

**PARENTAL WORKFORCE
PARTICIPATION AND
CHILDCARE FOR CHILDREN
UNDER SIX IN
MONROE COUNTY
FORMAL AND INFORMAL CARE, SUBSIDIZED
AND UNSUBSIDIZED CHILDREN**

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April, 2003
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PARENTAL WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION AND CHILDCARE FOR CHILDREN UNDER SIX IN MONROE COUNTY

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Prepared for:
Rochester/Monroe County Workforce Investment Board

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APRIL 2003

SUMMARY

The Rochester/Monroe County Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and its Welfare to Work subcommittee engaged CGR to conduct a study of child care in Monroe County. In its Request for Proposals, the WIB stated that child care is a critical service to children, employees, and employers in Monroe County. The Board was concerned that fiscal concerns at the state and federal level would impact the ability of families to access quality child care services through current child care subsidy programs. The WIB was concerned about the effect of access on recruitment, placement, and advancement of local employees and productivity for local employers.

This report includes analysis of the supply and demand of child care as well as the results of focus groups conducted with low-skilled job seekers, employees and employers. The report analyzes data from the county, state, and the 2000 Census to identify existing gaps between the supply and demand sides of child care in Monroe County. The report also includes findings from three focus groups, and a summary of common misconceptions about childcare subsidies.

This study provides a “snapshot” of child care in Monroe County in terms of workforce participation. While CGR and the Welfare to Work committee believe that childhood development, educational preparedness, and quality of care are important factors in evaluating child care in a community, they are beyond the scope

of this particular project, and are not addressed directly in this report.

In 2002, Monroe County changed the income eligibility criteria for subsidized childcare from <200% to <140% of the federal poverty level. No children in families receiving benefits at the time of the change in eligibility lost subsidies due to becoming income ineligible. Rather, these children were “grandfathered” into the system and continue receiving childcare subsidies until they age out; but no new applicants in the 140-199% of poverty range have been accepted since then. In this report, we focus primarily on the number of children below the 140% and 200% poverty level cutoff points.

Demand for Childcare

- ❖ 55,607 children under age 6 reside in Monroe County (Census 2000).
- ❖ One-quarter (25%) of children under age 6 live in a household with income under 140% of the federal poverty level (13,809 children).
- ❖ 35,600 children under age 6 (63%) live in a household with two working parents or a working single parent, and are therefore likely in need of childcare.
- ❖ An estimated 7,169 children under 6 live in households with income under 140% of the poverty level, AND are in need of childcare due to their parents' working status.
- ❖ An estimated 10,972 children under 6 live in households with income under 200% of the poverty level, AND are in need of childcare due to their parents' working status.
- ❖ The number of children potentially affected by the drop in the income eligibility level from under 200% to under 140% of the federal poverty level is estimated to be 3,803.

Supply of Childcare

- ❖ Monroe County has 19,236 regulated childcare slots including those in childcare centers, group family childcare homes, and family childcare homes (most of these slots serve children <6).
- ❖ As of February 6, 2003, Monroe County provided childcare subsidies for 5,704 children under age 6. Most of the parents

of these children are working; however, a portion of the parents are in training or rehabilitation programs. Therefore, not all subsidized childcare is for employed parents.

- ❖ Monroe County has 3,437 children under six in formal childcare who receive subsidies; an estimated 15,799 children in formal childcare who do not receive subsidies; 2,267 children utilizing informal care who receive subsidies, and an estimated 14,097 children in informal child care who do not receive subsidies.
- ❖ CGR estimates that the proportion of children eligible for a subsidy (and who are likely to need childcare) who actually receive a subsidy is between 52% and 80%. We calculate a range because families between 140% and 200% of poverty are currently being phased out of eligibility. If all families under 200% of poverty were still eligible, the number of current subsidies would represent 52% of those eligible ($5,704/10,972$). If only those children under 140% of poverty were eligible, the number of current subsidies would represent 80% of those eligible ($5,704/7,169$).
- ❖ Among families with working parents under 140% of poverty, an estimated 1,465 children under 6 are eligible for subsidies under current guidelines, but do not receive them. However, it is likely that some of these families have unpaid arrangements for child care and do not need subsidies, and that others near the 140% level feel the sliding scale subsidy is not worth the application process.
- ❖ Among families with working parents under 200% poverty, 5,268 children do not receive subsidies. Similarly, some likely have unpaid arrangements or choose not to apply for other reasons. Some are eligible under current guidelines, others are not.
- ❖ The additional county cost of covering the estimated children under 140% of poverty who are potentially in need of child care and do not currently receive subsidies is estimated between \$2.5 and \$3.2 million annually.

Gap Between Supply and Demand

- ❖ Approximately 16,000 Monroe County children under age 6 are in need of child care and are not in regulated child care slots, but rather in informal or other care.

Study Findings

- ❖ A high proportion of low-income children who are eligible actually receive subsidies in Monroe County (much higher than nationally).
- ❖ Available data indicate that slightly more than half of children in child care in Monroe County are in regulated (formal) child care settings (both subsidized and unsubsidized children).
- ❖ Focus groups indicate that some families of all income levels prefer informal/unregulated care, both because it is often less costly, and because they prefer to leave their children with family or friends whom they trust.
- ❖ Low-skill workers are unlikely to turn down a job or quit over child care concerns. They address the problem after they take the job and begin working.
- ❖ Employers indicate that employees are likely to be distracted/less productive, or even terminated if they have unreliable child care that causes repeated workplace interruptions.

Contributing Staff

Marilyn Klotz, Research Associate

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Louise Woerner, Chair of the WIB Welfare to Work Committee at the time of this study, is thanked for her participation and leadership. Steve Hooper also served as a key member of the committee and provided review and counsel over the course of the project.

Staff Team

Marilyn Klotz provided key data analysis, conducted focus groups, and authored sections of this report.

Don Pryor provided key review and counsel for the analysis and report.

INTRODUCTION

The Rochester/Monroe County Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and its Welfare to Work subcommittee engaged CGR to conduct a study of child care in Monroe County. In its Request for Proposals, the WIB stated that child care is a critical service to children, employees, and employers in Monroe County. The Board was concerned that fiscal concerns at the state and federal level would impact the ability of families to access quality child care services through current child care subsidy programs. The WIB was concerned about the effect of access on recruitment, placement, and advancement of local employees and productivity for local employers.

This report includes analysis of the supply and demand of child care as well as the results of focus groups conducted with low-skilled job seekers, employees and employers. This report analyzes data from the county, state, and the 2000 Census to identify existing gaps between the supply and demand sides of child care in Monroe County. The report also includes findings from three focus groups, and a summary of common misconceptions about childcare subsidies.

This study provides a “snapshot” of child care in Monroe County in terms of workforce participation. While CGR and the Welfare to Work committee believe that childhood development, educational preparedness, and quality of care are important factors in evaluating child care in a community, they are beyond the scope of this particular project, and are not addressed directly in this report.

In 2002, Monroe County changed the income eligibility criteria for subsidized childcare from <200% to <140% of the federal poverty level. No children in families receiving benefits at the time of the change in eligibility lost subsidies due to becoming income ineligible. Rather, these children were “grandfathered” into the system and continue receiving childcare subsidies until they age out; but no new applicants in the 140-199% of poverty range were accepted. In this report, we focus primarily on the number of children below the 140% and 200% poverty level cutoff points.

SUMMARY OF STUDY FINDINGS

CGR was not asked to make recommendations at the conclusion of this study. However, the following are a summary of selected study findings.

- ❖ A high proportion of low-income children who are eligible actually receive subsidies in Monroe County (much higher than nationally).
- ❖ Available data suggest that slightly more than half of children in child care in Monroe County are in regulated (formal) child care settings (both subsidized and unsubsidized children).
- ❖ Focus groups indicate that some families of all income levels prefer informal/unregulated care, both because it is often less costly, and because they prefer to leave their children with family or friends whom they trust.
- ❖ Low-skill workers are unlikely to turn down a job or quit over child care concerns. They address the problem after they take the job and begin working.
- ❖ Employers indicate that employees are likely to be distracted/less productive, or even terminated if they have unreliable child care that causes repeated workplace interruptions.

COMMON CHILDCARE MISCONCEPTIONS

Family Use of Subsidy Dollars

Misconception 1: Families receive the childcare subsidy dollars to use as they please.

Truth: Subsidies are paid directly to the childcare provider. The family of the child being subsidized does not have direct access to the subsidy money.

Use of Regulated vs. Non-Regulated Childcare

Misconception 2: By far, the largest proportion of childcare slots for children under 6 is non-regulated.

Truth: With approximately 35,600 children under 6 estimated to be in need of childcare and 19,236 regulated childcare slots available, regulated slots equal 54.8% of the total estimated need for childcare. True, not all programs operate at capacity; childcare providers have substantial turnover of both staff and clients. In addition, the age composition of provider clientele can vary so that the true number of slots for children 5 and under could be below our estimate. However, in most cases, it is in a provider's best financial interest to operate at capacity if possible. At the same time, at least some families will arrange their schedules so that their children will never be in care for pay, thus not competing for a childcare slot.

Use of Subsidies for Informal Care

Misconception 3: A facility must be regulated to be subsidized.

Truth: Federal law requires the County to subsidize informal (legally-exempt) childcare (relative care or neighbor/friend care). If these providers care for only children to whom they are directly related or for only a few children, they are not legally required to be regulated. However, DSS does have a set of requirements for informal, legally-exempt providers in order for them to be eligible for receipt of subsidy payments.

Regulation and Financial Compliance

Misconception 4: A childcare provider cannot be regulated if the provider does not report income to the IRS.

Truth: State licensing requirements are designed to monitor health and safety issues; they do not review financial compliance. However, if a provider receives a childcare subsidy from Monroe County, the County submits a 1099 form to the IRS reporting the amount of money paid to that provider.

Receipt of Subsidies and Financial Compliance

Misconception 5: A childcare provider cannot receive subsidies if the provider does not report income to the IRS.

Truth: The County reports the subsidy payment to the IRS and provides the forms necessary for the provider to comply with tax law, but the County does not monitor whether or not the provider declares the income, complies with withholding requirements or files income tax forms.

DEMAND FOR CHILDCARE IN MONROE COUNTY FOR CHILDREN UNDER SIX

Children by Poverty Level

Table 1 shows that 55,607 children under the age of 6 reside in Monroe County (Census 2000). Of those children, 65% live in households with income levels at 200% of poverty or more. Eighteen percent live in households under 100% of poverty, and an additional 7% live in households with incomes between 100% and 139% of poverty. ***Summing these groups, 25% of children under 6 in Monroe County live in households with incomes below 140% of poverty (13,809).***

Table 1: Children Under 6 Years Old in Monroe County by Household Income as a Percentage of Poverty

<i>Household Poverty Range</i>	<i>Number of Children</i>	<i>% of Children</i>
Total Children < 6	55,607	100%
Under 50%	4,774	8.6%
50% to 74%	2,782	5.0%
75% to 99%	2,309	4.2%
100% to 124%	2,555	4.6%
125% to 129%	492	0.9%
130% to 139% *	897	1.6%
140% to 149% *	898	1.6%
150% to 174%	2,390	4.3%
175% to 184%	943	1.7%
185% to 199%	1,360	2.4%
200% or Greater	36,207	65.1%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census, NYS Empire State Development, State Data Center, SF 3 Poverty Profile p. 7 (Table PCT50).

*Census data provide a 130%-149% grouping. CGR split the group into 2 categories to permit analysis of those <140%.

Children Below or Near the Poverty Level in Need of Childcare

Not all families with young children are in need of child care. Some families include a stay-at-home parent, and others may arrange their schedules so that parents take care of children in shifts, or so that other family members are able to care for children without pay such that no “childcare” in the traditional sense is necessary.

Table 2 shows the number of families in Monroe County below and above the poverty level, by parental working status. The table does not indicate whether the families¹ have children, nor the age of any children in the household. However, the table provides data with which we can estimate the proportion of families who might be in need of childcare, by poverty status.

Families Below Poverty in Need of Child Care

Table 2 shows there are 15,236 families in poverty in Monroe County ($1,918 + 5,979 + 7,339$). Of those, 6,930 families (45.5%) would potentially need childcare if they have young children because either both adults work, or a male or female householder without a spouse works (see figures in **bold**). We define working to include both those who work full-time year-round, as well as those who work less than full-time year-round. We exclude those who do not work at all. ***Therefore, we assume that a maximum of 45.5% of families below 100% of poverty in Monroe County may be in need of childcare, based on householder and spousal working status.***

¹ Family is defined by the Census Bureau as two or more people who reside together and who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption (U.S. Census Bureau, factfinder.census.gov/home/en/epss/glossary_f.html).

Table 2: Monroe County Families by Poverty Status and Work Experience of Householder and Spouse

	Householder Worked Full-time Year-Round in 1999		Householder Worked Less than Full-time, Year-Round in 1999		Householder Did Not Work	
	Below Poverty	At or Above Poverty	Below Poverty	At or Above Poverty	Below Poverty	At or Above Poverty
<i>Total Families</i>	1,918	103,769	5,979	33,260	7,339	33,553
<i>Married Couple Families</i>	644	83,840	1,041	24,217	1,916	26,471
<i>Spouse Worked FT, Year Round</i>	40	<i>38,004</i>	33	<i>8,890</i>	58	<i>4,058</i>
<i>Spouse Worked <FT, Year Round</i>	171	<i>30,923</i>	474	<i>9,241</i>	411	<i>3,600</i>
<i>Spouse Did Not Work</i>	433	<i>14,913</i>	534	<i>6,086</i>	1,447	<i>18,813</i>
<i>Male HH, No Wife</i>	194	<i>5,614</i>	550	<i>1,744</i>	6,663	<i>1,487</i>
<i>Female HH, No Husband</i>	1,080	<i>14,315</i>	4,388	<i>7,299</i>	4,760	<i>5,595</i>

Source: 2000 U.S. Census, NYS Empire State Development, State Data Center, SF 3 Poverty Profile p.8 (Table PCT 60).

Note: Bolded figures and those in italics represent those families that would likely require childcare if they have young children.

Families Above Poverty in Need of Child Care

Table 2 also shows that 170,582 families live at or above the poverty level, and that 116,030 of those families (68.0%) could potentially need childcare because of the householder's and householder's spouse's working status (see *italicized* figures). **Therefore, we assume that a maximum of 68.0% of families at or above 100% of poverty in Monroe County may be in need of childcare, based on householder and spousal working status.**

Using data from Table 1 on the number of children under 6 by poverty status, as well as the proportion of families above and below poverty who could need childcare based on their working status as described in the Table 2 discussion, CGR estimates the number of children in need of childcare, by household income as a percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) in Table 3.²

² For families at or below 100% of poverty, we assumed a maximum of 45.5% would need childcare. For families above 100% of poverty, we assumed a maximum of 68.0% would need childcare.

Table 3: Estimated Demand for Child Care, by Household Poverty Status, Monroe County, 2000

	<i>Household Poverty Level</i>	<i>Total Children Under 6</i>	<i>Proportion Estimated To Need Child Care</i>	<i>Children in Need of Child Care</i>
	Total Children	55,607		35,600
Below poverty	< 50% of Poverty	4,774	45.5%	2,171
	50% to 74%	2,782	45.5%	1,265
	75% to 99%	2,309	45.5%	1,050
At or above poverty	100% to 124%	2,555	68.0%	1,738
	124% to 129%	492	68.0%	335
	130% to 139%*	897	68.0%	610
	140% to 149%*	898	68.0%	611
	150% to 174%	2,390	68.0%	1,626
	175% to 184%	943	68.0%	641
	185% to 199%	1,360	68.0%	925
	200% or Greater	36,207	68.0%	24,628

*Census data provide a 130%-149% grouping. CGR split the group into 2 categories to permit analysis of those <140%.

Note that Table 3 assumes that only those persons currently in the workforce are in need of childcare, and does not include those who might need childcare in order to search for employment.

Table 3 shows that 35,600 children are in need of child care. This estimate is nearly identical to a Census 2000 table (that does not have poverty information) that shows an estimated 35,122 children in Monroe County have two working parents, or a single working parent (Table 4). Therefore, we believe the methodology used to develop Table 3 data on children in need of child care by poverty level is sound.

Table 4: Children Under 6 Years Old with Working Parents

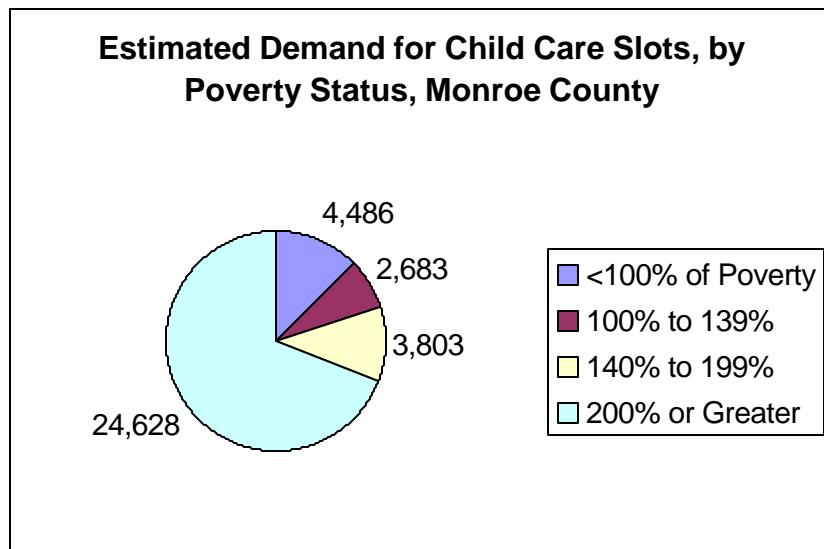
	<i>Number of Children</i>
Total Children < 6 with all Parents in Labor Force	35,122
Living with Two Parents, both in Labor Force	22,665
Living with Father Only, Father in Labor Force	2,536
Living with Mother Only, Mother in Labor Force	9,921

Source: 2000 U.S. Census, NYS Empire State Development, State Data Center, SF 3 Primary Profile p. 6 (Table P46).

69.2% of Children in Need of Childcare Live in Households Above 200% of the Poverty Level.

Table 3 shows that the majority of children in need of childcare have a household income of 200% of poverty or greater (24,628, or 69.2% of children in need of care). However, many children living near or below poverty and their families are in need of childcare, and have few monetary resources with which to obtain it. Nearly 4,500 children under the age of 6 in Monroe County in households where all parents work have a household income under 100% of poverty (4,486, or 12.6% of all children in need of child care). An additional 2,683, or 7.5% have a household income between 100% and 139% of the FPL. Summing these, **an estimated 7,169 children under the age of 6, or 20.1% of all children under 6 in need of childcare live in a household with income below 140% of the federal poverty level. The number of children below 200% of the federal poverty level in need of childcare is estimated at 10,972, or 30.8% of children in need of childcare.**

The number of children potentially affected by the drop in the income eligibility level from <200% to <140% of poverty is estimated to be 3,803 children, or 10.7% of all children in need of child care.



SUPPLY OF CHILDCARE IN MONROE COUNTY

Selected terminology

- ❖ **Regulated (or “formal”) childcare** is childcare overseen by the NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS). This includes childcare centers regulated by New York State, as well as registered family childcare and regulated group family childcare providers. Regulated child care must meet minimum quality standards.
- ❖ **Legally-exempt (or “informal”) childcare** is childcare not overseen by NYS OCFS. Most informal childcare arrangements are legally-exempt from NYS oversight. Without oversight, there is no guarantee that the provider meets New York State quality standards. A childcare provider need not be regulated in order to receive a subsidy payment from Monroe County. Indeed, 39.7% of subsidized children receive care from informal providers, according to Monroe County Department of Social Services (DSS). While subsidized children receiving informal care are tracked through DSS, unsubsidized children receiving informal care are not tracked, and the size of this segment of the childcare sector is therefore difficult to estimate.

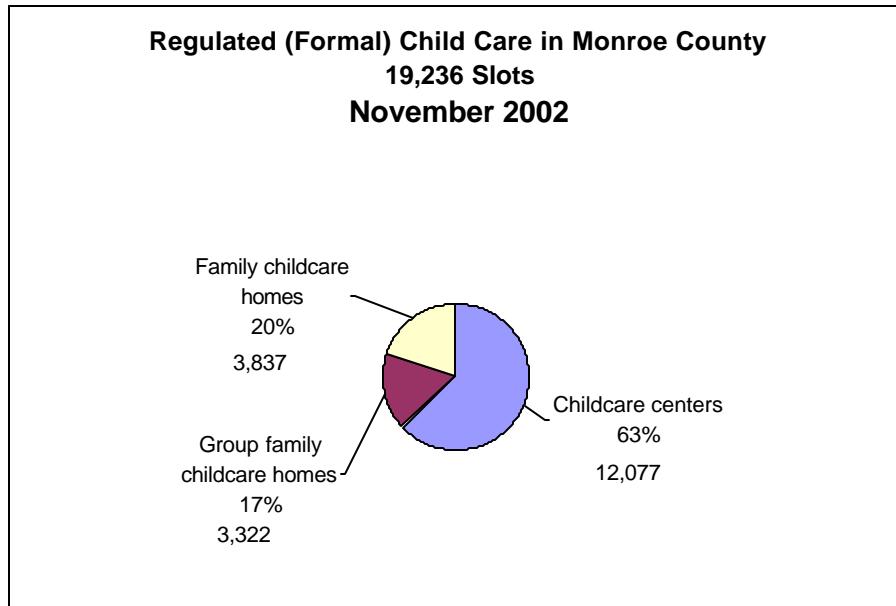
Some informal providers meet the requirements for oversight (most commonly due to the number of children served or hours of service), but do not apply for it. Also, some informal childcare providers might not report their income to the IRS for tax purposes. Monroe County sends a 1099 form to the IRS and the provider for all subsidized children receiving legally-exempt childcare.

Regulated “Formal” Childcare Slots

Monroe County has 19,236 regulated childcare slots, according to the NYS OCFS. These are distributed among:

- 144 **childcare centers** with approximately 12,077 slots;
- 301 **group family childcare homes** with approximately 3,322 slots; and
- 696 **family childcare homes** with approximately 3,837 slots.

These estimates are from November 15, 2002. The childcare business is volatile and providers enter and leave frequently. Slots are approximated since not all regulated slots are necessarily filled at any given time. The majority of these slots are for children under 6, though providers are permitted to vary the ages of children they serve as long as they remain within state-mandated caregiver to child ratios.



A 2001 CGR study, “Behavior Issues in Early Childhood Programs in Monroe County,” included a survey of all child care centers in the county. Among the 77 centers that responded to the survey (an approximately 50% response rate), 67 had one or more subsidized children in their care (87%), and an average of 31% of children in their care received subsidies at the time of the survey.

Legally-Exempt “Informal” Childcare Slots

Informal childcare slots are extremely difficult to estimate. Informal childcare includes paid arrangements that do not fall under state licensing or regulatory guidelines, and unpaid arrangements in which a friend or family member cares for a child, for example. For the purpose of this study, CGR estimates informal childcare slots as the number of children under 6 estimated to need childcare, minus the formal known slots and minus the known subsidized informal slots. This number may underestimate the actual number of children in informal care, as not all formal slots are occupied. However, it overestimates to the

degree that parents work different shifts to avoid child care. Informal slots that do not receive county subsidies are simply not recorded in a systematic fashion, and must be estimated in this manner.

County-Subsidized Child Care

Technically, Monroe County subsidizes children, not slots. The County subsidizes the number of children in families who apply and are deemed eligible for assistance. As of February 6, 2003, Monroe County subsidized 5,704 children under 6 (Table 5).

Table 5: Supply of Child Care in Monroe County, Children <6

	Total	Formal ^a	Informal
Total	35,600	19,236	16,364
Subsidized ^b	5,704	3,437	2,267
Unsubsidized ^c	29,896	15,799	14,097

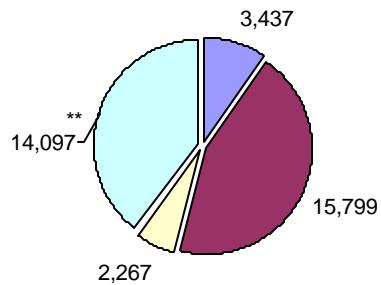
^aNot all formal slots are filled at any given time. Further, a small number may be filled with children under age 6. ^bData from Monroe County DSS and NYS OCFS. ^cFormal Unsubsidized calculated by CGR using OCFS data; Informal Unsubsidized from CGR estimates.

payment is too slow or too low). Further, the subsidy amount varies by income, and as families approach the higher income level (140%), the subsidy amount may not justify the paperwork and invasion of privacy inherent in the application process. Finally,

A portion of the subsidies goes to parents who are in training or rehabilitation programs, so not all the subsidies go to working parents. Subsidy figures do not include eligible families who choose not to apply for subsidies for a variety of reasons (some childcare providers may not accept subsidies because County

some families arrange their work schedules such that they do not have to pay for childcare (i.e., parents work opposite shifts, or relatives provide care without pay). *No one who applies and is eligible is denied*. However, if the County begins to run low on funds, it may choose to change eligibility criteria mid-year in order to reduce the number of new families eligible for subsidies.

Estimated Supply of Day Care in Monroe County, for Children < 6, 2002



- Regulated* (formal), subsidized
- Regulated* (formal), unsubsidized
- Informal, subsidized
- Informal, unsubsidized**

*Not all regulated slots are occupied at any given time. **This value overestimates the size of the informal care sector to the degree that families will arrange their work schedules so a parent can care for the child at all times. In addition, this value includes childcare arrangements that are unpaid. However, it underestimates to the degree that regulated slots are unfilled, and those children shift to informal slots.

Source of Care for Children Receiving Subsidies

Above we describe the number of children receiving subsidies and whether they receive formal or informal care. Table 6 shows whether children receive formal childcare in a center, a family home or group family home; or whether they receive informal care from a relative or non-relative.

Table 6: Children Receiving Subsidies, Ages 0-5, by Type of Care

	Number	Percentage
Total Children	5,704	100.0%
Formal-Center	1,758	30.8%
Formal-Family	806	14.1%
Formal-Group Family	873	15.3%
Informal	1,520	26.6%
Informal (relative)	747	13.1%

Source: Monroe County DSS

Table 6 shows that of the children under 6 receiving subsidies, 31% receive care in a child care center, an additional 29% receive care in a formal family home setting, 13% receive care from a relative, and the remainder receive other informal care. Among those receiving care in a formal (regulated) environment, about one-half are in child care centers.

Proportion of Eligible Children Receiving Subsidy

Earlier we stated the number of children in need of childcare living in households with income below 140% of the poverty level was 7,169, and the number with income below 200% of poverty was 10,972. The number of children currently eligible for a subsidy in Monroe County is somewhere between those figures, since families between 140% and 199% of poverty are currently transitioning out of eligibility. If all families under 200% of poverty were still eligible, the number of current subsidies would represent 52% of those eligible ($5,704/10,972$). If only those children under 140% of poverty were eligible, the number of current subsidies would represent 80% of those eligible ($5,704/7,169$).

ESTIMATED GAP BETWEEN SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Gaps in Subsidies for Eligible Children

As described earlier, we estimate that 7,169 children under 6 live in households with income under 140% of the poverty level, and are in need of childcare due to their parents' working status. Monroe County DSS provides childcare subsidies to approximately 5,704 children under 6 each month. Subtracting the number of children receiving subsidies from the estimated number of children under 6

Estimated Gap of 1,465 Children <140% of Poverty Lacking Subsidy.

in families eligible for subsidies, **we estimate an approximate gap of 1,465 children under 6**. As mentioned earlier, not all low-income working parents need childcare subsidies as they may have other care arrangements at no cost. To the extent that this is true, our figure *overestimates* the unmet need for childcare. At the same time, a portion of County subsidies goes to families in which the parents are in training or rehabilitation programs, rather than working. Further, a portion of County subsidies goes to families currently grandfathered into eligibility whose household income is between 140% and 199% of poverty. To the extent that these last two facts apply, we *underestimate* the unmet demand for childcare among low-income families.

Estimated Gap of 5,268 Children <200% of Poverty Lacking Subsidy.

If Monroe County were to return to its previous eligibility requirements and allow families up to 200% of poverty to receive subsidies, we estimate that 10,972 children under 6 would be eligible for subsidies. As the County currently provides 5,704 subsidies for children under 6, it would need to fund approximately 5,268 additional children.

Estimated Funding Gap

The County projects that in 2003 the average monthly cost per child (includes children through age 13) will be \$282 for a child in a family receiving family assistance and \$369 for a low-income (non family assistance) family. Because all-day childcare for children under 6 is more expensive than after-school care for children 6-13, these figures somewhat *underestimate* the average cost per child for children under 6. At the same time, a number of factors make it likely our calculations somewhat *overestimate* the expense of expanding the subsidy to include all families up to 140% of poverty. First, not all these families will choose to apply for subsidies. As mentioned earlier, some families have arranged care by relatives at no cost. Second, some families close to the income limit for subsidies will decide that the relatively small subsidy amount is not worth the paperwork hassle. Third, some providers refuse to accept subsidies and parents may choose to stay with that provider rather than upset their child's routine by switching providers. Fourth, families approaching the 140% income level receive a lower subsidy than those at lower income levels (sliding scale subsidy). Therefore, to the degree that families

of these 1,465 children are at the higher income level, the additional cost of adding them will be less than the average cost (\$282-\$369) of adding a family to the program.

With these considerations in mind, if all 1,465 currently unsubsidized children <140% of poverty estimated to be in need of child care were to be covered by subsidies, and if they required the full average cost of subsidizing a child, we estimate the County could need an additional \$5.0 to \$6.5 million per year. However, it is more likely that only some portion of the 1,465 children are in need of subsidies, which would bring the estimated additional costs down dramatically. Table 7 below illustrates estimated costs with different assumptions, including an assumption that one-half the 1,465 children are truly in need of subsidies at an average cost level. This assumption brings the cost range down to between \$2.5 and \$3.2 million.

Estimated Gap of \$2.5 Million to \$3.2 Million to Fully Subsidize all Eligible Children.

Table 7: Projected County Cost to Cover Children Currently Not Receiving Subsidies

Poverty Level	Estimated Number of Children Currently Not Receiving Subsidy*	Estimated Proportion of Children Actually in Need of Subsidy	Estimated Number of Children Actually in Need of Subsidy	Average Child Care Cost to DSS Per month**	Total County Cost Per Month	Total County Cost per Year
<140% of Poverty	1,465	All (100%)	1,465	\$282	\$413,130	\$4,957,560
	1,465	All (100%)	1,465	\$369	\$540,585	\$6,487,020
	1,465	one-half (50%)	733	\$282	\$206,565	\$2,478,780
	1,465	one-half (50%)	733	\$369	\$270,293	\$3,243,510
<200% of Poverty	5,268	All (100%)	5,268	\$282	\$1,485,576	\$17,826,912
	5,268	All (100%)	5,268	\$369	\$1,943,892	\$23,326,704
	5,268	one-half (50%)	2,634	\$282	\$742,788	\$8,913,456
	5,268	one-half (50%)	2,634	\$369	\$971,946	\$11,663,352

*It is likely that some of these children are in unpaid family caregiver arrangements, and are not in need of subsidy. Others may be in families who consciously choose not to apply for subsidy.

**Average monthly cost of child care for child on family assistance is \$282; cost for child in low-income family is \$369.

Estimated Gap in Regulated Childcare

Monroe County has 19,236 regulated childcare slots, and we estimate a total of 35,600 children under 6 are in need of childcare because they live in a household with two working parents or a working single-parent. Regardless of subsidies, an estimated 15,886 children are in childcare arrangements that are not regulated, and therefore are not required to meet minimum state standards for quality. For a portion of these children, parents arrange their work schedules so that a parent can care for the child at all times, and another portion of these children are in unpaid care (most likely relative care). The remainder is in informal care, either by choice or necessity.

City Centers Facing Enrollment Declines

It should be noted that regulated childcare centers in the City of Rochester are facing enrollment declines, due to a number of reasons, including; the stagnant economy, difficulty in obtaining “notices of decision” on subsidy awards from DSS due to staffing cuts, and the cuts in available subsidies (Patricia Vickers, personal communication).³ Other reasons for enrollment declines might include hours of operation, cost, and location. A careful analysis of enrollment trends is beyond the scope of this study.

Summary of Gaps

- ❖ Among families with working parents under 140% of poverty who need child care, an estimated 1,465 children under 6 are eligible for subsidies under current guidelines, but do not receive them. However, it is likely that some of these families have unpaid arrangements for child care and do not need subsidies, and that others near the 140% level feel the sliding scale subsidy is not worth the application process.
- ❖ Among families with working parents under 200% poverty, 5,268 children do not receive subsidies. Similarly, some likely have unpaid arrangements or choose not to apply for other reasons. Some are eligible under current guidelines, others are not.
- ❖ The additional county cost of covering all children under 140% of poverty who are potentially in need of child care and do not currently receive subsidies is estimated between \$2.5 and \$3.2 million annually.

³ Patricia Vickers, Early Childhood Education Quality Council Program Coordinator. 2/7/03.

- ❖ Approximately 16,000 Monroe County children under age 6 are in need of child care and are not in regulated child care slots, but rather in informal or other care.

FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

Background

The Rochester/Monroe WIB wishes to determine the impact of childcare issues on both employees and employers in terms of worker placement, retention, advancement, productivity, and other relevant issues. While an earlier section of the report examined the supply and demand for child care, this section of the report summarizes employee and employer perspectives and thoughts on obtaining and maintaining acceptable child care arrangements, the impact of different child care arrangements on employees in the workplace, and the effect of employee child care issues on their employers. Main focus group findings are highlighted here, while more detailed comments are available in the Appendix.

CGR held focus group discussions with three different groups: (1) low-skill job seekers; (2) low- and moderate-income employees; and (3) human resource professionals representing various employers. This memo is broken into three sections, one for each group. Each section begins with main findings from the focus group, followed by more details on group participants' responses to questions.

Focus groups are useful for gaining insight and perspectives on data-driven findings. However, the information gathered in these focus groups is based on a small sample of people and should not necessarily be considered fully reflective of the working parent population as a whole. Working parents utilize a wide array of child care arrangements, and have a wide range of child care experiences, and all may not be reflected in these focus groups.

Low-Skill Job Seekers

The first focus group consisted of low-skilled job seekers in a Life Skills training program at Catholic Family Center.

Finding 1: These participants are well aware of child care subsidies, or “DSS Child Care.” The low-skilled job seekers generally seemed aware of DSS childcare subsidies, due in part to their participation in the Life Skills training program which informed them of this resource. Also, those receiving cash assistance likely heard about subsidies through their caseworker. Some indicated they heard about subsidies through friends or family, and followed up with their caseworkers to obtain more information.

Finding 2: They are unlikely to be in a position to be selective about job offers. While childcare is an important issue for this group, they have very limited employment qualifications and have little choice in the jobs they accept. Therefore, they are unlikely to decline a job due to childcare difficulties. They are more likely to patch together childcare coverage in some way.

Finding 3: Informal care is more popular than regulated care. Most of the focus group participants relied on informal care (and usually family care), rather than regulated care. In some cases, family members providing care receive subsidy payments. While informal care offers some advantages, namely more flexible hours and often a willingness to care for children even when they are sick, it can be less reliable as a provider may decide on short-notice to discontinue offering childcare. This finding is corroborated by U.S. Census Bureau research (1997) that found that NYS families under 200% of poverty are more likely to use family-based care than those at higher income levels (17% vs. 9%), and are less likely to use center-based care (20% vs. 32%).

Finding 4: Concerns about quality of childcare exist. Low-skilled job-seeking mothers stated that they worried about the quality of care their children received and expressed concerns about the turnover in staff and classmates in child care facilities. They indicated that safety concerns and concerns about the child care environment can make them distracted, and feel the need to make frequent phone calls to the child care provider.

Finding 5: Child care must be located near home or work.

Participants indicated that they prefer child care that is within walking distance of their homes, as many of them do not have a vehicle available. A 1998 study by the Family and Work Institute found that mothers who do not have access to a center-based child care program within 10 minutes from home were almost twice as likely to leave employment than those who did have such access (see CGR literature review, 11/2002).

Low- to Moderate-Wage Employees at Local Hotel

CGR met with low- to moderate wage employees at a local for-profit employer (Airport Marriott Hotel).

Finding 1: They trust family more than unknown providers.

Participants in this group all use family care for their children. They indicate that they trust this arrangement more, and many said they would quit their jobs before placing a child in a child care center.

Finding 2: Their employer is flexible. These employees indicated that their employer is willing to put them on different shifts, allow for flex time, and allow them to leave early for children's doctor appointments, school teacher conferences, etc.

Finding 3: Employees are willing to make changes in their schedule/job description. One participant changed shifts several times to accommodate her need for a different schedule. Participants indicated they are willing to take different jobs within the company to meet the needs of both their families and their employer.

Finding 4: A need for child care referral/resource services exists. Employees did not seem to know where they would begin to look for formal child care. One participant will be looking for a new child care arrangement soon and does not know what types of questions to ask, or where to find a list of recommended providers.

Employers and Human Resource Professionals

CGR conducted two focus groups with Human Resource personnel at local companies likely to employ people at a range of incomes. These two groups were held on separate days for scheduling purposes, but are discussed together in this section. Employers represented included Park Ridge hospital, Paychex, Monroe Community Hospital, HCR, Via Health Systems and St. Ann's Home.

Finding 1: Child care issues are most pressing for middle-income workers. While employers stated there is a child care crisis for employees of all income ranges, the consensus was that childcare issues are most likely to impact middle-income workers, since low-income workers have access to subsidies, and cost is not as substantial a barrier for high-wage workers.

Finding 2: Most employees are not aware of the availability of subsidies. Those who are aware may not see the subsidy as reliable since they received a letter last summer indicating they would become ineligible.

Finding 3: Childcare issues sometimes come up in the interview process. Child care issues are occasionally raised during the interview process if employees are unable to work certain shifts because of childcare responsibilities. More often, the issue is only raised after the person has been hired.

Finding 4: Employees do not often leave employment due to child care. Most employers report that employees leave a job for reasons other than difficulties with childcare.

Finding 5: Employers report making a concerted effort to accommodate employees' childcare needs. Employers are trying to permit flex time where possible. They expressed some concern that the DSS subsidy application process itself can be burdensome and take time, resulting in lost time on the job or a delayed start date. They also had a sense that once employees begin to work full-time, they may become income-ineligible for subsidies, resulting in a new upheaval in childcare arrangements.

Finding 6: Concerns about childcare can lead employees to miss work or be distracted on the job. Child care problems cause interruptions in terms of phone calls from providers or children, or phone calls to the child care provider. Also causes the worker to feel extra stress. The lack of a child care backup plan was named as a significant problem for employees. A 1992 study found that high percentages of workers experienced lower productivity and higher absenteeism and tardiness because of child care problems. A 1997 study found that 29% of employed parents had to make other arrangements one or more times over a three month period because their regular child care was unavailable (see CGR literature review 11/2002).

Finding 7: Employers are implementing special child care policies and services. Some employers report offering FSAs to their employees; however, they said that the FSA might be intimidating for low-wage workers. Lower-income workers do not always understand how they save money when funds are deducted from their paycheck and they must also pay childcare costs upfront, only to be reimbursed later. In addition, the FSA poses extra paperwork for Human Resources staff who must stay current on changes in family status and work hours. In some cases, a childcare provider might refuse to furnish a social security number, so the employee cannot use the FSA. Some employers said that their employees were more likely to use the federal childcare tax credit, rather than an FSA. At least one employer does not offer an FSA to low-wage workers due to financial liability risks. The U.S. Treasury Department recommends businesses can take on several roles to help employees with child care including on-site or off-site child care, resource and referral programs, flexible schedules, public-private partnerships, corporate-labor management partnerships, and back-up/sick child care (see CGR literature review, 11/2002).

Finding 8: Referral and other child care services are popular with employees. Some companies contract with private firms to provide childcare referral services to their employees. The Human Resource staff report that these services are highly valued by employees. Other companies have workers onsite whose job involves learning about childcare providers and resources and they share this information with other employees. A few participants

commented that Catholic Family Center offers a Life Skills training program that has been helpful to their employees and also offers emergency loans that can be used on a short-term basis to cover childcare expenses.

Finding 9: Use One-stop as a child care information resource. Employers suggested that the One-Stop and other employment centers might also consider including information about childcare so that job-seekers would be aware of their options once they find employment. Contrary to our expectations, respondents seemed less aware of the services provided by the Child Care Council.

Finding 10: Concerns about after-school care exist. Participants expressed concern about the need for childcare for pre-teens and teenagers who are able to stay home alone, but still need supervision to avoid trouble.

Finding 11: Part-time child care appears to be especially difficult for workers to find.

Finding 12: Employers raised the paradox of expensive childcare fees, low wages for childcare workers, and city childcare centers closing as enrollments drop. Child care is very expensive, yet child care staff are poorly paid and providers have trouble making a profit. Employers expressed particular concern about city child care providers especially because recently the Rochester community has invested considerable time and resources to improve the quality of urban childcare. Focus group participants worried that these efforts would be lost if the childcare centers closed.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER ANALYSIS

This study provides a “snapshot” of child care in Monroe County in terms of workforce participation. A number of other child care-related “snapshots” as well as long-term studies could be pursued with additional research. Suggested areas for further analysis include the following:

- ❖ The long-term impact of regulated versus unregulated settings on educational and developmental outcomes.
- ❖ How to address demand for part-time child care, after-school care, and sick child care.
- ❖ Whether city child care centers are experiencing enrollment declines, and if so, the reasons for such declines.

APPENDIX A: DETAILED FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Low-Skilled Job Seekers

While the focus groups are informally structured, and often follow a discussion format rather than a structured question and answer format, the following illustrates the general questions used to elicit thoughts and perceptions on child care issues.

What are your current child care arrangements? What is important to you as you select a child care provider?

- ❖ Parents want the provider to be located in a convenient location, close to home or work. For some parents, the child care provider cares for the child in the child's home.
- ❖ Many low-skill job-seekers have family members care for their children. In some cases, these family members receive a subsidy payment from DSS. It is not clear whether or not these family members would care for the children if they did not receive the DSS payment or if they would expect the parent to pay out of pocket for childcare.
- ❖ Relatives or friends who care for children are more likely than regulated providers to provide care when a child is sick. This makes it less likely that a parent will miss work due to a sick child. At the same time, relatives and friends are more likely to leave the childcare business unexpectedly, meaning parents must find alternative care arrangements on short notice.
- ❖ One mom indicated that she had to quit her job in order to stay home with a seriously ill child.
- ❖ Some employees prefer to work an evening shift so that they can be home with their children during the day. One participant asked her supervisor for a change of shifts and her request was granted.
- ❖ If working non-traditional hours, parents must rely on family or friends for childcare. Some participants said they would like to see more 2nd and 3rd shift child care available, since these are often the schedules for jobs they are offered.

➤ Note: Some child care centers provide care during non-traditional hours. However, CGR spoke with a person who used to run a center than provided care during non-traditional hours. The center did not have many participants – partly because parents can find family to care for the children at those times and partly because waking a child to take her home in the middle of the night often disrupts the child's schedule for the rest of the night. Parents are likely to avoid center-based care for evening hours if at all possible.

How did you learn about subsidies? What is your experience with them? How would an increase in subsidies affect you? What would you do if subsidies were eliminated?

- ❖ Most respondents learned about subsidies through friends or acquaintances. In some cases, their DSS caseworker told them about subsidies. CFC also let them know they were eligible.
- ❖ In some respects, the low-skill job seekers group was perhaps better informed than the average person in their circumstances because they were all participating in a job search program through the Catholic Family Center. It is likely that staff at CFC informed them of support programs they otherwise may not have known about.
- ❖ One participant had a provider who refused to accept subsidies because the payments were too slow.
- ❖ All the parents in this group received fully or nearly-fully subsidized child care because they are job-hunting. They are pleased to be receiving subsidies now, and appear to be satisfied with their current child care arrangements. Their primary concern about subsidies is what they would do if they began to work full-time and became ineligible. However, they did not appear to have thought about what they will do if that occurs.
- ❖ Parents want quality childcare. For example, they are concerned if the caregiver allows their child to watch too much television.
- ❖ One participant stated that if you have good child care, you won't have a problem going to work, and you won't have to spend time at work making phone calls to check on your children.
- ❖ Parents want children to have a safe environment. They are likely to be distracted at work if they are worried about the safety of their children. They may call frequently to check on their child.

Some described dropping in unannounced at their child's childcare location to see how their children are doing.

How does your child care arrangement affect your workforce decisions or participation?

- ❖ Participants indicated that they are not willing to leave their child in a place where the child is not comfortable.
- ❖ Parents want a consistent environment for their children. They would like to see consistency in staffing and among classmates. Often, just as a child becomes familiar and friendly with a staff member, that person leaves. At the same time, other children may not stay in the program long, so a child cannot develop lasting friendships.

What do you do about sick days for your children?

- ❖ These participants have found that some employers understand when you call in because your child is sick; others do not.
- ❖ CFC considered offering a program to provide sick childcare. The challenge is finding a convenient location. If a child is sick, a parent won't want to take child across town on the bus. Another option CFC considered was training volunteers to come to the home and provide in-home care for sick children.

Does child care affect the type of job you will accept? Does it affect the wages you find to be acceptable?

- ❖ For many low-skill job-seekers, they just want to find a job. They don't have much choice in the type of work they get, their hours or their pay. As a result, they may have little choice in childcare options. They need to find whatever care they can afford.

Low-to-Moderate Wage Employees at Local Hotel

What are your current child care arrangements?

- ❖ All use unpaid family care; two use grandparents, one splits shifts with her boyfriend so they can avoid child care. However, one participant faces a need to find out of home care because her father can no longer take care of the children.
- ❖ Participants perceived that child care providers have no experience. One indicated that she knew someone who had never been around kids, but was hired by a center and put in a room by herself with 8 toddlers.

Why are you reluctant to use child care outside of the family? What would you do if the family care were unavailable?

❖ Participants stated that with non-family care, they don't know if other kids are picking on their children, if they're exposed to structured activities, or if they're watching TV all day. "No one wants their child to be one of 10 in a big room." "I trust my family care more than I would strangers." "Family won't force my children to take a nap when they don't want to," for example. "Plus my children can all be together instead of being separated by age into different rooms."

- ❖ "If my family care were no longer available, I'd have my wife stay home and I would work double shifts."
- ❖ "If my family care were no longer available, I would quit and stay home" (2 women).
- ❖ "I don't worry about my daughter at all. I don't worry that she's being mistreated, don't have to worry about the child care center closing early, getting there to pick her up on time", etc.
- ❖ "If I didn't have child care that I trust, I would be calling the child care provider all the time. I see others in my office doing that. I would also want to leave early often to check on my child."
- ❖ "With the change in child care I have coming up, I'm sure that I'll start to worry about whether the new caregiver is on time to pick my children up from school, will worry about whether the caregiver has a reliable vehicle, whether my children are safe in her car."

How does your child care arrangement affect you in the workplace?

❖ Participants are allowed to take personal days when their children are sick.

❖ Participants tell their managers about appointments ahead of time and they let them go early, leave and come back, or whatever is necessary. As long as they are told ahead of time, so that managers can be sure someone is there to cover the desk/shift, then it's OK.

❖ One participant started with a 4pm to 11pm shift, but with 2 children in school she never saw them. She changed her shift to 7pm to 2am, then to 8 to 5, so that she had either afternoon and/or evening time with the children. Recently she was granted a flex schedule of 9:30 to 5:30 so that she can drop her children at school in the morning.

Have you made changes in your job/career to accommodate child care?

- ❖ “If I did not have the family care arrangement, I would change my shift to stagger with my wife.”
- ❖ One participant’s husband gave up a job that required a lot of travel, but paid well, for a lower-paying job that does not require travel.
- ❖ “We need to put our children first even if it means less money.”
- ❖ Participants had never heard of FSA or any child care programs through the Marriott.
- ❖ “I told them I had small children when I interviewed. They said they would be flexible in helping to make things work. If they had not said that, I would not have taken the job.”

Does the Marriott have an FSA or any childcare incentives/programs?

How would you go about finding out about child care options if you didn't have family care arrangements (keep in mind, one woman is losing her family care arrangement).

- ❖ “Really don't know where to start. We need help in figuring out what to do, what to ask etc.”
- ❖ “I would not use anyone outside of family.”

Employers and Human Resource Professionals

- ❖ Childcare is not usually an issue during the recruitment process or interviews, although prospective employees may tell the interviewer they cannot work certain hours.
- ❖ For some employers, childcare issues only arise after the employee has been working for a time. If a parent receives a subsidy while in training, he or she may no longer qualify for subsidy once employed, and affordable child care then becomes more challenging to find.
- ❖ Parents may work opposite shifts to eliminate the need for childcare. One employer described a married couple that works the same job on two different shifts to accommodate their child care needs.

Do you hear about child care issues from your employees during the hiring process? Once they have been hired?

- ❖ Most employees leave employment for issues other than childcare. Most employee turnover is not due to childcare.

How do child care issues affect worker productivity?

- ❖ The general consensus among employers is that there is a childcare crisis for people of all income levels. Middle-class is especially hard-hit. Lower-wage workers can receive subsidies and higher-income parents can pay out-of-pocket, but middle-class workers struggle to afford childcare.
- ❖ Child care concerns affect attendance, stress levels, and can cause interruptions due to phone calls to and from providers and children.
- ❖ Problems with childcare can lead to stress at work. Employees may be late for work or miss work due to childcare issues. When they are at work, parents may be distracted by worrying about childcare. Too much interruption can lead to termination of employees.

What types of child care do your employees use? What challenges do employees face, if any?

- ❖ Many employees appear to lack a backup plan when their primary child care arrangement falls through.
- ❖ Human Resources personnel have a sense that most low-wage employees use informal childcare.
- ❖ Very difficult to find part-time childcare. Most centers want full-time care clients. Costs can be prohibitively expensive, such that a parent's entire salary may go to pay the cost of childcare.

What is or what should be the employer's role in child care issues?

- ❖ Employers try to accommodate scheduling needs. They encourage managers and other staff members to be supportive and willing to accommodate. Lower-income people especially need more accommodation as they have less ability to work around the cost barrier.
- ❖ Employers are beginning to think more flexibly and to accommodate employee schedules. They indicated that they try to allow employees to flex their time where possible, for example.

Do your employees use child care subsidies?

- ❖ Some participants felt that most employees are not aware of the subsidy availability. Others weren't sure about their employees' awareness.
- ❖ The DSS subsidy process itself can be burdensome for employees. It can take some time for an application to be approved and

people can't wait that long to accept a job. Employers may delay a start date to allow employees to get their DSS subsidies in place. Alternatively, employers may pay employees on a per diem basis until they have reliable childcare arranged.

- ❖ Some employees may choose to work fewer hours to keep their income below the eligibility requirements for childcare subsidies. Others may choose to work full-time and then become income-ineligible for subsidies.
- ❖ Current childcare subsidy recipients may have received a letter warning them that they would lose subsidies during Monroe County's budget difficulties over the summer. They may have made alternative arrangements in anticipation of losing the subsidy. They may not view the subsidy as reliable or may believe that the application process is not worth the hassle.
- ❖ One HR representative felt that if subsidies were more reliable and continued even after the person began working full-time, they would be more useful to both employees and employers.
- ❖ Many employers offer FSAs, but most employees only find out about them after they are hired and they receive an orientation about benefits. FSAs are very difficult for people to understand. Many low-wage workers are intimidated by the "use it or lose it" aspect. In addition, they don't understand how the money flows, why money is deducted from their paycheck and they also have to pay expenses upfront, only to be reimbursed later. Human Resources staff need to work with employees individually to show them how the program saves them money.
- ❖ One company has an FSA but does not make it available to low-wage workers due to financial liability and high employee turnover. Since the employer must provide the full amount of the employee's anticipated medical FSA contribution for the year up front in the calendar year, a company would lose money should an employee leave employment before all of the contributions for the year are made. Note: This does not apply to child care expenses.
- ❖ If an employee uses informal childcare, the provider may not want to report the income. Since the FSA requires the provider to furnish a social security number, the provider may not accept FSA payments.

As employers, what programs or policies do you have in place to assist employees with child care?

- ❖ FSAs create paperwork for employers. Employees change status (maternity leave, changes in the number of children in the home, changes in family status). It can be difficult for employers to keep up with the forms.
- ❖ Low-wage employees may be more likely to use the federal child care tax credit rather than an FSA.
- ❖ One employer contracts with an outside agency (LifeCare) which provides childcare referral services for employees. The company has been pleased with the quality of work done by the referral service and believes that it benefits employees. The service provides employees with examples of questions they should ask of prospective providers. Utilization of the service is very high. In addition, some firms have employees who have information about childcare through their work duties, and they share this information with employees.
- ❖ Other employers refer employees to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
- ❖ CFC's life skills training program has been useful in helping low-wage workers navigate such issues as budgeting and childcare. This is a good training program for people new to employment or returning to the work world after a long absence.
- ❖ The Childcare Council offers a list of registered childcare providers. Some schools maintain lists of informal providers.
- ❖ While representatives from St. John's Home and Fairport Baptist Home were not present, other participants indicated that these employers offer onsite childcare for their employees.
- ❖ An unmet and unaddressed need is that of after-school care for older children – preteens and early teens. These children are old enough to stay home alone, but need supervision to make sure they do their homework, eat a nutritious dinner and stay out of trouble. It is particularly difficult to find care for these older children.
- ❖ There is high turnover among childcare center employees, resulting in a lack of consistency in caregivers that can be very difficult for children. There is a paradox in that parents are paying high costs and yet childcare workers are not paid that well and childcare centers are barely profitable. Likewise, there is the

What do you see as major policy concerns in terms of child care, and what suggestions do you have for how the WIB might address these concerns?

paradox of city childcare centers closing due to low enrollment while at the same time, there is an increasing demand for childcare. Parents cannot afford childcare costs and providers cannot break even.

- ❖ Rochester has spent considerable time and effort to improve the quality of childcare, especially in the city. All that hard work will be lost if Childcare centers in the city close.
- ❖ Employers had concerns about reducing or eliminating funding for Head Start as well as Universal Pre-Kindergarten. They believed Head Start and UPK are important programs and should continue to receive funding.
- ❖ Perhaps the One-Stop Center, in addition to helping job-seekers find and retain employment, could also offer information on childcare. It would be useful to have a source of information on childcare resources in the same location where parents search for employment.