



# Assessment of Affordability, Availability, Increase in Facilities and Strategies for Support of the Early Childhood Child Care Programs in Washoe County June 2019

This report is an assessment and estimate of the current childcare need and projection for the coming years. It proposes steps the agency can take to assure they meet the increase-in-demand forecast and recommends recruitment and retention strategies to ensure system capacity and to meet the community's needs.

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## **Introduction**

Washoe County remains the only local jurisdiction responsible to license childcare services in our state. The on-going decision to continue this responsibility has been due, in part, to the strong relationship Human Services Agency has with childcare providers. They recognize the importance of supporting quality childcare and understand the public's need for guidance and assistance in choosing a provider who is right for their family.

Through the Child Care Development Block Grant funding received, The Agency seeks to understand the decline in licensed child care providers in both homes and centers and to develop a long-term plan to increase child care options for families in our community as well as provide support to help retain them in the field.

## **Executive Summary**

Prior to 2001, Washoe County Human Services Agency had seen a small, but steady increase in the number of licensed childcare homes and centers. However, with the marked downturn in the economy beginning in approximately 2003, the number of licensed centers and homes began to slowly decrease while populations of families with young children increased. Many families saw a dramatic decline in their hours worked, income and eventually, due to rising costs and lack of resources including care for their children; joblessness. The option of providing home childcare was enticing in that a parent who was out of work, could not only stay home with their children, thereby saving childcare costs but could also have income generated by caring for additional children during their parents' work week. With gradual increase in employment in our community, many home and center providers have turned to other employment. This relates directly to childcare being one of the lowest paid jobs without typically strong benefits such as paid leave, competitive insurance benefits or retirement savings opportunities. Childcare is also a very costly service to provide which, in turn, limits it to those families who can manage the expense balanced with the income they receive from work. Childcare is not regarded as a profitable business and requires a provider to assume a high level of responsibility and liability.

Accessibility, affordability, and quality of care are influencers that effect availability. Increasing availability is a community responsibility. Trends show a lack of space for children needing care especially for infants and young toddlers, lack of qualified, well-trained staff to care for children, high costs to locate and make renovations or new construction for commercial operation and lack of benefits and a sustainable wage for providers in both centers and homes. Providers feel that they are unable to pass the true cost of operation onto parents.

Planning for this increase in population by increasing available care that is affordable and of high quality is something that the licensing agency can help the community achieve. Quality childcare being available to all parents in the community impacts The Agency's service provision in many of their programs. Having quality choices for childcare that are accessible, a stable early education work force, and a strong

childcare community directly improves the quality of life not only for families but their children as well.

## **Methods**

Initial questions considered were to identify barriers for providers to either expand existing facilities or to start new programs, consideration of economic challenges, identify system barriers including regulations specifically for child care or those requirements of other agencies for operation, and the process of recruiting, training and retaining staff that may affect the successful operation of the facility.

Methods to get answers to these questions included research and review of current and recent-past assessments of the local and state child care industry, national and Nevada Kids Count reports over the past five years, national information on barriers to operating and utilizing public and private facilities, personal interviews with parents, foster parents, licensing staff, directors of child care centers licensed by the county and by the state, agency managers, outside support agencies and responses to a prepared survey received and analyzed through Qualtrics and agency staff.

## **Current Initiatives to Understand Child Care Availability in Nevada**

Numerous assessments of the availability of childcare, affordability and the needs for quality improvement have been conducted. The Children's Cabinet completes annual assessments and publishes "The State of Child Care in Nevada" as well as "The Child Care Fact Sheet". The Nevada Kids Count Project, which is a state assessment supported by the National Kids Count organization funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, is also published annually and while it focuses on identified child well-being indicators, childcare availability and affordability are included factors.

The Nevada Department of Education and its Office of Early Learning and Development are responsible for overseeing program quality, interagency coordination, early childhood workforce development and early learning development standards for the state of Nevada. The Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council or ECAC was established in 2009 by an executive order signed by Governor Gibbons, which was continued by Governor Sandoval in 2011. During the 2013 Nevada Legislature Governor Sandoval signed AB 79 establishing the Council in statute. The ECAC developed a strategic plan to address improvement and strengthening of the childcare system in the state by 2014. This plan was updated for the next five years in 2018. Many of the key findings and objectives stayed the same in the update and the Council continues to facilitate statewide strategic planning, implementation and monitoring of childcare in the state.

The 2018 report is comprehensive with information gathered and with recommendations made by the Council. It lacks specificity to location although does address some of the differences in Clark, Washoe and many of the rural counties. The results summarize the state of affordability and accessibility of childcare in the state and quantify quality through statewide programs and policy. The reports show that "there is urgency to

address the quality, accessibility and support for early learning in Nevada as the state rapidly evolves to a 21st Century economy brought on by its success in attracting private and public employers”. Nevada has the second fastest growing population, the ninth fastest job growth, and ninth fastest growing economy in the United States. Washoe County numbers for these statistics are even slightly higher.

Emphasis is placed on the need for not only high-skilled, educated workers, they also want services that support families living here in quality. This includes early education opportunities available to all levels of employees and families. As the need for skilled workers intensifies, so does the importance of ensuring that all Nevada children are healthy and ready to learn in pre-K, kindergarten and elementary school – the mission of the Nevada Department of Education. They recognize that early care is an important part of that education thus the strategic plan includes recommendations on improving quality, increasing training and education for providers and addressing wage inequities.

“In 2015, 29 percent of Nevada children were at or above proficient in reading by the end of grade three – an essential foundation for educational and lifelong success. Dramatically improving this critical indicator depends on building strength in three areas: early learning spanning birth through grade three; family engagement and support; and child and family health”. (ECAC 2018 Strategic Plan)

In addition to access to quality early learning programs, the ECAC Assessment found that families want more support for their efforts to nurture their children’s literacy development, love of learning, and school readiness with quality experiences. Families in Washoe County have personal definitions of quality in addition to availability of services. Programs that are seen as “successful”, “good for kids” and “financially sound” such as Head Start Programs, lab schools at the University and Community Colleges, private homes and centers that have developed curriculum tend to be subsidized by other funding sources and have resources available such as student employees and benefit packages that are tied to the larger business or institution.

The importance of available childcare that is of high quality is seen in both a child’s ability to be a successful learner and well-being as well as stability for the family through that care and on-going employment.

According to the Director of the National Bridges Out of Poverty Project, Philip DeVol, only since 2017 has the lack of childcare resources not been the number one indicator of poverty. It is now the second, replaced by homelessness. In our community, homelessness and poverty are significant and complex. One reason for people not being able to break the cycle of poverty is the lack of appropriate care for their children.

A characteristic of these assessments, while providing helpful and clear information, is that they address childcare and early education on a national and “statewide” level. Washoe County’s information is delineated when gathered on specific data points, but trends, recommendations and observations are made at a statewide level. They often don’t address local needs and influences. Recommendations are inclusive of all jurisdictions and counties in Nevada and tend toward high-level change to the improvement of the industry and quality of childcare.

Through estimating market demand, identifying barriers to successful childcare businesses, identifying the geographic areas with the highest childcare needs and

proposing a strategy to increase the number of licensed childcare facilities as well as provide on-going support, the Agency will better serve the community.

**Community Need**

Numbers of children in the age range of those needing full-time care – typically children ages birth through 12 years of age – far out-pace the number of available licensed childcare spaces in all geographic areas of our community. Some areas have more commercial centers than homes which offer more flexibility in placement, but the numbers of spaces available does not meet the numbers of children needing daily care arrangements in any location or neighborhood. Although older children often attend out-of-school-time programs which are currently not licensed in our community, vacancies to attend is also at a premium. The number of children ages zero to four years increases more dramatically than any other child age group and is the most expensive and hardest type of care to find. The implications of this given that this time in a child’s life is one of the most important in terms of development, the word crisis is not an exaggeration.

**Washoe County Child Care Licensing Facility Count  
Total Licensed Child Care Facilities**

	Total # of facilities
FY2013	291
FY2014	261
FY2015	253
FY2016	246
FY2017	235
FY2018	230
<b>Net Loss over five years -21%</b>	

**Washoe County Population Projections for Five Years – Age Specific**

	0-4 years	5- 9 years	Total
2018	28,168	28,200	56,368
2019	28,961	28,209	57,170
2020	29,572	28,415	57,987
2021	30,230	28,860	59,090
2022	30,754	29,265	60,019
2023	31,248	29,834	61,082
2024	31,772	30,411	62,183
<b>Projected increase over next five years - 10.31%</b>			

Specifically, in the past six years, Washoe County has experienced a 21% reduction in the number of licensed day care facilities and a 24% loss of “space” or vacancies with which to enroll a child or children. Additionally, a steady increase in the community’s population of children under the age of nine years places more demand for childcare

space in both homes and centers. In the next five years, this same population is expected to increase by 10% with the highest increase forecasted to be in the age zero-to-four years group.

### **Availability**

From 2008 to 2017, the state of Nevada experienced a 52% decline in licensed family childcare programs and a 5% decline in licensed centers. During the same period, Nevada's overall licensed capacity has declined by 4891 slots (-10.5%); however, over the last two years a small net gain of 924 slots (2.2%) has occurred in centers and group family care, many of them being in the Clark County area. Family home care continues to slowly decline in the state as a whole.

Washoe County statistics reflect these percentages. In the last quarter of 2018, Washoe had 240 facilities with a capacity of 9076 spaces. There were 31,342 children ages 0 to 5, with 67.5% of them living in households where all parents work full time. An additional 36,880 children ages 6 to 12 are in households where 71% of all caregivers work outside of the home.

Even the minimum number of spaces as indicated by people on waiting lists and those not qualified for subsidy, is far from being adequate much less affording choice to families in programming and services offered.

Nevada's statewide early childhood capacity meets 23% of the need for childcare for children ages 0-5 and 35% of the need for children ages 0-5 living in households where all parents are in the workforce. The percentage for Washoe County is even lower at approximately 20.1% of the need being met.

High-quality childcare and after school programs that foster literacy, math and social skills are not optional. They are a necessity for both family stability and child development. Yet in Washoe County, only 32.2% of its 3-year and 4-year-olds were enrolled in pre-K programming as of 2016. Only 12% of those children were enrolled in state-funded pre-K, special education, and Early Head Start or Head Start programs. This means that nearly 70% of the children arriving on their first day of school for kindergarten are already behind their classmates who had the benefit of preschool. This places a great burden on the children, their parents and teachers to catch-up.

Waiting lists in Washoe County are long and don't address the need for stable environments for young children. Parents may place their names on a waiting list but by the time they are contacted about an opening, their child has often already settled into the current arrangement and begun to develop relationships with his caregiver and moving him will cause disruptive stress but the situation in terms of proximity, price, curriculum may be less than ideal for his family. Infant care waiting lists "can be years long" which defeats the purpose of the list in the first place – by time there is an opening, the child is no longer an infant! Center administrators and home providers alike find it difficult to manage wait lists so that they are current and meaningful not to mention having to tell families that they can't help them.

Inspectors, parents and directors were all concerned about the size and length of wait-lists and find that they really are not a viable option for families trying to plan stability and learning for their children. When asked about specific numbers on wait lists, several examples were provided:

TMCC waiting list:

6 weeks-18 months – 67 (children or families)

18-36 months - 73

3-5 years - 41

FT & PT care wait lists are about 5% more with an additional 35 families wanting semester-care only.

UNR waiting list:

Infants – 59 (children)

Ones – 53

Twos – 54

Threes – 27

Fours – 8

K/1<sup>st</sup> – 1

Boys and Girls Club Wiegand Child Care Center waiting list:

Infants – 37 (children) and “older children” (2 years and older) – 17. The Boys and Girls Club facility will “shift” classrooms, teachers and children to make group size or “classroom” changes to accommodate for enrollment. Historically they have “never had a waiting list”.

Close proximity is often used as a definition of availability but many factors in our community effect there being adequate quality childcare for children. Availability is not only geographic location but includes transportation needs, hours of operation that match a parent’s schedule – especially in a community that has many entry-level jobs working beyond “traditional” work hours, and specific family needs. While geographic proximity is not the only factor in the accessibility of licensed childcare, the absence of licensed childcare in a community often means it is not an accessible option for parents. Proximity does not promote access to childcare for certain populations who have difficulty finding childcare programs that meet their families’ needs. For example, families with infants and toddlers; parents with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities; immigrant families; families who depend on subsidy and parents working nonstandard hours have all historically faced even more limited options for licensed childcare in our community and often turn to family, friends and neighbors for care. The term “childcare deserts” can be used in many of the county’s “informal” communities. Areas such as North Valleys, Stead, Washoe Valley and Caughlin Ranch can be considered childcare deserts due to the small amount of (or no) childcare spaces located within the community itself. Families or childcare centers must transport their children to care outside of their neighborhoods and school districts. If a family uses

public transportation for this, it further limits their choices, is time consuming due to lack of routes and needing to transfer, costly and difficult on children.

Most parents discover that childcare is harder to find when their children are infants than when they are preschoolers. When childcare supply is examined by age group, licensed options are much scarcer for the youngest children. This scarcity is due in large part because infant care is more expensive to provide. Infants and toddlers require more supervision and interaction with adults, making smaller staff ratios essential. As a result, providers struggle to care for young children at a price that families can afford; a situation that was repeated in interviews and survey responses.

Childcare researchers and advocates have long speculated that Hispanic/Latino families may have a cultural preference for informal or relative care over formal or nonrelative childcare arrangements. The National Research Center on Hispanic Children and Families investigated many of these assumptions and found that the perceptions of Hispanic/Latino parents, whether they are immigrants or native-born, on different types of childcare arrangements are generally similar to those of black and white non-Hispanic parents. However, for their children under age five, in low-income families, researchers did find significantly lower rates of participation in early care and education programs among immigrant Hispanic/Latino households. Latino populations are the largest increasing ethnic population in Washoe County.

According to the United States Census Bureau in their tracking of Washoe County population trends, since 2010 there has been a 17.4% increase in the Hispanic/Latino population with all other ethnic populations increasing less than 5% in each category. The Latino population accounts for 24.7% of the population in Washoe County. Increasing the number of spots available anywhere in the county is needed – not just in areas that have currently low or no facilities - but consideration should be given to the needs of the Latino population and their needs for quality care as a part of the effort for improvement.

### **Affordability**

For decades, federal and state lawmakers underfunded childcare assistance, resulting in dwindling enrollment levels and fewer quality options for parents as the value of their childcare subsidy eroded over time. Congress took action in 2014 to improve quality, requiring minimum safety protections, such as background checks for child care providers, and extending eligibility periods for child care assistance, all of which Washoe County already had in place. However, without additional funding, these improvements exacerbated declines in enrollment for child care assistance.

By 2016, child care assistance plummeted across the country and the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) program served the fewest children in its 18-year history. Nevada was among 21 states that failed to spend any of the Social Services Block Grant funding that compliments the CCDBG funds received from the federal government. Nevada ranks as the least affordable in the nation for the cost of infant care in licensed family childcare and the 8th least affordable in licensed centers. The cost of infant care represents 55% of income for a family of three living at 100% of



poverty, and 40% of income for a family of three living at 140% of poverty. Currently in Washoe County, families earning more than 140% of poverty would not qualify for childcare subsidy.

Washoe County income and poverty levels:

		Rank*	Nevada	U.S.
Income per household	\$52,243	<a href="#">10th</a>	\$55,553	\$52,762
Income below poverty line	14.2%	<a href="#">7th</a>	12.9%	14.3%

\*among the 17 school districts in Nevada

Current (as of December 2018) average childcare rates in licensed facilities (both homes and childcare centers) in Washoe County are averaging \$179.00 per week. The rates vary slightly on the type of care provided – center vs. home – and age of children - infant vs. children ages 3 years old and up- and to some extent, geographic locations. Some areas (North Valleys, Sutro Street) charge approximately \$140.00 per week while other areas (remote Spanish Springs, South Reno) can charge \$185.00 per week. Infant care is universally more expensive, and providers agree that “infant care charges do not cover what it costs to provide the service” so they subsequently must make this up in other areas of their operation.

The Children’s Cabinet not only administers the childcare subsidy program but also collects data on childcare needs and usage throughout the State, including average costs per county and facility type. The current subsidy paid to eligible participants is \$30 per day or \$150.00 per week. When a facility charges more than this amount, the parent is responsible to pay the remaining amount.

Efforts to bolster childcare supply must focus on growing financially sustainable childcare programs as well as protecting children’s safety. Operating a childcare center or family childcare home is costly, but some elements that drive costs are necessary to protect children’s safety and to meet the minimum licensing standards. Suggested changes that attempt to superficially cut costs by rolling back safety protections, or by increasing group sizes and the number of children providers can watch undercut quality and reduce the effectiveness of early childhood investments.

There is a disparity between the revenue that providers need to operate a childcare program and how much parents can afford to pay. Operating a safe and high-quality child care center—one that pays its teachers a living wage and trains them to be effective caregivers; has small child-to-staff ratios to promote safety, language development, and social and emotional skills; and invests in age-appropriate materials and classroom spaces—is expensive. Childcare providers, both family homes and centers, usually close their doors because they simply cannot afford to operate on tuition payments alone, furthering the undersupply of childcare in our community. This

is due to both loss of space as well as the lack of desirability to open new facilities. Information from providers emphasized that caregivers need to be educated about the difficulty of successful operation before they are ever issued a license.

### **Interview Information**

Speaking with parents, staff and directors of centers and licensing staff provided in-depth perspectives on the state of childcare in our community as well as specific examples that each had experienced due to the shortage of childcare space. While recognizing that individuals can't always speak for all in the group, there were still many commonalities that the Agency can draw upon to make change.

Parents, caregivers and staff all agree that the shortage of available childcare space is a crisis and that it is affecting quality of life for children both in care and those who are not. Parents are unable to make meaningful placement choices based on schedule, child's needs, location, transportation or fit into a program. Much like foster care, the first concern for parents is "a spot" or vacancy to even begin discussion about placement. The issue of cost affects which center or home they can choose for their child as well. Both staff and parents report that they have had to choose other arrangements due to the cost being too high for their budget.

The near-universal shortage of licensed childcare has negative consequences for working parents. When parents are unable to access care for their young children, many are forced to make career sacrifices or worse, sacrifices in quality and opportunities for their children. Even if parents stay in the workforce, they often must weave together a patchwork of care arrangements that lacks the quality assurances of licensed care and program stability that children need. One parent explained the care arrangement she has in place consists of siblings attending different childcare centers because of lack of space and the rates being raised because of the center's need to "comply with new regulations". She struggles with how to pay the extra tuition or to make the decision to move her child.

While their point of view was slightly different, all those interviewed agreed that parents, especially those who live in poverty or are the "working poor" cannot afford childcare generally and certainly can't afford to make choices about where and how their children are cared for. All felt that at some level or regarding some issues, the community has a responsibility to ensure that children are well cared for and that families have options to promote stability.

The pay scale for caregivers and the high expectations and requirements that the community has for them to provide care do not match. Hours of operation are long to accommodate family's needs, duties are not singularly focused on caregiving (food preparation, cleaning and sterilizing the environment, administration and finance organization, activity planning, maintenance and parent communication) and there are often no benefits or leave time available. The quality of staff being hired as caregivers, substitutes and support staff is a big concern for all interviewed. There are few educated and experienced caregivers available for hire due to the low compensation and lack of benefits. Those that are hired often don't see the job as a career and are

quick to leave – sometimes without notice and during a work shift. Staff at centers and substitutes have low commitment to the job and those that are successful are doing it for the “work with children and families – certainly not the pay”.

Directors who contributed information felt that the early childhood profession is not seen as desirable and that higher education institutions do not do enough to promote childcare as a viable career within ECE. They said that instructors’ and administrators’ expectations and experiences with childcare facilities were unrealistic. They feel that education is not being made accessible so that new students would think that the career is rewarding and that internship requirements are not being utilized effectively. This coupled with the low pay and benefits causes many to make different choices than direct child caregiving.

## **Survey Results**

A survey of childcare providers (directors, center staff, home caregivers), parents and other community agencies was completed through the Qualtrics platform. The survey was sent to all licensed providers by email and they were encouraged to share it with staff, parents, and any others whom might have opinions on the lack of childcare business, its decline and ways to support and increase the number of providers. The survey was available from May 2<sup>nd</sup>, through May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019. There were 89 total responses from a wide range of experience levels and “roles” in the early childhood education community. A high-level overview done by HSA staff as well as the original response information are attached to this report as appendices one and two.

Generally, the results echoed much of what those interviewed discussed and suggested. They showed that parents and providers are concerned about the cost of doing childcare, new business and qualified staff as well as the inability for most families who need the care the most to afford it. The licensing staff have a very good understanding of what the issues are that providers both in centers and in homes are concerned about and how the system functions. They also enjoy appreciation and support from the childcare community and have built trust in themselves and their knowledge and the Agency as well.

Understanding expectations and having the multiple agencies that providers are responsible to in agreement with requirements and regulations is important to providers and parents. Having coaching and mentoring in place for a variety of needs also was prevalent among respondents. This ranged from education and support through the licensing process to having personal coaching while trying to manage difficult child behaviors. Interacting productively with parents and other family members as well as the child care community was something they saw as critical and that they needed support with. Survey respondents were generally quite positive with their suggestions for support and recruitment and were appreciative of the opportunity to provide feedback.

## **Economic Impact**

Without safe, affordable options for caring for their young children, parents may leave their jobs, increasing operating costs due to recruitment, retraining and the loss of skilled workers. Turnover costs for staff average over \$9,000 for employees earning \$8 per hour, and 150 percent of the salary of salaried employees.

Nationally, more than one fifth of all unscheduled absences from work are due to family issues, costing businesses money and productivity. Onsite childcare or emergency back-up childcare reduces unscheduled absenteeism and saves businesses money.

Early Childhood Education benefits help the community in long range outcomes. Employees without young children report that their work environment would improve if their employer offered early care and education benefits. Access to convenient and reliable early care is also an attractive benefit for employees without young children because they do not need to cover for their peers during unscheduled absences.

Smaller and medium size businesses including childcare centers themselves, can also benefit from providing effective childcare benefits, such as flexible work hours, pre-tax spending plans, tele-commuting, and paid parental leave.

Numbers for Washoe County from surveys, assessments and impact studies show that less than one third of children with working parents can attend licensed care and education programs. Other families must find assistance from family, friends, or neighbors, or adjust work schedules so they can care for their children.

Several parents reported having to take extended leave from their employment to “wait for the right arrangements” for their families. When a single parent must work to provide stability for their family, these type of leave arrangements are not possible.

From a provider’s perspective it is difficult to justify opening a business that is known to be low in profit and difficult for families to afford. The cost of doing business is not recouped by a realistic rate for weekly care for parents. The start-up costs for new childcare business are high. Location of a suitable space is difficult and payments for rent or the purchase start immediately. Any required renovations are costly and, in our community, may take several months to begin due to the lack of construction companies available. The licensing process also takes several months to complete. This time has providers unable to off-set the investment by income from providing care.

Nevada’s use of federal dollars has been inconsistent at best and lacks a direct correlation to assisting providers and parents. Currently, Nevada’s use of the childcare subsidy is processed by allocating funding for the program based on the previous year’s spending as well as providing for administrative resources in the state in terms of augmenting state budgets for licensing staff and benefits oversight. With the decline in providers, subsidies awarded are also fewer. A reapportionment of subsidy funds and the block grant monies to the counties can help more directly support new providers and young children and allow them to be spent more creatively for both the families needing them as well as the providers who are serving them.

In 2014 and in an update in 2018 the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) program was reauthorized with three significant new mandates for states.

First, the law introduced new requirements related to health and safety including minimum standards, mandatory criminal background checks, and increased training for licensing inspectors. Second, the law authorizes additional opportunities for states to focus on quality. The law promotes increasing the supply of high-quality providers in underserved communities, requires states to implement early learning and development guidelines, and requires additional professional development for providers. To support this focus on quality, states were required to invest at least 7 percent of their federal award on quality improvement in FY 2016. This increased to 8 percent in FY 2018 and 9 percent in FY 2020. Finally, the law focuses on helping families easily access stable, quality care. This includes providing expanded consumer information and changing eligibility processes. Initially only the State participated in these changes and use of funding to support programs however, in recent months, Washoe County has been involved in assessment and audit of the progress of implementation of some of these requirements.

### **From Personal Experience...**

According to childcare licensing social workers in the Agency, there is a crisis regarding the state of childcare in Washoe County. The specifics include not having enough facilities providing care for children, pay rate for employees, consistency in caregivers and businesses, cost increases to provide care, appropriate training to address children's and family's increasing needs and the lure/availability of other jobs paying more and providing paid benefits. Consequently, families find the years-long waiting lists, their child's caregivers changing often, increase daily costs and an extremely limited choice of care settings to meet their children's needs. Childcare licensing workers enjoy a strong relationship with the providers assigned to their caseload. This enables them to hear what barriers child caregivers feel keep them from being successful, and expanding and improving the characteristics of day-to-day care.

Child Care Center directors, community stakeholders and agency staff all voiced concern about the inability to provide more spaces for childcare due to the high construction costs and significant requirements to bring existing buildings into compliance with multiple agency requirements. One director summarized by saying, "it really is as if the city and the county don't want childcare centers in town". Finding a building that is accessible to families in our community often includes extensive refurbishing which is expensive. Additional high costs to open a facility include the special use permit process which is also lengthy without guarantee of granting.

New construction costs are steadily increasing, and contractor availability is at a premium; often requiring "earnest money" guarantee. As with the local housing markets, rent and lease amounts have skyrocketed requiring significant amounts of down payment. One licensing inspector cites for example, being in consultation with the Texas Prep-School, a national child care center chain. "They want to do new construction here, but their square footage requirements are less than ours, so their initial costs will be higher and their business model might not be profitable in Nevada." Another added, "I have referred new people to churches but not all churches want a

childcare facility in their church and if they find a location, the construction costs scare them away”.

Couple this with the extreme lack of appropriate staff to hire and the barriers often seem insurmountable or at least “not worth it”. Inspectors, educators and directors all explained that potential providers (especially home providers) and direct caregiving staff would rather go work at Tesla, Panasonic, Apple etc. because these corporations pay more hourly, have less training-hour requirements and employment expenses and offer various benefit packages. Many facilities still require caregivers to pay for their own work permit (\$72.00) and tb test (\$20.00) and any costs for training classes which are required prior to getting a paycheck. Even facilities that pay well and provide benefits are having a difficult time finding and keeping inexperienced staff, much less well-qualified and experienced people. A licensing inspector speculates, “It seems that the church preschools and small facilities have less turn-over and I wonder if it is because the moral is better due to the “community feeling” of their programs?”

Licensing staff, directors and caregiving staff also report that they are having increasing conversations with both parents and providers about children becoming more challenging in behaviors and needs so teachers are “burning out” and leaving the profession more quickly. “Many teachers, home providers, and directors have been sharing their frustration and calling us for help and support weekly.” Another inspector stated, “It also feels like we have been getting more complaints about teachers being rough and impatient with children lately and I wonder if it is because of the combination of finding quality staff and behaviors becoming more challenging.”

Directors and home providers have been complaining more often that parents are also becoming more difficult in their expectations and tolerance of a typical childcare setting. Licensing workers and directors agree that providers are attributing it to “the personality of the new generation”. Providers are feeling that the parents seem more demanding, inflexible, and entitled. They have also said this is the case with the younger teachers that they are hiring. Their commitment to the profession is non-existent and they often move from job to job with no notice or break in work because the demand for employees is so high.

Not all facilities appreciate being mandated to participate in the Silver Stars Program, the State’s Quality Rating and Improvement System to serve children and families eligible for subsidy. While it is a voluntary program, many respondents felt that the only choice they have is to participate and be able to serve subsidy recipients or to not. It is also only open to licensed centers. Many feel that the requirements are not reflective of the facility’s quality, that it is not an informative system to families and that the administration of the program is not done with help and support. Parents, operators and staff alike feel as if there are numerous competing agency requirements and that some are contradictory. Requirements in the form of regulations and other agency permits and inspections continue to increase. Health Department permits for food service requirements have increased in both who needs a permit as well as in cost. Several providers feel that regulation development and approval is done without adequate input specifically from Washoe County due to it being the only “other” licensing entity.

Early Head Start and Head Start programs are the only facilities that must work with both county and state licensing and often voice that they wish that the County could

license all their facilities. They complain that the State is punitive, fee driven, have minimal understanding of the childcare community and often conflict with local interpretation of the requirements.

These are specific examples of what interviewees and survey respondents collectively identified as barriers to increasing, recruiting and retaining more childcare spaces and choices. They almost universally said that better communication and coaching in several forms would be a definite improvement to the work in our community. These issues are nation-wide and are complex, but providers, stakeholders and parents felt that some local solutions are easier.

### **What's Working**

Nevada as a state, with the work of the Governor's Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council and other support programs, is making progress on improving its childcare system. Those interviewed said that the early care and education system overall is increasing its focus on quality and not "just space" although they acknowledge one without the other is a failure. They also noted that parents appear to be more educated and aware of what quality childcare looks like and why it is important and are willing and open to programs to improve their understanding of child development and the importance of family involvement.

There are numerous support programs for both families and providers although it seems that childcare workers are unaware of them or the program qualifications are so specific and complicated that they may not be fully and effectively utilized. There are programs to help increase the level of education that direct providers have to work with young children, support groups for facility directors to learn from colleagues which can help to improve communication and increase the number of providers in our community, funding sources to assist with child care costs as well as training and start-up. The issue, as is common, is communicating their availability to the community and to ensure that the supports are meeting the need in a real way. As one director said, "I hear about funding, support, planning, but it never seems to materialize for the average childcare provider."

Providers also have access to professional development that helps them continually improve care. While the agency that administers the training approval and delivery system has been dealt criticism for their lack of flexibility in a fluid industry, providers acknowledge the benefit of consistency and streamlining what is appropriate training especially for new providers to the field.

In addition, participants noted there is increased communication and collaboration among those working in the childcare system in local communities and regions of the state.

## What People Want

According to providers, Agency staff and the parents themselves, parents want quality, affordable childcare where their child is safe, happy, healthy, and learning. Geographic location was thought to be a “luxury” and if families have reliable transportation, they “are willing to drive” to take advantage of quality program, available space and affordability. As summed up by one parent, “If the childcare is excellent and they love my child and help him grow, I don’t care where I have to drive to.” Washoe County, while small enough to allow this type of decision making for many parents, still has significant barriers with transportation availability to meet all schedules of staff and families. It remains an obstacle towards locating a program with space for a family, having quality programming and be in a proximity to a parent’s home and work to allow them reasonable transportation time and effort.

Parents want to be able to have a choice in providers that support their child’s health and development. Providers feel the same about the lack of space – it keeps them from making matches that are realistic and viable with the family and their child.

These goals, however, all need to be balanced. As one parent explained, “I look for a combination of things [when selecting a provider]. Price, unfortunately, has always been first and foremost for me, and then location because I don’t always have access to a car”. It is reasonable that these factors either individually or together, dictate what a child’s care arrangements are while their parents work.

Parents and providers alike report that finding care at all is challenging, regardless of cost. Waiting lists are long and certainly don’t accommodate emergencies. Providers must manage them and deal with each family they must turn away. This is especially true for infant care. Many parents end up at home after their baby’s birth and in “a panic.”

Finding care can be particularly difficult for parents of infants and toddlers and those working second and third shifts. People interviewed and surveyed believe that the extra regulations for care of infants, along with the higher staffing ratio required, discourage childcare providers from accepting infants. One parent said, “Even if you do find [a provider who takes infants], you might end up on a waiting list.” One parent interviewed discussed that not only are her four young children in two different centers, but before they could make these arrangements her husband had to take a few-month leave of absence from his job while they identified a caregiver and figured out the arrangements.

Additionally, data suggests that need for childcare assistance is growing. For example, analysis by Nevada’s Children Advocacy Alliance (Nevada Kids Count 2018) explored the unmet need among children in the earliest years of life (birth through age three). This analysis found that a quarter of Nevada’s children ages birth through age three—108,000—live at or below 100 percent of the federal poverty level and have all available parents employed outside of the home. This suggests that there are many more families eligible for the CDC program than are currently served. Although there currently is no “wait list” to receive subsidy, the qualifications are limiting so that only the most desperate of children and families are eligible to receive assistance. And use of the funding to support providers has not been instituted on a wide-scale basis.



### Washoe County: Subsidy recipients

Families 856

Children 1,369

Percent of Families Working 87.75%

Percent of TANF benefit recipients 70.9%

Single Parent Households 85.3%

Percent of Children in Licensed care 71.3%

Percent of Children in Relative Care 6.9%

### Observations:

Throughout this local assessment providers, parents, educators and community members voiced appreciate and support for the Agency and the licensing staff. It was obvious that there are strong relationships within the childcare community and that they are happy with the Agency's approach to relationships and improvement. Consistently there was discord about other agencies that are trying to support early childhood education both locally and at a state level. With this trust in the agency and the agreement that other agencies need help to communicate and streamline their goals, focus on uniformity would be a step forward for both providers and parents. The survey itself was very well-received. Recipients were appreciative of being asked for input. This data can be built on to determine baselines of information and to respond to suggestions made by the community if put into place regularly. Focus on licensing's ability to create consensus can be leveraged. Once the workforce, clients and other agencies have a better understanding of perspective, they can be a powerful voice to help change funding and support for children.

### Conclusion:

Each day parents in Washoe County must make difficult decisions about who will care for their children when they go to work and to school. Regardless of the provider and setting, parents want stable, affordable childcare where their child is safe, happy, healthy, and learning. Very often, however, parents experience multiple challenges when trying to access quality care, which in turn makes it difficult to maintain employment or enroll in college or training. High costs price some parents out of the market completely causing them to change their plans. Dealing with these changes creates more challenges in our community. Finding a provider on short notice is almost impossible and certainly gives no chance to match a child's needs to the provider's skills and services. According to parents interviewed and surveyed, while they would like to obtain childcare in their geographic neighborhoods, this is not a "luxury" that the majority get. The competition between where a facility is located, how much weekly

care costs and if the parent feels the care is of high-quality causes many to simply choose whomever has a vacancy for their child or children's age group. This circumstance is exacerbated for those parents who are looking for infant and/or toddler care, or for children with beyond ordinary needs. Finding a provider that is open when they work can be especially difficult for parents who work second, or third shift and it appears that this group relies primarily on family and kin for regular childcare. These challenges cannot be overcome by parents and providers alone. Childcare must be part of both the State and Washoe County's broader effort to improve early learning and development and a family's access to it. While The Agency can be a direct link to improving and increasing quality childcare in our community, this also needs to be a legislative and state goal because access to high-quality childcare can change children's lives, help families escape poverty and is essential to economic development.

Research has firmly established the importance of the first thousand days of life to the intellectual and emotional development of children. What happens in this period can have a lifelong impact. Early investments can increase children's future education success, make them less likely to rely on social welfare programs, and make them more likely to succeed in the labor force. The majority of children under four years of age in both Washoe County and our State are being raised in households where all parents are working, and many of these young children need to have quality care that their parents can depend on to nurture and educate them in some of the most developmentally important times of their lives. If investments are going to reach children in their first thousand days, these investments are going to need to be delivered, at least in part, through the childcare system. Providers in Washoe County feel supported and listened to by their licensing workers and appreciate the support the Agency provides which is the perfect platform to institute change and improvement.

## **Washoe County Child Care Assessment Trends Summary**

From the information provided in the Child Care Assessment of Availability and Affordability conducted for Washoe County Human Services Agency (HSA) in June of 2019, the following trends can be seen:

Child Care spaces available for full and part-time care of children ages birth to 10 years of age does not match the number of children currently needing care. This is evidenced by long wait lists for care at the majority of facilities in the community. (Not all providers were surveyed). Additionally, numbers of children ages birth to 10 years of age are expected to increase by approximately 10% in the coming years while at the same time, the numbers of child care givers is declining both in centers and in homes. The number of spaces needed for infant and toddler care are far outmatched by the number of parents seeking care for their children as they attend school or work. If the community saw an increase of 10 thousand spots, it still would be match those children who potentially could benefit from quality care as over 78% of those children who potentially need care live in families where the adults all are employed outside of the home.

Child Care staff are difficult to find, educate and retain. The biggest barrier to the lack of longevity and availability of child care staff is universal low wages and few if any employer benefits such as insurance, paid leave and savings opportunities such as retirement benefits. This lack of comparable wages and benefits to other employment in the community leaves few skilled workers to select from and those that are available are often young, uneducated and lack the desire to commit to child care being a lifetime career. The Education system appears to not support child care as a viable career choice to most surveyed and working in the public school system provides more benefits and a higher wage.

Construction costs for new or expanding facilities are too high for providers to be able to afford the investment. The process to get a contractor's commitment as well as the need to pay for construction or expansion of an existing facility prior to being able to generate income makes increasing capacity very difficult. Construction can take months to complete due to the scarcity of those contractors willing to do the work and the increasing costs of materials. Currently vacant buildings that could be used for child care centers require extensive renovation to meet current codes and standards for license approval. Home providers lack the funds to invest in materials, resources and time for education when they are often the sole caregiver and also have a family to care for "after hours".

Financial support such as subsidies and scholarships are focused on the client with little-to-no resources from quality dollars provided to facilities directly. Instead of supporting care providers, those families needing care (and who qualify) are provided benefits. This does not address the lack of existing vacancies and instead creates more pressure with facilities having waiting lists and lack of space. Families may have funding to support their child's care but they still don't have consistent space available or a choice of what services they need for their child. Additionally, the real cost of providing child care is higher than what can be reasonably charged to parents and providers have to find other ways to augment their earnings. They do not have opportunity for the daily care of a child to be subsidized by other funding sources.

Providers are not aware or knowledgeable of existing programs to help with daily care issues such as inclusion, behavior management, education opportunities for themselves and staff. The criteria for many programs is complex and difficult for some to meet and many providers feel that the programs and requirements of oversight agencies are in conflict with one another. Many agencies involved with compliance or support do not understand the other agency's requirement themselves and create solutions for compliance or participation without input. Providers desire instruction and explanation of why requirements are in place and what the benefit to their participation is.

Community members do not understand the lack of availability and affordability of the child care service. They are unaware of strategies to support more quality places for parents to take their children to. Chamber of Commerce, building permits, business owners and community leaders can support child care need through awareness, understanding and requirements put in place to increase and stabilize the industry. Requirements such as construction of suitable buildings with the issuance of building permits, on-site child care for employees, compliance requirements addressed for uniformity and presentations to help decision-makers understand the situation and importance of quality child care availability can improve both service and numbers.

Government entities within the City of Reno, City of Sparks and Washoe Counties as well as state agencies and the Legislature can be lobbied and encouraged to share responsibilities for adequate child care. Funding, real estate, supportive compliance measures are all part of a broader effort to ensure quality child care in Washoe County.

## **Child Care Recruitment and Support Strategies Suggestions**

Recommendations: Commerce, government, the childcare industry and the general public must invest in working together to ensure that the early care and education industry is a vital part of Washoe County's economic development, workforce development and family stability.

Communication and understanding of the state of childcare can help in many areas. These recommendations from the conducted assessment can be prioritized in a number of ways – categories of what they could accomplish such as quality improvement, staff training, regulatory consistency, financial impact – or by importance to the impact the change would make. Below, the recommendations are roughly organized by feasibility and resources investment from things that could be done “now” progressing to the long-term.

- Survey and interview respondents both appreciated the opportunity to give opinions, suggestions and feedback. The initial survey can be instituted on a regular basis semi-annually to gather “real-time” information to shape strategic planning. Additional ways to gather information can include “town hall – type” meetings to encourage ideas and discussion between HSA, other compliance agencies and providers.
- Social media is a tool that is not being utilized by the Agency for communication, support or recruitment of providers. A media presence to provide information on an on-going basis and the support of a blog format to help providers and parents relate to each other can be developed within the public information officer's duties for both the county and the agency.
- All agencies that influence, monitor and support childcare activities – licensing, quality improvement, training, funding, inspections – should be parallel in their requirements and expectations of providers. Review existing policies and procedures between agencies to reduce barriers to improvement, compliance and understanding. Facilitate development of cohesive requirements and rules so that agencies are not contradictory in their expectations for county providers.
- Establish on-going work session to help agencies understand the disparities and to develop more streamlined requirements. This can start with working with provider-identified, specific agencies and progress by bringing different agencies together for strategizing changes and discussion about the industry. Quarterly perhaps. Agencies suggested include HSA, the Nevada Registry for Training, the Silver State Stars Program (the QRIS program in Nevada), WC Health Department as well as respective fire and building departments, higher education institutions (UNR and TMCC) and the state licensing and Supportive Services divisions, support groups and parent representation.

- Support of existing or creation of new support and mentoring opportunities. HSA can provide guidance, a place to meet, funding for supplies, information and research on solutions for topics provided. Most respondents to the survey and those interviewed indicate that coaching or pedagogists with specific goals (business knowledge, behavior modification, communication, trauma-aware care) could be immediately helpful. Coaching and suggestions from experienced and knowledgeable people in each area to help providers learn “in the moment” would be well received. Structure can be provided by HSA staff while not be directly responsible for the content and organization of what support is needed and how it is delivered. HSA staff are already recognized as knowledgeable by their clients and have experience in working with similar groups in the foster care program. This can lend cohesiveness and legitimacy to the development of mentoring and support groups formed by childcare providers.
- Understanding is a key word used consistently by providers, parents, outside agencies and higher education. Training that is meaningful and reflective of current community environment is seen as the most important aspect of understanding all that is required to provide quality childcare. HSA can help gather professionals to address training topics that providers feel are most helpful. HSA can also provide trainings on the licensing process as well as other areas they are experts in – trauma informed care, the effects of child abuse and neglect on families, strategies for behavior management in a group setting, how to effect change in practice, homelessness and poverty, recruitment strategies, retention ideas and effective communication. Many providers feel that the current training topics are not relevant, are expensive and difficult to access and that the approval process is difficult.
- Training availability and the variety of topics could be enhanced by the development or sharing of the current QPI website for Just-In-Time Training. While some topics are clearly dedicated to foster care exclusively, many are appropriate for childcare providers. And those that are added and developed for child caregivers are important for foster caregivers as well. The approval process and posting could be shared with the Nevada Training Registry.
- A group of center directors is currently meeting to address barriers, concerns and change in the commercial childcare community. This group provides support and information to area directors and although they have only met a few times, it seems to be well-received. HSA could support this group specifically by providing training and information through participation in meetings and events. Other groups could be formed to help support home

providers and staff as well. HSA has been effective in supporting and developing similar groups in the foster care setting.

- The higher education system; specifically, the two larger schools in our community, the University and Community College, are viewed to many as unrealistic, inflexible and expensive regarding classes and topics provided. These institutions may have differing requirements and seem to providers to be disconnected from their role in encouraging people to choose early education (specifically work in a childcare center or home day care) as a career. Meeting with them to clarify expectations and explain contradictions in requirements would be helpful in creating a sustainable “future” of highly educated staff and leadership and could lead to a partnership in helping to increasing the availability of qualified staff. These institutions may have funding available to focus on programs that directly impact the quality and quantity of the potential work force in our community.
- The survey and interviews suggested the blending of “business knowledge”, child development and family-needs knowledge. Work with small business development centers, the University and Chamber of Commerce to develop training and to provide technical assistance related to business development and finance to providers.
- Many respondents and those interviewed, point out the disparities between “the state” and Washoe County. Efforts can be made to align regulation compliance, communication, expectations and representation of Washoe County in state process. Identifying discrepancies and working to streamline them so that providers feel as if the licensing entities are requiring the same of all licensees and are executing process similarly. This can be done in on-going meetings with the oversight agency in the state, The Department of Public and Behavioral Health, as well as addressing regulation changes jointly in both licensing jurisdictions. Many people spoken to and through survey are pleased with and draw distinction between the “positive” interactions with Washoe County and the lack of confidence they have in “the state”.
- Consider demographics and cultural disparity as a way of differently thinking about supporting childcare. Hispanics and Latino populations are disproportionately under-represented in poverty categories. They are the ethnic group that is the most successful in defeating the poverty cycle. Factors include family focus on improving the situation for each next generation and that families support multi-family living arrangements in which two, three or more families live in one home and the adults contribute to the living expenses as a group and share child care responsibilities – traditionally the fathers work and the mothers take turns caring for every family’s children. They often work

complimentary shifts so that the children are always cared for by one of the people they live with. This arrangement often includes extended families and multiple generations there by supporting those who otherwise would be unable to support themselves. This is an example of how thinking about the licensing process and requirements could be shaped to include less “traditional” options for care. The example can also be used as a foundation for other projects Human Services Agency is working on regarding homelessness, substance abuse and the poverty cycle.

- The Governor-appointed Nevada’s Early Childhood Advisory Council is in place to improve, support and understand childcare needs in our state. Their work is on-going with meetings held monthly. The Agency can increase their presence at these meetings and learn ways to leverage this group’s work to directly impact childcare in Washoe County. Funding, use of existing programs, communication on eligibility, intra-agency coordination are important elements the Council works on.
- Data development and collection should be done regularly and be available to help policymakers determine the solutions needed to address the childcare supply gap. Prioritizing data collection that allows policymakers, advocates, and agency staff to accurately assesses the number of children, by age group, that licensed childcare providers serve will help support changes in the coming years. Accurate data on the local childcare market can help provider networks and monitoring agencies design interventions to ensure they are meeting the needs of families. Continued use of simple surveys such as the one used for this review can help the early childhood community feel listened to and included in planning and can provided the Agency with practical ideas to diminish barriers to licensure and increase the number of providers available in the county.
- Human Services Agency can take the lead in education on the effects and benefits of quality childcare for all children to gather support from outside the Agency. The “why” of the importance of having enough quality childcare providers can be the foundation for social and traditional media contacts, the streamlining of requirements, the increase in available staff and to help change “the culture” of childcare. The Agency can identify and steward relationship development with other city and county agencies to support the need for more childcare options for families as our community continues to grow. The barriers the agency identifies through their work with providers can be addressed on a more “community-level”. This can be accomplished through on-going community trainings on topics such as regulations development, the licensing process, health department requirements, and educational benefits in training.



- The lack of viable spaces for childcare providers to start up business or to expand their existing services are difficult to locate and more difficult to afford to bring into compliance with county codes and regulations. Include language in city general plans prioritizing the development of childcare facilities such as the required inclusion of buildings to house childcare centers with new construction. The Agency has means and connections with both city and county agencies to help identify and provide buildings that can help meet the current and increasing need for centers and home care. City and county planners can be involved in the approval process and in locating possible buildings that are or could become suitable. The shared cost of this project would benefit several objectives within the community – accessibility, affordability, sustainability of families in poverty, beautification of the environment, meaningful employment and community stability.
- Locating existing space to renovate or to build a new facility is difficult to find and for providers to understand the approval process. The Agency can recruit and work with a real estate expert to locate possible buildings and sites to provide on-going to potential providers.
- Start-up costs and overhead investments are a significant barrier to both commercial facilities and home providers starting into the business or expanding services they currently provide. Provide funds for permitting, inspections, equipment and materials, changes or upgrades needed to come into compliance with minimum standards. Block grant funding has been increased and possibly can be used to subsidize these initial costs. Businesses can partner with facilities to subsidize operating costs in exchange for space for care for their employees.
- Identify businesses that currently have on-site or subsidized childcare for employees to learn about the barriers they see to this type of facility and what the Agency may be able to do to increase awareness and availability.
- Seek to subsidize or be responsible for the typical “start-up” costs for caregivers such as work permit cards, TB tests and training to eliminate these barriers for potential caregivers and businesses.
- Identify and help shift practice to support licensed providers as opposed to families so that all facilities can be available and affordable for a child for enrollment. Subsidizing

operating costs to help lower tuition costs could be more effective than subsidizing parents' cost.

- Identify and facilitate the use of state and federal funding to subsidize operating costs of facilities so that wages and benefits provided to staff are commensurate with their responsibilities. Childcare providers unanimously note that they are unable to pass “true” operating costs onto their patrons due to the limitations of most families in our community to afford childcare costs as they currently are. Both home and center providers seem to realize that most of the parents they work with are considering cost before any other aspect of childcare and that many can't meet the demands already. HSA has the resources to discover, develop and influence funding that might be available to subsidize operations on a long-term basis. Using block grant funding to also subsidize center's per child costs similar to their assistance to parents would support all.
- A legislative liaison to assist providers in advocacy and regulation development could be identified and supported by the Agency. This would assist both providers and agency staff during the legislative session to make changes that are beneficial, realistic and enforceable and would aid the understanding of the process and implementation of changes.
- Assisting with the development and certification of a viable childcare provider substitute program would help to allow caregivers to have more time for self and family care. This could be done at no cost to the provider through the Agency doing background checks and approval of substitutes and the Children's Cabinet (houses the Child Care Resource and Referral Service which is state and federally funded) managing those providers that are approved. Training requirements could be changed to allow temporary use of such staff.
- Grant money from the state, county and city could be used to incentivize childcare providers to accept infants and toddlers by offering a one-time payment for each child they enroll through the state's childcare subsidy system. For the young children they enroll who don't qualify for childcare subsidies, the providers could still receive a smaller bonus. Funds could also be used to develop a “retainer” system in which providers get paid a base rate dependent on the spaces they have available and have that increased through subsidy or parents' contribution when the spot is filled.

## **Appendix 1 – Child Care Survey Results**

May 2019

### **CCL Survey Brief/High Level Analysis**

89 total responses

#### **Q1 – Date**

- Survey was completed from May 2<sup>nd</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019

#### **Q2 – Length of service in Industry**

- Lowest represented was 6-10 years with 8 responses of 89, 8.99%
- Largest represented was 21+ years with 36 responses of 89, 40.45%

#### **Q4 – Role within industry**

- Large mix of respondents. All categories were represented.
- Bulk of responses came from Home Providers – 20.47%, Center Director or Owner – 25.98%, Staff Member at Facility – 16.54%, and Parent – 26.77%.

#### **Q6 – Suggestions to get providers into field**

- Increase salaries
- Better and additional benefits
- Focus on business planning as well as required trainings. Remember that it is a business.
- Don't do it
- Take as many classes as you can
- Create a mentoring program for established center directors and staff to assist with new people coming in the field.
- Must love children and this type of work.

#### **Q7 – Suggestions to expand or improve**

- Communicate and collaborate with other providers and staff to brainstorm ways to improve.
- None/Don't
- Can't keep staff to expand due to wage gap
- Expand licensing requirements for home providers to take on more children.
- Provide grants to expand with or help with new equipment
- QRIS

#### **Q8 – Ways can HSA better support**

- Mentoring program

- Subsidize pay and benefits for staff
- Offer grants
- More collaboration – Talk to other staff when visiting, not just Director/Manager/Owner
- More free trainings at different times (if established, nearly impossible during regular work hours)
- Create a substitute pool like they have for School District Teachers.
- Searchable list of all providers that shows credentials and accreditations.
- Increase number of students allowed
- None. They are doing a great job.
- Make QRIS standard for all providers.
- Look into Nevada Registry. A lot of people are noting issues with this service.

#### Q9 – Biggest Barriers

- All identified barriers were selected numerous times
- Low Pay was the largest selected at 33.9%
- High Startup Costs – 18.08%, Lack of Support – 16.95%, Conflicting Rules and Requirements – 13.56%, Unable to Meet and Adhere to Licensing Requirements – 9.6%, and Other – 7.91%

#### Q10 – Low Pay Reasons for selection

- Unable to keep staff at wages offered
- Can't afford school, student loans, and other costs at such low hourly rates
- No money in industry to pay higher

#### Q11 – High Startup Costs Reasons for selection

- Unforeseen costs associated like, materials and whatnot. More than budgeted for.
- Lack of business skills
- Paying for classes, licenses, and making sure facilities are up to par
- Generating revenue to pay off loans is difficult
- Overall, it is just expensive

#### Q12 – Lack of Support Reasons for selection

- Little to no business experience
- Poorly educated
- No mentoring program available
- Emotionally exhausting and no one to reach out to/Support group
- No back-up or substitute teacher pool
- Burn out

- Systemic issues regarding society's perception of CCL workers – Not always fun and not a babysitter
- Nevada Registry issues and not being helpful

#### Q13 – Conflicting Rules and Requirements Reasons for selection

- All agencies involved have different regulations
  - Health District, State, WCHSA, Accreditation Programs, QRIS, City, Fire, etc.
- Would like to streamline requirements amongst agencies
- Confusing to read and understand

#### Q14 – Unable to meet Requirements Reasons for selection

- Class requirements and hours continue to increase and are available during working hours and not during off time.
- Easier to meet requirements with access to resources for help
- Staff cannot afford required trainings and centers are unable to pay on behalf of the staff

#### Q15 – Other Reasons for selection

- Lack of qualified candidates available to hire
- Lengthy hours
- Lack of benefits for staff (insurance, retirement, etc.)
- Cannot afford to send staff to trainings and schooling
- Parents should be able to supersede rules and regulations from other agencies if they feel it is in the best interest of their child
- Struggles with parents

#### Q16 – Ideas to obtain more staff and licensees

- Increase salaries
- Work with ECE professors to encourage employment in the field
- Have a process where an agency prescreens and preapproves candidates to hire from
- Reevaluate requirements and make them more feasible
- Provide classes for what it takes to open a center. Include with ECE curriculum.
- Make required trainings and classes more available in off time and not during standard work hours
- Systemic changes regarding perception of CCL field. Changing perspective of community regarding this work to be more supportive.
- Grants and incentive programs to help with costs
- “Professionalize the field”

- Provide funding or low interest loans to help people get into the field
- Business fundamentals; have center directors be more involved, accept employee thoughts, collaborate, etc.

Q17 – Other information that would be helpful

- Streamline standards from all agencies
- Help make the field more professional by creating benefits and incentives
- Allow home providers to take on more children if they have the space and resources to do so, rather than holding them to the 6-child limit.
- Substitute service
- Understand and be respectful of time, knowing that some operations are only one person
- A generic checklist of what needs to be completed to get licensed, open a center, etc.  
Makes it easier to follow
- Offer business class opportunities to grow knowledge in that part of the field
- Continue to provide support and answers to providers in the field/Help them navigate issues, requirements, etc.
  - Noted that this is happening and want to see it continue

## Resources and Citations

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Nevada's Silver Stars – Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)  
[www.nvsilverstatestars.org/professionals](http://www.nvsilverstatestars.org/professionals)

## Interviews and Information Gathering:

Kim Stevens, Director and Executive Officer, Early Learning Center, Truckee Meadows Boys and Girls' Club of Northern Nevada

Rebecca Clinton, Education Coordinator, Truckee Meadows Boys and Girls Club

Linda O'Neil, Child Development Specialist, University of Nevada, Reno

Tara Hill, Director, Minds N Motion Child Care Center

Breanna Caldwell, Assistant Director, Just Kidding Learning Center

Gloria Torma, foster and adoptive parent

Liana Bersk, parent

Gordon and Liz, parents

Debora McDermed, Consultant and Trainer of Bridges Out of Poverty concepts

Sherry Waugh, Executive Director, University of Nevada, Reno, Governor's Early Childhood Advisory Council Member

Diane Nicolet, Director, Truckee Meadows Community College lab school childcare center. Member of School District's Safe and Health Schools Commission.

Lisa Ruggerio, Chair, Washoe County School District Safe and Healthy Schools Commission, Project Lead for PreK to Three Initiative



Licensing Staff – Elise Henriques, Jaime Taylor, Karen Micklish

HSA managers – Amy Sandvik, Stacey Lance, Kristy Baker, Cara Paoli, Ryan Gustafson

Survey sent to all licensed childcare providers with encouragement to send to parents and other ece partners.  
Results compiled by Jeremy Wilson, HSA. May 2019

Attendance at monthly meeting of the Early Childhood Advisory Council, Marty Elquist, chair

