

# Childcare Access in Local Context



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## **What is the need?**

Approximately 5-7% of Rochester's population is aged 0-4 at this time, a rate that is expected to remain steady or even grow in coming years (Werner, 2016). At the same time, we are 1,855 spots short of the expected need for childcare slots in Olmsted County (First Children's Finance, 2017). The challenge of finding affordable and appropriate childcare affects all families with children ages 0-4 years old, but accessing early childcare is especially challenging for single parents, parents who work non-traditional shifts, immigrants, and families from the poor and middle-class (Werner, 2016).

## **Who provides childcare?**

Children may be cared for by family childcare providers, family members, friends, and/or licensed childcare centers. The number of slots available does not meet overall need, and families with children with special needs, infants, and toddlers face an even larger gap in services (Werner, 2016). Locally, center-based childcare providers tend to interact collaboratively by sharing resources and training. Family-based childcare is decentralized and the community of service providers is less structured.

## **What are the current issues and conversations around childcare?**

Infant childcare is expensive and there are few available slots. Family childcare providers have dropped by 27% at the same time the number of needed childcare slots has grown by 28% for southern Minnesota (Werner, 2016). Conversations around this topic are common in the local community, with a number of public-interest articles published by media and ongoing discussions around legislative changes needed to better support family and childcare settings (Carlson, 2017a, 2017b). This is a priority topic as it affects the workforce in macro ways as individual parents make changes and accommodations in their career development in order to provide childcare. As the ages 0-5 are the most important for social-emotional development (CDC, 2017), there is a societal need for the provision of quality childcare in addition to providing the requisite number of slots.

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