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The Growing Need for Childcare

The demand for preschool childcare has reached a high level and continues to rise as we enter the 21st century. Over the past several decades, women have entered the workforce in record numbers. Nationally, the employment rate of mothers with children under 18 has risen from 39 percent in 1970 to 69 percent in 2000. However, a recent census has shown some decline in the rate of young mothers returning to employment during an infant's first year. This has occurred primarily among more educated, white women.

Employment rates of mothers with young children have not increased as dramatically as during the 1980s when rates jumped by 15 percent over the decade. However, employment of Missouri mothers of young children has continued to increase steadily during the 1990s as shown in [Chart 1](#). Census data are provided only for the age groups shown in the chart.

The [types of child care](#) arrangements from which families may choose are quite varied. For some families the care may be provided by family members, neighbors, or friends. Some children are cared for in their own homes. Other families may choose organized facilities such as childcare centers, group homes, or family daycare homes. Choice will be affected by childcare options available to families in their locality.

Nationally, the trend has been away from in-home and relative care for children to out-of-home care. This shift has produced a steady growth of center-based care. Two-thirds of the children of single parents working full-time (67 percent) are in care full-time. Three in five (60 percent) young children of two-parent families with both parents working full-time are in care full-time. A study by the U. S. Department of Education found that the percentage of children age 3 to 5 enrolled in center-based early childhood care programs increased from 53 percent in 1991 to 60 percent in 1999.

New 2000 Census data also show a continuation of the trend of young children growing up in homes in which all parents in their household are working. Census data detail the number of children under age 6 with all parents either working or looking for a job, i.e., "in the labor force". In Missouri, 273,991 children under age 6 live in households in which all parents are working. We use this number as an estimate of the number of preschool children needing childcare.

Childcare Availability and Quality Issues

For the purpose of understanding the potential unmet need for childcare across the state, Missouri's childcare capacity is measured by the number of childcare "slots" available. Childcare capacity in

Missouri is reported for licensed as well as exempt facilities. Licensed providers account for 61.2 percent of Missouri's potential capacity.

Licensing is a means of assuring safety for children in out-of-family care settings. It provides the baseline of protection – from injury, disease, or developmental impairment. Licensing also certifies that the building is safe and sanitary. A recent study of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) showed that 20.4 percent of all SIDS deaths between 1995 and 1997 occurred in a childcare setting. In Missouri, the rate for the same time period was 24.4 percent. Of those, one-third died during their first week in care.

Missouri's comprehensive licensing requirements consist of health and safety standards, including fire and sanitation inspections, and require the building to meet local building and zoning codes. In addition, there are standards that regulate director and staff qualifications, and annual staff training in child development-related topics.

Missouri statute also allows for a licensing category titled license-exempt for **early childhood programs** that are operated by religious organizations. License-exempt programs are regulated by the Bureau of Child Care. However, the regulations do not include the same comprehensive requirements as in licensed centers.

A two-tiered licensing system also exists among **family childcare homes**. Legally operating family childcare homes may be designated as "licensed" or "unlicensed, subsidy-receiving" by the Bureau of Child Care. A licensed family childcare home is one in which care is provided for more than four children unrelated to the caregiver and the caregiver complies with all licensing requirements.

An unlicensed, subsidy-receiving family childcare home is one in which care is provided to four or fewer children. The caregiver either does not comply with all the licensing regulations

or does not choose to be licensed. These providers only have to be 18 years of age, have child abuse/neglect and criminal background screenings, pass a TB test, and inform parents if they have access to a working phone.

The highest level of program quality assurance available to most parents is through accreditation systems, which are intended to identify high quality programs. There were 345 accredited childcare providers in Missouri in 2001 – down slightly from 350 in 1999. The majority of the accredited providers are located in metro counties. High quality childcare is generally regarded as care that is stable, has a low child-to-staff ratio, and in which the provider has had training in child development and/or early childhood education. Studies have shown that positive outcomes of quality childcare include subsequent gains in intellectual performance, fewer grade retentions, greater rates of employment and less dependence on welfare, lower rates of teen pregnancy, as well as fewer acts of delinquency.

Unmet Need

Table 1 shows that, as of September 2002, the potential capacity of licensed facilities in Missouri stood at 131,943 and that of registered and exempt providers was 83,639 for a total "known" capacity of 215,582. By subtracting the number of children under age 6 needing care – all parents working – from the total potential capacity, the estimated "unmet need" is 58,409 statewide. **Map 1** shows that this varies from a negative need, i.e., more capacity than need, in a few counties to an unmet need as high as 81 percent in DeKalb County. Capacity can exceed need especially in major employment centers such as is the case the Boone (Columbia), Greene (Springfield), Buchanan (St. Joe), and Jackson (Kansas City) counties. Many parents may opt to keep their children in care in the

county in which they are employed rather than their county of residence. It is important to note that this measure of capacity is unable to take into account the number of unlicensed providers caring for 4 or less unrelated children that do *not* receive state subsidy. Also, while a provider may be licensed for a certain capacity, they may choose to care for fewer children. This might mean a smaller unmet need than is estimated.

Childcare Affordability

Many families, particularly those with low to middle incomes, have trouble financing the cost of quality childcare. Childcare affordability is a particular challenging barrier to welfare recipients seeking to enter the workforce in light of welfare reform. According to study of the cost of childcare across the country, The Children's Defense Fund found that the average cost of care for four-year-olds in Missouri was \$4,118 and \$5,239 for a 12-month-old. The Kansas City Early Education 2002 Status Report found that the average price of center-based and home provider preschool care was \$97 and \$103 per week respectively.

With the enactment of the 1996 Welfare Reform Law, several federal childcare programs were consolidated into one block grant to the states, known as the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG). The CCDBG is funded at \$2.1 billion in fiscal year 2002. In addition to this block grant money, states may choose to transfer up to 30 percent of their Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funds into the CCDBG or spend TANF funds directly on childcare programs. Through CCDBG, states have been able to offer childcare subsidies to a greater number of families receiving cash benefits or working low-wage jobs. However, Missouri's eligibility requirement is 118 percent of the federal poverty level making it 49th in the nation. Only the very poorest can qualify. According to the Missouri

Department of Social Services 45,712 children were receiving subsidized childcare in 2001. The Childcare Development fund formerly CCDBG is up for reauthorization this year along with TANF.

Selected web-based resources

www.daycare.com/missouri

http://www.mocrrn.org/canvas_area.html

The Carolina Abecedarian Project
<http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~abc/>

Coalition on Human Needs Childcare Issue Brief
<http://www.chn.org/issuebriefs/childcare.asp>

Children's Defense Fund Childcare Cost Study
<http://www.childrensdefense.org/pdf/highcost.pdf>

National Center for Early Development and Learning
<http://www.ncedl.org/>

UMC Family Policy & Research Center
<http://Mucenter.missouri.edu>

Urban Institute childcare publications
<http://www.urban.org/Template.cfm?Section=ByTopic&NavMenuID=62&TopicID=9&TopicName=Child%20Care%20and%20Development>

ETC.

Conferences/Meetings

The National Council on Family Relations is holding their 64th Annual Conference in Houston, Texas, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, November 19th-24th, 2002. For more information, see <http://www.ncfr.org> (website).

The National Association for the Education of Young Children is holding their annual conference in New York City on November 20- 23rd, 2002. For more information, see <http://www.naeyc.org> (website).

The Zero to Three National Training Institute will be held December 6-8, at the Hilton Washington and Towers, in Washington, DC. For more information, see <http://zerotothree.org> (website).

The National Head Start Association will hold their 19th Annual Parent Training conference on December 13th-16th, 2002, in Dallas, TX at the Wyndham Anatole Hotel. A Focus on Fathers institute will be offered in a preconference training institute, December 13th and 14th. For more

information, call (703) 739-0875 or see <http://www.nhsa.org> (website).

The 7th Annual Head Start and Child Care Birth to Three Institute will be held in Washington, DC, January 7th – 11th, at the Grand Hyatt and Renaissance Washington Hotels. For more information contact Pam Booker at p.booker@zerotothree.org or see <http://www.ehsnrc.org> (website).

The Midwest Association for the Education of Young Children (MWAEYC) will hold their annual conference in 2003 on April 9-12th in Peoria, Illinois. For more information, see <http://www.mwaeyc.org> (website) or contact Jan Deissler at (309) 681-5322 or jdeissler@icc.edu.

The Parents' as Teachers 12th annual Born to Learn Conference will be April 27 to 29th, 2003 at the Millennium Hotel in St. Louis, Missouri. For more information, contact Sarah Lifka at (314) 432-4330 or sarah.lifka@patnc.org or see <http://www.patnc.org> (website).

Resources

A new study, "Inequality at the Starting Gate", that shows the learning gap between children entering school who come from families with low and high-incomes has been released by the Economic Policy Institute and can be obtained at <http://www.epinet.org>.

A report by Steven Barnett at the National Institute for Early Education Research, "The Battle Over Head Start: What the Research Shows", is available at <http://nieer.org/docs/index.php?DocID=43>

The Center for Family Policy & Research publishes policy briefs on a variety of child and family related issues that may be obtained from their website <http://MUCenter.missouri.edu>.

Several new policy briefs discussing findings from the Midwest Child Care Consortium, a longitudinal study of child care quality across several states are now available from the center website.