a high-level summary, offering pivotal insights into the needs, preferences, and challenges faced by parents, caregivers, and child care providers. For a detailed breakdown of the survey and forum data, please refer to Appendix E and Appendix F.

## **Affordability/Funding**

- Parents and families across the West Central Indiana region grapple with the financial strain of affording high-quality child care.
- Middle-class families encounter barriers, unable to qualify for programs such as the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) and On-My-Way Pre-K, limiting opportunities for professional growth.
- High costs associated with quality care pose challenges for families seeking enrollment in programs that better prepare children for successful kindergarten experiences.
- Child care costs represent a significant monthly burden for parents and families, especially those with multiple children and single parents.
- Child care providers struggle to secure funding for services and employment of adequately qualified staff.
- Current home-based CCDF reimbursement rates and the lack of financial assistance from the state present challenges for child care providers.

## **Availability**

- Child care capacity is limited across each county within the West Central Indiana region.
- Data indicated limited availability for infants, toddlers, and before-and-after school care in each county.

- Homes that operate as child care providers are incompatible with standard work hours, presenting challenges for parents and families.
- A gap in child care options exists for individuals engaged in shift work.
- Limited options are available for part-time care, drop-in care, or non-traditional hours required for shift work.
- Limited options and availability are noted for children with special needs, requiring additional staff and training opportunities.

## **Quality of Care**

- Inadequate spots are available within high-quality child care programs throughout the West Central Indiana region, contributing to challenges in social and emotional learning and kindergarten readiness.
- Parents and families express concerns about safety and the quality of the environment for children not enrolled in child care.

## **Early Childhood Educators**

- Child care providers struggle to attract and retain qualified staff due to low pay, lack of benefits, and workplace environment challenges within the child care field.
- The balance between professional development and payback period is a significant concern.
- The costs associated with professional development are deemed unfeasible with current child care workforce wages.
- Limited training opportunities exist for child care providers in specific areas of need (i.e., behavioral challenges, education) and for business administration (i.e., accounting, accreditation/licensing, etc.).

## **General Workforce**

- Parents and families across West Central Indiana have had to quit jobs or take long absences due to a lack of child care.
- Middle-class families encounter barriers related to CCDF and On My Way Pre-K have prevented families from accepting promotions and new positions due to the financial programming they would lose with a higher income.
- Employers in the region expressed challenges in recruiting and retaining employees due to a lack of child care infrastructure needed to support new families.

# Objectives Overview

Embarking on a strategic mission to elevate the standards of child care, these initiatives stand as a proactive response to the intricate challenges interwoven in early childhood education. These strategic efforts are crafted to serve as catalysts for positive transformation rather than mere solutions. The focus is firmly anchored on the principles of accessibility, quality, affordability, and workforce development. Through a deliberate combination of data-driven insights and collaborative engagement with stakeholders, the mission is to redefine the landscape of child care. Through research, the Taskforce was able to determine the following overarching objectives:

- Objective 1 is dedicated to increasing and expanding access to high-quality care, striving to eliminate barriers and extend quality child care services to families from all walks of life.
- Objective 2 aims to foster partnerships with local employers and organizations, acknowledging the pivotal role these programs play in the region regarding employee retention and recruitment. This objective seeks to leverage opportunities for employers to actively contribute to and support child care initiatives.
- Objective 3 delves into the expansion and promotion of early childhood educators and workforce development, seeking to create robust pathways for professional and educational growth within the field.
- Objective 4 focuses on resource generation and strategic leveraging of funding opportunities, ensuring the sustained financial health of child care initiatives.

Together, these objectives form a cohesive strategy to enhance overall quality, accessibility, and support for child care programs throughout the region.

To successfully implement these objectives, strategies, and action items, the Taskforce has identified the following entities as vital partners and collaborators in the implementation of enhanced child care throughout the West Central Indiana region.

- Clay County
  - Clay County Community Foundation
  - Clay County Community Schools
  - Clay County Chamber of Commerce
  - Clay County Leadership
  - City and Town Leadership

- Parke County
  - Parke County Community Foundation
  - Parke County Early Care and Education Coalition
  - Partnership Parke County
  - North Central Parke Community School Corporation
  - Southwest Parke Community Schools
  - Parke County Chamber of Commerce
  - Parke County Leadership
  - City and Town Leadership
- Putnam County
  - Putnam County Community Foundation
  - North Putnam County Community Schools
  - Greencastle Community School Corporation
  - South Putnam Community Schools
  - Putnam County Chamber of Commerce
  - Putnam County Leadership
  - City and Town Leadership
- Sullivan County
  - Sullivan County Community Foundation
  - Northeast School Corporation
  - Southwest School Corporation
  - Child Care Coalition
  - Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce
  - Sullivan County Leadership
  - City and Town Leadership
- Vermillion County
  - Vermillion County Community Foundation
  - Vermillion County Redevelopment Commission
  - North Vermillion Community School Corporation
  - South Vermillion Community School Corporation
  - Vermillion County Leadership
  - City and Town Leadership
- Vigo County
  - Vigo County Community Foundation
  - Vigo County School Corporation
  - Terre Haute Chamber of Commerce
  - Indiana State University
  - Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College
  - Vigo County Leadership
  - City and Town Leadership



- Regional Groups
  - Chances and Services for Youth
  - Family and Social Services Administration
  - Ivy Tech Community College
  - Thrive West Central
  - United Way of the Wabash Valley
  - Wabash Valley Community Foundation
  - West Central Indiana Partnership
  - Western Indiana Community Action Agency



## Objectives, Strategies, and Action Items

The following outlines the objectives by providing strategies and actions/tactics for each objective. The Timeframe has been suggested for the Taskforce to consider, and the Responsibility has been left blank intentionally. The Taskforce will determine roles and responsibilities for each objective, strategy and/or action moving forward.

### OBJECTIVE 1 – Increase availability and expand access to high-quality child care.

STRATEGY 1.1 – Increase overall access to licensed child care providers throughout the region.		
Actions/Tactics	Responsibility	Timeframe
1.1.1 Establish a task force comprised of representatives from local and regional leadership, early childhood care and education providers, families, Early Learning Indiana, and other relevant stakeholders to conduct a thorough study and formulate recommendations aimed at augmenting the quantity of high-quality providers across the region.		2024 - Q4
1.1.2 Facilitate further research endeavors to identify enduring and sustainable solutions that effectively tackle the financial challenges associated with infant and toddler care.		2024 - Q4
1.1.3 Create process for continuous improvement to enhance child care capacity, broaden accessibility, and elevate the quality across various provider types, including homes, centers, and ministries.		2025 - Q1
STRATEGY 1.2 – Increase overall availability of licensed child care providers throughout the region.		
Actions/Tactics	Responsibility	Timeframe
1.2.1. Form collaborative partnership with the local Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agency, CASY, to increase outreach efforts directed towards unlicensed providers and provide comprehensive educational resources.		2025 - Q1

1.2.2 Research and evaluate need and approaches to increase child care during non-traditional hours.		2025 - Q2
<b>STRATEGY 1.3 – Decrease barriers to accessing child care programs for all families, especially those experiencing adversity.</b>		
<b>Actions/Tactics</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
1.3.1 Establish a comprehensive hub offering resources, information, and communication channels for families seeking insights into child care options and eligibility procedures within public assistance programs.		2026 - Q4
1.3.2 Evaluate and formulate a grant/scholarship program in collaboration with local community foundations and employers, strategically designed to mitigate the financial burden of child care expenses for families with low to moderate income levels.		2025 - Q2
1.3.3 Increase public awareness of available services and eligibility requirements by conducting a communications campaign throughout the region.		2025 - Q4
1.3.4 Increase percentage of affordable programs.		2025 - Q3
1.3.5 Evaluate strategies to diversify alternatives for families seeking support in transportation for child care services.		2027 - Q4
<b>STRATEGY 1.4 – Increase the number of high-quality providers (Paths to Quality Level 3 and 4) across the region.</b>		
<b>Actions/Tactics</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
1.4.1 Initiate a program designed to support current providers holding PTQ Levels 1 and 2, facilitating their progression to attain a high-quality ranking at Levels 3 or 4.		2026 - Q3
1.4.2 Assemble a task force comprising of representatives from local chambers of commerce and regional organizations to collaboratively formulate initiatives aimed at encouraging providers to achieve PTQ Level 3 or 4.		2026 - Q1

1.4.3 Promote statewide incentives for programs that have received advanced PTQ ratings.		2026 - Q4
1.4.4 Identify and promote grants and alternative funding resources for child care facilities to offset costs associated with advanced PTQ accreditation (Levels 3 and 4).		2026 - Q3
1.4.5 Conduct additional research regarding PTQ obstacles and solutions, identifying state and national trends, evaluating support structures and incentives to help providers come into compliance with PTQ requirements.		2026 - Q2
<b>STRATEGY 1.5 – Provide support to families of children with special needs.</b>		
<b>Actions/Tactics</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
1.5.1 Enhance availability and accessibility by expanding choices for vulnerable families, reducing barriers, and accommodating a higher number of children with special needs in inclusive settings.		2027 - Q3
1.5.2 Explore specialized training opportunities, education, and credentialing for providers to better serve families and children with special needs.		2026 - Q4
1.5.3 Explore funding opportunities to acquire specialized equipment catering to the needs of children with special needs.		2027 - Q1

**OBJECTIVE 2 – Promote, enhance, and support child care programs throughout the region through local employers and organizations.**

<b>STRATEGY 2.1 – Engage employers in child care conversations to increase awareness of the impact of child care on region development and the local economy.</b>		
<b>Actions/Tactics</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
2.1.1 Establish a task force to conduct a comprehensive study on the economic implications of child care within the local region, with a particular focus on how the absence of adequate child care facilities affects recruitment efforts.		2025 - Q1

2.1.2 Identify employer partners to provide child care services/programs to act as ambassadors for overarching goals.		2025 - Q2
2.1.3 Create dialogue with employers to understand the impact and benefits of employer-sponsored child care.		2025 - Q2
2.1.4 Foster engagement with local organizations, stakeholders, and groups, leveraging a comprehensive marketing campaign across social media and other channels to showcase and promote their active participation in regional initiatives.		2027 - Q2
2.1.5 Create cost share model for existing and future employers to assist with child care costs.		2028 - Q1
2.1.6 Execute the utilization of FSSA Employer Sponsored Child care grant funding to extend tuition benefits to employers across the region.	Terre Haute Chamber of Commerce	2024 - Q3

**OBJECTIVE 3 – Expand and promote early childhood education and workforce development opportunities.**

<b>STRATEGY 3.1 – Recruit, retain and promote a high-quality child care and education workforce.</b>		
<b>Actions/Tactics</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
3.1.1 Convene stakeholder groups (or utilize existing Taskforce) to make recommendations for revising and strengthening professional recruitment efforts throughout the region.		2026 - Q1
3.1.2 Increase capacity of high-quality child care workforce by creating a toolkit for licensure, professional development, and continuing education.		2026 - Q2
3.1.3 Develop feedback system to generate improvements to updates on professional development content, delivery and accessibility.		2026 - Q2

3.1.4 Educate stakeholders, legislators and operators on the importance of competitive wages and the current workforce challenges providers are facing.		2025 - Q3
3.1.5 Develop and harness training programs, mentorship and resources to support individuals interested in becoming child care providers, to increase services across the region.		2026 - Q2
3.1.6 Develop scholarship through local foundations for those seeking to pursue careers in child care (education, psychology, etc.) in Indiana through higher education providers (ISU, Ivy Tech, SMWC and DePauw).		2028 - Q3
3.1.7 Conduct a benchmarking analysis of successful child care providers to evaluate their strategies for employee recruitment and retention.		2027- Q2

**STRATEGY 3.2 – Create marketing campaign to promote the value of early childhood education and child care professionals.**

<b>Actions/Tactics</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
3.2.1 Create marketing content, including social media, videos, and printed collateral, to promote the work of early childhood educators and child care professionals. (Example: Child Care Technical Assistance's First 2,000 Days Campaign)		2027 - Q4
3.2.2 Engage local organizations, employers and school systems to participate in campaign through social media and other channels.		2027 - Q4

**STRATEGY 3.3 – Research and analyze opportunities and constraints for early childhood staff.**

<b>Actions/Tactics</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
3.3.1 In collaboration with providers, identify positions and areas that experience high employee turnover/burnout.		2028 - Q1
3.3.2 Identify and develop communication strategy to describe career paths for child care professionals and early childhood educators.		2028 - Q2

3.3.3 Conduct a comprehensive study to analyze the sustained trajectory of the early childhood education career path, encompassing an examination of long-term growth indicators such as wage escalation, positional expansion, and the evolving demand within the field.		2028 - Q2
3.3.4 Develop and host annual symposium for the region, to provide an opportunity for collaboration among providers and allowing providers to learn about current trends, barriers, and opportunities to improve operations.		2028 - Q4

**OBJECTIVE 4 – Generate resources and leverage available opportunities for funding.**

STRATEGY 4.1 – Remove operational and financial barriers for new and existing providers throughout the region.		
Actions/Tactics	Responsibility	Timeframe
4.1.1 Research and identify grants and alternative funding sources to offset the costs of licensure and accreditation for providers.		2026 - Q2
4.1.2 Assess current transportation routes to identify underserved populations due to lack of transportation, and lack of before- and after-school care options.		2028 - Q4
4.1.3 Review existing land use and zoning regulations throughout the region and develop recommendations to streamline approval processes for center care, home and ministry providers.		2028 - Q3
4.1.4 Leverage current federal, state and local funds to ensure sustainability and scale of programming vital to child care.		2028 - Q3
4.1.5 Establish a community fund in collaboration with a local nonprofit organization, specifically local community foundations, dedicated to generating grants for child care providers and programming enhancements.		2028 - Q4
4.1.6 Identify grant opportunities and alternative funding sources that can be accessed by communities to help secure providers, supplement wages, and increase service offerings.		2025 - Q3

**STRATEGY 4.2 – Convene Taskforce to advocate for changes in public policy and statewide initiatives.**

Actions/Tactics	Responsibility	Timeframe
4.2.1 Educate local organizations on the structure/procedure for CCDF voucher reimbursements.		2024 - Q2 (ongoing)
4.2.2 Review current child care laws, rules, and policies and identify potential barriers preventing providers from expanding capacity.		2024 - Q2
4.2.3 Advocate for changes to the Indiana Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) voucher rates.		2026 - Q3
4.2.4 Reduce child care costs by increasing eligibility threshold for child care scholarships, supporting tax credits, and implementing other financial supports for families with low to moderate income levels.		2027 - Q1
4.2.5 Initiate dialogue with Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA) regarding CCDF process and determine tangible goals for changes to state legislation.		2026 - Q2
4.2.6 Engage government relations (lobbying) to gather information related to current state programs and identify opportunities to increase reimbursement rates and alternative funding for families with low to moderate income levels.		2026 - Q2
4.2.7 Collaborate with Indiana Chamber of Commerce to advance conversations around employer-sponsored child care and its impact on Indiana communities.		2024 - Q2
4.2.8 Initiate dialogue with FSSA regarding early childhood educator wages and determine tangible goals for state legislative changes.		2026 - Q2

# Conclusion

The formulation of Grow Up in West Central Indiana signifies a pivotal initiative aimed at laying a robust and inclusive groundwork for accessible child care within the region. The intricately crafted objectives, strategies, and action items encapsulated in the Grow Up in West Central Indiana: A Regional Child Care Strategic Plan are the result of meticulous data analysis and extensive deliberations with child care stakeholders. As this strategic plan is poised for adoption, the Committee is strategically positioned to allocate responsibilities to key stakeholders, entrusting them with the pivotal role of monitoring, tracking, and executing the plan's objectives to achieve tangible outcomes.

As the implementation stage of Grow Up in West Central Indiana begins, the imminent future holds a wealth of promise and transformative potential. The blueprint for the plan encompasses a holistic approach, weaving together diverse elements that collectively contribute to the comprehensive development and well-being of children in the community. The strategic plan not only envisages an elevation in the quality of child care services but also seeks to establish an inclusive and collaborative framework that actively involves community stakeholders in the journey.

The forthcoming stages of the strategic plan implementation involve a concerted effort to engage and gather insights from a wide spectrum of community stakeholders. These stakeholders, ranging from parents and educators to local businesses and governmental bodies, will play a pivotal role in shaping the plan and ensuring its alignment with the unique needs of the community. The West Central Child Care Task Force will seek to engage local leaders to help not only elevate the plan but utilize resources to carry out the various initiatives and strategies outlined in this plan. Through town hall meetings, workshops, and collaborative forums, the goal is to facilitate a meaningful dialogue that fosters a shared understanding of the mission and vision embedded in the child care strategic plan.

By fostering a sense of collective ownership and involvement, this plan will position the community as an active participant in the execution of the strategic plan. Their diverse perspectives, experiences, and expertise will enrich the implementation process, making it a truly collaborative and community-driven endeavor. This inclusive approach not only enhances the plan's efficacy but also ensures that the solutions crafted are resonant with the cultural, social, and economic nuances of the community.

Looking ahead, Grow Up in West Central Indiana stands as a beacon guiding us toward a future where families can thrive and be supported through child care networks, their workforce, and the overall community. It is not merely a document but a living, evolving roadmap that will be enhanced by the collective commitment and involvement of the community. As the region embarks on this journey, the vision is not just to meet immediate goals but to sow the seeds for a sustainable and flourishing child care ecosystem that leaves an indelible mark on West Central Indiana.



# Appendices



Appendix A - Indiana General Assembly's Interim Study Committee on Public Health



Appendix B - Case Studies



Appendix C - Strategic Brand Communication and Implementation



Appendix D - Grow Up in West Central Indiana Survey



Appendix E - Grow Up in West Central Indiana Survey Results



Appendix F - Forums



# Appendix A

## Indiana General Assembly's Interim Study Committee on Public Health

### Administrative Changes (Zero or Low Fiscal Impact)

- Licensing
  - Remove barriers to child care center and provider licensing by modernizing standards. Enable blanket waivers in place of frequent variances. Many stakeholders testified that Indiana's licensing regulations are outdated and are in need of an overhaul. (From the Indiana Early Learning Advisory Committee)
  - Limit licensing and quality requirements to only those requirements that are recognized as best practices and evidence-based systems. (From Growing Kids Learning Centers)
  - Eliminate and/or reduce Indiana's child care licensing exemptions so that all providers have the same basic health and safety requirements. A child's health and safety needs remain the same, regardless of which provider they attend. (From Growing Kids Learning Centers)
  - Make licensing standards consistent across all provider types. (From Growing Kids Learning Centers)
  - Transfer program quality requirements (i.e., educational components) from licensing to Paths to Quality, Indiana's statewide quality rating and improvement system for early child care and education (PTQ). Use PTQ system to promote and rate quality. (From Growing Kids Learning Centers)
- Regulatory Flexibility for Child Care Facilities
  - Provide regulatory flexibility for a child care provider with a Level 3 or Level 4 PTQ program rating to expand to other locations. (From the Indiana Early Learning Advisory Committee)
  - Assist accredited K-12 institutions in establishing and providing high quality onsite child care and early learning programs. (From the Indiana Early Learning Advisory Committee)
  - Revise Indiana code definitions around home-based daycare (IC 12-7-2- 28.6) in residential areas to incentivize churches and schools to rent out their space for use. (From the Fortitude Fund)
  - Make an addition to Indiana Code that allows more than one licensed provider to operate out of one facility, thus encouraging child care entrepreneurs to form cooperatives and partnerships while saving on facility costs. (From the Fortitude Fund, the Northeast Indiana Early Childhood Coalition)

- Administrative Efficiencies
  - Increase data-sharing and communication between those agencies who have regulatory touchpoints with child care providers, including the Indiana Family and Social Services Agency, the Department of Child Services, Homeland Security, and the Department of Health. (From FSSA)
  - Make access to the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) easier for parents by implementing a presumptive eligibility policy and simplifying the application and eligibility determination process. (From the Indiana Skills 2 Complete Coalition)
- Child Care Center Staffing & Classroom Ratios
  - Adjust age requirements for teaching staff, such as allowing 19-year-olds to provide care and allowing teachers under 21 to provide infant care. (From the YMCAs of Indiana, the Northeast Indiana Early Childhood Coalition)
  - Allow child care experts and families to decide when children are developmentally ready to move to the next age group to ease staffing ratio concerns. (From the YMCAs of Indiana)
  - Rename the Class II home based licensing category "Group Child Care" and adapt the North Dakota licensing model that allows up to 30 children in Group Child Care at any one time instead of the current 16-or-less children requirement, effectively creating a micro-center group care that does not require the high demands of a large center but allows for care in nonresidential settings. (From the Fortitude Fund)
  - Amend the requirements for Class II Group-Based Child Care license to allow those with a high school diploma and nationally recognized Child Care Development Associate (CDA) Certificate to open a Class II center. (From the Fortitude Fund)

#### Recommendations with Fiscal Impact

- CCDF (Child Care and Development Fund) & On-My-Way Pre-K
  - Expand income eligibility for On-My-Way Pre-K and for Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Vouchers. (From multiple sources)
  - Revisit work requirements from On-My-Way Pre-K eligibility to increase eligibility. In order to qualify for On-My-Way Pre-K, parents or guardians in the household must be working, going to school, attending job training, or looking for a job. (From the Indiana Early Learning Advisory Committee)
  - Increase state funding to supplement Child CCDF funding. (From multiple sources)
  - Restructure the CCDF funding formula to decrease or eliminate rate disparities between counties. (From the YMCAs of Indiana)
  - Allow full-time child care teachers and assistants to automatically qualify for a state child care voucher. (From the Northeast Indiana Early Childhood Coalition)

- Set the CCDF reimbursement rate to reflect the actual costs of operating high-quality child care programs. (From the Southern Indiana Gateway)
- Increase the use of CCDF contracts and grants mirroring the structure of the Build, Learn, Grow Scholarship fund. The Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning can create more CCDF agreements with programs to serve and be paid for a contracted number of slots for a specified period of time. If there are gaps between when one family withdraws and another enrolls, the contract continues to pay, thus providing financial stability as the program recruits another family. (From the Southern Indiana Gateway)
- Employer Incentives
  - Consider incentivizing the provision of employee benefits for child care providers, including insurance groups and industry 401Ks. (From Growing Kids Learning Centers)
  - Investigate the Michigan and North Carolina tri-share model, in which child care costs are shared on an equal basis between employers, parents, and the state. See Indiana SB368-2023. (From the United Way of Central Indiana)
  - Explore Kentucky and North Dakota Employer Matching grants for employers that provide child care benefits to employees. (From the United Way of Central Indiana)
  - Create incentives for businesses who secure child care slots for their employees. Potentially include this as an allowable use of READI funds. (From the YMCAs of Indiana)
  - Measure the demand for the employer child care expenditure tax credit passed by the Indiana General Assembly during the 2023 Legislative Session (HEA 1001). If there is high demand, propose legislation to include expenditures made for ongoing costs at employer-sponsored sites as eligible expenditures for the credit. (From the Indiana Skills 2 Complete Coalition, Southern Indiana Gateway)
  - Direct financial resources to employers and ensure that state resources expended lead directly to improved capacity at employer-sponsored child care sites, by tying any financial incentives for employers to metrics that measure child care capacity. (From the Indiana Skills 2 Compete Coalition)
  - Support the development of statewide shared services alliances and family child care networks to achieve economies of scale. Advocate to state leaders for the creation of a statewide child care technology structure to better serve children and families while supporting program leaders. (From Southern Indiana Gateway)
  - Renew Indiana's Employer-Sponsor Child Care Fund, which creates a \$25M competitive grant initiative that will open fall 2023. (From FSSA)
- Child Care Provider Incentives
  - Extend the educational real estate tax exemption to child care providers. (From Growing Kids Learning Centers)

- Incentivize the renovation and rehabilitation of existing providers to add space for more children. (From the YMCAs of Indiana)
- Create incentives that encourage providers to enter the marketplace or add seats, such as a direct per-seat incentive for licensed providers. (From the Indiana Skills 2 Compete Coalition)
- Subsidize child care providers to enable them to pay higher wages in order to support and retain providers and limit turnover. (From the Indiana Skills 2 Compete Coalition)
- Develop an easier process for providers to draw down the full amount of CCDF funding available by reducing attendance requirements. (From the Indiana Skills 2 Compete Coalition)
- Create more contract-based subsidy payments for providers so they can stabilize supply. (From the Indiana Skills 2 Compete Coalition)
- Growth & Support of the Child Care Workforce
  - Use matching workforce funds or other incentives to support recruitment, competitive compensation and working conditions for effective early learning educators. (From the Indiana Early Learning Advisory Committee)
  - Incentivize child care providers to increase wages for child care workers who complete education and training that result in a postsecondary degree or industry recognized credential. (From the Indiana Early Learning Advisory Committee)
  - Provide tax credits to credentialed child care workers who demonstrate work history. (From the Indiana Skills 2 Compete Coalition)
- Support & Access for Indiana Families
  - Renew FSSA's \$10M Child Care Expansion Grant that prioritizes access for underserved communities and priority age groups. (From FSSA)
  - Increase child care subsidies via the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) to support the needs of more families while creating greater equity between urban and rural areas. (From the Southern Indiana Gateway)
  - Provide a child and dependent care tax credit (29 states) - Available evidence suggests this is not only a relief to parents and incentive to work, it also boosts child care provider wages. (From the Indiana Skills 2 Compete Coalition)
  - Provide a child tax credit (12 states) - A more flexible alternative, state-level child tax credits recognize and account for the increased costs associated with welcoming and taking care of a child. (From the Indiana Skills 2 Compete Coalition)
  - Investment in Student Parents (From the Indiana Skills 2 Compete Coalition)
    - Fund campus navigators to connect student parents to resources like CCDF.
    - Support the establishment of higher education campus child care centers or child care-campus partnerships and the prioritization of students for slots.

- Establish a state-level student parent child care grant program or prioritize/set aside funds for student parents in CCDBG, including student parents in Adult Basic Education and ELL.
- Increase financial assistance for student parents to enable them to afford child care.

# Appendix B

## Case Studies

The Child Care Resource Network provides community and employer case studies of local efforts and initiatives to discover solutions to improve outcomes for children and families, implementation of family-friendly policy development to support employees with young children, and alignment with the State's overall goals towards child care. These case studies were utilized as benchmarks for potential opportunities in the development of strategies within the regional strategic plan.

### Community Case Studies

#### **Monroe County – Monroe Smart Start**

Monroe Smart Start, a dynamic local child care leadership initiative in Monroe County, Indiana, stands as a beacon for driving kindergarten readiness. With the generous support of the local Community Foundation, this initiative not only facilitates access to tuition-free pre-K programs in Title I elementary schools for 140 children annually, but it also injects vital funding to expand child care capacity at high-quality early childhood locations within the community.

The Monroe County Early Childhood Coalition innovatively established a website offering a comprehensive platform for educators, parents, and employers to access additional resources, events, and exclusive teaching opportunities for educators. Moreover, the website serves as a nexus for community members and organizations, providing a means to connect and contribute to the coalition, thereby bolstering strategic planning initiatives.

- Opportunities:
  - Formation of an Early Childhood Coalition: Inspired by Monroe Smart Start, the establishment of an Early Childhood Coalition presents a strategic opportunity. This coalition can lead initiatives, providing essential resources to diverse community members, including families, employers, and educators.
  - Development of a Scholarship Program: Recognizing the financial challenges faced by families, there is an opportunity to develop a scholarship program, fostering affordability and accessibility to high-quality child care.

## **Montgomery County - Early Childhood Coalition**

Montgomery County Early Childhood Coalition, aided by a planning grant from the Lilly Endowment, embarked on a comprehensive journey to understand and address the barriers and challenges in child care services. Engaging a task force of local stakeholders representing government, employers, child care providers, parents, schools, and nonprofits, the Coalition formulated a robust five-year strategic plan. This plan targets critical aspects such as increasing community and parent education, improving accessibility, enhancing program quality, making child care more affordable, and fortifying program supports.

- Opportunities:
  - Formation of an Early Childhood Coalition: Building on Montgomery County's success, fostering the formation of an Early Childhood Coalition can lead to collaborative efforts and synergies within the community.

## **Kosciusko County – LaunchPad**

LaunchPad, the Child Care and Early Learning Coalition in Kosciusko County, Indiana, emerged as a strategic response to the county's child care shortage. Through innovative partnerships with the Chamber of Commerce, Community Foundation, and United Way, LaunchPad devised a comprehensive five-year strategic plan. This plan targets improving family and community education, increasing child care accessibility, enhancing affordability, growing the early learning workforce, and advocating for policy change. Notably, LaunchPad's unique financial support model, with contributions from local businesses, serves as a model for an alternate approach to sustaining its operation.

- Opportunities:
  - Development of an Organization Supported by Local Businesses: The model adopted by LaunchPad, supported regionally by local business contributions, presents a compelling opportunity for the creation of a similar organization to lead child care initiatives.

## **Rush County – Early Childhood Coalition**

In Rush County, the Early Childhood Coalition, known as First5, has achieved a number of notable successes. First5's proactive initiatives, including the increase of child care capacity and the development of a parent engagement app which provides weekly text messages to parents containing meaningful messages and ways to engage with their young children, showcase a commitment to meeting the unique needs of the Rush County community.

- Opportunities:
  - Development of an Early Childhood Coalition: Inspired by First5, there is an opportunity to establish a dedicated Early Childhood Coalition, fostering collaborative efforts to address the specific needs of the respective county.
  - Creation of a Text-Based Parent Engagement App: The success of the parent engagement app utilized by First5 presents an opportunity to replicate this model in partnership with local school corporations. This initiative could provide families with young children meaningful messages containing educational information, support, and resources.

## **Employer Case Studies**

### **Ashley Industrial Model – Transformation of Former Elementary School into Child Care Facility**

Ashley Industrial Model, a prominent manufacturer and employer in Ashley, Indiana, responded to the challenge of filling job openings by spearheading a collaborative effort with local employers. The CEO of Ashley Industrial Model led a coalition to identify challenges and collaboratively address the pressing need for high-quality child care. This initiative resulted in a partnership with Agape Child Care Ministry and LaGrange First Church of God to renovate an underutilized elementary school, creating an additional 90 child care seats. The facility, operated by LaGrange First Church of God, operates as a registered ministry and nonprofit organization.

- Opportunities:
  - Collaborate with the Vermillion County Redevelopment Commission for the transformation of Ernie Pyle Elementary School into a child care facility for Vermillion County.
  - Identify potential facility locations and offer support in other counties within the West Central Indiana region.

### **Polywood – Employee Sponsored Child Care Services**

Polywood, another major state manufacturer, addressed its employees' child care needs by partnering with Wawasee Early Learning. Polywood subsidizes a percentage of its employees' child care costs, enabling the opening of an additional classroom. Approximately 30% of Polywood's employee child care costs are covered through this initiative.

- Opportunities:
  - Establish sustainable programming by partnering with child care facilities, allowing local businesses to fund seats for their employees.
  - Collaborate with the Greater Terre Haute Chamber of Commerce, leveraging the FSSA Employee Sponsored Child Care grant to help companies develop child care benefits.

### **Indiana Stamp & Indiana Signworks – Infant Care Tuition Assistance Program**

Family-owned Indiana Stamp & Indiana Signworks recognized the importance of supporting employees with child care needs. Unable to provide on-site child care, the company implemented an infant care tuition assistance program. This initiative covers 33% of child care costs for employees with infants aged 12 months or under, provided they choose a center rated PTQ Level 3 or higher.

- Opportunities:
  - Collaborate with the Terre Haute Chamber of Commerce to leverage the FSSA Employee Sponsored Child Care grant for developing child care benefits.
  - Engage with local manufacturers to assess interest and gauge need for similar programming.

### **Borshoff – Bring Your Baby to Work Program**

Borshoff, an advertising and public relations agency in Indianapolis, introduced the “Susan F. Matthews Bring Your Baby to Work” program. This innovative initiative allows parents to bring infants aged six weeks to six months to work. To accommodate the new team members, Borshoff provides private rooms for feeding and nap time as well as designated areas for parents/employees.

- Opportunities:
  - Collaborate with local businesses and organizations to brainstorm unique or non-traditional child care support programs.
  - Work with the Greater Terre Haute Chamber of Commerce through the FSSA Employee Sponsored Child Care grant to assist companies in developing child care benefits for their employees.

# Appendix C

## **Strategic Brand Communication and Implementation**

Grow Up in West Central Indiana adopted a holistic approach when establishing a powerful and cohesive brand identity. This brand, reflected in carefully selected color codes, embodies warmth, reliability, and community, aligning with the commitment to nurturing accessible, high-quality child care in the region while taking into account the institutions of higher education that made the plan possible. Consistency in color codes and language is emphasized to cultivate a cohesive and recognizable presence across all communication channels.

Embedded within this initiative is a robust communication strategy designed to articulate the significance of Grow Up in West Central Indiana. The language and outreach strategy are purposeful, aiming to convey a shared responsibility for the welfare and development of West Central Indiana's children. Leveraging both traditional and digital platforms, the plan can resonate across diverse audiences, fostering community engagement.

Complementing these elements is the Implementation Guide—a comprehensive manual for translating vision into action. This guide meticulously outlines the step-by-step process for executing each strategic initiative within Grow Up in West Central Indiana. It serves as a roadmap for stakeholders, providing best practices, timelines, and designated responsibilities. As the region embarks on this journey, the Implementation Guide also delineates optimal methods for community outreach. Introducing the plan thoughtfully and effectively to the residents and stakeholders of West Central Indiana is integral to its success. Together, these components form a unified foundation, ensuring Grow Up in West Central Indiana is not only seen but deeply understood and embraced by the community.

### Branding

The following was drafted during the data collection phase of the Strategic Plan to help guide outreach and advertisements for the survey, forums, and all marketing materials.

### **Branding and Marketing Materials Implementation**

To ensure the quality and consistency of external outreach efforts, the consultant recommended the development of a strict set of branding guidelines for use in all materials

regarding or supplemental to the strategic plan. In addition to the need for quality and consistency across all stakeholders, the development of graphical elements, advertisements and any other marketing materials will be developed by the consultant and dispensed to Indiana State University and Ivy Tech for further distribution or posting to ensure an efficient and effective use of manpower and time. The brand that has been developed is a marriage of branding from ISU and Ivy Tech Terre Haute, to promote and ensure inclusion from both parties.

## **Branding Guidelines**

- The brand will have three primary colors
  - ISU's Royal Blue (Hex #283A97)
  - Ivy Tech Terre Haute's Banks of the Wabash (Hex #8DC63F)
  - Both Companies utilize White (Hex #FFFFFF)
- The brand will utilize the Font Century Gothic Paneurop
  - Bold will be primarily used for all graphics and headings.
  - Regular will be used for any captions or longform text.
- Creative:
  - To maintain a simplistic and effective representation of all involved parties, it is the recommendation to implement two kinds of creative elements: stock imagery depicting children and child care as a whole, or block coloring. Additionally, utilize a few words for graphics, and a professional tone for captions.
  - The consulting group recommends the tagline: "Grow Up IN West Central Indiana" for the strategic plan.
- Logos
  - Use of logos will be limited on creatives, aside from when necessary, on print marketing materials. Additionally, in lieu of logos on creatives and social media, there will be verbiage within each caption to illustrate that the plan is sponsored by ISU and Ivy Tech Terre Haute.
  - The order for the logos should be as follows:
    - In vertical alignment, Indiana State's logo must be on top, followed by Ivy Tech.
    - In horizontal alignment, Indiana State's Logo will be leftmost, followed by Ivy Tech.

## Marketing Implementation

It is the consultant's recommendation that several specific channels are utilized, both paid and unpaid, for the purposes of distributing the survey to the public and informing the public about the various developments of the survey, keeping the need for child care services present in the public's mind and garnering support for the project. The methods recommended to achieve these goals are as follows:

- Social Media
  - Social media posts will be distributed for posting on social media by all relevant stakeholders at all milestones and other relevant timing. Included within the distributed posts will be the creative elements, captions, relevant hashtags, and a specific window of time within which to post the content on relevant channels.
- Social Media Advertising
  - Using the recommended budget illustrated later in this document, a significant portion of the budget will be utilized towards the implementation of social media advertisements to ensure the maximization of reach within the six counties.
    - Includes Geofencing the relevant counties, specific targeting, etc.
  - Create multiple relevant and targeted ads based on demographic information to ensure equal representation across all age groups and counties.
- Print Marketing
  - Engage and educate local non-competing facilities (i.e., public schools, public libraries, YMCAs, etc.) and distribute take-home flyers and other print materials.

The goal of this campaign is not to ensure the complete usage of the recommended and available budget but to ensure that the budget is not exceeded or needs continuous reevaluation over the course of the project. Additionally, to maintain ease of use for ISU, Ivy Tech Terre Haute, and any other major partners, the consultant recommends implementing paid advertising through the previously named West Central 2025 (West Central Indiana Partnership) regional brand Facebook account. All ads would acknowledge the sponsors, while mitigating any liability for ISU and Ivy Tech Terre Haute in terms of implementing, and more importantly purchasing, social media ads. This will also encourage external engagement and community advocacy through the use of the regional brand while holding true to the desires of ISU, Ivy Tech Terre Haute and all other relevant stakeholders.

Additionally, it is imperative that each stakeholder shares the social media content through their own marketing channels as it is distributed. It is also recommended that it not just be posted via official accounts and channels, but to encourage stakeholders, their employees

and families to share posts on their personal accounts. This will not only further increase the reach of the survey and relevant information but will also show the stakeholders' commitment to the success of the plan; further encouraging the public to engage.

## Communication Strategy

### **Introduction**

This communications strategy is a resource for ISU, partners, and consultants to educate West Central Indiana on the purpose of a Regional Child Care Strategic Plan and the importance of a regional approach to finding solutions for the current state of child care within the six-county region. The document is intended to support the implementation of the child care strategic plan internally and externally for the best result of positive public relations for all publics related to ISU. Following these recommendations will impact the public's outlook of the organization and create a new understanding that is parallel with the mission and goals of ISU. Use this resource for a clear understanding of how to connect with the public and ensure the correct information is being shared. ISU and its consultants will help to ensure that these changes are approved and implemented.

The following recommendations are comprehensive, and all action items may not apply based on various circumstances. ISU is encouraged to utilize this guide (as a whole or in parts) to best support its mission.

### **Goals**

- Communicate the purpose of the Regional Child Care Strategic Plan with regional and local stakeholders to build excitement around the development of the plan.
- Ensure all parties communicate effectively to keep stakeholders informed throughout the strategic planning process including the timeline, analysis, and engagement.
- Reach wide-ranging audiences to receive diverse, comprehensive data based on the current state of child care for providers, families, stakeholders, and more.

### **Regional Stakeholders**

Included are specific regional stakeholders that ISU and consultants will be communicating and interacting with throughout this process. It is important to recognize the differences between the regional stakeholders interacting with the Strategic Plan. Based on that

interaction, each group must be communicated with differently to ensure transparency and trust are built and sustained.

#### Regional Stakeholders

- Wabash River Regional Development Authority
- Thrive West Central
- West Central Indiana Partnership

#### County Stakeholders (Elected Officials, Councils, Departments, etc.)

- Clay County
- Parke County
- Putnam County
- Sullivan County
- Vermillion County
- Vigo County

#### School Corporations

- Clay Community Schools
- Vigo County School Corporation
- South Vermillion Community School Corporation
- North Vermillion Community School Corporation
- Southwest School Corporation
- Northeast School Corporation
- South Putnam Community School Corporation
- North Putnam Community Schools
- Greencastle Community School Corporation
- North Central Parke Community School Corporation
- Southwest Parke Community Schools

#### Regional Partners

- United Way of the Wabash Valley (UWWV)
- Chances and Services for Youth (CASY)
- Community Foundations

#### Other Stakeholders

- Healthcare Providers
- Top Employers
- Unions

- YMCAs
- Child Care Coalitions
- CODA
- Chambers of Commerce

#### Partners

- Host an internal kickoff event with partnering associations to ensure all goals are aligned.
- Host a roundtable discussion for local and state leadership as well as partners.
- Post and reshare media and marketing materials on ISU's social media accounts to reemphasize the collaboration between ISU and its partner stakeholders.

#### Community

- Announce the strategic plan purpose and timeline in a press release.
- Implement increased opportunities through social media, word-of-mouth, and a bulletin to join the newsletter/marketing engagement materials for prospective and current consumers.
- Encourage all consumers to participate in the strategic plan survey for feedback through social media, word-of-mouth and newsletter/marketing engagement material.
  - Encourage stakeholders to push survey through their public social media accounts.
- Invest in a series of paid social media advertisements to encourage participation in the strategic plan survey in addition to results of the survey experiencing maximum reach and visibility across the region.
- Adjust targeting to relevant demographics to encourage equivalent participation across generations as needed. Highlight key brand elements on social media and other marketing items to reinstall brand awareness.
- Increase community building initiatives to create transparency, ensure trust and remain in a positive light.
- Host a press conference when the strategic plan is successfully completed and implemented to reinforce community involvement.
  - Publish a supplemental media advisory prior to the event as well as a press release post-event.
- Attend networking functions and high-level meetings to continue positioning ISU as a leader in the child care industry.

#### Government

- Collaborate with ISU's assistant to the President for State Government Relations, Ms. Susan Preble, and keep in communication on a weekly basis.

- Create constant grassroots activism regarding the need for accessible child care as well as female workforce development.
- Gather statements and testimonials from legislators and state agency directors regarding the current state of child care. This could include current child care worker pay, assistance to child care providers, state programs for child care, child care deserts, and more in each county across the West Central Indiana region (mayors, commissioners, legislators, councilmembers, etc.).

## Media

- Pitch an op-ed to the Tribune-Star to educate the public on the needs within the child care industry in West Central Indiana and its impact on the community.
- Pitch story to WTWO and WTHI
- Social media initiatives
  - Post about survey and relevant data across applicable ISU platforms
    - Include messaging relaying the importance of the survey
    - Include messaging relaying the expected timelines of the project
    - Include messaging relaying the impact the plan will have on constituents, businesses, etc.
    - Encourage reposting and sharing of ISU posts from local stakeholders involved in planning
- Conduct paid social media advertising efforts to further expand impact of the survey
  - As data is collected, adjust relevant targeting to encourage specific demographic groups to respond (i.e., if there is a lack of responses from young adults, adjust targeting to focus on that group)

## Crisis Communications

In addition to the timeline procedure, it is of utmost importance that ISU and any other relevant parties agree on the necessary steps to approach any form of crisis communication. Within the realm of this plan, crisis communication includes any items that would cause a rapid and/or significant change in opinion of the public or any relevant parties of importance to view this plan or the parties involved in a negative light. Examples of items where crisis communication would be necessary are as follows:

- Negative comments on social media posts that gain traction or cause significant negative engagement on platforms
- Significant and unexpected delays in the project

- Changes in alignment of participating parties or the unanticipated exit of any involved and relevant parties

For each of these items, the group as a whole must be prepared to handle the situation quickly, effectively and from a united front. Outlined below is the consultant's recommended process to handle crisis communication. Note: the following is not entirely comprehensive as crises can vary widely:

- Negative comments on social media
  - Regularly monitor social media posts.
  - Should a negative comment arise:
    - First, judge whether the comment can be used as an opportunity to address a concern, further engaging the public and position all parties in a positive light.
    - Should the first option be unavailable, hide the comment.
    - Never delete comments if it can be avoided, this will only lead to further backlash from the commentor and any other parties.
- Significant and unexpected delays in the project
  - Part of encouraging community involvement and stakeholder investment includes providing regular and consistent updates on the state of the project. To ensure this, if a delay arises:
    - First, it must be decided whether this delay can be avoided, either through alternative measures, creative adjustments, etc.
    - If the delay is unavoidable, determine if the delay will impact the long-term timeline – can it be done simultaneously with other efforts, shorten the length of other efforts or any other options.
      - Should the delay affect the timeline, it needs to be communicated to all relevant parties immediately.
      - The public will also need to be informed quickly and provide relevant and appropriate reasoning as to why the delay exists.
- Changes in alignment of participating parties or the unanticipated exit of any involved and relevant parties
  - Immediately discuss the need for a meeting including all relevant parties.
  - Determine the responsibilities and efforts of the exiting party.
  - Determine if a public statement is necessary.
  - Redistribute the responsibilities and efforts amongst the remaining parties.
    - Determine if a new partner is needed to cover necessary responsibilities and efforts.

The previous information is provided as a guide; ISU and all partners should collaboratively decide on an outlined crisis communication policy to enact for the tenure of this project. Doing so will ensure a cohesive response that can be employed quickly and effectively when necessary.

# Appendix D

## Grow Up in West Central Indiana Survey

The following is a PDF of the online survey referenced throughout this strategic plan, exported directly from the survey development software.



## West Central Indiana Child Care Strategic Plan Survey

Thank you for your participation in impacting child care in West Central Indiana. **Our community is exploring the current child care challenges that face our region. To understand the needs best, we are collecting data from West Central Indiana Communities, Clay, Parke, Putnam, Sullivan, Vermillion, and Vigo Counties. The following survey asks a variety of questions related to your personal experiences and the overall state of child care. The following data will be used in creating a Child Care Strategic Plan for West Central Indiana and surrounding communities. All information in the survey is confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this plan.**

**This project is generously supported by the Lilly Endowment, Indiana State University, and Ivy Tech Community College.**

\* 1. Which best describes you? If you are an employer and/or hiring manager/HR/employee benefits representative and receive child care, please select the first option.

- I am an employer/high-level executive/hiring manager/HR/employee benefits representative at a business in West Central Indiana
- I receive child care services in West Central Indiana (provider, family members, etc.)
- I am in need of child care services in West Central Indiana
- I am a child care provider in West Central Indiana
- I do not have a child and/or do not need child care in West Central Indiana

## West Central Indiana Child Care Strategic Plan Survey

### Employer/Business Survey

2. Where is your business currently located?

- Clay County
- Parke County
- Putnam County
- Sullivan County
- Vermillion County
- Vigo County
- Other (please specify)

3. What industry is your business?

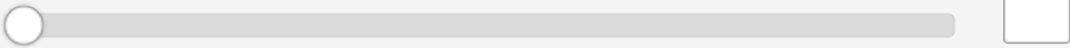
4. What is your role within your business?

5. How many employees are currently at your business

- 1 - 10
- 11 - 25
- 26 - 50
- 51 - 100
- 101 - 200
- 201 - 500
- 500+

6. On average, what percentage of your employees have children under the age of 12?

0% 50% 100%



7. Do you provide child care and/or resources for finding child care for your employees?  
Select all that apply.

- We have child care offerings at the company/business
- We partner with a local child care provider
- We offer reimbursement for child care
- We provide resources to help find quality child care
- We do not offer any assistance with child care
- Other (please specify)

8. What is the most prominent child care need among your employees?

9. Does your business require that people work overnight or on weekends? If so, what do those employees do for child care during that time?

10. Do you have children and receive child care in West Central Indiana?

- Yes, a partner, spouse, or friend provides child care
- Yes, I receive child care from a provider in West Central Indiana
- I have children but they do not need child care
- No, I do not have children and do not need child care services

## West Central Indiana Child Care Strategic Plan Survey

### Child Care Recipient Survey

11. How do you receive child care?

- A partner, family member, or friend stays home to watch my child(ren)
- I take my child(ren) to a child care provider

## West Central Indiana Child Care Strategic Plan Survey

### Child Care from Family or Friend Survey

12. What county do you currently live in?

- Clay County
- Parke County
- Putnam County
- Sullivan County
- Vermillion County
- Vigo County
- Other (please specify)

13. How many children do you have?

- 1 child
- 2 children
- 3 children
- 4 children
- 5+ children

14. What ages are your children? Select all that apply.

- Currently expecting
- Newborn
- Infant (6 weeks - 12 months)
- Toddler 1 (12 - 23 months)
- Toddler 2 (24 - 35 months)
- Preschool (3 years)
- Pre-K (4 - 5 years)
- Kindergarten age
- Elementary school age
- Middle school age
- High school age
- College and above

15. What is your marital status?

- Single parent/householder
- Married, both spouses working
- Married, one spouse working
- Living with partner but not married, both working
- Living with a partner but not married, one working
- Other (please specify)

16. What factors or circumstances contributed to you choosing to have a partner, family member, or friend watch your children?

17. If challenges involving the state of child care were a deciding factor in your decision to choose at-home child care, please indicate what impacted you on the list below. Select all that apply.

- Lack of available spots in child care
- High costs
- Providers are unable to meet my child's needs
- Lack of availability during the hours I need
- Lack of child care providers in my area
- Other (please specify)

18. If you tried to seek out a child care provider before choosing at-home child care, please tell us about your experience.

19. On average, how many hours a day does your child(ren) stay with a family member or friend for child care?

- 1 - 3 hours
- 4 - 7 hours
- 8 - 9 hours
- 10+ hours

20. Do you need child care in the summer?

- Yes, I need full-time child care
- Yes, but I only need part-time child care
- No, I do not need child care in the summer

21. Do you need child care on weekends?

- Yes, I need full-time child care
- Yes, but I only need part-time child care
- No, I do not need child care on the weekends

22. Which hours of the day do you need child care? Select all that apply.

- 5:00 a.m. - 7:00 a.m.
- 7:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.
- 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
- 12:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
- 3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.
- 6:00 p.m. - midnight
- Midnight - 5:00 a.m.
- On weekends
- Overnight child care

23. What are the biggest challenges when it comes to finding and receiving child care? Select all that apply.

- Cost
- Transportation
- Location
- Quality
- Lack of understanding for what child care providers are in area
- Availability
- Other (please specify)

24. What do you hope to get out of your current child care for your child(ren)? Select all that apply.

- Educational components (planned curriculum, activities, etc.)
- Life skills
- Social-emotional learning
- Interaction with other children
- Individualized attention to child
- Structured routine
- Other (please specify)

25. What county do you currently live in?

- Clay County
- Parke County
- Putnam County
- Sullivan County
- Vermillion County
- Vigo County
- Other (please specify)

26. What county is your child care provider located in?

- Clay County
- Parke County
- Putnam County
- Sullivan County
- Vermillion County
- Vigo County
- Other (please specify)

27. How many children do you have?

- 1 child
- 2 children
- 3 children
- 4 children
- 5+ children

28. What ages are your children? Select all that apply.

- Currently expecting
- Newborn
- Infant (6 weeks - 12 months)
- Toddler 1 (12 - 23 months)
- Toddler 2 (24 - 35 months)
- Preschool (3 years)
- Pre-K (4 - 5 years)
- Kindergarten age
- Elementary school age
- Middle school age
- High school age
- College and above

29. What is your marital status?

- Single parent/householder
- Married, both spouses working
- Married, one spouse working
- Living with partner but not married, both working
- Living with partner but not married, one working
- Other (please specify)

30. Which of the following describes how you receive child care?

- Part-time center based child care
- Part-time home based child care
- Full-time center based child care
- Full time home based child care
- Private child care provider (nanny, etc.)
- Local Education Agency (LEA)
- Ministry child care service
- Advanced care for children with special needs
- Before- and after-school care
- Other (please specify)

31. How did you find your current child care provider?

- Recommendation from a friend, family member, or coworker
- Social media
- Referral from local assistance agency
- Advertisement
- Google search
- Online locator
- Other (please specify)

32. Before you found your current child care provider, were you on a waitlist? If so, for how long?

33. Are your child(ren)'s needs being met at their current provider?

- My child(ren)'s needs are met
- My child(ren)'s needs are somewhat met
- My child(ren)'s needs are not met

34. What do you hope to get out of your current child care for your child(ren)? Select all that apply.

- Educational components (planned curriculum, activities, etc.)
- Life skills
- Social-emotional learning
- Interaction with other children
- Individualized attention to child
- Structured routine
- Other (please specify)

35. On average, how many hours a day does your child(ren) receive child care services?

- 1 - 3 hours
- 4 - 7 hours
- 8 - 9 hours
- 10+ hours

36. How much do you pay for child care per week *per child*?

- \$50 - \$75
- \$76 - \$100
- \$101 - \$125
- \$126 - \$150
- \$151 - \$200
- \$200+

37. Please describe the current impact child care has on your monthly finances.

38. Do you need child care in the summer?

- Yes, I need full-time child care
- Yes, but I only need part-time child care
- No, I do not need child care in the summer

39. Do you need child care on weekends?

- Yes, I need full-time child care
- Yes, but I only need part-time child care
- No, I do not need child care on the weekends

40. Which hours of the day do you need child care? Select all that apply.

- 5:00 a.m. - 7:00 a.m.
- 7:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.
- 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
- 12:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
- 3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.
- 6:00 p.m. - midnight
- Midnight - 5:00 a.m.
- On weekends
- Overnight child care

41. Do you receive assistance/support to help pay for child care providers?

- Yes, I receive assistance through a state organization
- Yes, I receive assistance from family members
- Yes, I receive assistance from my employer
- No, I do not receive any assistance
- Other (please specify)

42. Does your family qualify for/use CCDF (Child Care Development Fund) vouchers for child care?

- Yes
- No
- I do not know
- Prefer not to answer

43. Is your child a part of the On My Way Pre-K program?

- Yes
- No
- I do not know
- Prefer not to answer

44. What level of Paths to QUALITY (PTQ) is the provider your child(ren) attends?

- Level 1
- Level 2
- Level 3
- Level 4
- My child care provider does not have a PTQ ranking
- I do not know what level my child care provider is
- Other (please specify)

45. Please rate the following based on your experience with child care in the community and your provider.

	Extremely Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Not Satisfied	Extremely Not Satisfied
Child Care Quality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Child Care Education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Location of Child Provider	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Availability/Hours of Child Care Provider	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cost of Child Care Provider	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

46. What are the biggest challenges when it comes to finding and receiving child care? Select all that apply.

- Cost
- Transportation
- Location
- Quality
- Lack of understanding for what child care providers are in area
- Availability
- Other (please specify)

## West Central Indiana Child Care Strategic Plan Survey

### In Need of Child Care Survey

47. What county do you currently live in?

- Clay County
- Parke County
- Putnam County
- Sullivan County
- Vermillion County
- Vigo County
- Other (please specify)

48. How many children do you have?

- 1 child
- 2 children
- 3 children
- 4 children
- 5+ children

49. What ages are your children? Select all that apply.

- Currently expecting
- Newborn
- Infant (6 weeks - 12 months)
- Toddler 1 (12 - 23 months)
- Toddler 2 (24 - 35 months)
- Preschool (3 years)
- Pre-K (4 - 5 years)
- Kindergarten age
- Elementary school age
- Middle school age
- High school age
- College and above

50. What is your marital status?

- Single parent/householder
- Married, both spouses working
- Married, one spouse working
- Living with partner but not married, both working
- Living with partner but not married, one working
- Other (please specify)

51. As you are comfortable, please describe your current child care needs and struggles.

52. How long have you been looking for child care services?

- Less than 1 month
- 1 - 2 months
- 3 - 6 months
- 6+ months

53. Are you currently on a waitlist for child care?

- Yes, I am currently on a waitlist for one child care provider
- Yes, I am currently on a waitlist for multiple child care providers
- No, I am not on a waitlist for a child care provider

54. When do you need child care? Select all that apply.

- Full-time on weekdays
- Part-time on weekdays
- During the summer
- On weekends
- During early morning hours or late evening hours
- Other (please specify)

55. What is the biggest challenge when it comes to finding and receiving child care? Select all that apply.

- Cost
- Transportation
- Location
- Quality
- Lack of understanding for what child care providers are in area
- Availability
- Other (please specify)

56. Where are you currently located?

- Clay County
- Parke County
- Putnam County
- Sullivan County
- Vermillion County
- Vigo County
- Other (please specify)

57. What type of program are you?

- Center Exempt
- Center Licensed
- Home Exempt
- Home Licensed
- LEA (Local Education Agency)
- Ministry
- Other (please specify)

58. Do you offer any specialized child care services?

59. On average, how many children do you serve per week?

- 1 - 5
- 6 - 10
- 11 - 20
- 21 - 30
- 31 - 40
- 41 - 50
- 50+

60. What age range of children do you serve? Select all that apply.

- Infant (6 weeks - 12 months)
- Toddler (12 - 23 months)
- Toddler 2 (24 - 35 months)
- Preschool (3 years)
- Pre-K (4 - 5 years)
- Before and After School Care

**If you are comfortable sharing, please answer the following questions related to costs for children at child care providers.**

61. How much do you charge per week for infants?

\$50 \$200+

62. How much do you charge per week for toddlers?

\$50 \$200+

63. How much do you charge per week for preschool-aged children?

\$50 \$200

64. How much do you charge per week for school-aged children?

\$50 \$200+

65. How many employees do you have?

- 1 - 2
- 3 - 5
- 5 - 10
- 11 - 15
- 16 - 20
- 21 - 30
- 30+

66. Have you achieved a Paths to QUALITY (PTQ) ranking?

- I am a level 1 provider
- I am a level 2 provider
- I am a level 3 provider
- I am a level 4 provider
- I am a not a PTQ provider
- I am not eligible to participate in PTQ

67. If you are not a PTQ provider or are not eligible to be one, what resources and tools would you need to become one? For more information, visit <https://www.in.gov/fssa/pathstoquality/>.

68. If you are currently a level 1 or 2 PTQ provider, what tools and resources would you need to become a level 3 provider? For more information, visit <https://www.in.gov/fssa/pathstoquality/>.

69. Do you provide child care on weekends?

- Yes, we provide child care on weekends
- No, we do not provide child care on weekends

70. Do you provide child care during early hours, evening hours, or overnight? Select all that apply.

- Yes, we provide child care during early morning hours
- Yes, we provide child care during evening hours
- Yes, we provide child care overnight
- No, we do not provide child care during any of these times

71. Are you a CCDF (Child Care Development Fund) eligible program/provider?

- Yes, I am a CCDF eligible program/provider
- No, I am not a CCDF program/provider

72. As a provider, what do you believe is the biggest challenge for families when it comes to finding and receiving child care? Select all that apply.

- Cost
- Transportation
- Location
- Quality
- Lack of understanding for what child care providers are in area
- Availability
- Other (please specify)

73. Do you currently have a waitlist for your services? If so, what is the average number of names on the waitlist?

74. What challenges do you face as a child care provider in your community?

West Central Indiana Child Care Strategic Plan Survey  
Overall Survey

75. Do you believe your community has adequate access to child care providers and assistance?

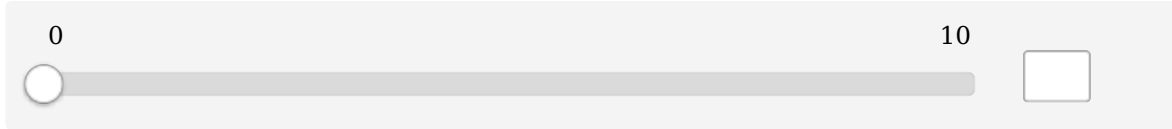
- Yes, I believe our community has adequate access to child care
- No, I do not believe our community has adequate access to child care
- Neutral, I believe parts of our community have adequate access to child care while other parts do not

76. What tools and resources are needed within the community to help make child care more accessible?

77. How would you describe the need for child care in your community?

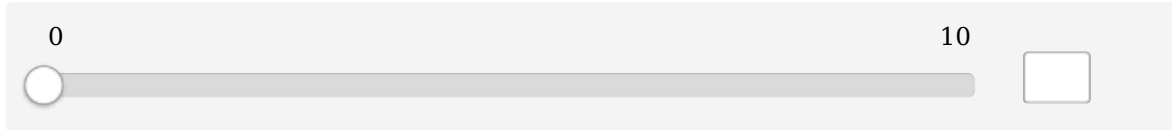
78. On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being the worst and 10 being the best), how would you rate the current availability of child care in your community?

0 10



79. On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being the worst and 10 being the best), how would you rate the quality of child care in your community?

0 10



## West Central Indiana Child Care Strategic Plan Survey

### No Children/No Child Care Survey

80. What county do you currently live in?

- Clay County
- Parke County
- Putnam County
- Sullivan County
- Vermillion County
- Vigo County
- Other (please specify)

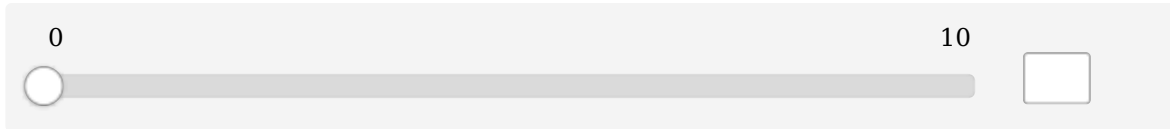
*Please answer the following questions based on your current understanding of the child care need in your community.*

81. What tools and resources are needed within the community to help make child care more accessible?

82. How would you describe the need for child care in your community?

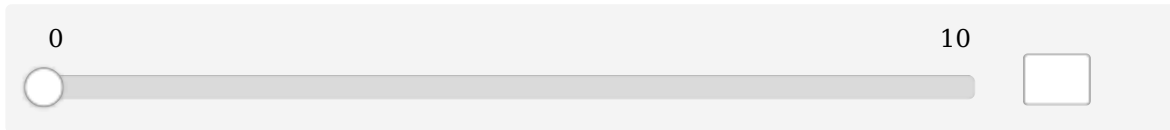
83. On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being the worst and 10 being the best), how would you rate the current availability of child care in your community?

0 10



84. On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being the worst and 10 being the best), how would you rate the current quality of child care in your community?

0 10



## West Central Indiana Child Care Strategic Plan Survey

### Demographics

85. What gender do you identify as?

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary and/or Gender Non-conforming
- Prefer not to answer
- Other (please specify)

86. What is your age?

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+
- Prefer not to answer

87. What is your racial background?

- White
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Asian or Asian American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- Two or more races
- Prefer not to answer
- Other (please specify)

88. Please select the option that best describes your employment status. Select all that apply.

- I work full-time
- I work part-time
- I work in the trades industry
- I work remotely
- I am unemployed
- I am pursuing professional education training (trades, CNA programing, etc.)
- I am currently an undergraduate student
- I am currently a graduate student
- Other (please specify)

89. What is your annual household income?

- Under \$15,000
- Between \$15,000 and \$29,999
- Between \$30,000 and \$49,999
- Between \$50,000 and \$74,999
- Between \$75,000 and \$99,999
- Between \$100,000 and \$150,000
- Over \$150,000
- Prefer not to answer
- Other (please specify)

90. What is your highest level of education?

- Middle/Elementary School
- High School or GED equivalent
- Associate Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Doctorate/Ph.D.
- Prefer not to answer
- Other (please specify)

91. What is your primary language?

- English
- Spanish
- Mandarin
- Prefer not to answer
- Other (please specify)

# Appendix E

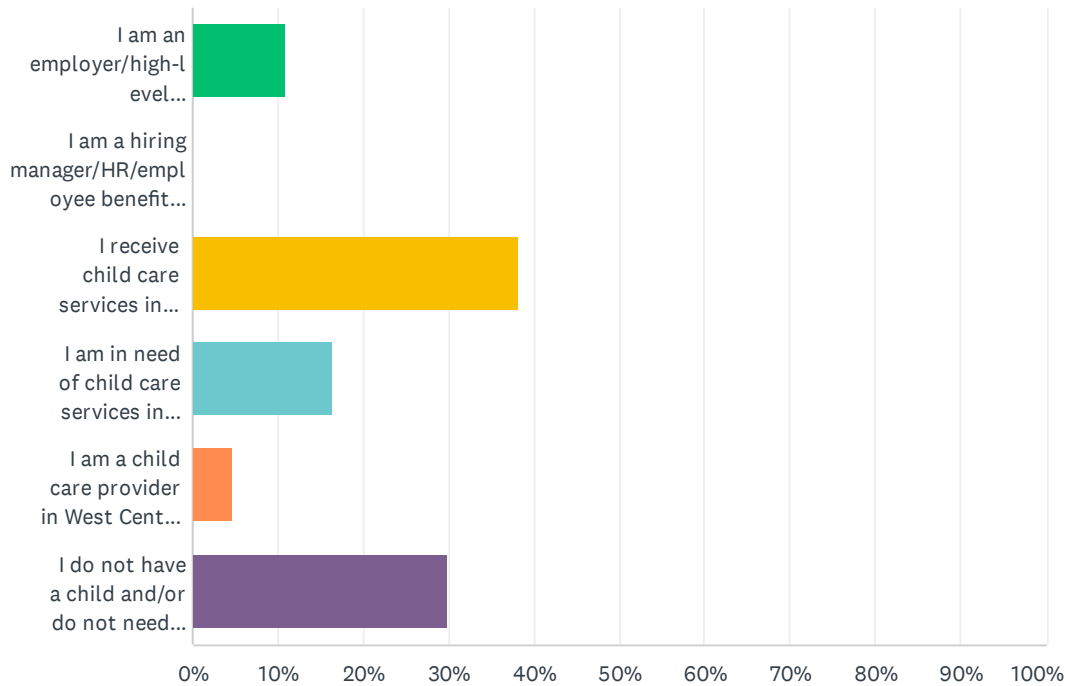
## Grow Up in West Central Indiana Survey Results

The following is a PDF of the survey results captured through the data collection process, exported directly from the survey development software.



**Q1 Which best describes you? If you are an employer and/or hiring manager/HR/employee benefits representative and receive child care, please select the first option.**

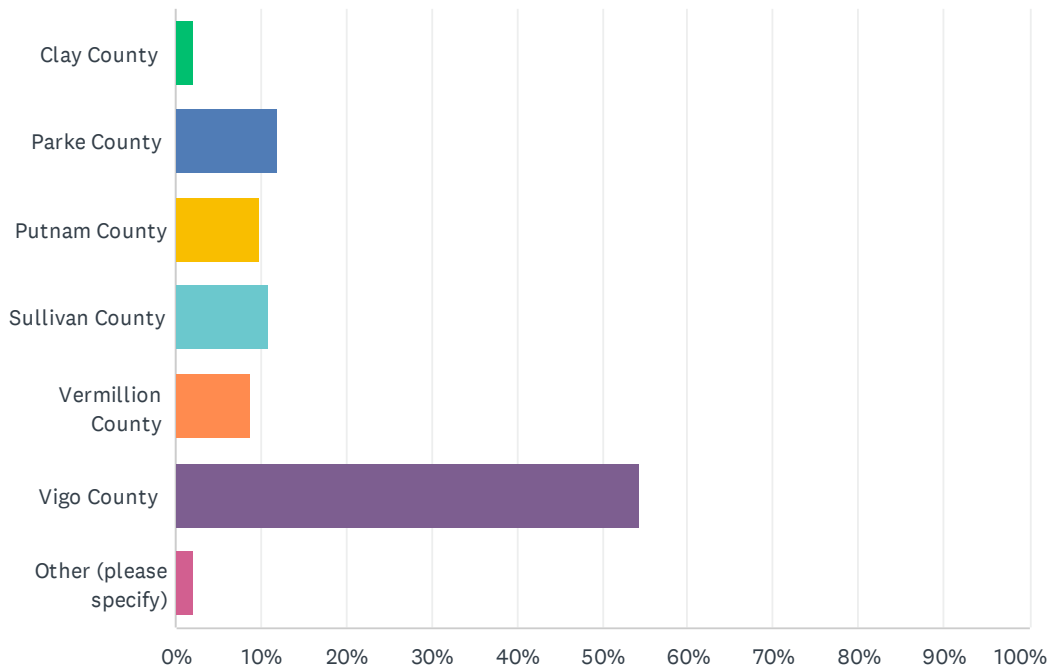
Answered: 839 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I am an employer/high-level executive/hiring manager/HR/employee benefits representative at a business in West Central Indiana	10.85%	91
I am a hiring manager/HR/employee benefits representative in West Central Indiana	0.00%	0
I receive child care services in West Central Indiana (provider, family members, etc.)	38.26%	321
I am in need of child care services in West Central Indiana	16.45%	138
I am a child care provider in West Central Indiana	4.65%	39
I do not have a child and/or do not need child care in West Central Indiana	29.80%	250
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>839</b>

## Q2 Where is your business currently located?

Answered: 92 Skipped: 747

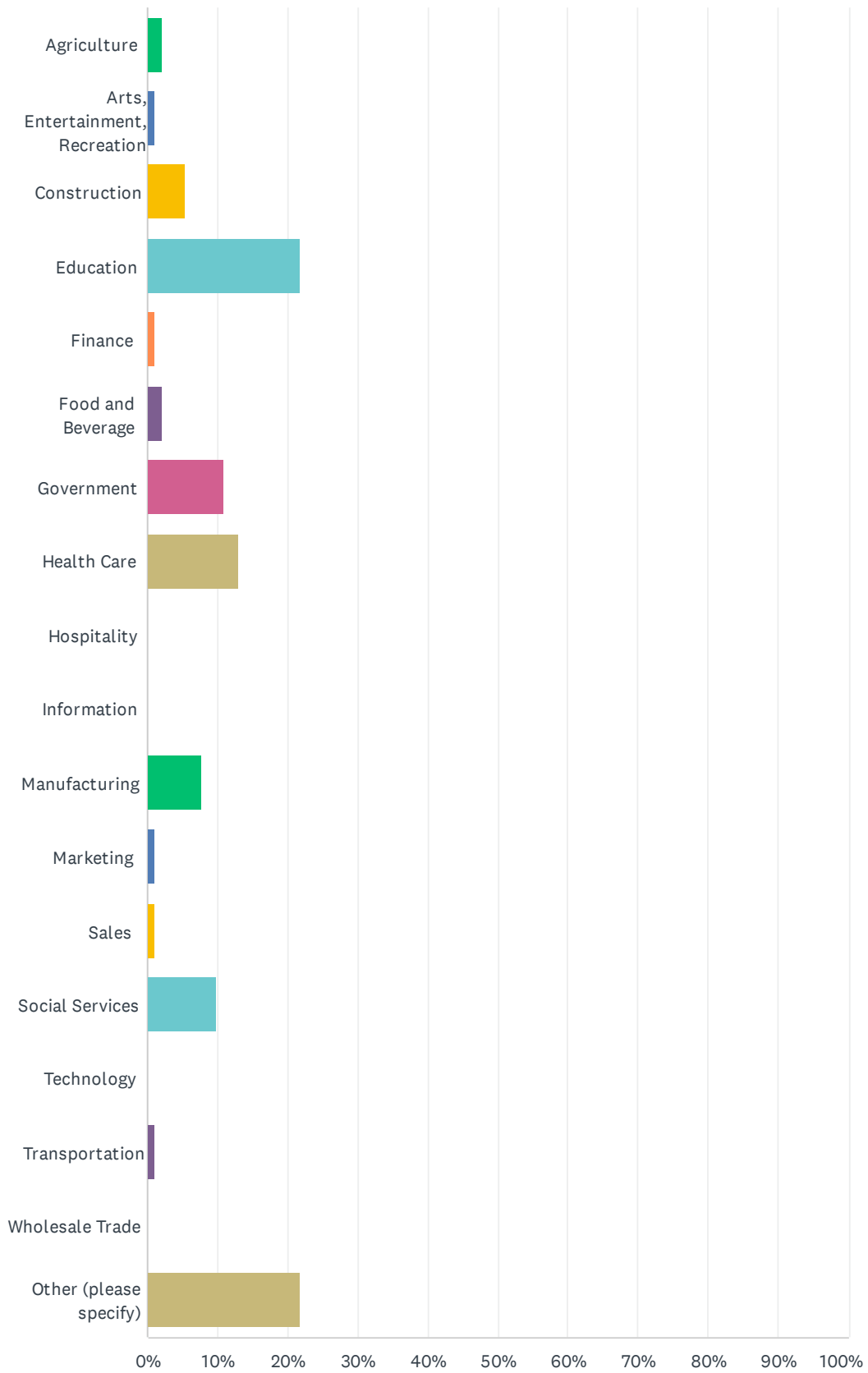


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Clay County	2.17% 2
Parke County	11.96% 11
Putnam County	9.78% 9
Sullivan County	10.87% 10
Vermillion County	8.70% 8
Vigo County	54.35% 50
Other (please specify)	2.17% 2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>92</b>

### Q3 What industry is your business?

Answered: 92 Skipped: 747

# West Central Indiana Child Care Strategic Plan Survey

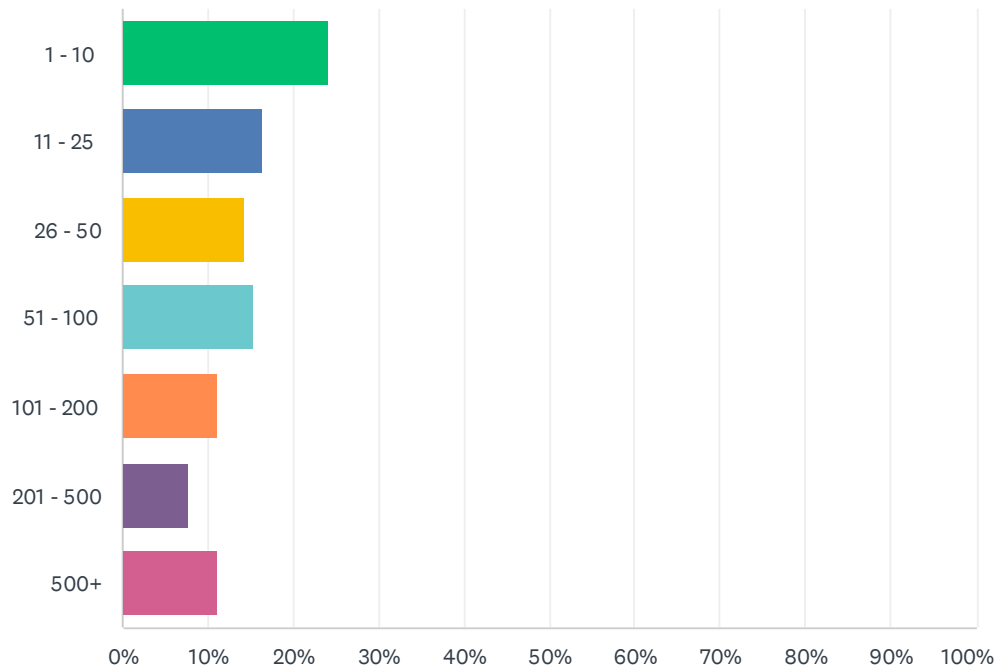


## West Central Indiana Child Care Strategic Plan Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Agriculture	2.17%	2
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation	1.09%	1
Construction	5.43%	5
Education	21.74%	20
Finance	1.09%	1
Food and Beverage	2.17%	2
Government	10.87%	10
Health Care	13.04%	12
Hospitality	0.00%	0
Information	0.00%	0
Manufacturing	7.61%	7
Marketing	1.09%	1
Sales	1.09%	1
Social Services	9.78%	9
Technology	0.00%	0
Transportation	1.09%	1
Wholesale Trade	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	21.74%	20
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>92</b>

## Q5 How many employees are currently at your business

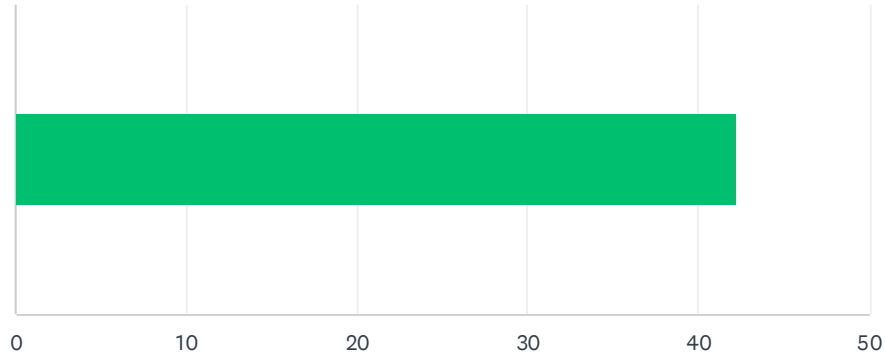
Answered: 91 Skipped: 748



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1 - 10	24.18%	22
11 - 25	16.48%	15
26 - 50	14.29%	13
51 - 100	15.38%	14
101 - 200	10.99%	10
201 - 500	7.69%	7
500+	10.99%	10
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>91</b>

## Q6 On average, what percentage of your employees have children under the age of 12?

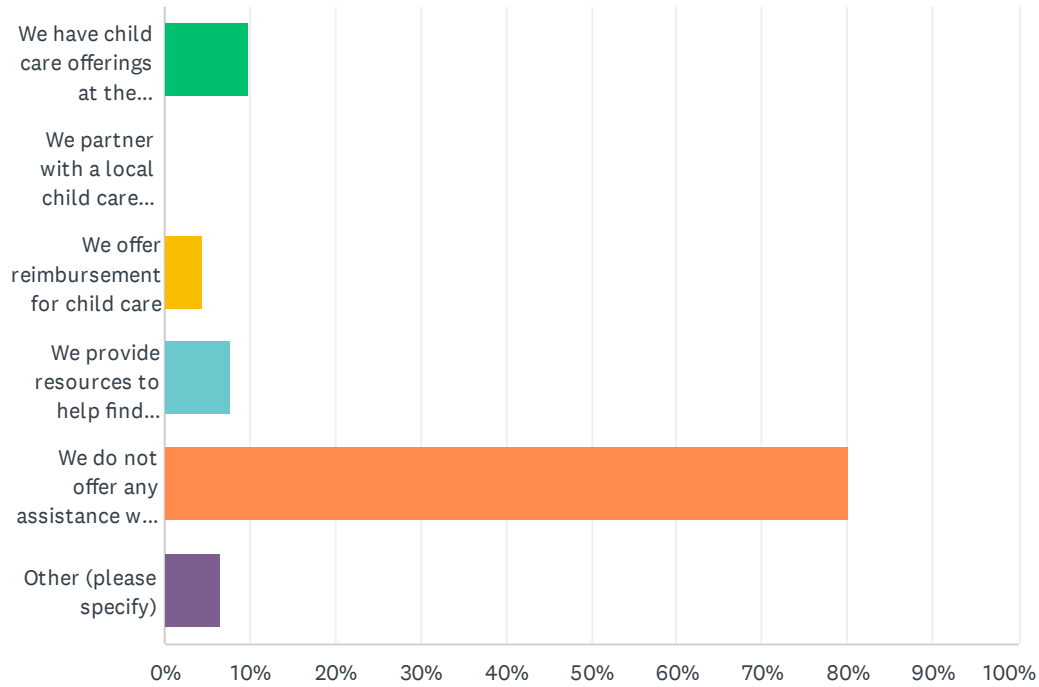
Answered: 87 Skipped: 752



ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
	42	3,676	87
Total Respondents: 87			

## Q7 Do you provide child care and/or resources for finding child care for your employees? Select all that apply.

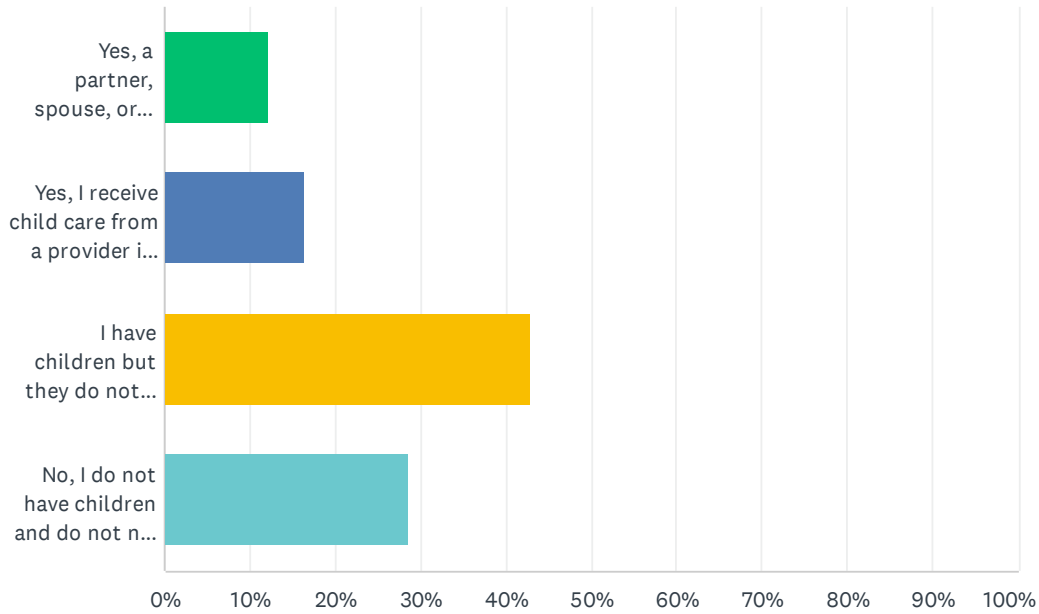
Answered: 91 Skipped: 748



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
We have child care offerings at the company/business	9.89%	9
We partner with a local child care provider	0.00%	0
We offer reimbursement for child care	4.40%	4
We provide resources to help find quality child care	7.69%	7
We do not offer any assistance with child care	80.22%	73
Other (please specify)	6.59%	6
Total Respondents: 91		

## Q10 Do you have children and receive child care in West Central Indiana?

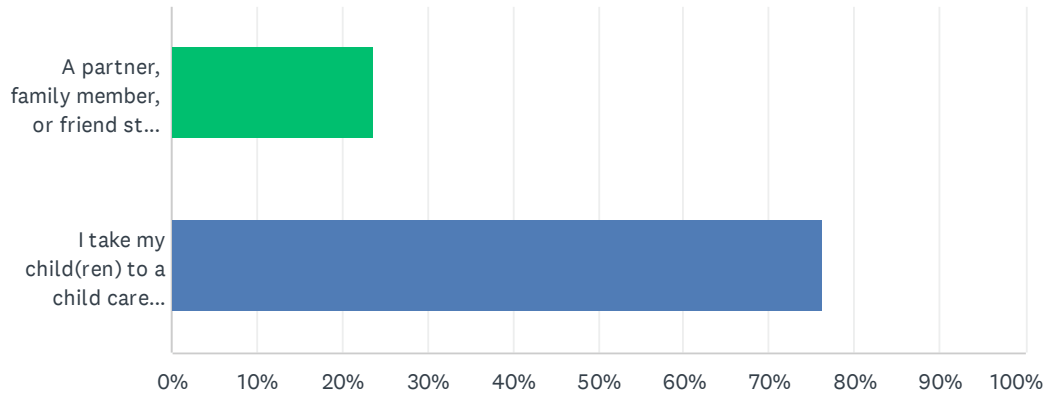
Answered: 91 Skipped: 748



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, a partner, spouse, or friend provides child care	12.09%	11
Yes, I receive child care from a provider in West Central Indiana	16.48%	15
I have children but they do not need child care	42.86%	39
No, I do not have children and do not need child care services	28.57%	26
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>91</b>

## Q11 How do you receive child care?

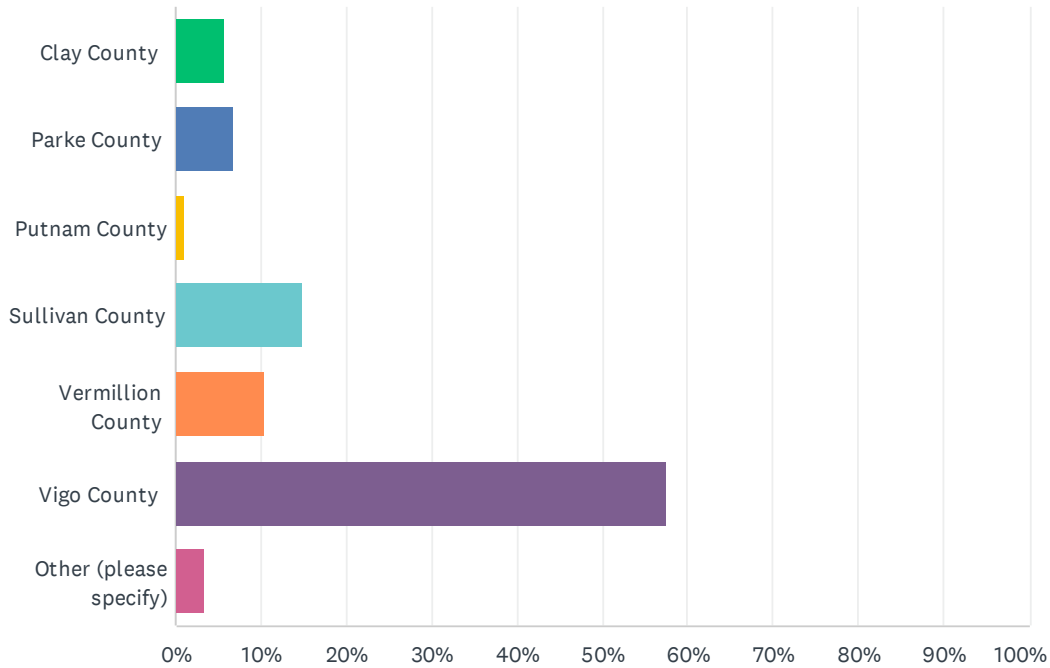
Answered: 322 Skipped: 517



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A partner, family member, or friend stays home to watch my child(ren)	23.60%	76
I take my child(ren) to a child care provider	76.40%	246
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>322</b>

## Q12 What county do you currently live in?

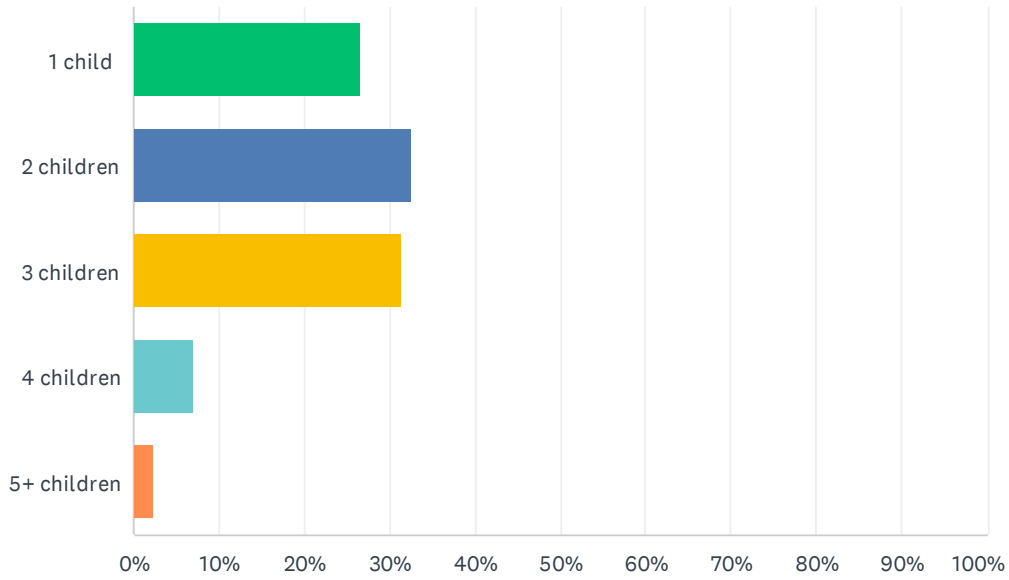
Answered: 87 Skipped: 752



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Clay County	5.75%	5
Parke County	6.90%	6
Putnam County	1.15%	1
Sullivan County	14.94%	13
Vermillion County	10.34%	9
Vigo County	57.47%	50
Other (please specify)	3.45%	3
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>87</b>

## Q13 How many children do you have?

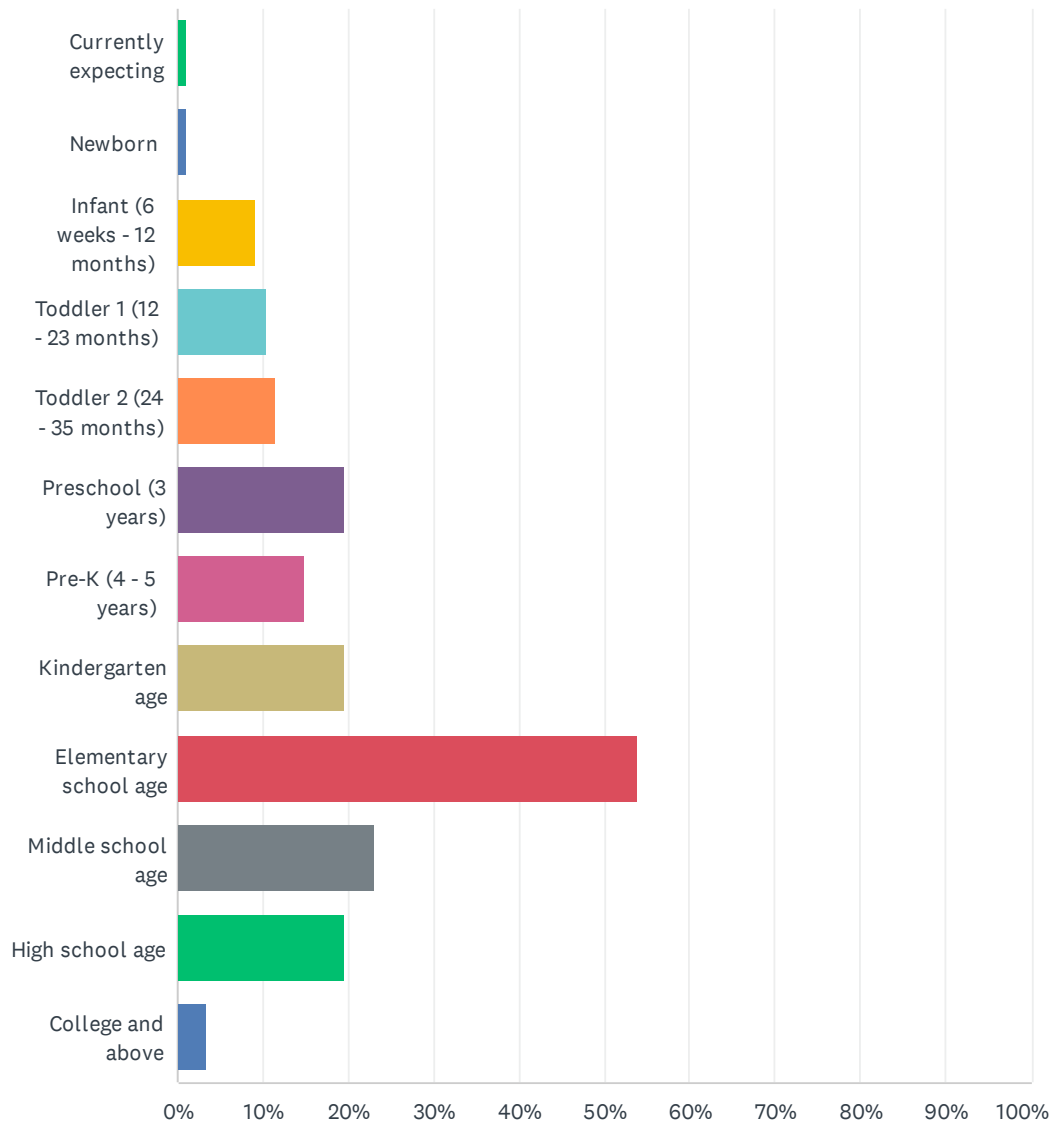
Answered: 86 Skipped: 753



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1 child	26.74%	23
2 children	32.56%	28
3 children	31.40%	27
4 children	6.98%	6
5+ children	2.33%	2
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>86</b>

### Q14 What ages are your children? Select all that apply.

Answered: 87 Skipped: 752

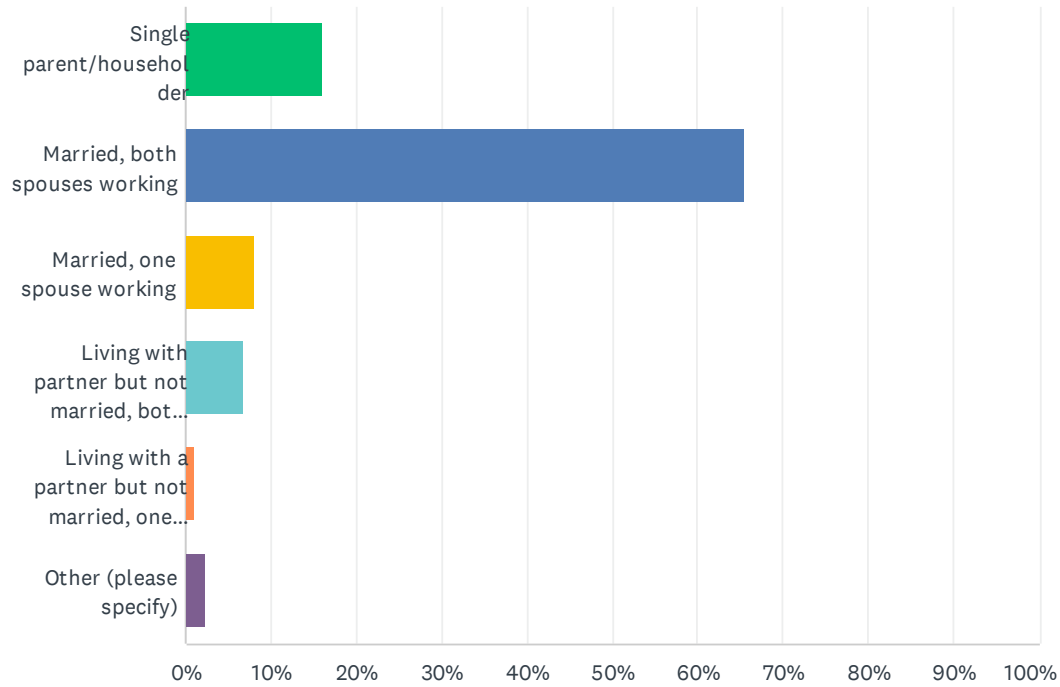


## West Central Indiana Child Care Strategic Plan Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Currently expecting	1.15%	1
Newborn	1.15%	1
Infant (6 weeks - 12 months)	9.20%	8
Toddler 1 (12 - 23 months)	10.34%	9
Toddler 2 (24 - 35 months)	11.49%	10
Preschool (3 years)	19.54%	17
Pre-K (4 - 5 years)	14.94%	13
Kindergarten age	19.54%	17
Elementary school age	54.02%	47
Middle school age	22.99%	20
High school age	19.54%	17
College and above	3.45%	3
Total Respondents: 87		

## Q15 What is your marital status?

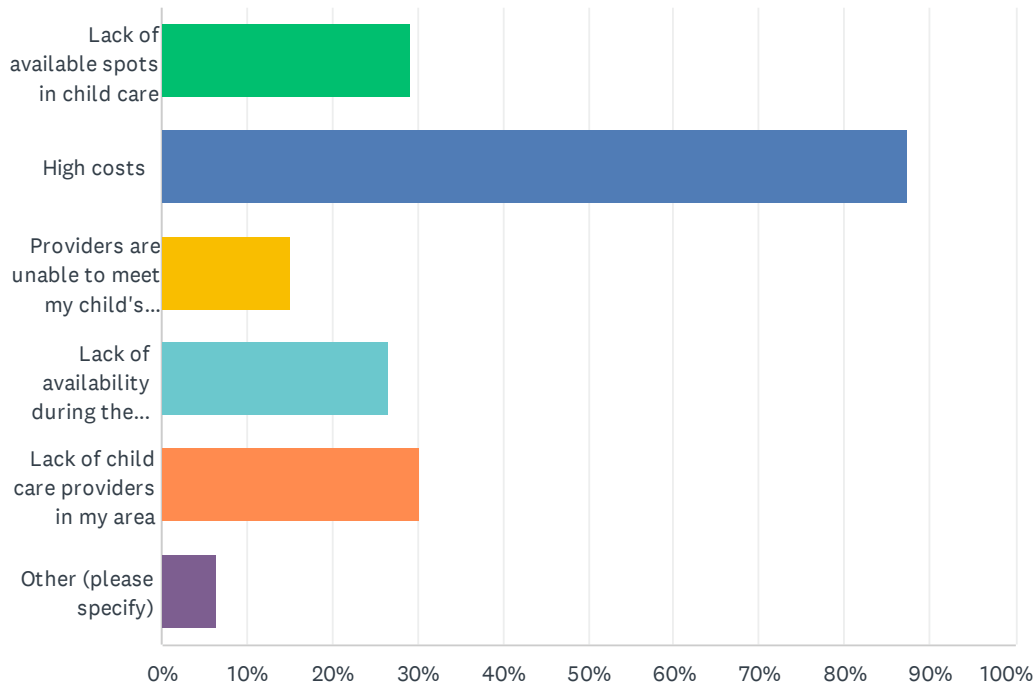
Answered: 87 Skipped: 752



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Single parent/householder	16.09%	14
Married, both spouses working	65.52%	57
Married, one spouse working	8.05%	7
Living with partner but not married, both working	6.90%	6
Living with a partner but not married, one working	1.15%	1
Other (please specify)	2.30%	2
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>87</b>

**Q17 If challenges involving the state of child care were a deciding factor in your decision to choose at-home child care, please indicate what impacted you on the list below. Select all that apply.**

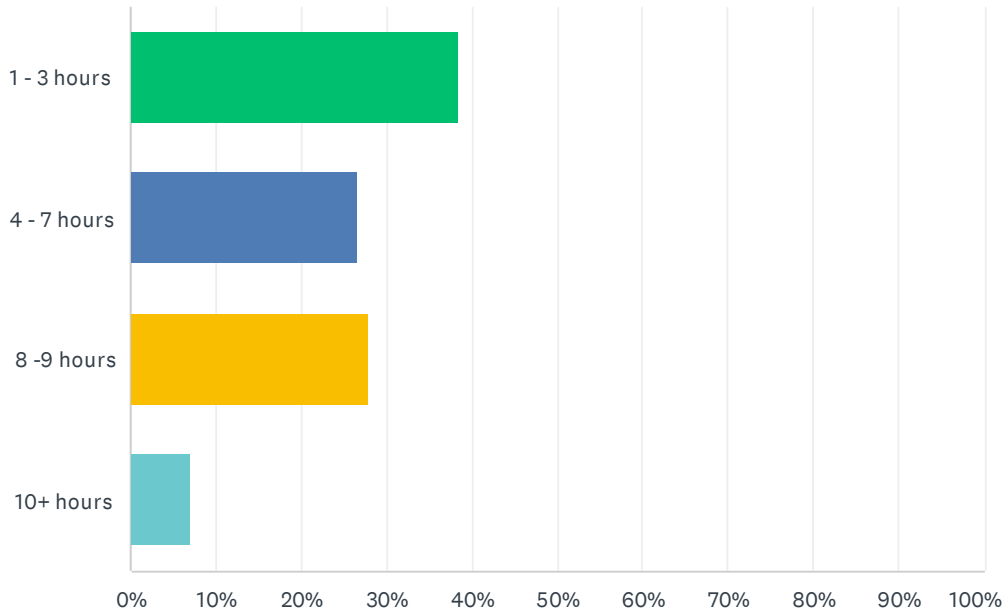
Answered: 79 Skipped: 760



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Lack of available spots in child care	29.11%	23
High costs	87.34%	69
Providers are unable to meet my child's needs	15.19%	12
Lack of availability during the hours I need	26.58%	21
Lack of child care providers in my area	30.38%	24
Other (please specify)	6.33%	5
Total Respondents: 79		

### Q19 On average, how many hours a day does your child(ren) stay with a family member or friend for child care?

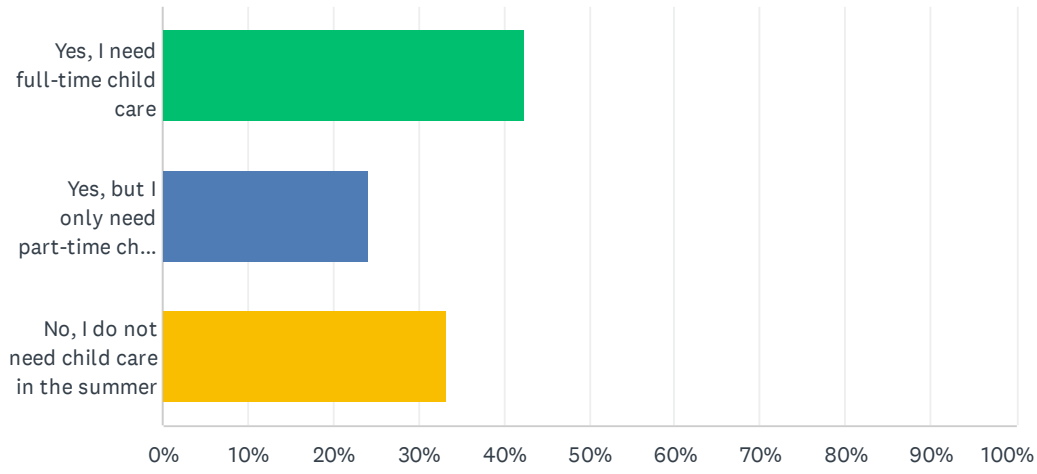
Answered: 86 Skipped: 753



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1 - 3 hours	38.37%	33
4 - 7 hours	26.74%	23
8 -9 hours	27.91%	24
10+ hours	6.98%	6
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>86</b>

## Q20 Do you need child care in the summer?

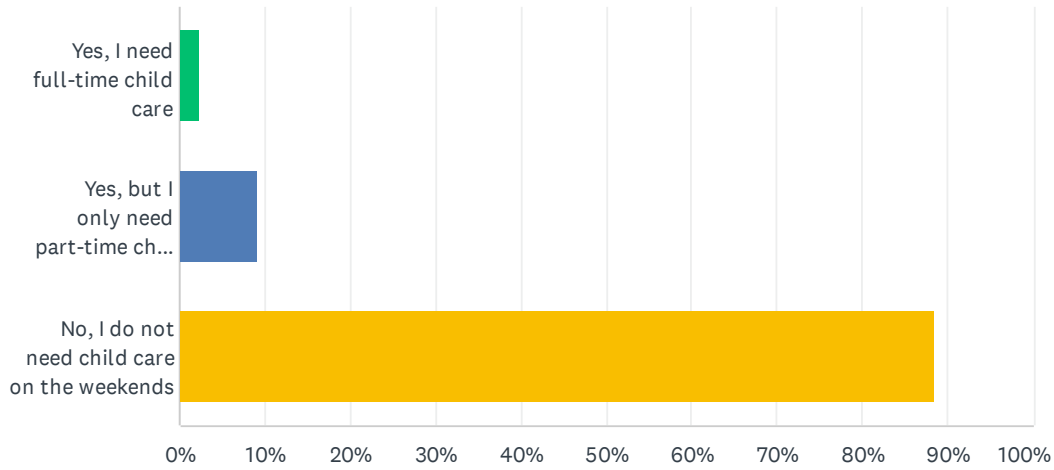
Answered: 87 Skipped: 752



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, I need full-time child care	42.53%	37
Yes, but I only need part-time child care	24.14%	21
No, I do not need child care in the summer	33.33%	29
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>87</b>

## Q21 Do you need child care on weekends?

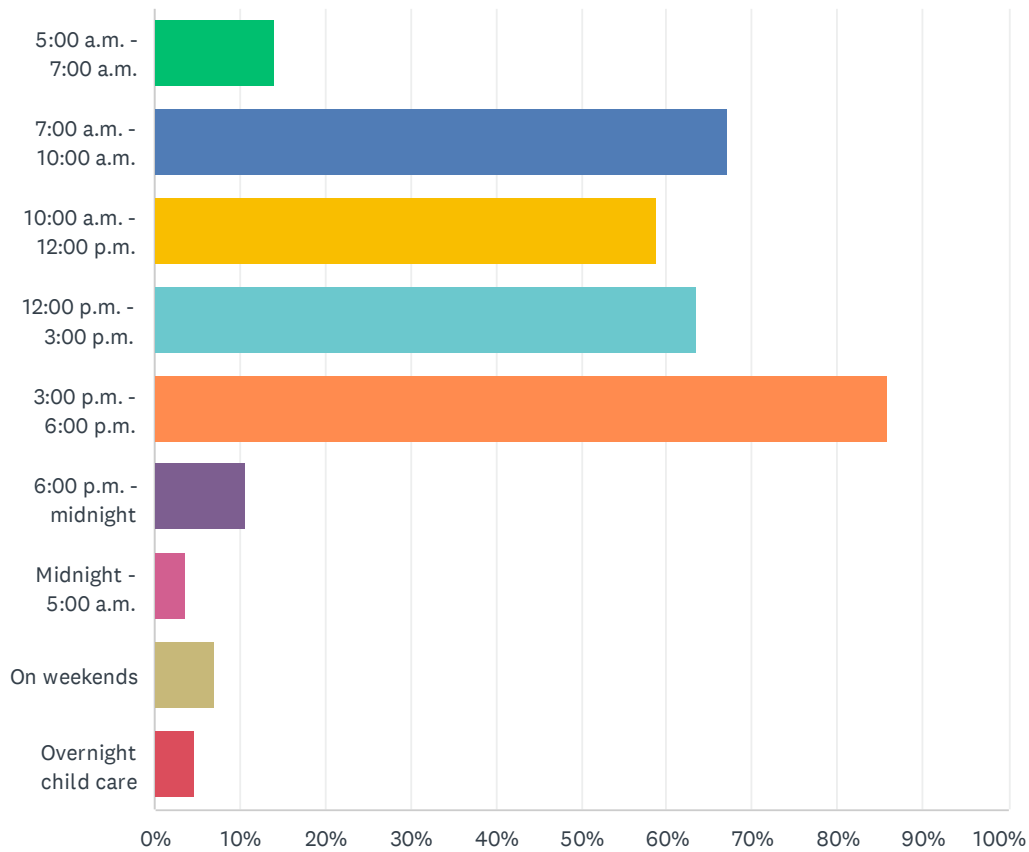
Answered: 87 Skipped: 752



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, I need full-time child care	2.30%	2
Yes, but I only need part-time child care	9.20%	8
No, I do not need child care on the weekends	88.51%	77
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>87</b>

## Q22 Which hours of the day do you need child care? Select all that apply.

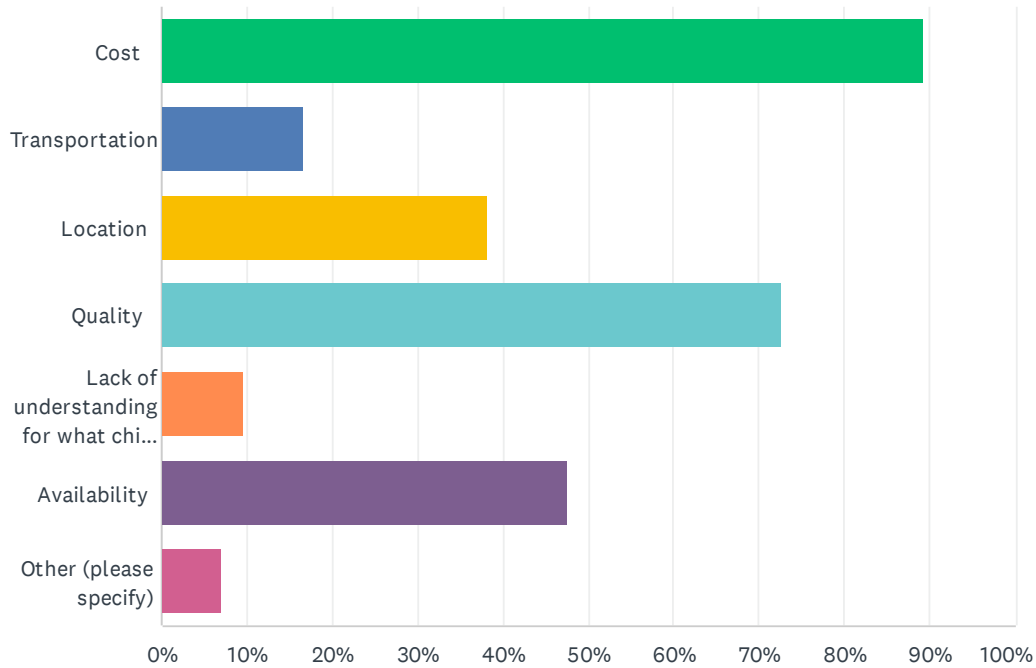
Answered: 85 Skipped: 754



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
5:00 a.m. - 7:00 a.m.	14.12% 12
7:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.	67.06% 57
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	58.82% 50
12:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.	63.53% 54
3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.	85.88% 73
6:00 p.m. - midnight	10.59% 9
Midnight - 5:00 a.m.	3.53% 3
On weekends	7.06% 6
Overnight child care	4.71% 4
Total Respondents: 85	

## Q23 What are the biggest challenges when it comes to finding and receiving child care? Select all that apply.

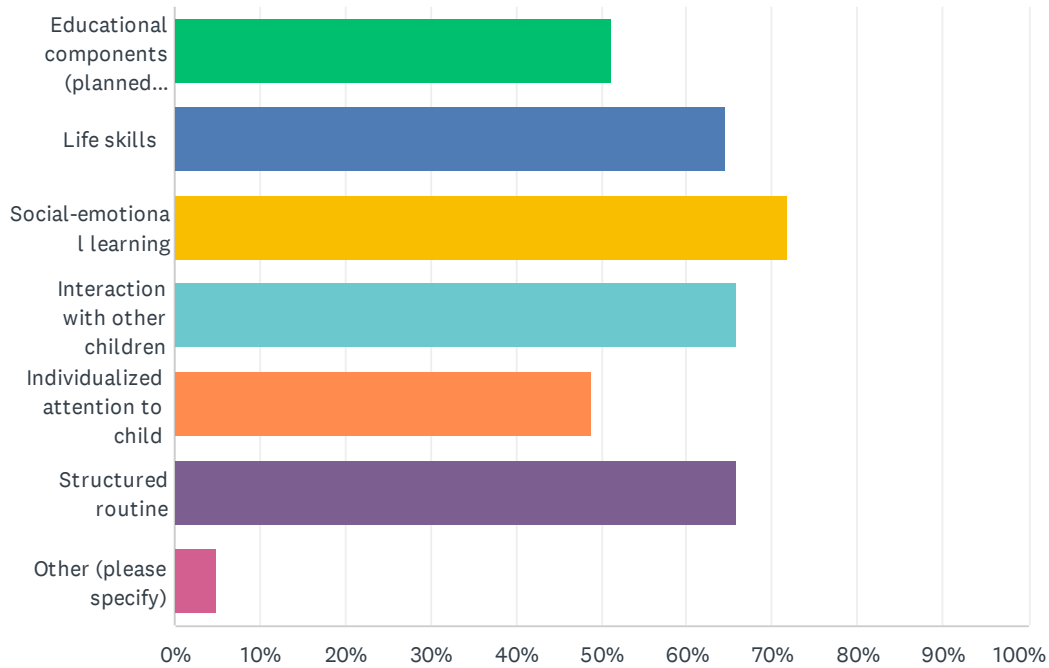
Answered: 84 Skipped: 755



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Cost	89.29%	75
Transportation	16.67%	14
Location	38.10%	32
Quality	72.62%	61
Lack of understanding for what child care providers are in area	9.52%	8
Availability	47.62%	40
Other (please specify)	7.14%	6
Total Respondents: 84		

## Q24 What do you hope to get out of your current child care for your child(ren)? Select all that apply.

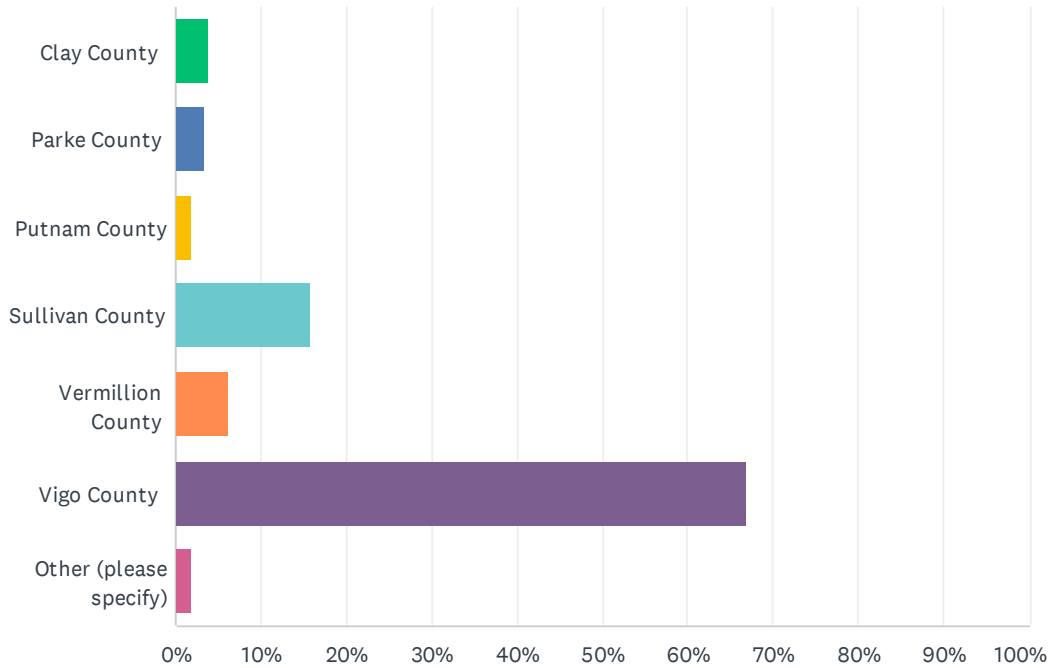
Answered: 82 Skipped: 757



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Educational components (planned curriculum, activities, etc.)	51.22%	42
Life skills	64.63%	53
Social-emotional learning	71.95%	59
Interaction with other children	65.85%	54
Individualized attention to child	48.78%	40
Structured routine	65.85%	54
Other (please specify)	4.88%	4
Total Respondents: 82		

## Q25 What county do you currently live in?

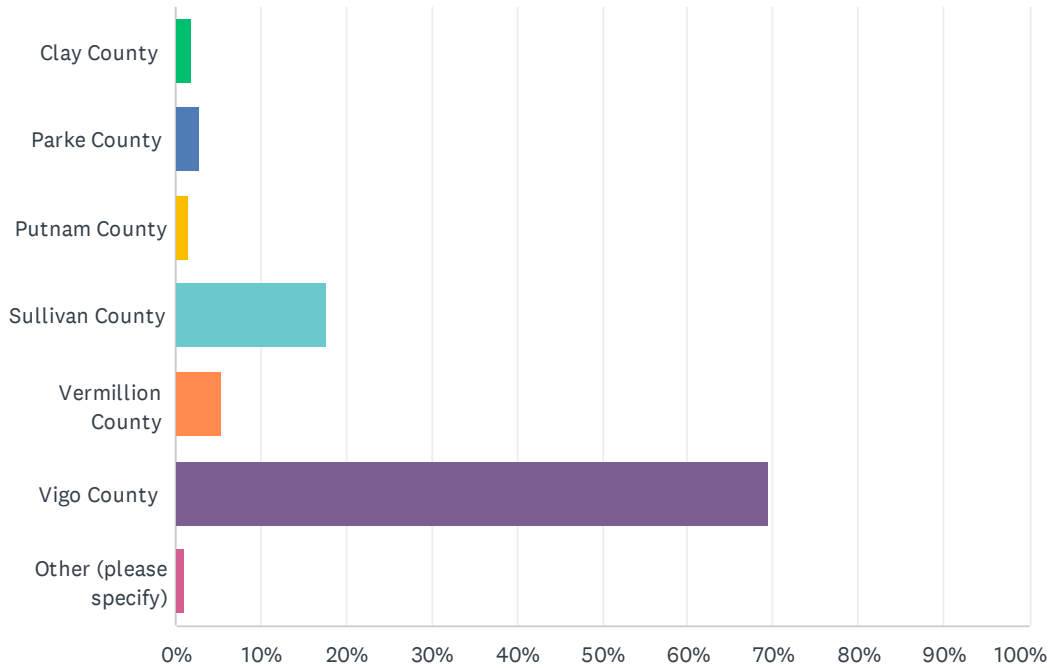
Answered: 260 Skipped: 579



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Clay County	3.85%	10
Parke County	3.46%	9
Putnam County	1.92%	5
Sullivan County	15.77%	41
Vermillion County	6.15%	16
Vigo County	66.92%	174
Other (please specify)	1.92%	5
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>260</b>

## Q26 What county is your child care provider located in?

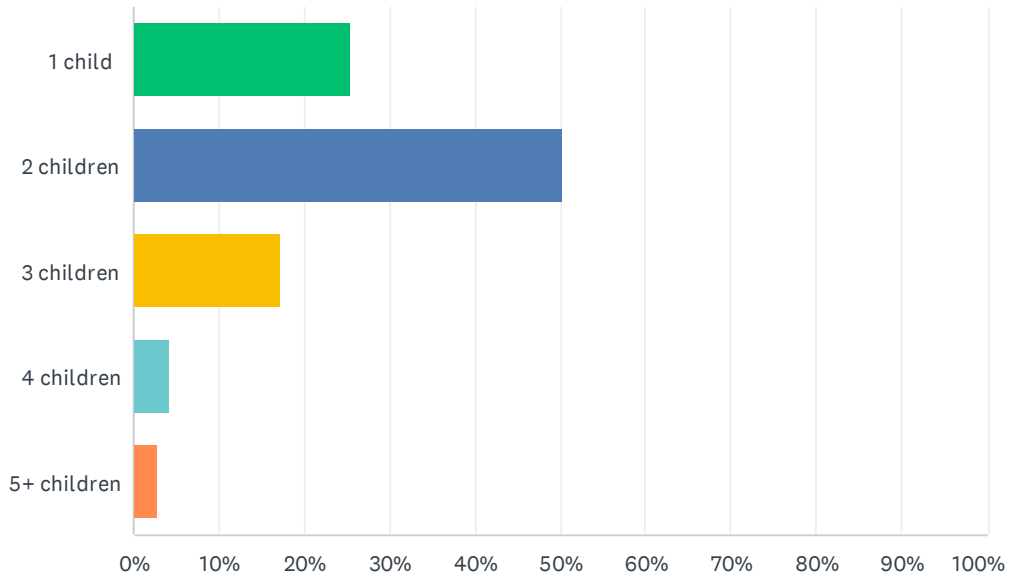
Answered: 260 Skipped: 579



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Clay County	1.92% 5
Parke County	2.69% 7
Putnam County	1.54% 4
Sullivan County	17.69% 46
Vermillion County	5.38% 14
Vigo County	69.62% 181
Other (please specify)	1.15% 3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>260</b>

## Q27 How many children do you have?

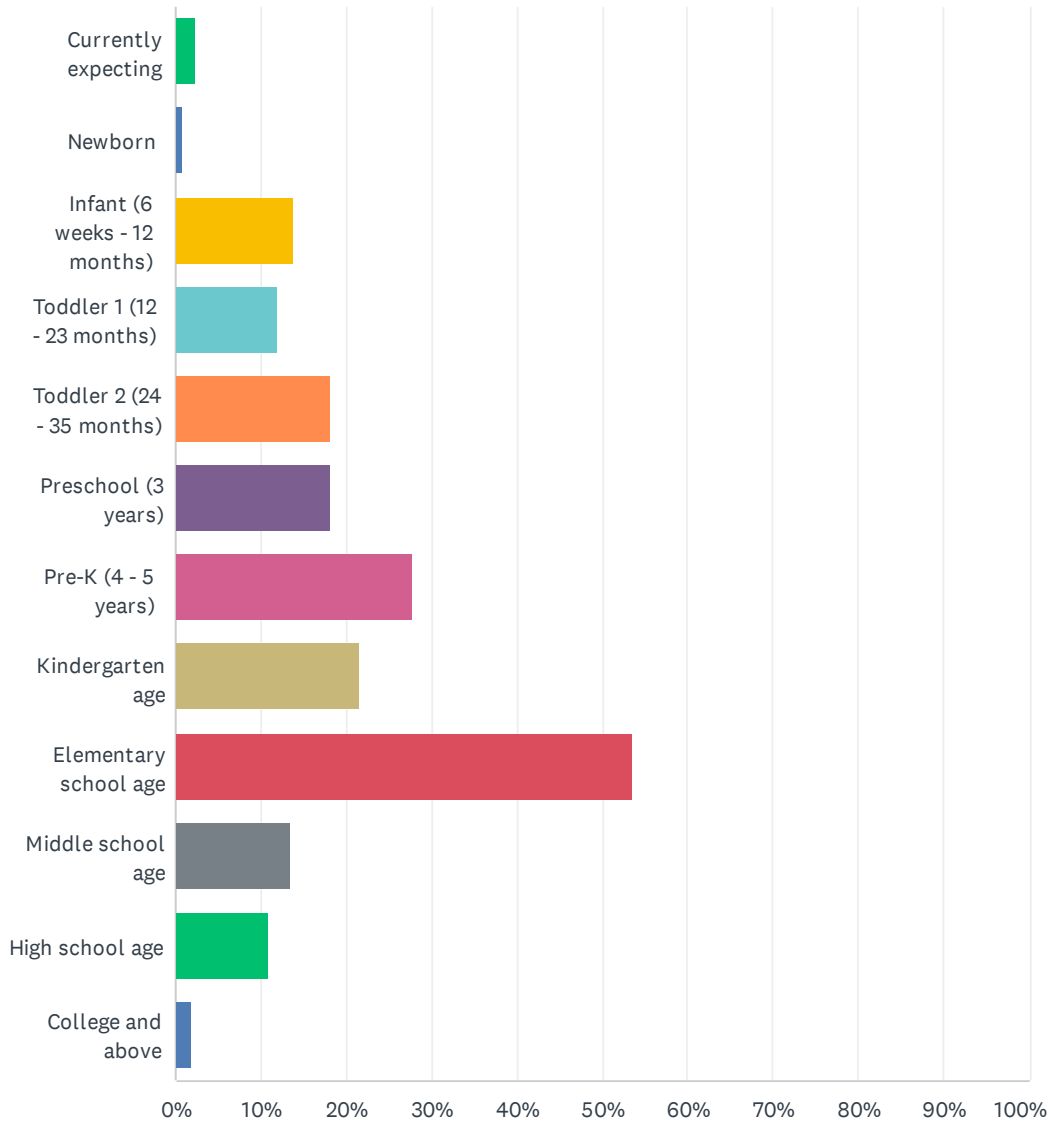
Answered: 260 Skipped: 579



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1 child	25.38%	66
2 children	50.38%	131
3 children	17.31%	45
4 children	4.23%	11
5+ children	2.69%	7
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>260</b>

## Q28 What ages are your children? Select all that apply.

Answered: 260 Skipped: 579

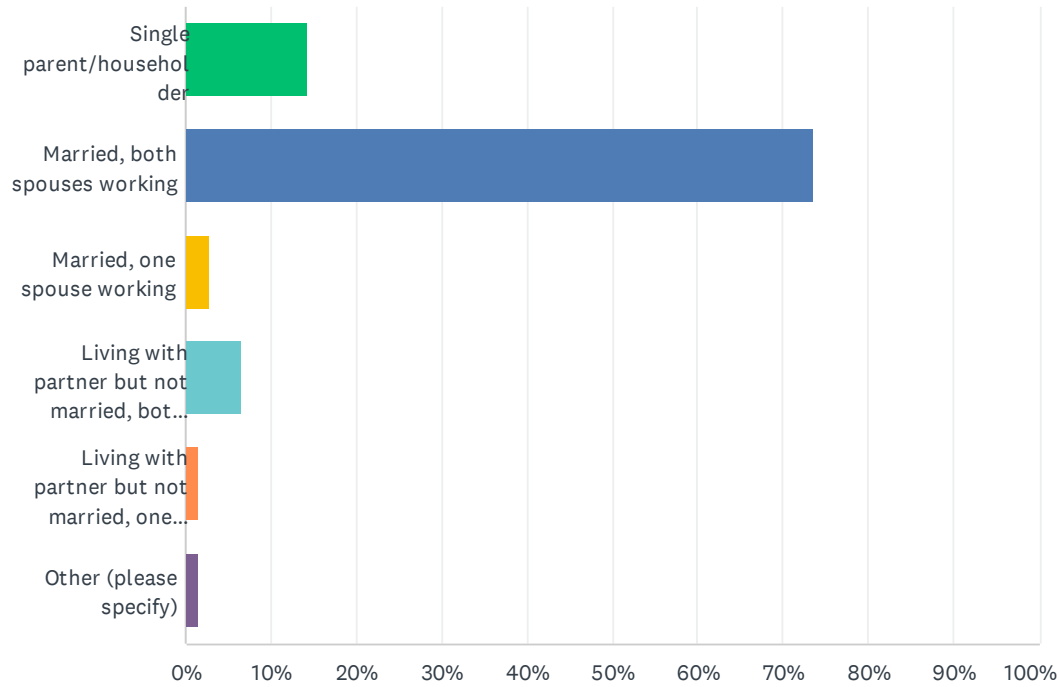


## West Central Indiana Child Care Strategic Plan Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Currently expecting	2.31%	6
Newborn	0.77%	2
Infant (6 weeks - 12 months)	13.85%	36
Toddler 1 (12 - 23 months)	11.92%	31
Toddler 2 (24 - 35 months)	18.08%	47
Preschool (3 years)	18.08%	47
Pre-K (4 - 5 years)	27.69%	72
Kindergarten age	21.54%	56
Elementary school age	53.46%	139
Middle school age	13.46%	35
High school age	10.77%	28
College and above	1.92%	5
Total Respondents: 260		

## Q29 What is your marital status?

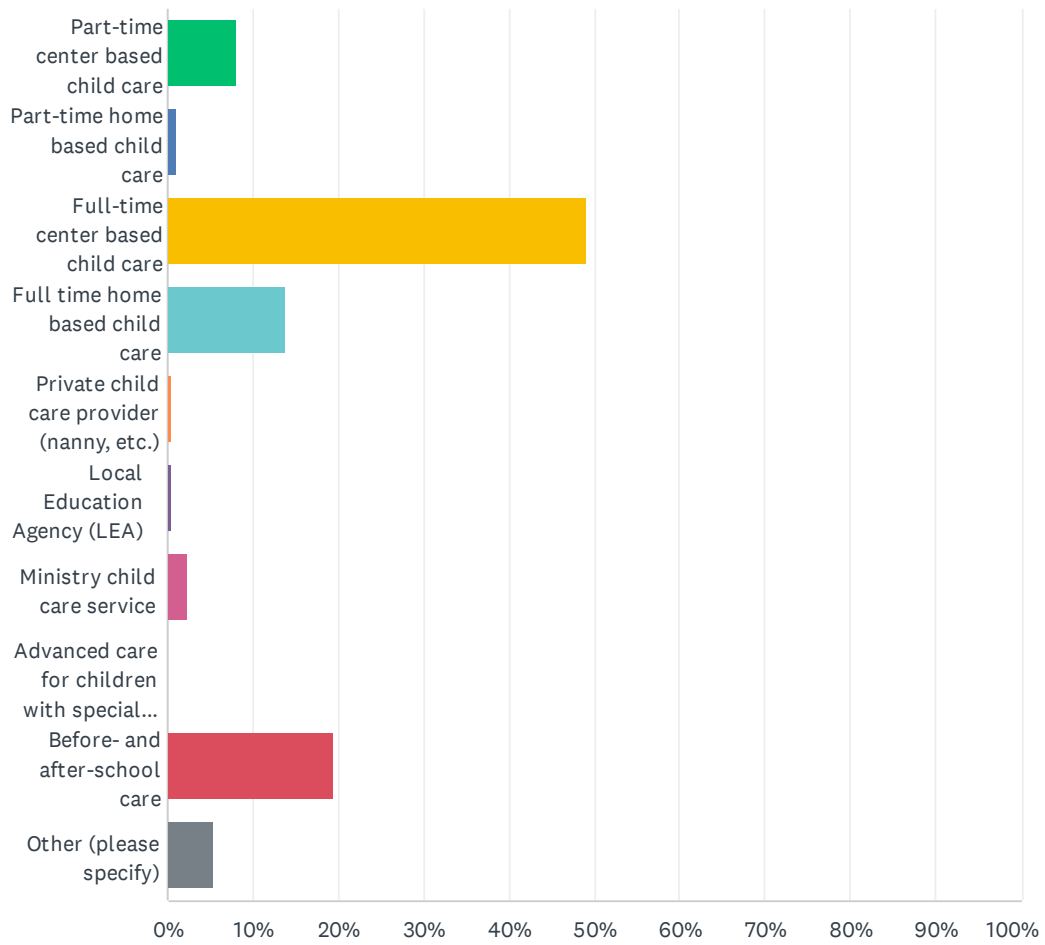
Answered: 260 Skipped: 579



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Single parent/householder	14.23%	37
Married, both spouses working	73.46%	191
Married, one spouse working	2.69%	7
Living with partner but not married, both working	6.54%	17
Living with partner but not married, one working	1.54%	4
Other (please specify)	1.54%	4
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>260</b>

### Q30 Which of the following describes how you receive child care?

Answered: 259 Skipped: 580

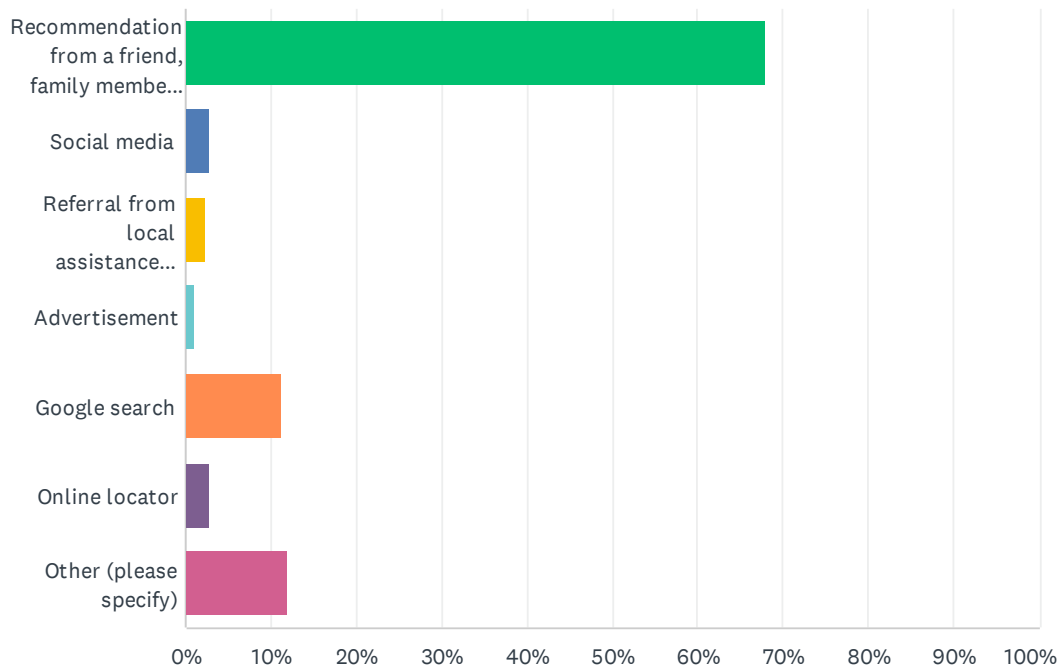


## West Central Indiana Child Care Strategic Plan Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Part-time center based child care	8.11%	21
Part-time home based child care	1.16%	3
Full-time center based child care	49.03%	127
Full time home based child care	13.90%	36
Private child care provider (nanny, etc.)	0.39%	1
Local Education Agency (LEA)	0.39%	1
Ministry child care service	2.32%	6
Advanced care for children with special needs	0.00%	0
Before- and after-school care	19.31%	50
Other (please specify)	5.41%	14
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>259</b>

### Q31 How did you find your current child care provider?

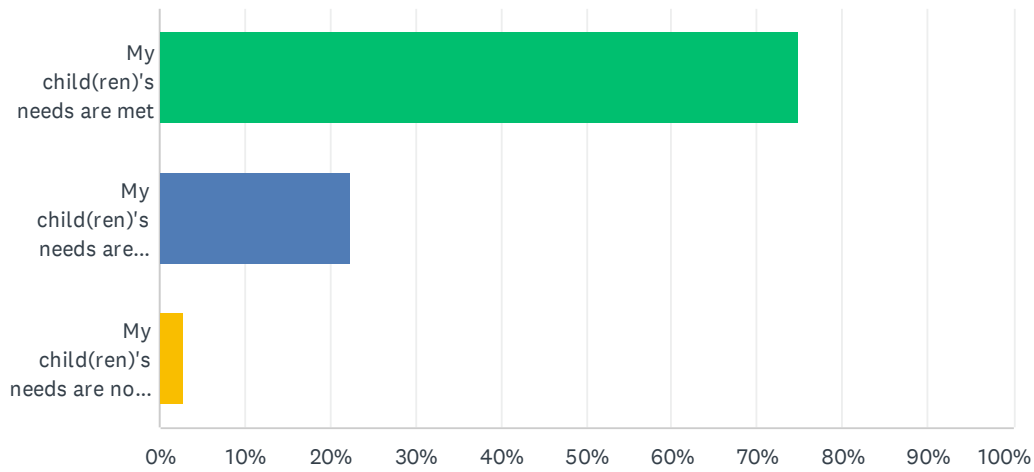
Answered: 259 Skipped: 580



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Recommendation from a friend, family member, or coworker	67.95%	176
Social media	2.70%	7
Referral from local assistance agency	2.32%	6
Advertisement	1.16%	3
Google search	11.20%	29
Online locator	2.70%	7
Other (please specify)	11.97%	31
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>259</b>

### Q33 Are your child(ren)'s needs being met at their current provider?

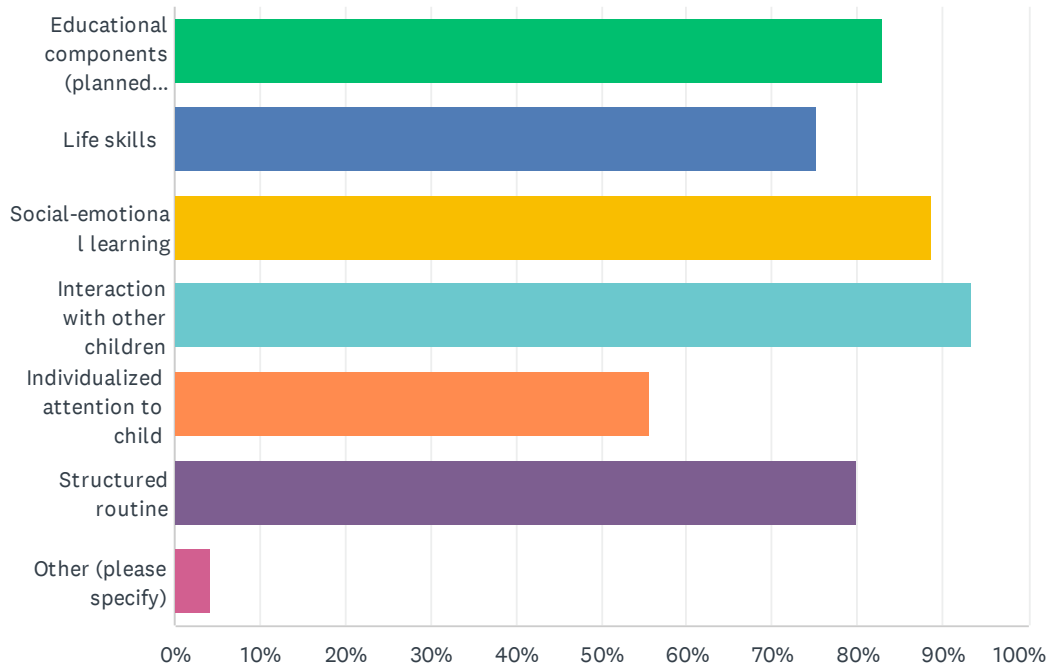
Answered: 258 Skipped: 581



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
My child(ren)'s needs are met	74.81%	193
My child(ren)'s needs are somewhat met	22.48%	58
My child(ren)'s needs are not met	2.71%	7
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>258</b>

### Q34 What do you hope to get out of your current child care for your child(ren)? Select all that apply.

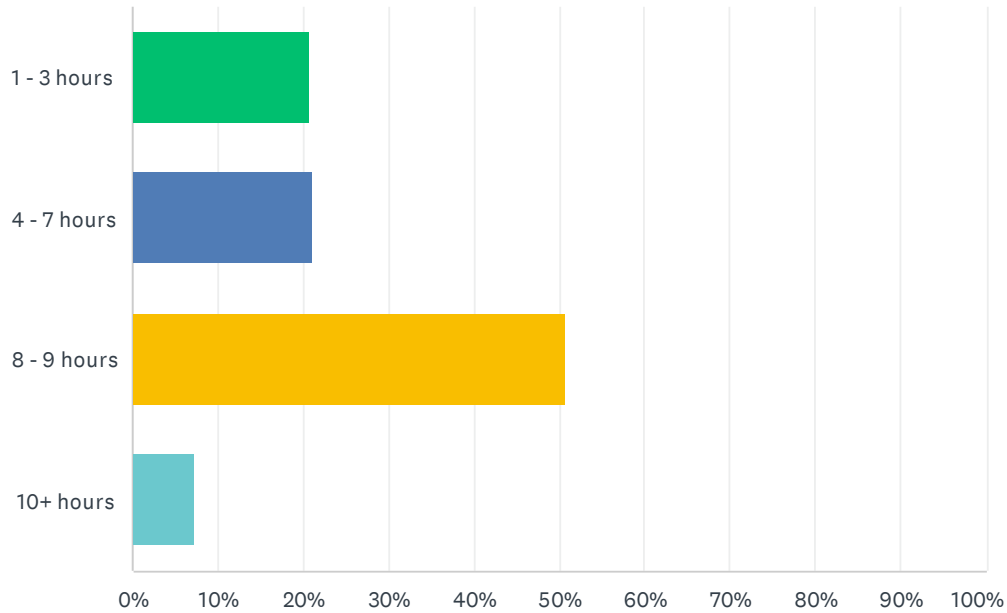
Answered: 259 Skipped: 580



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Educational components (planned curriculum, activities, etc.)	83.01%	215
Life skills	75.29%	195
Social-emotional learning	88.80%	230
Interaction with other children	93.44%	242
Individualized attention to child	55.60%	144
Structured routine	79.92%	207
Other (please specify)	4.25%	11
Total Respondents: 259		

### Q35 On average, how many hours a day does your child(ren) receive child care services?

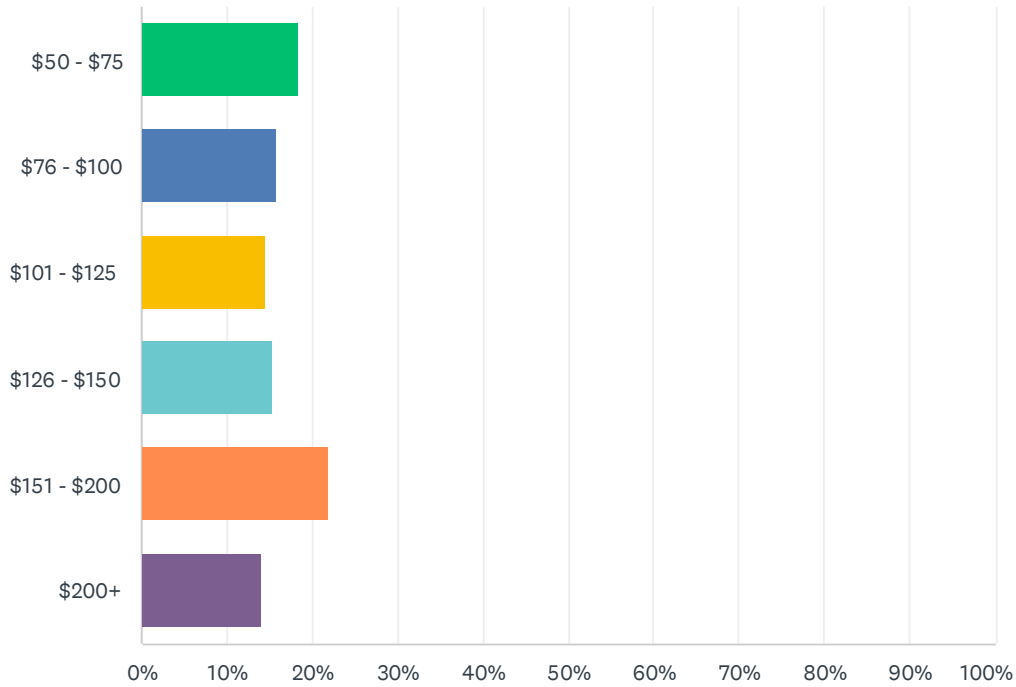
Answered: 260 Skipped: 579



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1 - 3 hours	20.77%	54
4 - 7 hours	21.15%	55
8 - 9 hours	50.77%	132
10+ hours	7.31%	19
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>260</b>

### Q36 How much do you pay for child care per week per child?

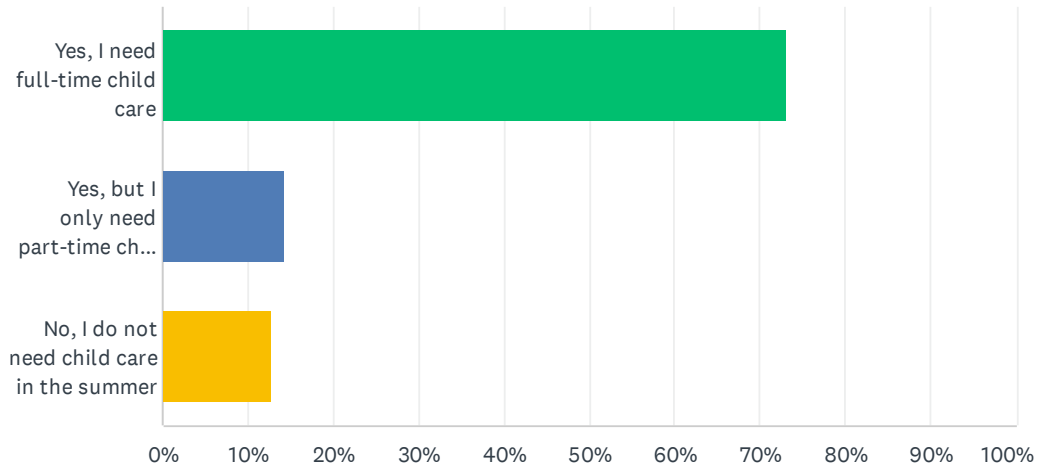
Answered: 255 Skipped: 584



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
\$50 - \$75	18.43% 47
\$76 - \$100	15.69% 40
\$101 - \$125	14.51% 37
\$126 - \$150	15.29% 39
\$151 - \$200	21.96% 56
\$200+	14.12% 36
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>255</b>

### Q38 Do you need child care in the summer?

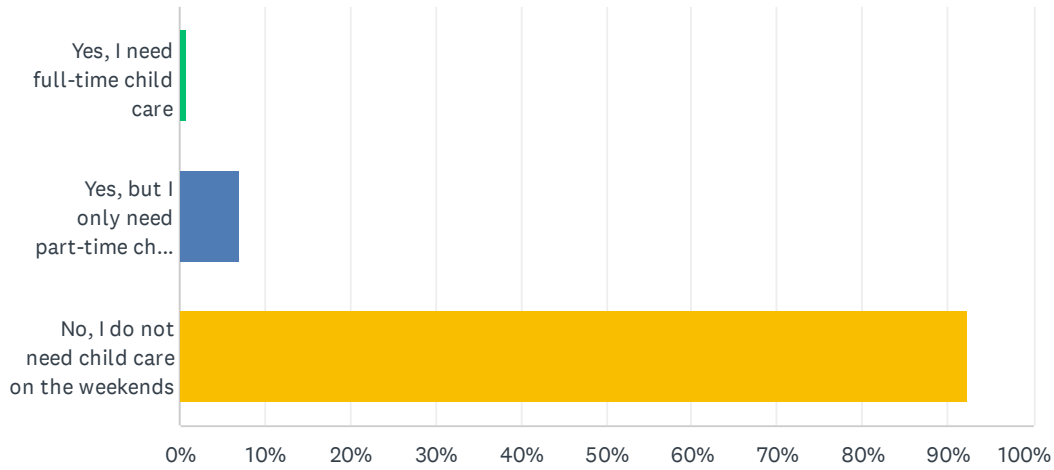
Answered: 260 Skipped: 579



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, I need full-time child care	73.08%	190
Yes, but I only need part-time child care	14.23%	37
No, I do not need child care in the summer	12.69%	33
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>260</b>

### Q39 Do you need child care on weekends?

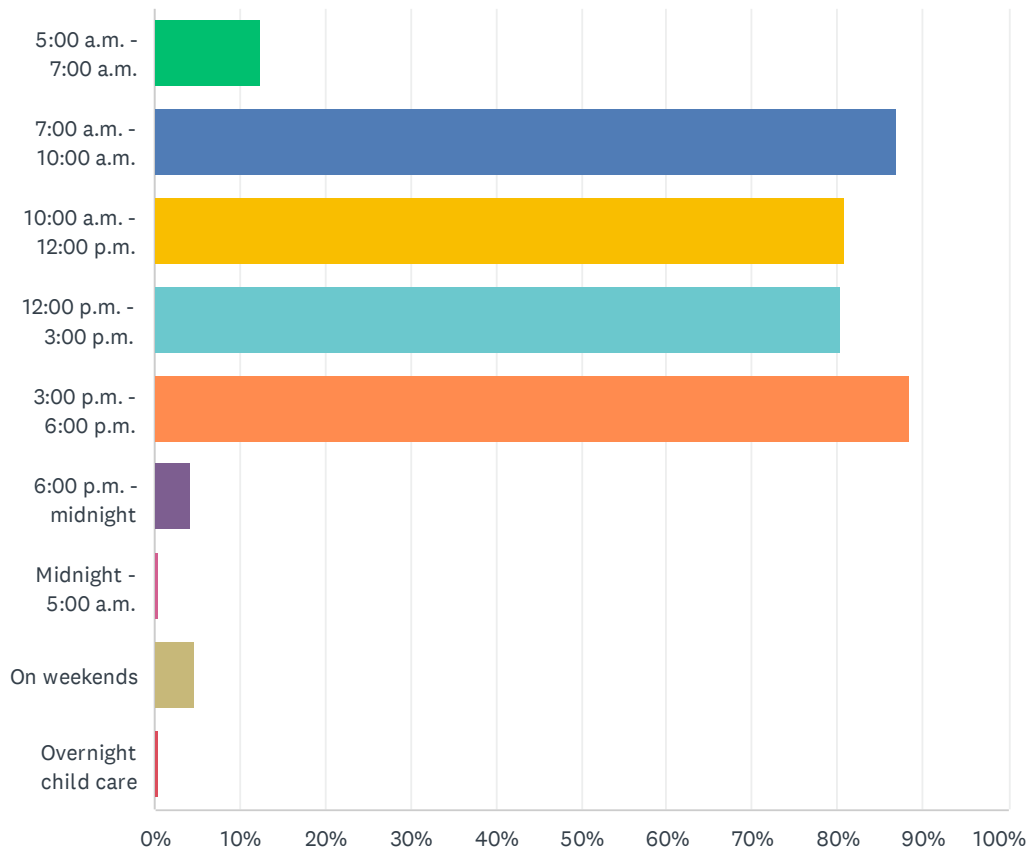
Answered: 259 Skipped: 580



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, I need full-time child care	0.77%	2
Yes, but I only need part-time child care	6.95%	18
No, I do not need child care on the weekends	92.28%	239
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>259</b>

### Q40 Which hours of the day do you need child care? Select all that apply.

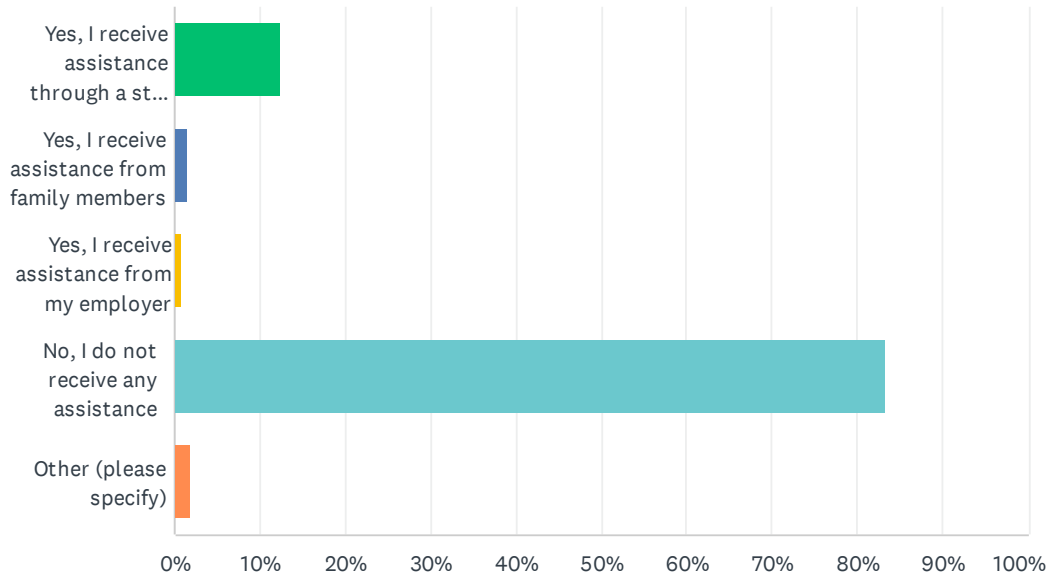
Answered: 260 Skipped: 579



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
5:00 a.m. - 7:00 a.m.	12.31%	32
7:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.	86.92%	226
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	80.77%	210
12:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.	80.38%	209
3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.	88.46%	230
6:00 p.m. - midnight	4.23%	11
Midnight - 5:00 a.m.	0.38%	1
On weekends	4.62%	12
Overnight child care	0.38%	1
Total Respondents: 260		

## Q41 Do you receive assistance/support to help pay for child care providers?

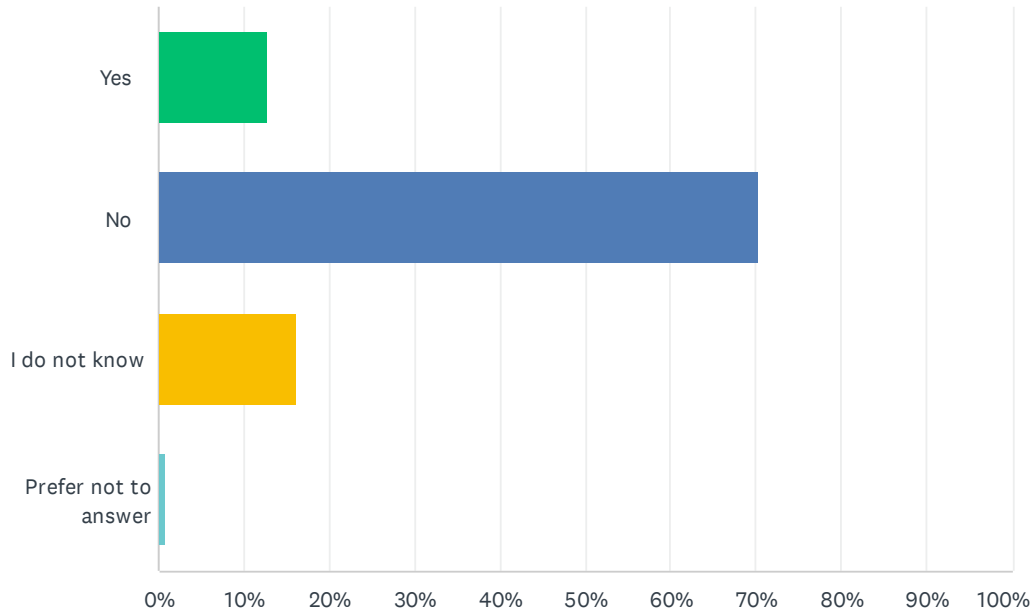
Answered: 259 Skipped: 580



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, I receive assistance through a state organization	12.36%	32
Yes, I receive assistance from family members	1.54%	4
Yes, I receive assistance from my employer	0.77%	2
No, I do not receive any assistance	83.40%	216
Other (please specify)	1.93%	5
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>259</b>

## Q42 Does your family qualify for/use CCDF (Child Care Development Fund) vouchers for child care?

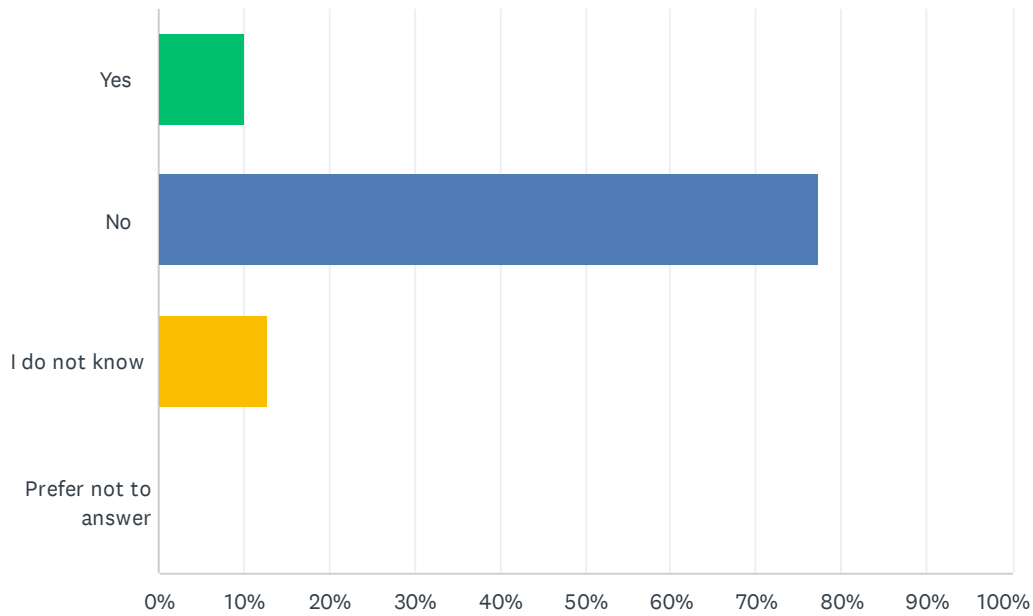
Answered: 260 Skipped: 579



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	12.69%	33
No	70.38%	183
I do not know	16.15%	42
Prefer not to answer	0.77%	2
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>260</b>

### Q43 Is your child a part of the On My Way Pre-K program?

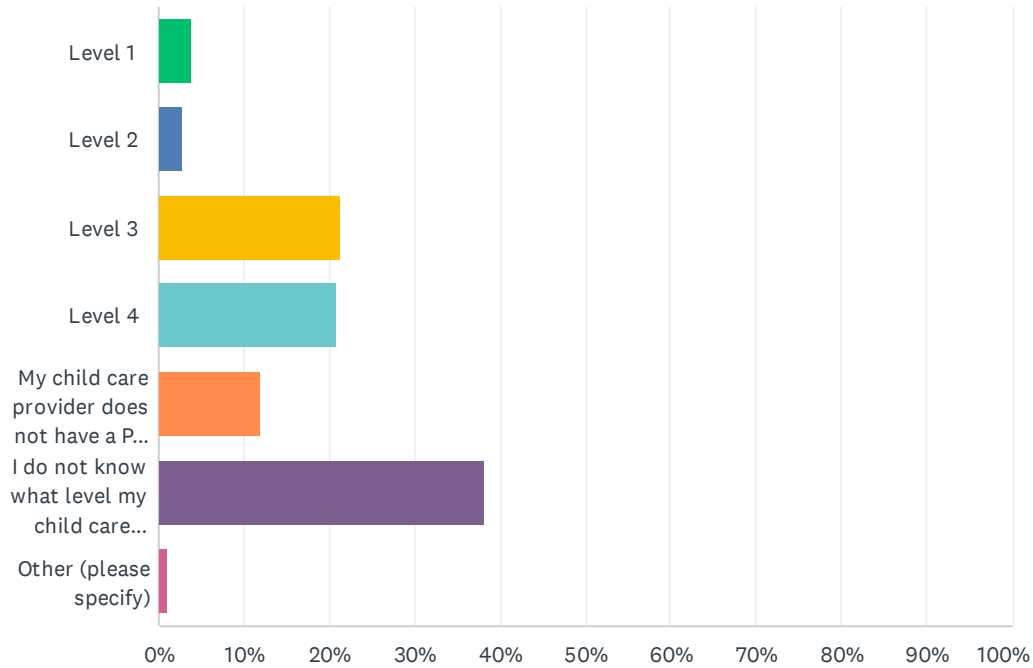
Answered: 260 Skipped: 579



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	10.00%	26
No	77.31%	201
I do not know	12.69%	33
Prefer not to answer	0.00%	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>260</b>

### Q44 What level of Paths to QUALITY (PTQ) is the provider your child(ren) attends?

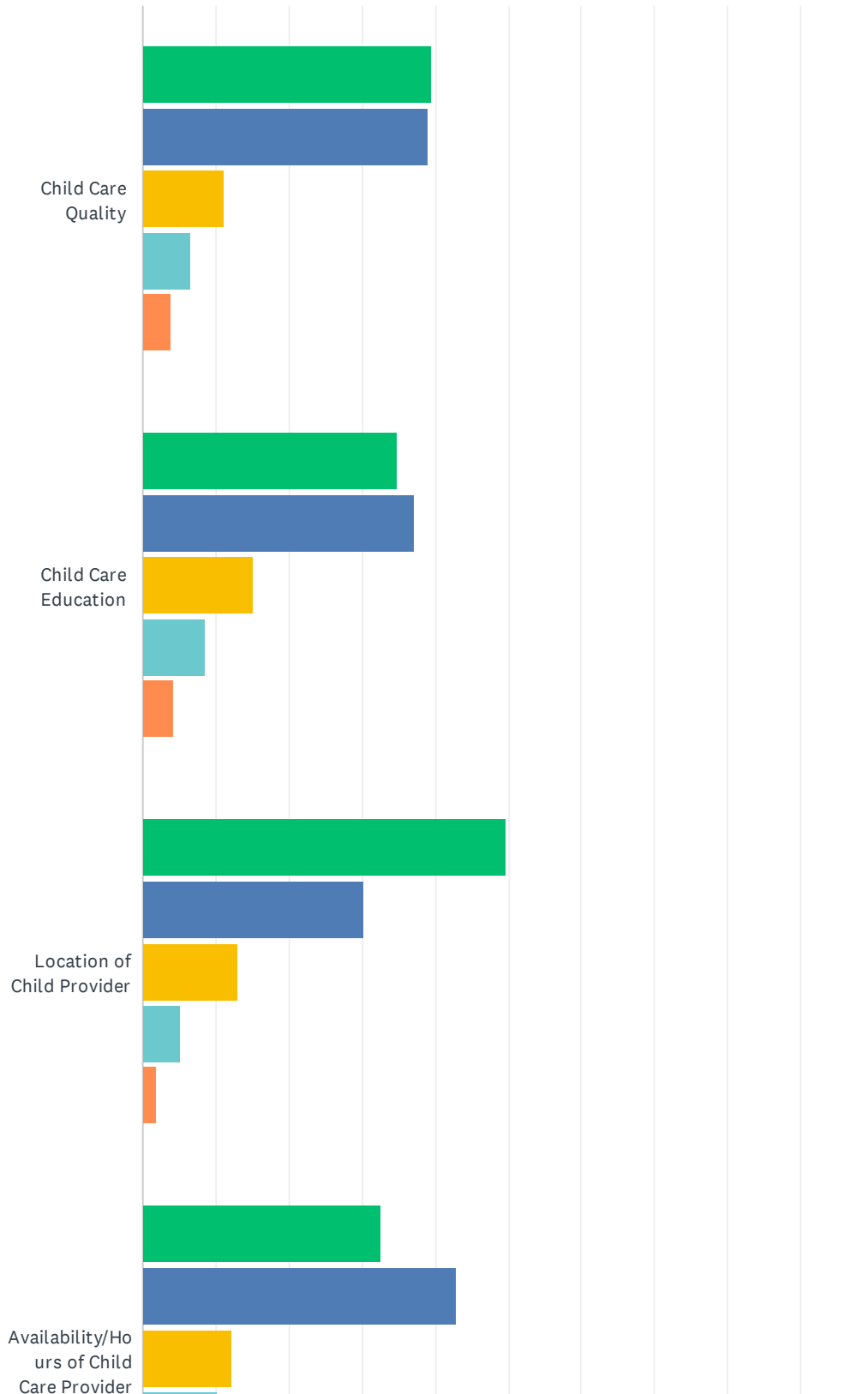
Answered: 259 Skipped: 580



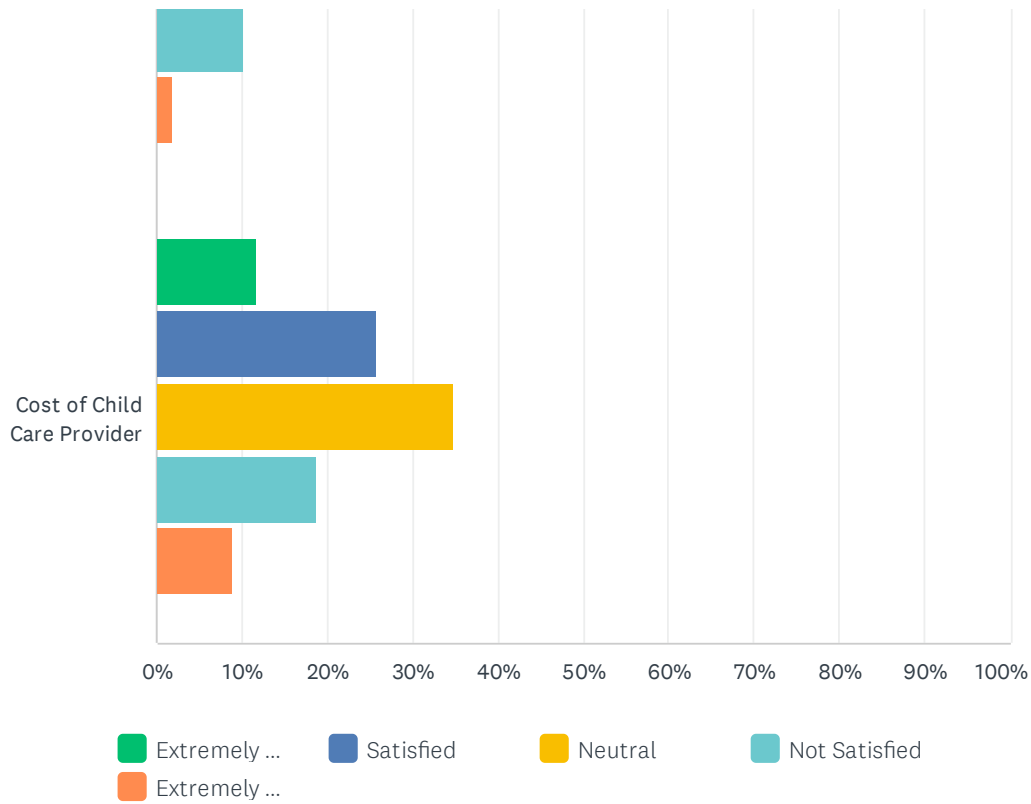
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Level 1	3.86%	10
Level 2	2.70%	7
Level 3	21.24%	55
Level 4	20.85%	54
My child care provider does not have a PTQ ranking	11.97%	31
I do not know what level my child care provider is	38.22%	99
Other (please specify)	1.16%	3
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>259</b>

### Q45 Please rate the following based on your experience with child care in the community and your provider.

Answered: 259 Skipped: 580



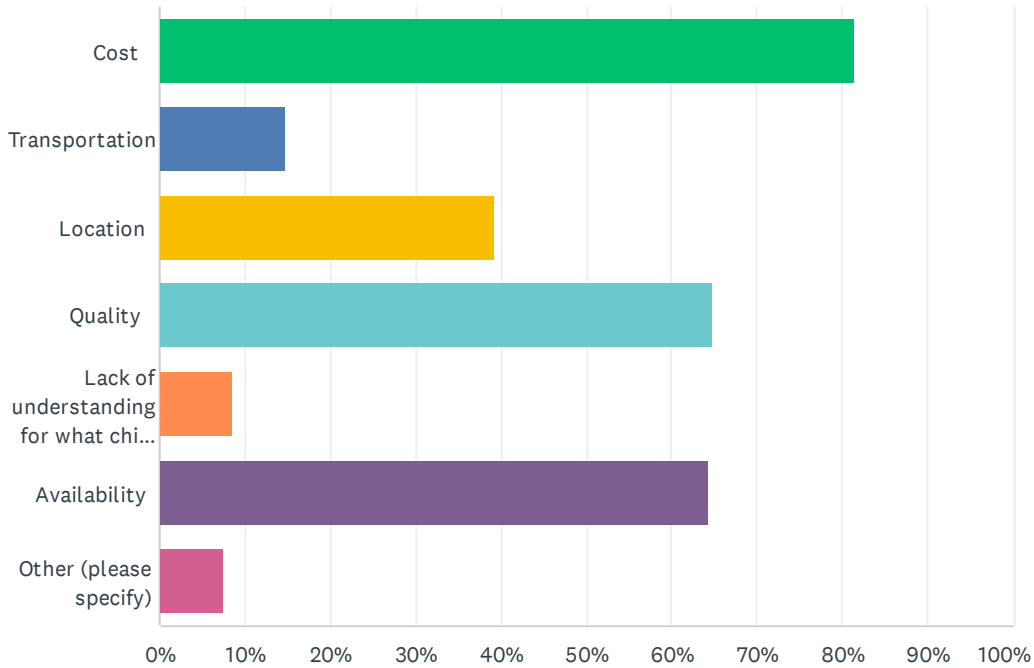
## West Central Indiana Child Care Strategic Plan Survey



	EXTREMELY SATISFIED	SATISFIED	NEUTRAL	NOT SATISFIED	EXTREMELY NOT SATISFIED	TOTAL
Child Care Quality	39.37% 100	38.98% 99	11.02% 28	6.69% 17	3.94% 10	254
Child Care Education	34.77% 89	37.11% 95	15.23% 39	8.59% 22	4.30% 11	256
Location of Child Provider	49.61% 126	30.31% 77	12.99% 33	5.12% 13	1.97% 5	254
Availability/Hours of Child Care Provider	32.68% 83	42.91% 109	12.20% 31	10.24% 26	1.97% 5	254
Cost of Child Care Provider	11.72% 30	25.78% 66	34.77% 89	18.75% 48	8.98% 23	256

### Q46 What are the biggest challenges when it comes to finding and receiving child care? Select all that apply.

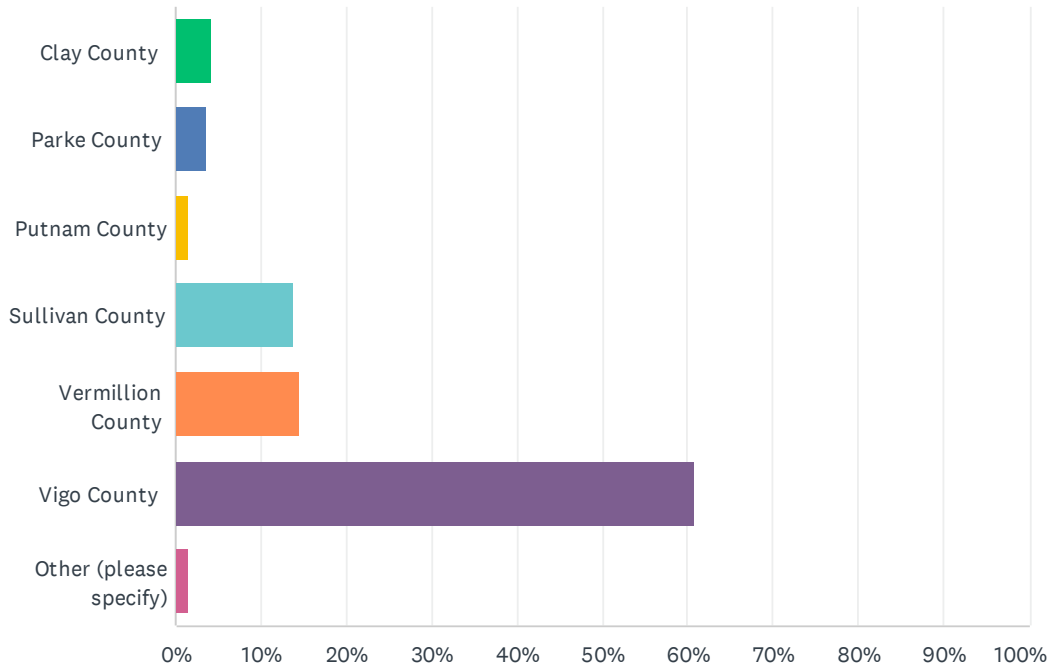
Answered: 258 Skipped: 581



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Cost	81.40%	210
Transportation	14.73%	38
Location	39.15%	101
Quality	64.73%	167
Lack of understanding for what child care providers are in area	8.53%	22
Availability	64.34%	166
Other (please specify)	7.36%	19
Total Respondents: 258		

## Q47 What county do you currently live in?

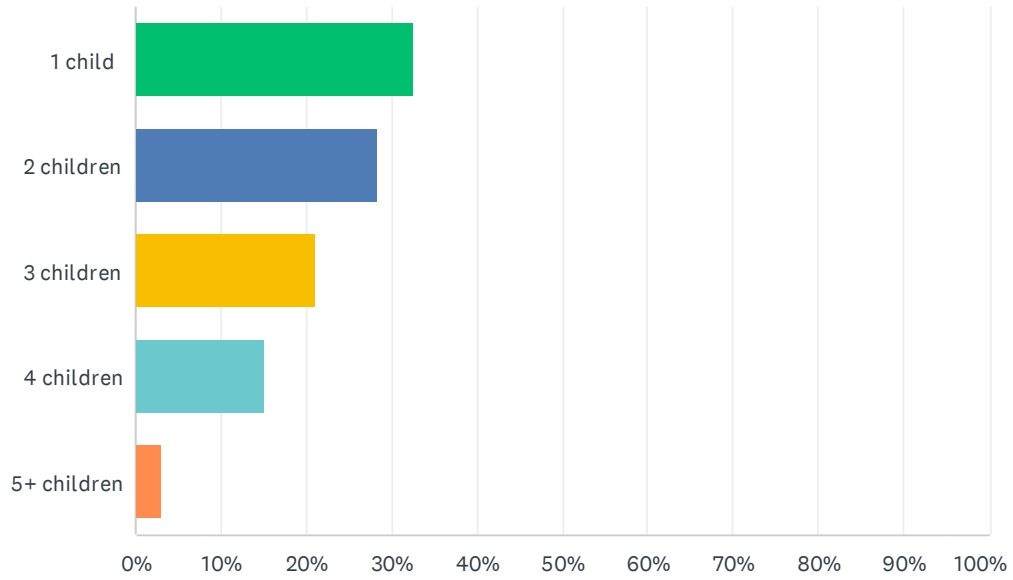
Answered: 138 Skipped: 701



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Clay County	4.35%	6
Parke County	3.62%	5
Putnam County	1.45%	2
Sullivan County	13.77%	19
Vermillion County	14.49%	20
Vigo County	60.87%	84
Other (please specify)	1.45%	2
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>138</b>

## Q48 How many children do you have?

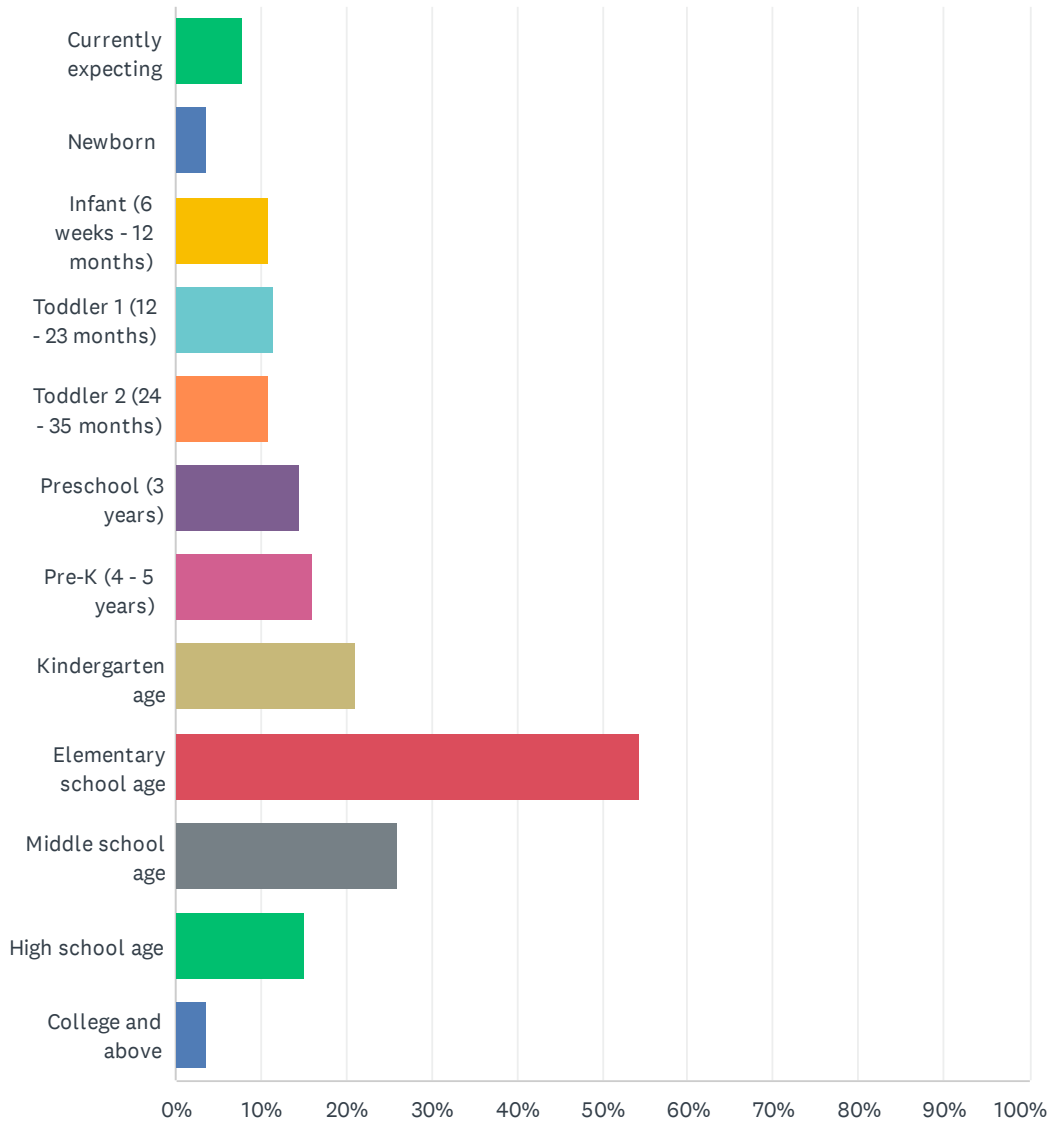
Answered: 138 Skipped: 701



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1 child	32.61%	45
2 children	28.26%	39
3 children	21.01%	29
4 children	15.22%	21
5+ children	2.90%	4
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>138</b>

### Q49 What ages are your children? Select all that apply.

Answered: 138 Skipped: 701

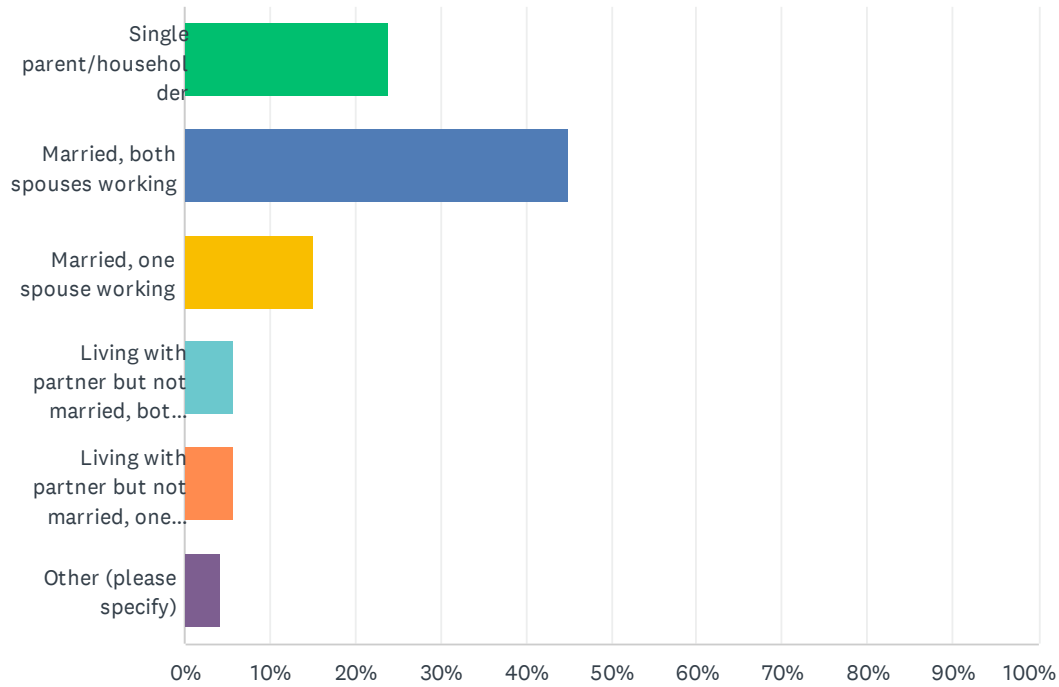


## West Central Indiana Child Care Strategic Plan Survey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Currently expecting	7.97%	11
Newborn	3.62%	5
Infant (6 weeks - 12 months)	10.87%	15
Toddler 1 (12 - 23 months)	11.59%	16
Toddler 2 (24 - 35 months)	10.87%	15
Preschool (3 years)	14.49%	20
Pre-K (4 - 5 years)	15.94%	22
Kindergarten age	21.01%	29
Elementary school age	54.35%	75
Middle school age	26.09%	36
High school age	15.22%	21
College and above	3.62%	5
<b>Total Respondents: 138</b>		

## Q50 What is your marital status?

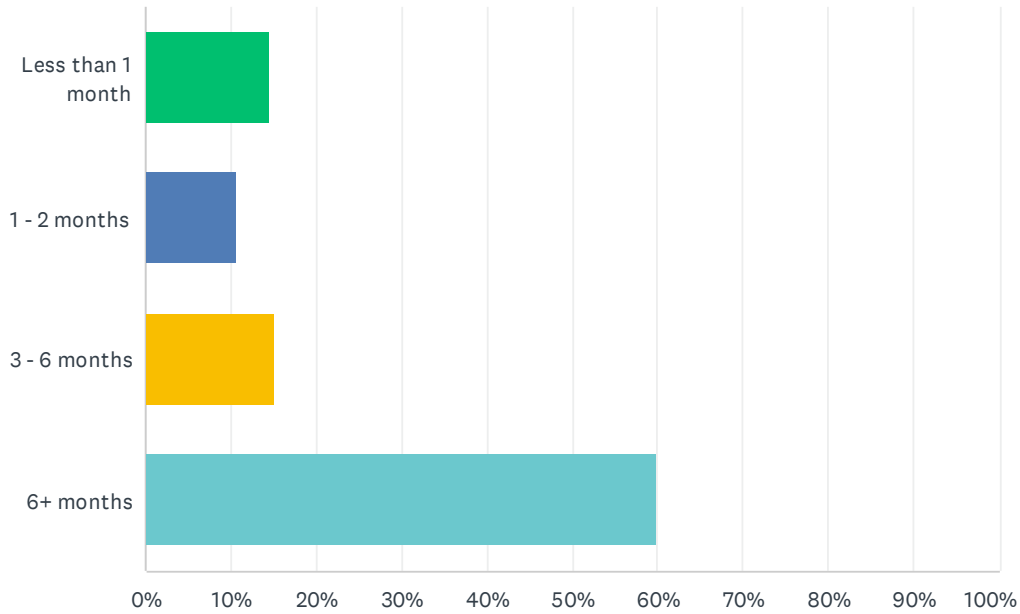
Answered: 138 Skipped: 701



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Single parent/householder	23.91%	33
Married, both spouses working	44.93%	62
Married, one spouse working	15.22%	21
Living with partner but not married, both working	5.80%	8
Living with partner but not married, one working	5.80%	8
Other (please specify)	4.35%	6
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>138</b>

## Q52 How long have you been looking for child care services?

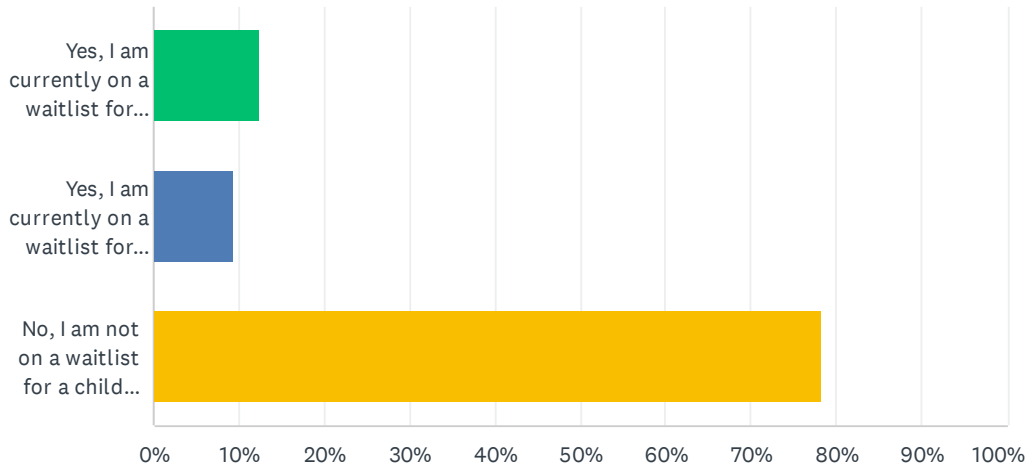
Answered: 132 Skipped: 707



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Less than 1 month	14.39% 19
1 - 2 months	10.61% 14
3 - 6 months	15.15% 20
6+ months	59.85% 79
TOTAL	132

### Q53 Are you currently on a waitlist for child care?

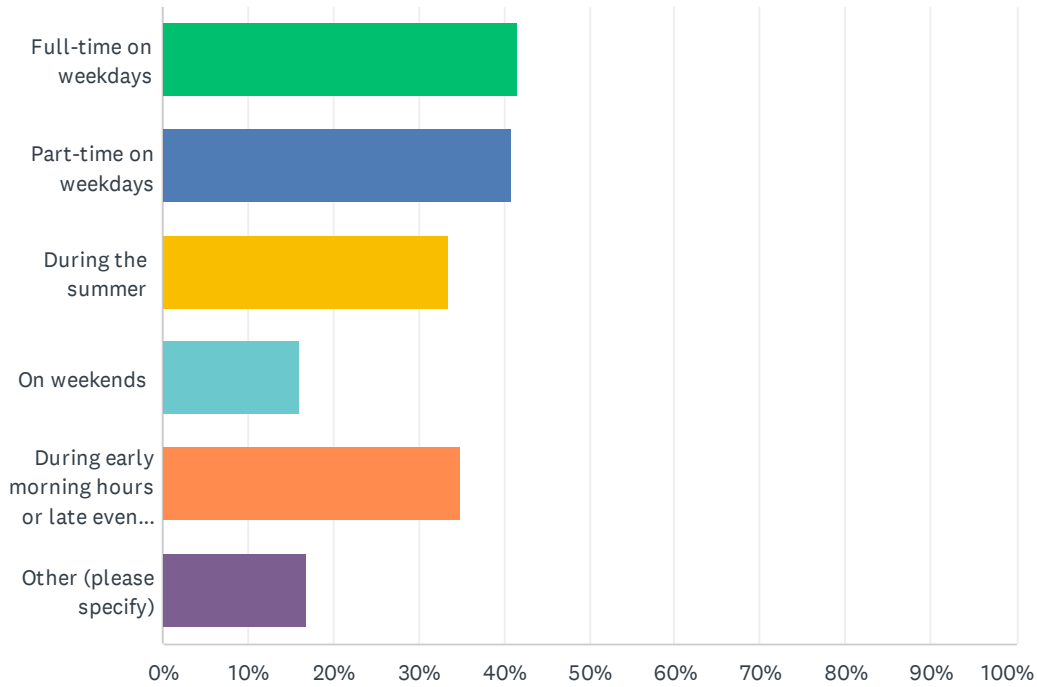
Answered: 138 Skipped: 701



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, I am currently on a waitlist for one child care provider	12.32%	17
Yes, I am currently on a waitlist for multiple child care providers	9.42%	13
No, I am not on a waitlist for a child care provider	78.26%	108
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>138</b>

### Q54 When do you need child care? Select all that apply.

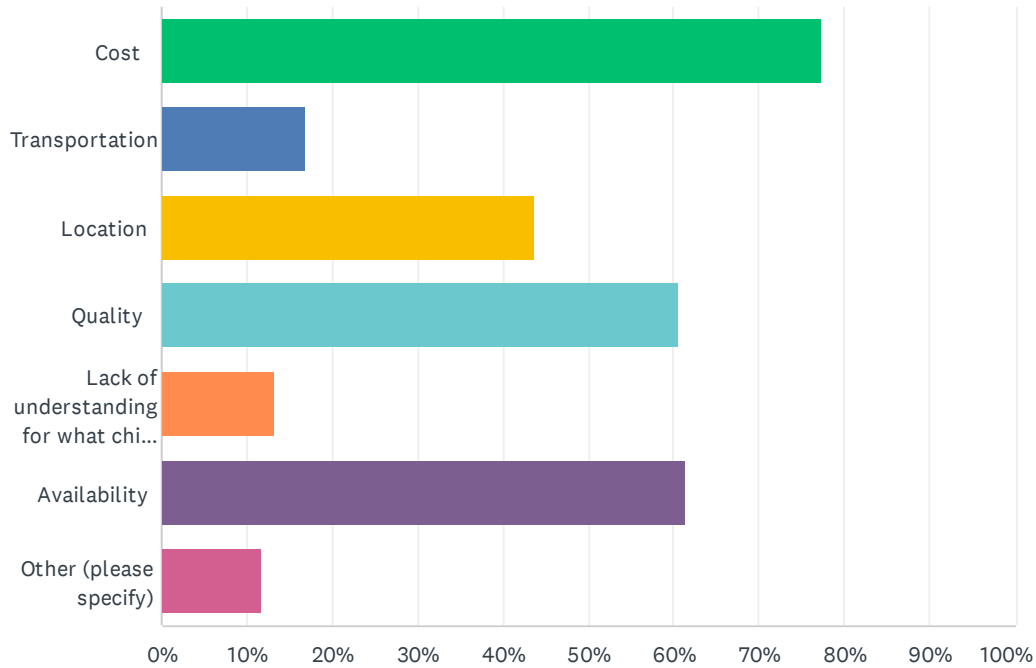
Answered: 137 Skipped: 702



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Full-time on weekdays	41.61%	57
Part-time on weekdays	40.88%	56
During the summer	33.58%	46
On weekends	16.06%	22
During early morning hours or late evening hours	35.04%	48
Other (please specify)	16.79%	23
Total Respondents: 137		

### Q55 What is the biggest challenge when it comes to finding and receiving child care? Select all that apply.

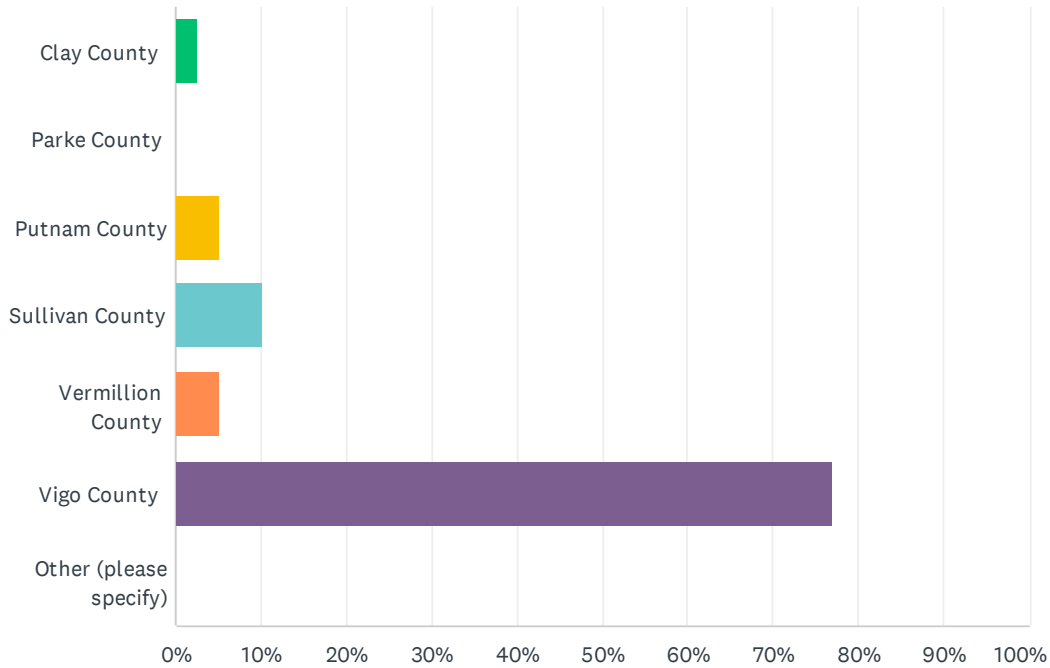
Answered: 137 Skipped: 702



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Cost	77.37%	106
Transportation	16.79%	23
Location	43.80%	60
Quality	60.58%	83
Lack of understanding for what child care providers are in area	13.14%	18
Availability	61.31%	84
Other (please specify)	11.68%	16
Total Respondents: 137		

## Q56 Where are you currently located?

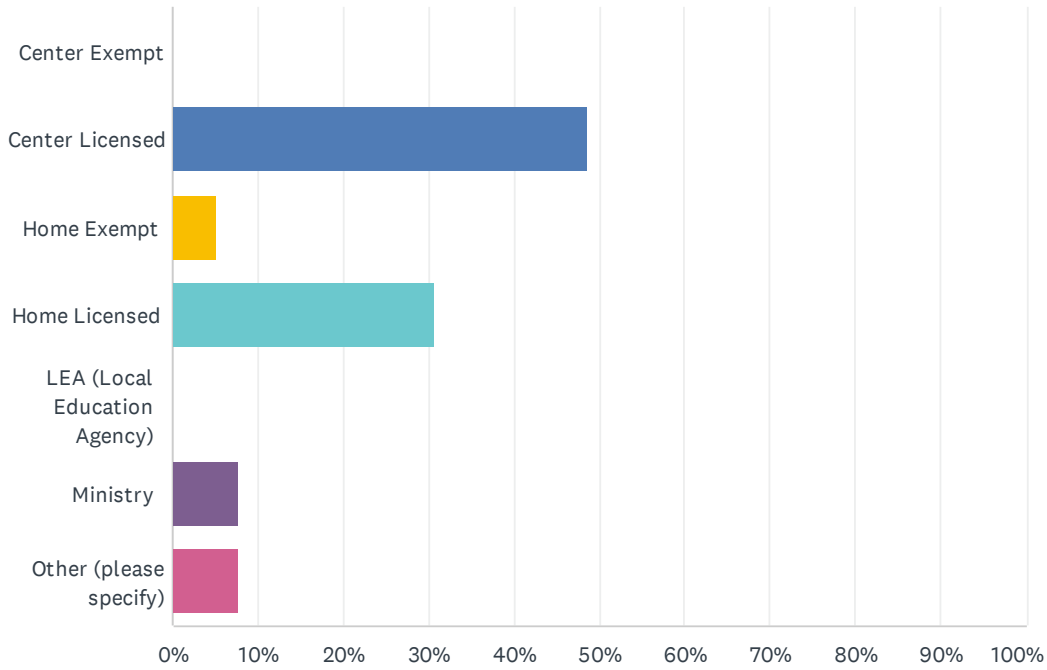
Answered: 39 Skipped: 800



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Clay County	2.56%	1
Parke County	0.00%	0
Putnam County	5.13%	2
Sullivan County	10.26%	4
Vermillion County	5.13%	2
Vigo County	76.92%	30
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>39</b>

## Q57 What type of program are you?

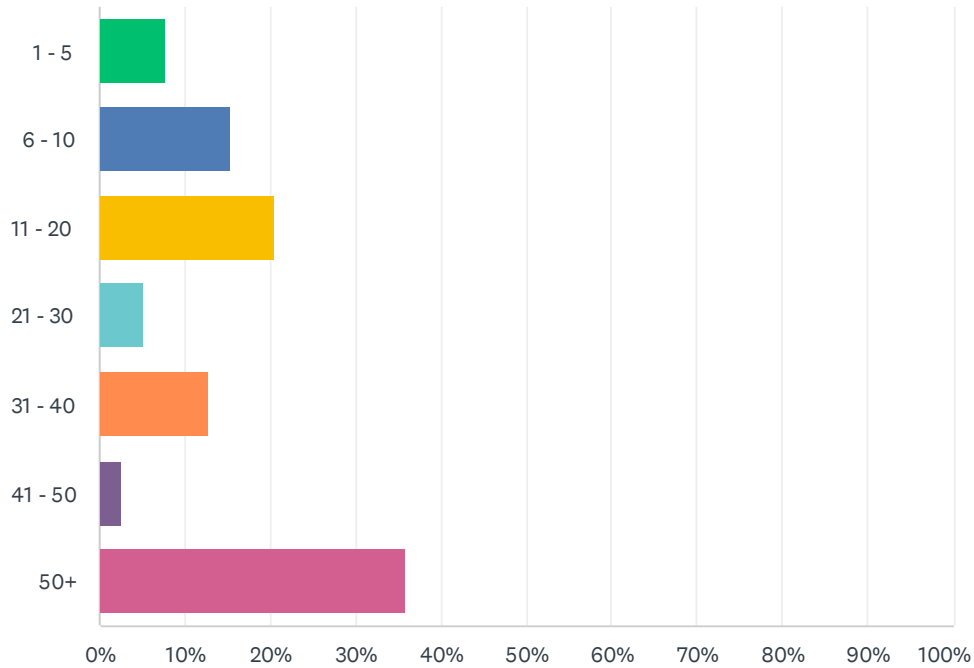
Answered: 39 Skipped: 800



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Center Exempt	0.00%	0
Center Licensed	48.72%	19
Home Exempt	5.13%	2
Home Licensed	30.77%	12
LEA (Local Education Agency)	0.00%	0
Ministry	7.69%	3
Other (please specify)	7.69%	3
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>39</b>

## Q59 On average, how many children do you serve per week?

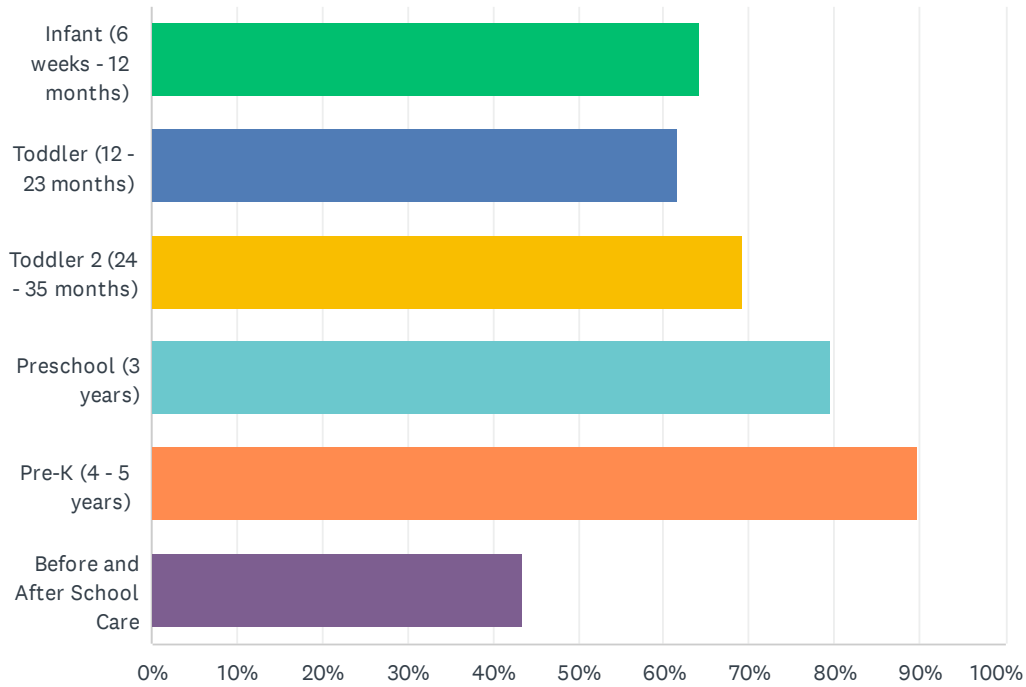
Answered: 39 Skipped: 800



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1 - 5	7.69%	3
6 - 10	15.38%	6
11 - 20	20.51%	8
21 - 30	5.13%	2
31 - 40	12.82%	5
41 - 50	2.56%	1
50+	35.90%	14
TOTAL		39

### Q60 What age range of children do you serve? Select all that apply.

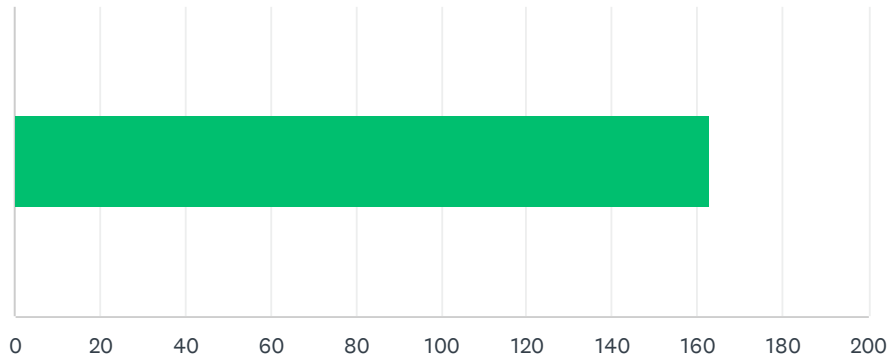
Answered: 39 Skipped: 800



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Infant (6 weeks - 12 months)	64.10%	25
Toddler (12 - 23 months)	61.54%	24
Toddler 2 (24 - 35 months)	69.23%	27
Preschool (3 years)	79.49%	31
Pre-K (4 - 5 years)	89.74%	35
Before and After School Care	43.59%	17
Total Respondents: 39		

## Q61 How much do you charge per week for infants?

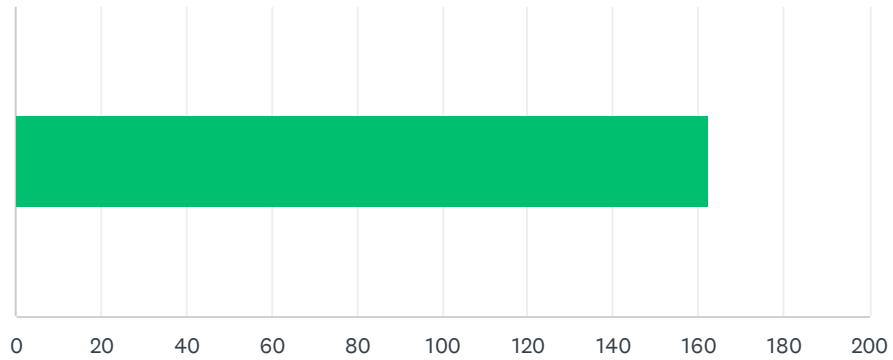
Answered: 26 Skipped: 813



ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
		163	26
Total Respondents: 26			

## Q62 How much do you charge per week for toddlers?

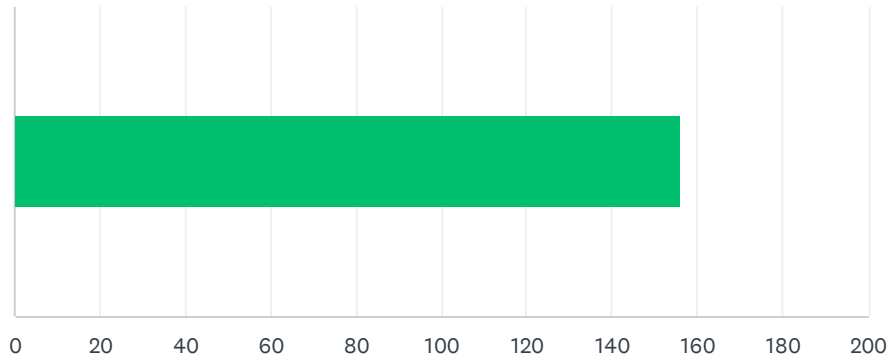
Answered: 28 Skipped: 811



ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
	163	4,553	28
Total Respondents: 28			

### Q63 How much do you charge per week for preschool-aged children?

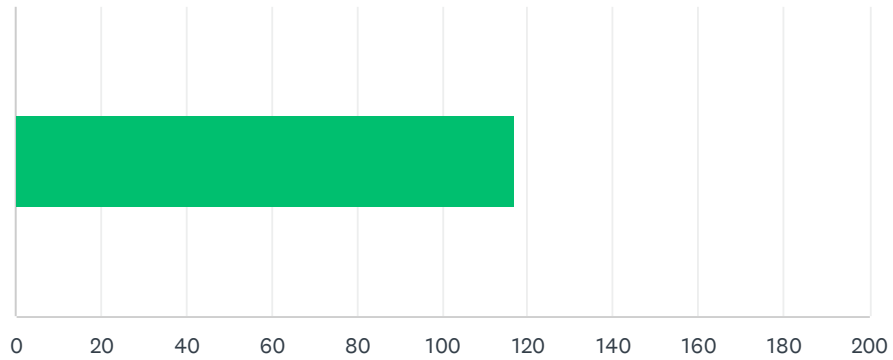
Answered: 30 Skipped: 809



ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
		156	4,677
Total Respondents: 30			30

## Q64 How much do you charge per week for school-aged children?

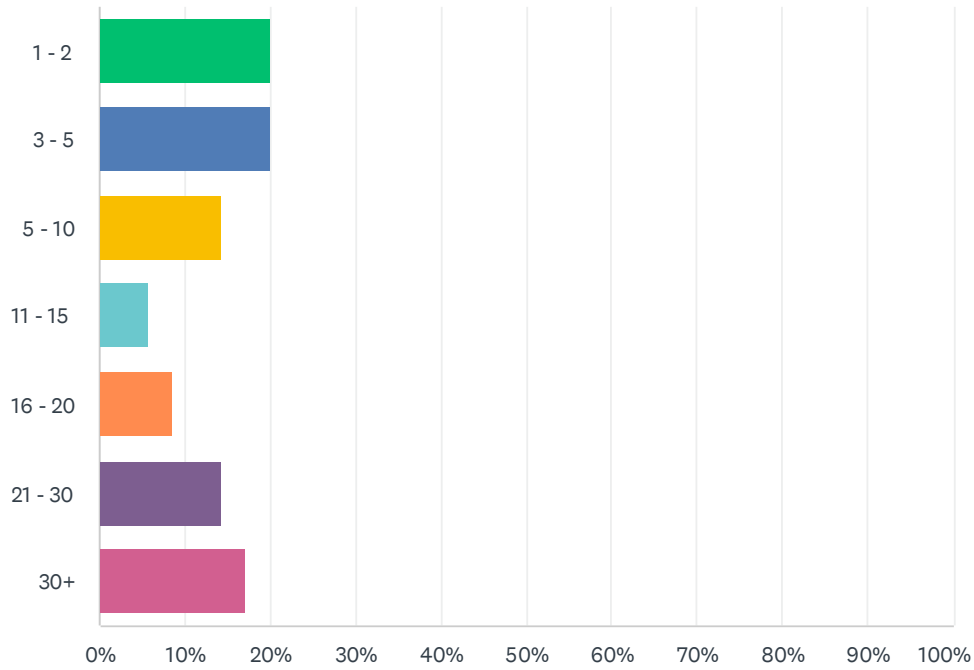
Answered: 17 Skipped: 822



ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
	117	1,986	17
Total Respondents: 17			

## Q65 How many employees do you have?

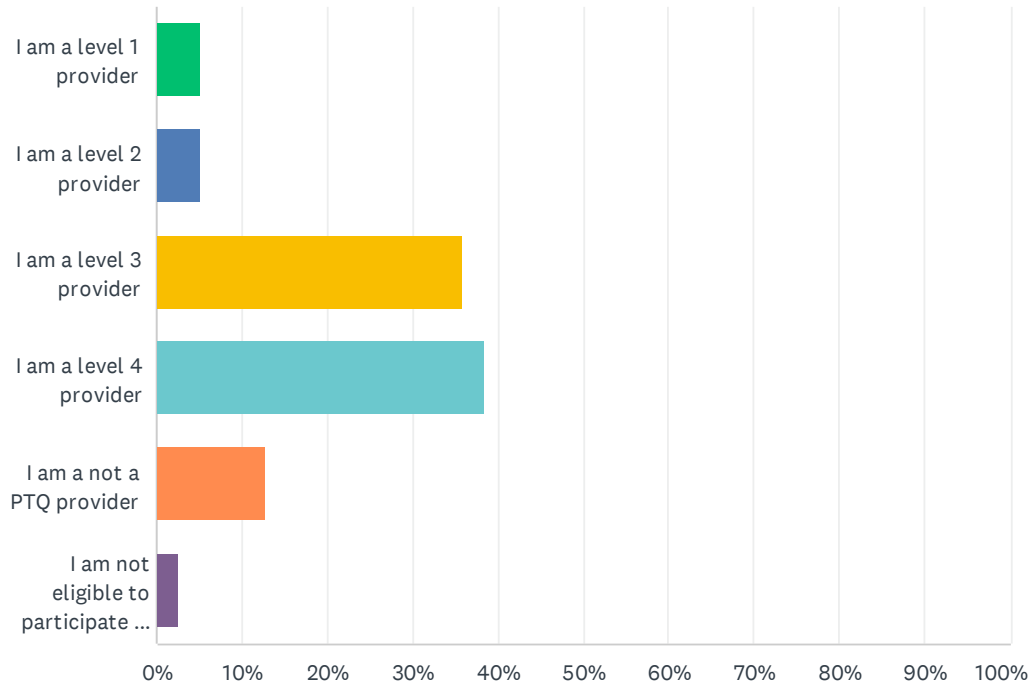
Answered: 35 Skipped: 804



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1 - 2	20.00%	7
3 - 5	20.00%	7
5 - 10	14.29%	5
11 - 15	5.71%	2
16 - 20	8.57%	3
21 - 30	14.29%	5
30+	17.14%	6
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>35</b>

## Q66 Have you achieved a Paths to QUALITY (PTQ) ranking?

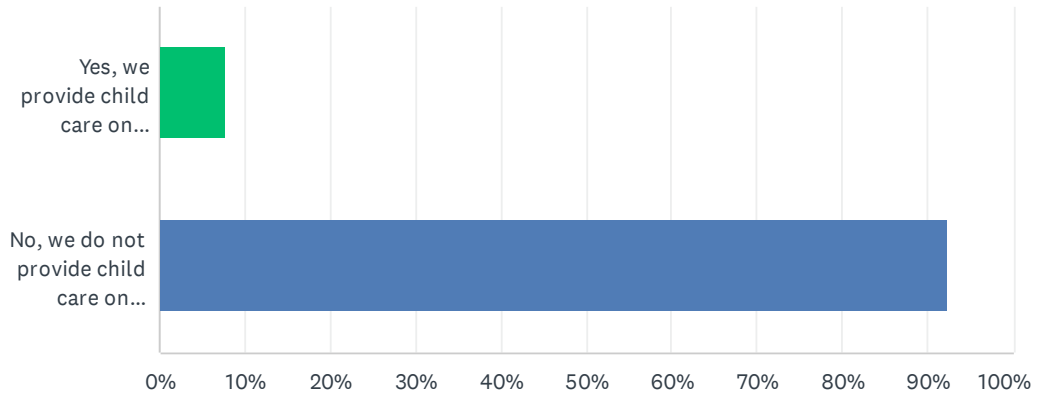
Answered: 39 Skipped: 800



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
I am a level 1 provider	5.13% 2
I am a level 2 provider	5.13% 2
I am a level 3 provider	35.90% 14
I am a level 4 provider	38.46% 15
I am a not a PTQ provider	12.82% 5
I am not eligible to participate in PTQ	2.56% 1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>39</b>

## Q69 Do you provide child care on weekends?

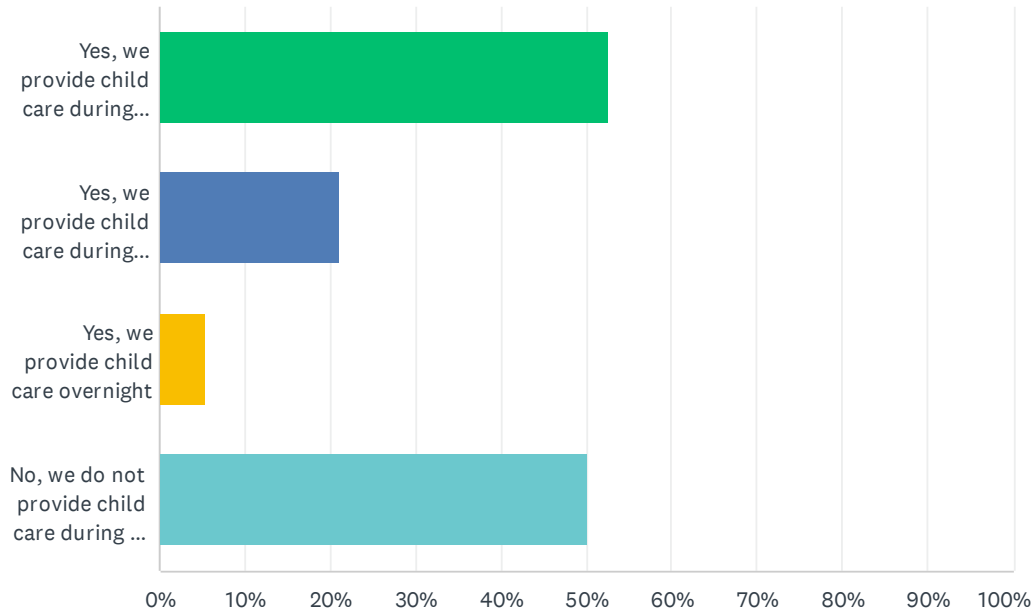
Answered: 39 Skipped: 800



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, we provide child care on weekends	7.69%	3
No, we do not provide child care on weekends	92.31%	36
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>39</b>

### Q70 Do you provide child care during early hours, evening hours, or overnight? Select all that apply.

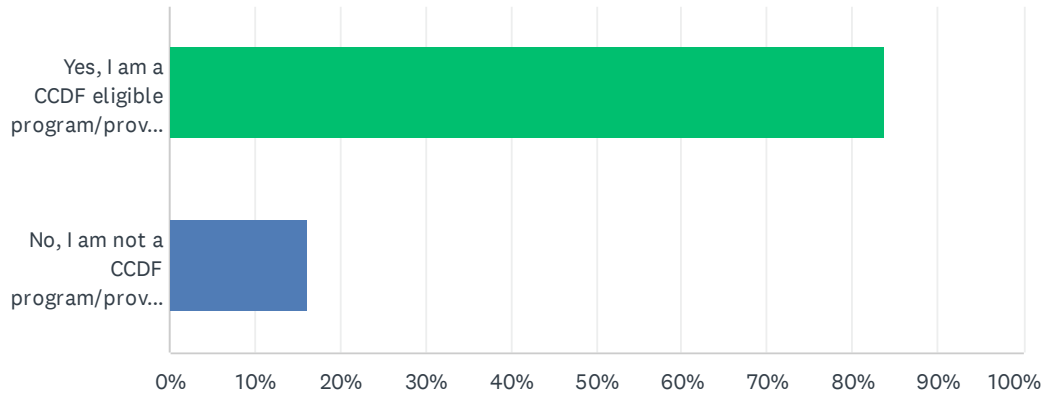
Answered: 38 Skipped: 801



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, we provide child care during early morning hours	52.63%	20
Yes, we provide child care during evening hours	21.05%	8
Yes, we provide child care overnight	5.26%	2
No, we do not provide child care during any of these times	50.00%	19
Total Respondents: 38		

## Q71 Are you a CCDF (Child Care Development Fund) eligible program/provider?

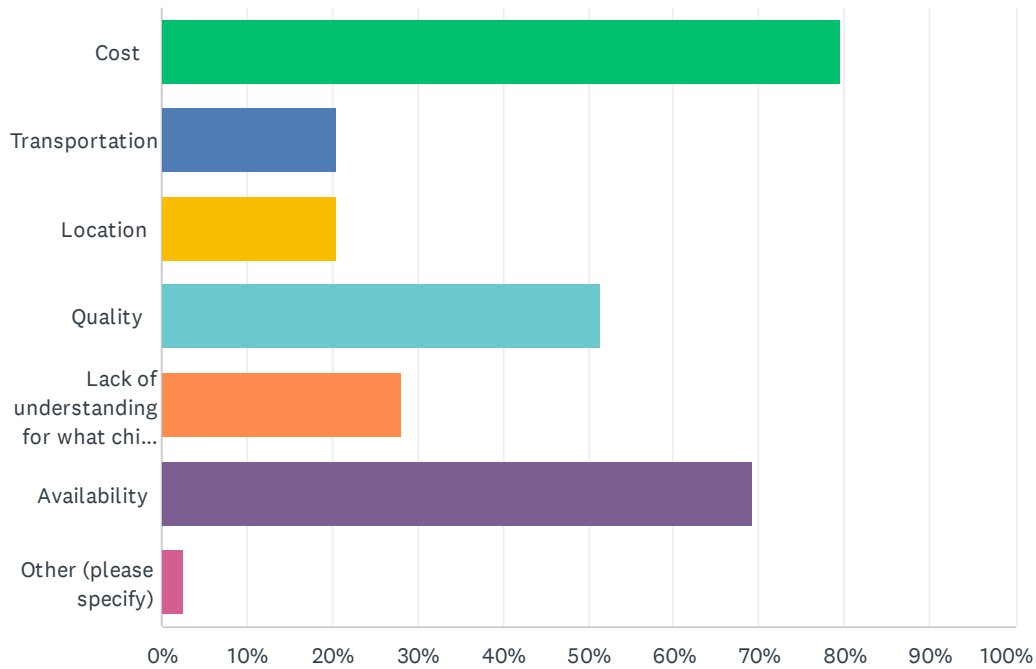
Answered: 37 Skipped: 802



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, I am a CCDF eligible program/provider	83.78%	31
No, I am not a CCDF program/provider	16.22%	6
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>37</b>

### Q72 As a provider, what do you believe is the biggest challenge for families when it comes to finding and receiving child care? Select all that apply.

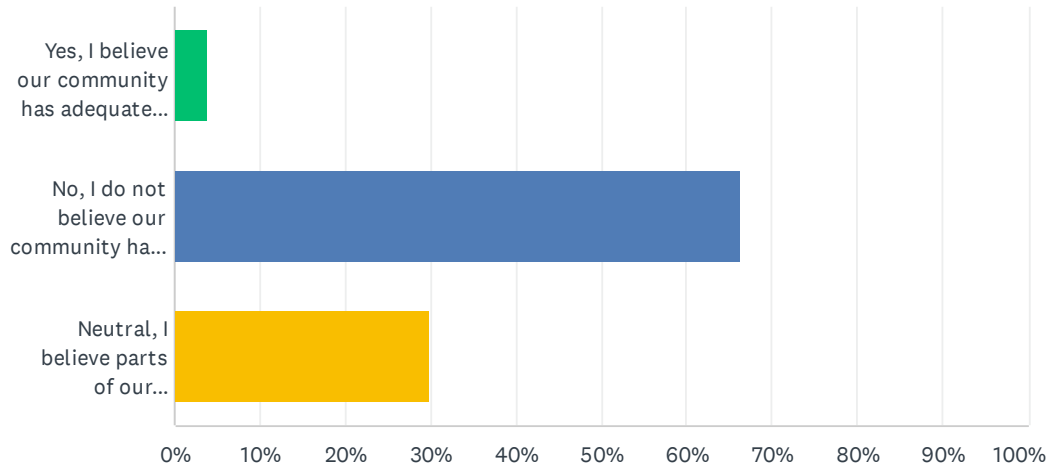
Answered: 39 Skipped: 800



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Cost	79.49%	31
Transportation	20.51%	8
Location	20.51%	8
Quality	51.28%	20
Lack of understanding for what child care providers are in area	28.21%	11
Availability	69.23%	27
Other (please specify)	2.56%	1
Total Respondents: 39		

## Q75 Do you believe your community has adequate access to child care providers and assistance?

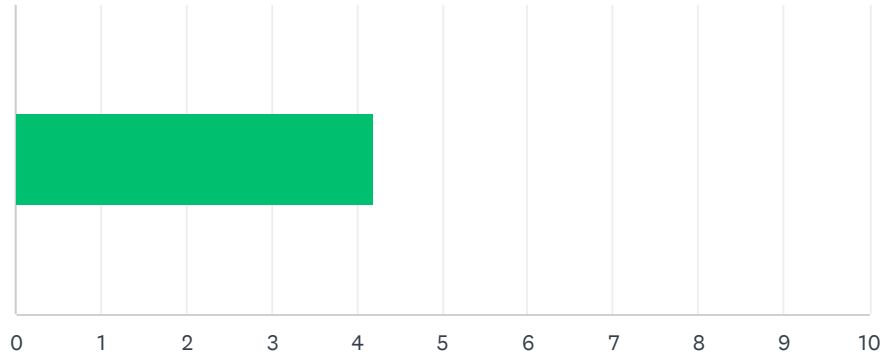
Answered: 561 Skipped: 278



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, I believe our community has adequate access to child care	3.92%	22
No, I do not believe our community has adequate access to child care	66.31%	372
Neutral, I believe parts of our community have adequate access to child care while other parts do not	29.77%	167
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>561</b>

Q78 On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being the worst and 10 being the best), how would you rate the current availability of child care in your community?

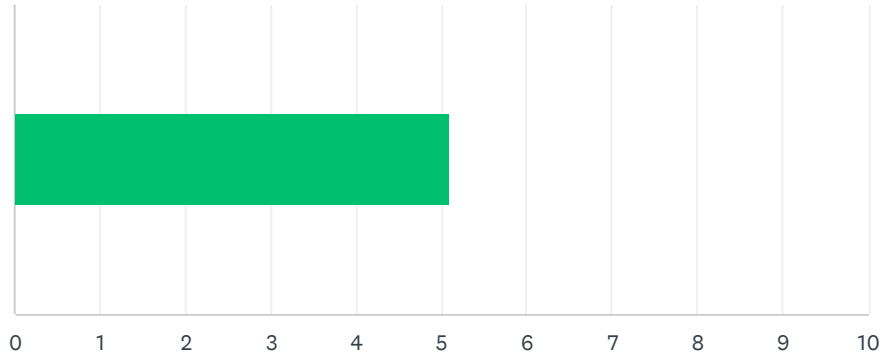
Answered: 541 Skipped: 298



ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
	4	2,270	541
Total Respondents: 541			

Q79 On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being the worst and 10 being the best), how would you rate the quality of child care in your community?

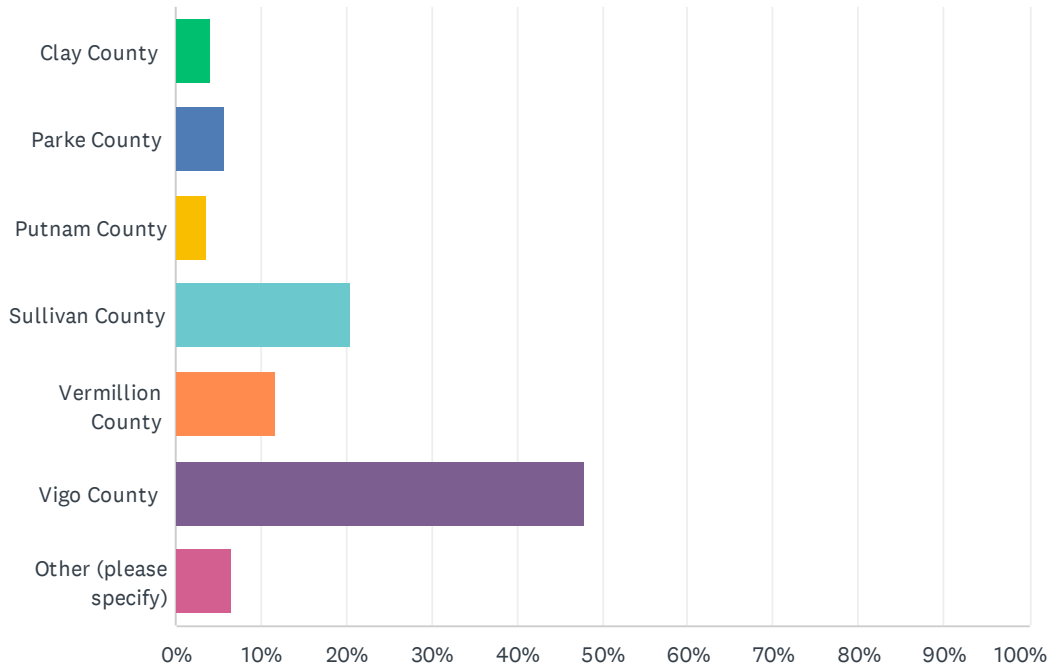
Answered: 535 Skipped: 304



ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
	5	2,721	535
Total Respondents: 535			

## Q80 What county do you currently live in?

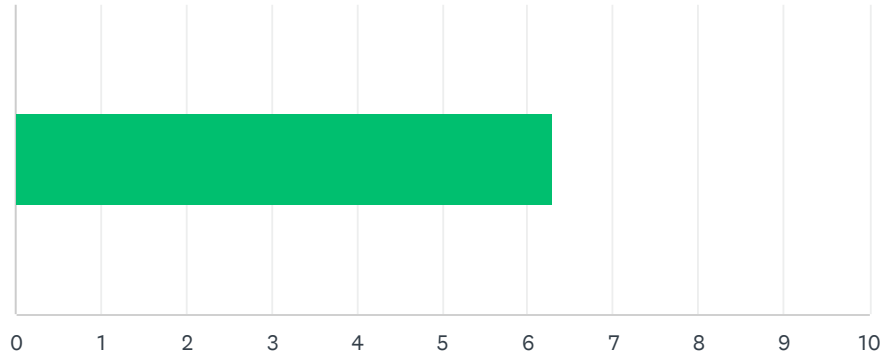
Answered: 275 Skipped: 564



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Clay County	4.00%	11
Parke County	5.82%	16
Putnam County	3.64%	10
Sullivan County	20.36%	56
Vermillion County	11.64%	32
Vigo County	48.00%	132
Other (please specify)	6.55%	18
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>275</b>

Q83 On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being the worst and 10 being the best), how would you rate the current availability of child care in your community?

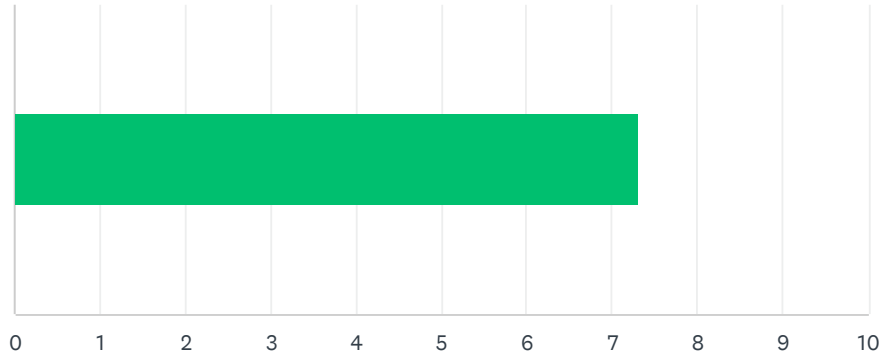
Answered: 247 Skipped: 592



ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
	6	1,553	247
Total Respondents: 247			

Q84 On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being the worst and 10 being the best), how would you rate the current quality of child care in your community?

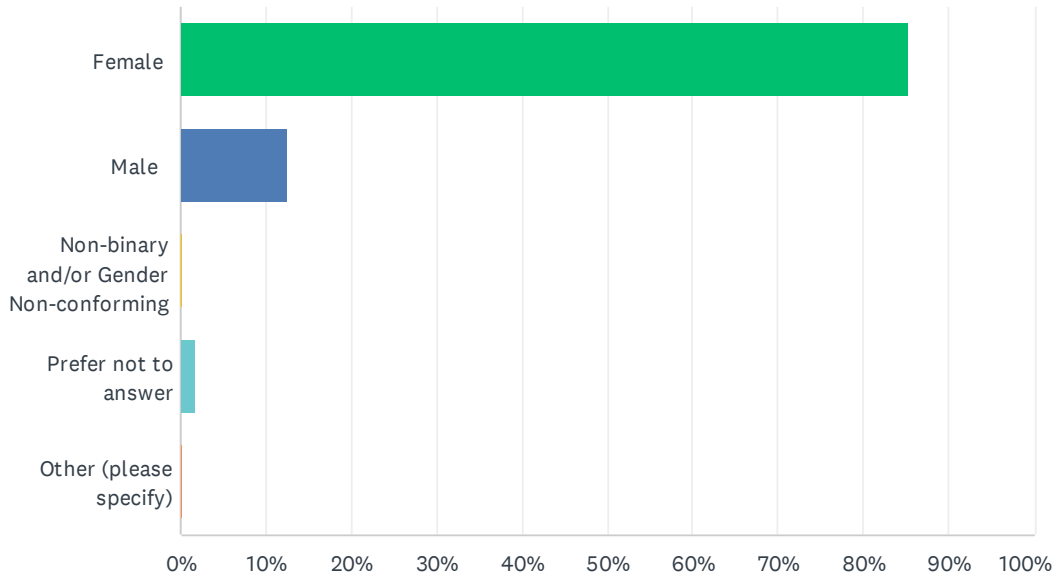
Answered: 245 Skipped: 594



ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
	7	1,793	245
Total Respondents: 245			

## Q85 What gender do you identify as?

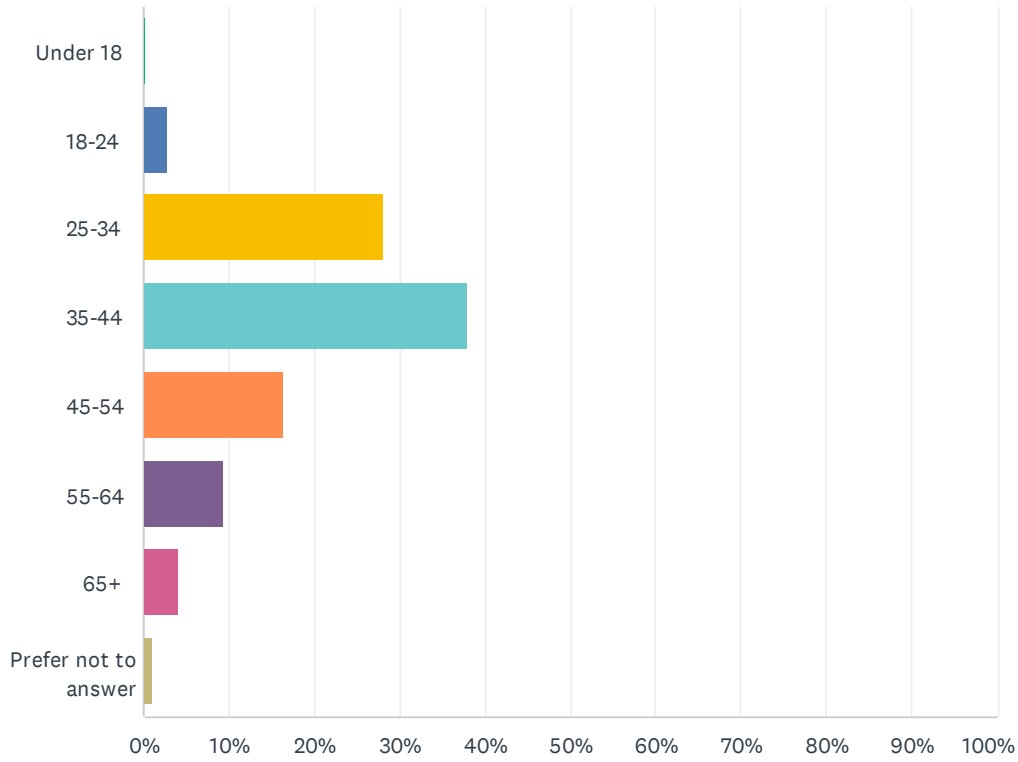
Answered: 833 Skipped: 6



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Female	85.23%	710
Male	12.61%	105
Non-binary and/or Gender Non-conforming	0.12%	1
Prefer not to answer	1.80%	15
Other (please specify)	0.24%	2
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>833</b>

## Q86 What is your age?

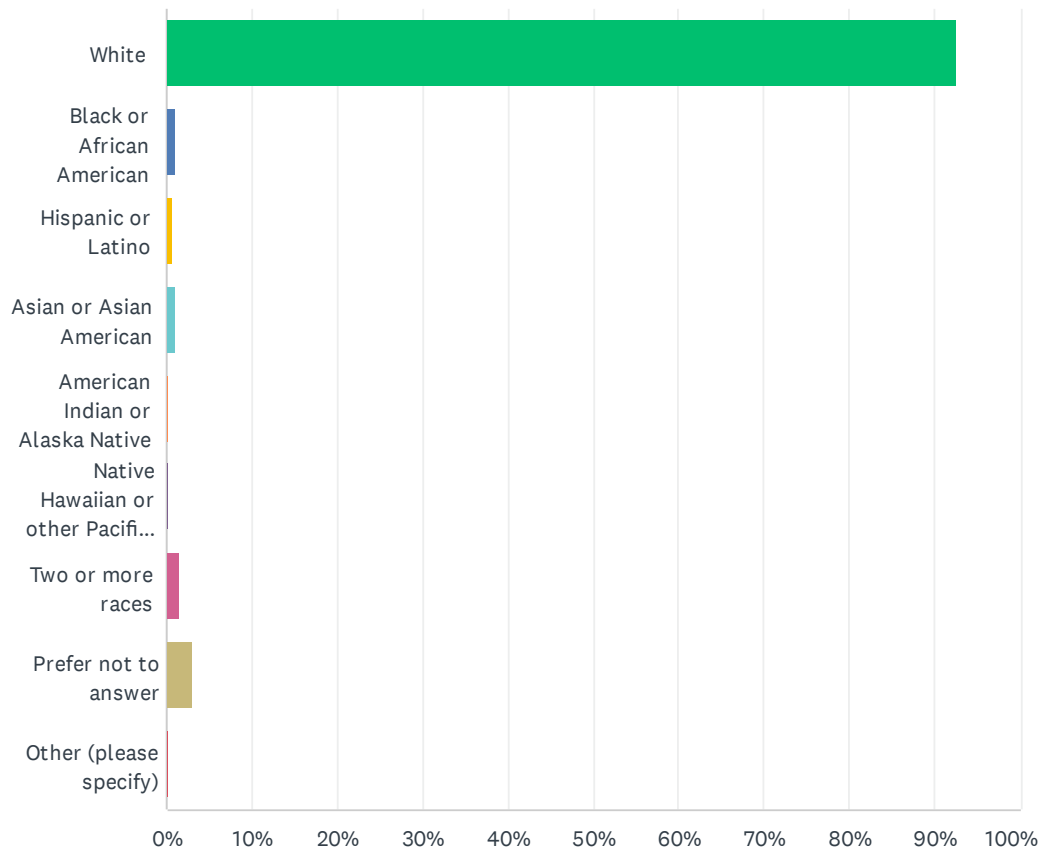
Answered: 836 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under 18	0.12%	1
18-24	2.75%	23
25-34	28.11%	235
35-44	38.04%	318
45-54	16.51%	138
55-64	9.33%	78
65+	4.07%	34
Prefer not to answer	1.08%	9
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>836</b>

## Q87 What is your racial background?

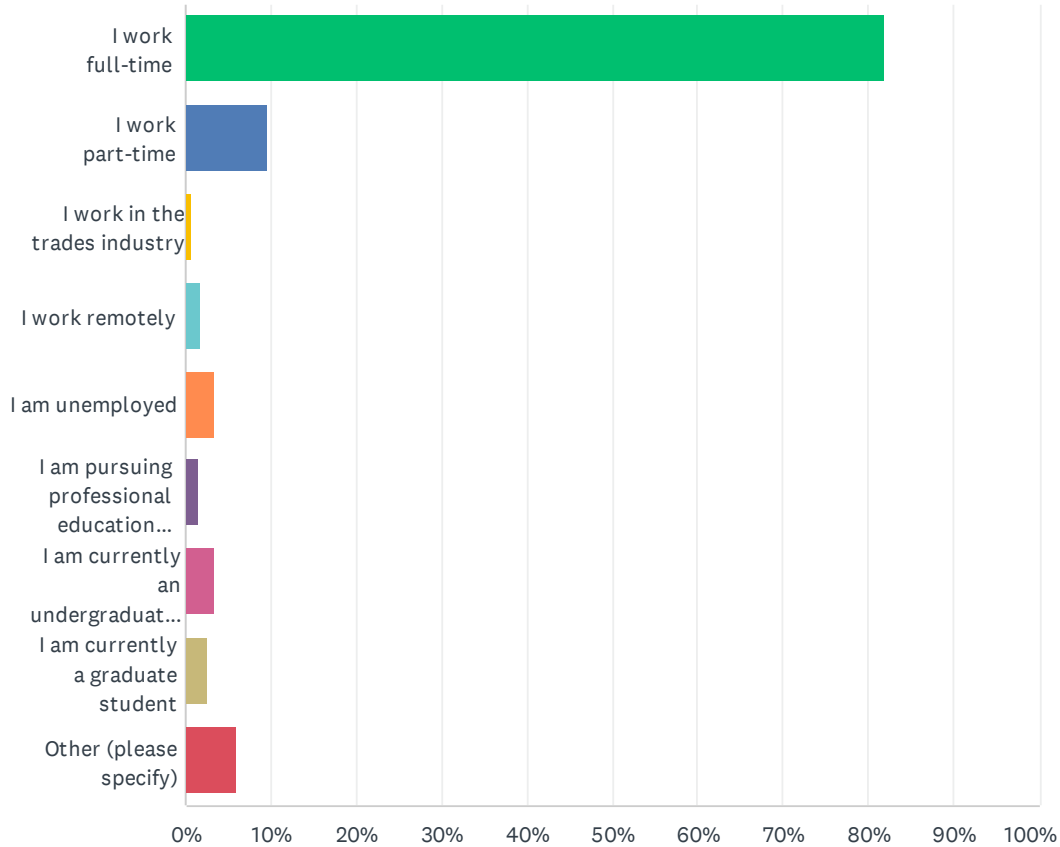
Answered: 833 Skipped: 6



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
White	92.44%	770
Black or African American	0.96%	8
Hispanic or Latino	0.72%	6
Asian or Asian American	0.96%	8
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.24%	2
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.12%	1
Two or more races	1.44%	12
Prefer not to answer	2.88%	24
Other (please specify)	0.24%	2
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>833</b>

**Q88 Please select the option that best describes your employment status.  
Select all that apply.**

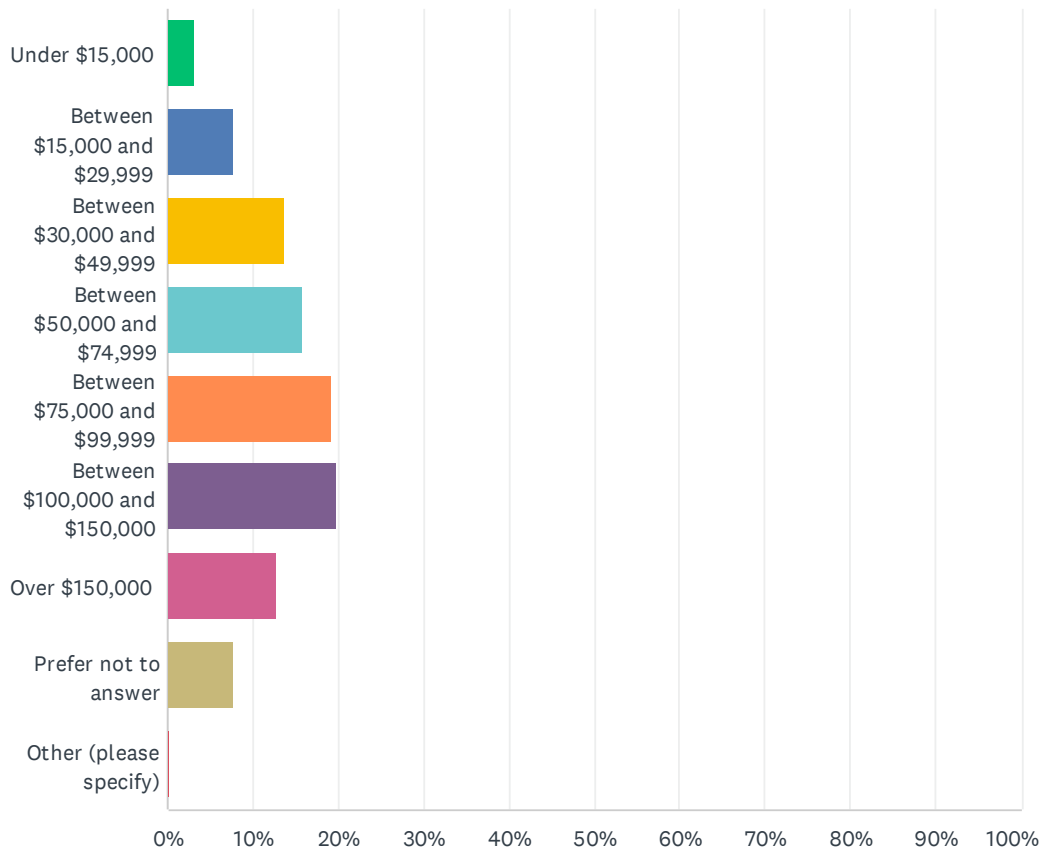
Answered: 836 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I work full-time	81.94%	685
I work part-time	9.57%	80
I work in the trades industry	0.72%	6
I work remotely	1.79%	15
I am unemployed	3.35%	28
I am pursuing professional education training (trades, CNA programing, etc.)	1.44%	12
I am currently an undergraduate student	3.47%	29
I am currently a graduate student	2.63%	22
Other (please specify)	5.98%	50
Total Respondents: 836		

## Q89 What is your annual household income?

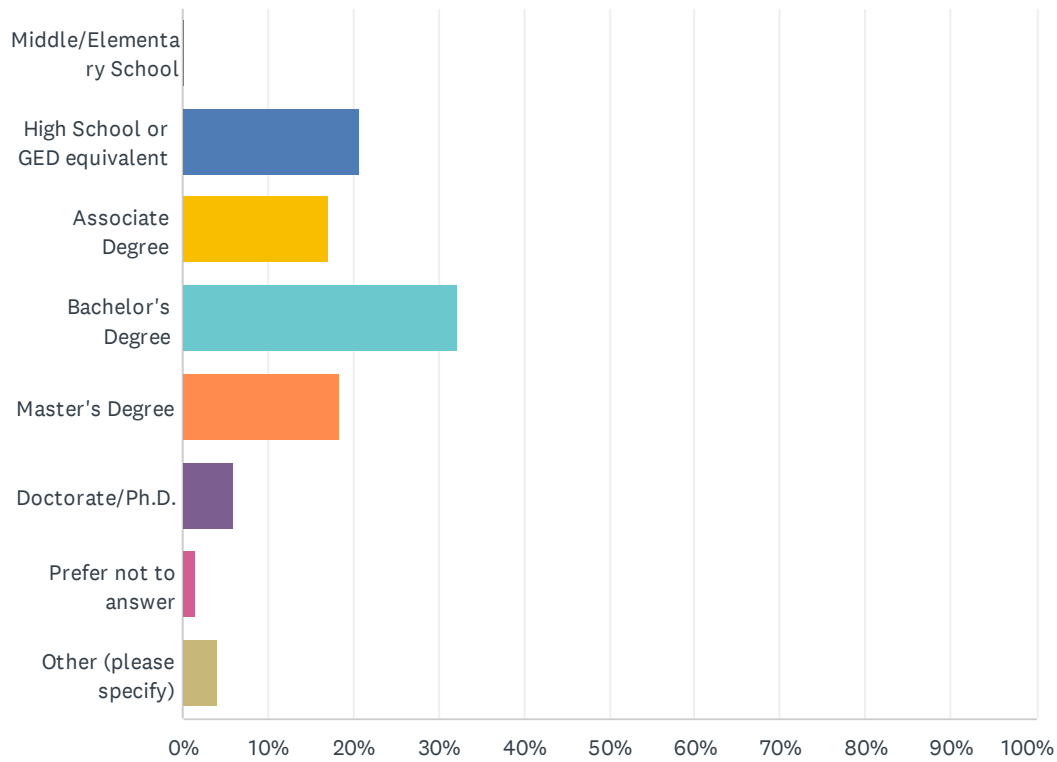
Answered: 831 Skipped: 8



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under \$15,000	3.13%	26
Between \$15,000 and \$29,999	7.70%	64
Between \$30,000 and \$49,999	13.72%	114
Between \$50,000 and \$74,999	15.76%	131
Between \$75,000 and \$99,999	19.25%	160
Between \$100,000 and \$150,000	19.86%	165
Over \$150,000	12.76%	106
Prefer not to answer	7.58%	63
Other (please specify)	0.24%	2
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>831</b>

## Q90 What is your highest level of education?

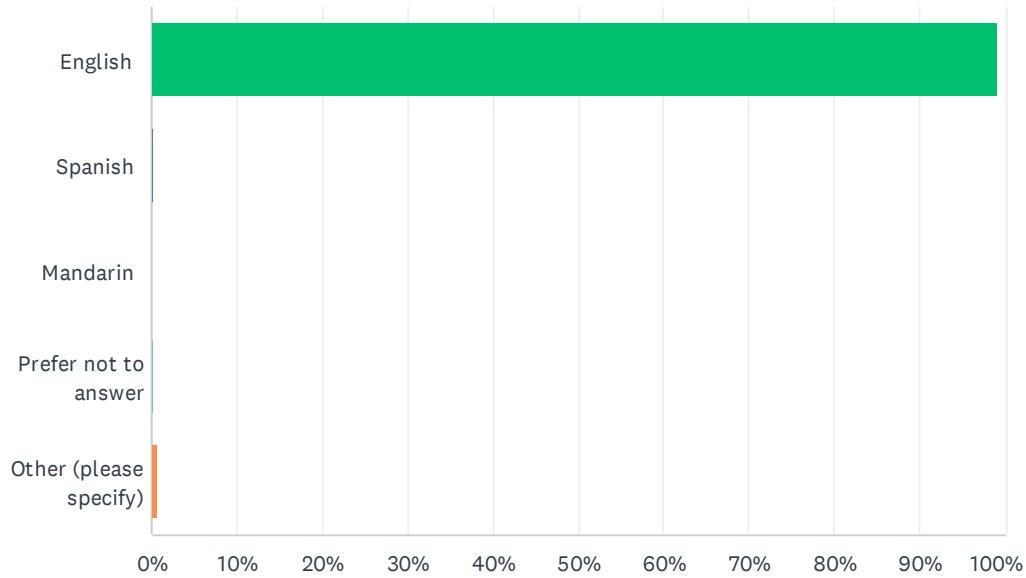
Answered: 837 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Middle/Elementary School	0.12%	1
High School or GED equivalent	20.67%	173
Associate Degree	17.08%	143
Bachelor's Degree	32.26%	270
Master's Degree	18.28%	153
Doctorate/Ph.D.	5.97%	50
Prefer not to answer	1.55%	13
Other (please specify)	4.06%	34
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>837</b>

## Q91 What is your primary language?

Answered: 834 Skipped: 5



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
English	99.04%	826
Spanish	0.12%	1
Mandarin	0.00%	0
Prefer not to answer	0.24%	2
Other (please specify)	0.60%	5
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>834</b>

# Open-Ended Responses

## *Employer Survey*

What is your role within your business?

- HR/Payroll
- Principal
- Superintendent
- Management
- Teacher
- Administration
- Board of Directors
- Elected Official
- Director
- Owner
- Manager
- Benefits Supervisor
- CEO
- Financial Advisor
- Deputy Warden
- Vice President
- President
- COO
- Registered Behavior Technician

What is the most prominent child care need among your employees?

- Quality
- Affordability
- Availability
  - Infant care
  - Before and after school care
  - Availability beyond standard work hours
  - Summer
- Location
  - Proximity to schools
  - Convenient to work place

Does your business require that people work overnight or on weekends? If so, what do those employees do for child care during that time?

- Yes
  - Relatives help to watch children

*Child Care from Family or Friend Survey*

What factors or circumstances contributed to you choosing to have a partner, family member, or friend watch your children?

- Child care costs are too expensive
- Safety concerns
- Lack of quality
- Lack of an accessible location
- Work schedule changes weekly – lack of providers able to accommodate
- Lack of providers for children with special needs
- Lack of part-time options
- Lack of infant care
- Unable to pick child up on time due to work
- Lack of after school care
- Hours
- Different ages makes it difficult due to different schedules
- Too many kids – too expensive

If you tried to seek out a child care provider before choosing at-home child care, please tell us about your experience.

- Long waitlist – when finally available no longer needed
- No high quality care was available
- Used to take to child care, but decided to move to family since it was free
- Costs were too high
- No part time availability
- Lack of early morning/later hours
- Lack of safety and trust
- Dirty or messy
- No options available for children with special needs
- Local providers had to cut capacity due to staffing issues

## *Child Care from Provider Survey*

Please describe the current impact child care has on your monthly finances.

- Very hard and expensive
- Large portion of family budget
- Takes away from being able to afford other things (house, better cars, saving, etc)
- A large portion of paycheck
- Missing/struggling for one payment will mess up entire year of accounting
- Can't afford to have another child
- Without child care vouchers I couldn't afford it
- Child care is the largest bill
- Had to get a second job
- Have to chose cost over value
- Moderate
- A big impact during the summer
- Paying more for a high-quality provider is worth it but very hard
- I can't seek better employment because I have to work from home to help watch kids
- Very hard as a single parent
- Challenging without qualifying for vouchers

*In Need of Child Care Survey*

If you are comfortable, please describe your current child care needs and struggles.

- Costs are too high
- Lack of quality and licensed providers
- Lack of part-time care/flexible hours
  - Shift child care
- Lack of availability
- Lack of options for children with special needs
- Lack of before and after school care
- Lack of providers who accept CCDF vouchers

## *Child Care Provider Survey*

Do you offer any specialized child care services?

- Daycare
- Pre-K
- Special education
- Education
- On-My-Way Pre-K
- CCDF
- Before and after school care

How much do you charge per week for infants?

- \$161

How much do you charge per week for toddlers?

- \$161

How much do you charge per week for preschool-aged children?

- \$155

How much do you charge per week for school-aged children?

- \$109

If you are not a PTQ provider or are not eligible to be one, what resources and tools would you need to become one?

- Help with licensing

If you are currently a level 1 or 2 PTQ provider, what tools and resources would you need to become a level 3 provider?

- It's a lot of work and stress on top of everything else (finding staff, paperwork, etc.). Providers need support

## West Central Indiana Child Care Strategic Plan Survey

Do you currently have a waitlist for your services? If so, what is the average number of names on the waitlist?

- 40 - 60
- 5 - 10
- Just infants
- 25+
- Receive calls every day

What challenges do you face as a child care provider in your community?

- Parents unable to afford it
- Behavioral issues
- Low pay
- Lack of respect/communication from parents
- High costs for high quality
- Parents struggle with costs but business is barely able to survive
- Unable to expand to fund future projects
- Quality staff and staff retention
  - Staff burn out
- Need more support from the state
- Lack of funding – a need for more local grants

## *No Children/No Need for Child Care*

What tools and resources are needed within the community to help make child care more accessible?

- Flexible child care hours
- Before and after school care
- Transportation options
- Free or low cost care
- Trust
- Advocacy for child care and quality education
- Advertising resources to help with child care recruitment
- Financial programs for those who don't qualify for vouchers
- More info. available about child care upfront for parents (costs, availability, places that work with children with special needs, accreditation levels and their meaning, etc.)
  - A directory
- More infant and toddler care
- Programs for kindergarten readiness
- Grants for providers and families
- Employer offerings
- Nontraditional hours
- Community support
- Tax credits/benefits
- Professional training and development for providers
- Public-Private partnerships
- Food assistance

How would you describe the need for child care in your community?

- A great need
- Need more facilities for child care
- Need is always high
- Need for quality care
- Expensive
- Dire need

*Child Care Recipient and Provider Overall Survey*

What tools and resources are needed within the community to help make child care more accessible?

- Daycare collaboration with school corporations
- Learning materials for children
- Funding for food for children
- Lower costs
- Transportation services
- More high-quality slots
- More infant and toddler care
- Financial assistance – scholarships/grants
- More CCDF providers
- Central data base to get information on current child care providers (who has availability, accreditation, costs, services, etc.)
- Funding for providers
- Higher wages
- Advocacy services
- Education for local government to understand how a lack of child care impacts all
- Advertising resources for providers for staffing and parents
- Quality workforce
- Awareness for children who need care
- Before and after school care
- Government programs for funding for those who don't qualify for CCDF
- Employer/Child care provider partnerships
- Training/providers for children with special needs
- Resources to help providers with business operations, especially emerging providers

How would you describe the need for child care in your community?

- Desperate
- A high need
- Lack of quality providers
- Expensive
- Urgent
- Dire

# Appendix F

## Forums

In the pursuit of obtaining precise and current data pertaining to the state of child care in West Central Indiana, a comprehensive and regionally representative data collection approach was implemented. This encompassed the facilitation of seven forums, strategically distributed throughout the region to ensure a thorough and inclusive assessment. Two sessions were held in Vigo County, and singular forums convened in Clay, Parke, Putnam, Sullivan, and Vermillion Counties. Each forum was structured and consisted of a standardized set of six questions, enumerated below. This deliberate and uniform questioning framework was designed to elicit accurate responses, thus providing a nuanced understanding of the distinct child care challenges prevailing in each county within West Central Indiana.

- What are some current gaps and challenges facing your community concerning child care? What would you identify as the top need for child care in your community?
- Based on your experiences, what challenges in child care do you see within the various age groups: infants, toddlers, preschool, before and after school care, etc.?
- What resources are needed for child care recipients to help make child care more accessible to all?
- What resources are needed for child care providers to help make child care more accessible to all?
- How have you seen a lack of availability and high costs for child care affect your community?
- What should future parents and people moving to your community be aware of about child care?

### Community Forum 1

- Vigo County
  - Indiana State University, Heritage Ballroom in Tirey Hall
  - October 12, 2023

The inaugural Vigo County forum welcomed the active participation of a diverse cohort of stakeholders, encompassing elected representatives, local child care providers, and parents. Delving into a comprehensive array of topics, the discussions unfolded around

multifaceted challenges intrinsic to the topic of quality child care. Noteworthy among these challenges were the impediments posed by the high costs associated with child care services, the conspicuous lack of toddler and infant availability, and an overarching deficiency in the overall capacity of child care providers within the county.

A pivotal aspect that dominated the discourse pertained to the struggles faced by child care providers and the ensuing ramifications for the broader community. Among the concerns was the shortage of capacity, intertwined with the challenge of recruiting a qualified workforce essential for expanding child care services. Discussions underscored the multifaceted roles that child care providers assume, including responsibilities in accounting, marketing, strategy formulation, operational aspects, and networking. Constraints stemming from educational and time limitations often hindered the efficient handling of these tasks. Recognizing these challenges and proposing tangible solutions emerged as a recurrent theme during the discussions emphasizing a collective commitment to fostering an environment conducive to the success and resilience of child care providers within Vigo County.

### Community Forum 2

- Putnam County
  - Ivy Tech Community College - Greencastle
  - October 16, 2023

The Putnam County forum was composed of predominantly public officials and child care providers. This forum, akin to the preceding Vigo County session, posed familiar discussions revolving around costs, accessibility, quality, and the intricate dynamics of child care provider staffing. Nevertheless, the discourse in Putnam County unveiled a distinctive focus on the availability of child care spots, which emerged as a noteworthy and unique facet.

The provider participating in the forum offered perspective, emphasizing that while there may be available child care spots in Putnam County, the critical consideration lies in the alignment of these spots with the actual needs of the county's residents. This revelation urged a closer examination of the intersectionality between the availability of child care spots and their relevance to the specific requirements of the community.

A distinctive attribute that set Putnam County apart from other forums was the consideration of child care spot availability in light of associated costs. The forum deliberated on the possibility that the comparatively higher costs associated with child care

might serve as a deterrent for individuals, potentially resulting in underutilized child care spots. While other counties have individuals who shy away from traditional child care due to high costs, it very rarely leaves unclaimed spots among providers. This unique insight emphasized the intricate interplay between economic considerations and accessibility, shedding light on a dynamic that warrants further exploration and strategic consideration in the ongoing discourse surrounding child care initiatives within Putnam County.

### Community Forum 3

- Sullivan County
  - Sullivan Civic Center
  - October 17, 2023

The Sullivan County forum welcomed participants, including public officials, child care providers, and engaged local citizens, fostering perspectives representative of the community's varied interests. Echoing discussions in forums across the region, participants in Sullivan County engaged in thoughtful deliberations on shared themes, highlighting prevalent barriers that hinder access to child care services within the county.

A noticeable theme brought up during the forum was Sullivan County's ongoing struggle to adequately meet the burgeoning needs of families by providing an appropriate number of child care spots. Central to this challenge was the recurrent issue of provider staffing, a common theme across various counties in the region. Sullivan County's distinctive characteristic of having a majority of home-based providers added a layer of complexity, as it brings forth unique licensing requirements in comparison to center-based care, further contributing to the intricacies of child care.

A discussion point emerged around Sullivan County's need for extended hours and nontraditional care options. Participants commented on the scarcity of providers offering early morning and late evening hours, overnight care, or weekend care, rendering a notable gap in the availability of child care services. This extends to before and after school care for children over five years old, signifying a comprehensive need for diverse and flexible child care options that align with the evolving demands and schedules of families within Sullivan County.

### Community Forum 4

- Clay County

- Clay County YMCA
- October 23, 2023

The Clay County forum provided in-depth discussions encompassing key thematic areas such as cost implications, accessibility challenges, provider staffing concerns, and the overarching theme of child care quality. The deliberations in Clay County mirrored prevalent concerns voiced in various regional forums, establishing a shared narrative that highlights the systemic challenges inherent in the child care landscape.

Drawing a parallel with the Vigo County forum, participants in the Clay County session accentuated a crucial aspect often overlooked — the lack of business training opportunities available for child care providers. This deficiency was identified as a critical factor impacting the overall quality of child care services and hindering providers' capacity to participate in state programs, such as the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), further amplifying the need for comprehensive professional development initiatives tailored to the unique requirements of child care providers within Clay County.

An additional layer of complexity was introduced by the discussion surrounding Clay County's substantial manufacturing population. Participants explored the intricate dynamics and challenges faced by families working in the manufacturing sector, particularly regarding the availability of child care options that align with the demanding schedules inherent to the industry. The availability of child care spots, while existent, was acknowledged as potentially incongruent with the preferred times required by families engaged in manufacturing-related occupations. This, coupled with high costs, emerged as a potential deterrent for families in need, signifying the intricate interplay between economic considerations, working hours, and child care accessibility.

#### Community Forum 5

- Vermillion County
  - Clinton Community Center
  - October 24, 2023

The Vermillion County forum attracted a diverse array of participants, constituting a cross-section of the community's leadership and stakeholders. Elected officials, leaders from local economic development groups, child care advocacy representatives, parents, and delegates from major employers within the community collectively engaged in a comprehensive exploration of pertinent themes. Beyond the recurring subjects of cost

implications, quality considerations, availability challenges, and provider staffing, the forum in Vermillion County evolved into a nuanced dialogue on the county's distinctive child care initiatives and their consequential impact on economic development.

A distinctive feature of the discussions was the alignment of child care considerations with Vermillion County's economic landscape. Notable participants included major employers, such as Elanco, and representatives from the Industrial Park RISE, which is actively involved in attracting additional manufacturers to the county. This strategic integration highlighted the pivotal role that child care availability plays in shaping the region's ability to retain and attract a skilled workforce. The connection between child care access and economic development emerged as a central theme, showcasing the implications that a shortage in child care availability could exert on the community's industrial growth and its capacity to secure and retain valuable employees. The strategic focus on attracting more manufacturers to the Industrial Park RISE magnifies the importance of addressing child care challenges as an integral component of the broader economic development agenda.

### Community Forum 6

- Parke County
  - In partnership with the Parke County Education Coalition
  - Community Center
  - October 26, 2023

The Parke County forum, organized in collaboration with the Parke County Education Coalition, provided a platform for an array of community stakeholders. Attendees included representatives from local economic development corporations, child care providers, parents, and engaged community members. The multifaceted discussions delved into a spectrum of child care-related challenges to Parke County, aligning with prevailing themes observed across West Central Indiana, encompassing issues such as availability constraints, high costs, staffing shortages, and considerations of child care quality.

The partnership with Parke County's Education Coalition added an enriching layer to the discourse, allowing for an exploration of the county's ongoing child care initiatives and their far-reaching implications. The forum presented itself as an opportunity to delve into the intricacies of how these initiatives intersect with the broader fabric of Parke County, shedding light on their effects and ramifications on the local landscape.

A focal point of the discussions revolved around the profound impact of inadequate child

care availability on employers of varying scales within Parke County. The struggle to retain and attract employees emerged as a recurring theme, with some employers even recommending prospective employees to reside in Terre Haute/Vigo County for improved access to child care services. This dynamic not only poses a challenge for businesses but also extends to educational institutions within the community, as schools grapple with difficulties in hiring teachers due to the lack of child care options for their families. Furthermore, the forum highlighted the demand within Parke County for infant care and providers offering early morning and late evening care to stand out as the most sought-after services by families.

### Community Forum 7

- Vigo County
  - Vigo County Public Library
  - November 2, 2023

The second Vigo County forum was a predominantly provider-centric gathering, featuring a substantial representation of child care providers alongside community members. This shaped the discourse to largely center around the intricate challenges faced by child care providers within Vigo County. While common themes such as staffing concerns resonated throughout the discussions, the forum delved into additional nuanced topics that specifically impact providers, thus enriching the dialogue with multifaceted perspectives.

A significant focus emerged on the need for a more streamlined hiring process, reflecting providers' concerns about the intricacies involved in recruitment and the potential for improvements in this crucial aspect of their operations. The discussions also illuminated the challenges providers face in navigating the complex landscape of licensing requirements, emphasizing the need for clarity and support in adhering to regulatory standards. The forum also provided a platform for providers to express their need for additional resources to efficiently manage and operate their businesses, including assistance with startup costs, indicating a desire for a more supportive ecosystem that fosters the sustainability of child care services.

Providers also shared invaluable insights into the challenges experienced by families, encompassing issues such as navigating costs, understanding the PTQ (Paths to QUALITY) program, qualifying for state and federal financial programs, and contending with the pervasive lack of capacity. Transportation considerations for before and after-school care also surfaced as a notable concern, highlighting the challenges providers encounter in

facilitating these essential services for families. These firsthand perspectives offered a comprehensive view of the interconnected challenges faced by both providers and families, reinforcing the complexity of the child care landscape in Vigo County.





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