



**FIRST  
CHILDREN'S  
FINANCE**

A photograph showing a group of people in a meeting. A woman in the foreground is pointing upwards with her right hand. Other people are visible in the background, looking towards the same direction. The image is slightly faded and serves as a background for the title.

# **Crow Wing County**

**CHILD CARE SURVEY REPORT  
MARCH 12, 2021**

**MINNESOTA STATE DIRECTOR: SUZANNE PEARL  
FIRST CHILDREN'S FINANCE CONSULTANT: KARI STATTELMAN  
CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS: JOAN BERNTSON, TERI STECKELBERG,  
PATRICIA WELSCH**

**This project is possible with  
generous support from:**

**if** Initiative  
FOUNDATION



# FIRST CHILDREN'S FINANCE

# Crow Wing County

## PROJECT INFORMATION

### PROJECT INFORMATION:

Community stakeholders in the Brainerd Lakes Area came together in the fall of 2020 to develop a Strategic Supply Plan to support the child care industry in Crow Wing County. The Strategic Supply Plan process is designed and facilitated by First Children's Finance. It was developed to support communities in creating a strategic approach to increase the supply and quality of child care.

Through a series of meetings the group of stakeholders listed met and discussed child care needs. Through this process the group saw the importance of reaching out to the citizens of the region to get their input on how child care in the region was affecting them.

### SURVEY DISTRIBUTION

The Crow Wing County community was invited to participate in a comprehensive survey about child care. 279 individuals participated in the parent survey, 37 employers participated in the employer survey, and around 34 providers participated in a survey specific for child care providers.

The survey was distributed via email and other social media platforms. Surveys were available electronically and via paper copy.

### IMPORTANCE OF HIGH QUALITY CHILD CARE:

In rural communities, highs and lows in the local economy greatly influence the sustainability of a community's child care supply and vice versa. A robust supply of high quality child care fosters community growth.



### PROJECT TEAM

JENNIFER BERGMAN - CITY OF BRAINERD  
MIKE BJERKNES - BLAEDC  
BRADLEY CHAPULIS - CITY OF BAXTER  
KIM ELLINGSON - BREMER BANK  
TYLER GLYNN - BLAEDC  
COLLEEN GOEDKER - GOEDKER REALTY  
DON HICKMAN - INITATIVE FOUNDATION  
TIM HOULE - CROW WING COUNTY  
KAREN JOHNSON - CROW WING ENERGIZED  
JENNIFER LARSON - ISD 181  
SHANE RIFFLE - BRAINERD LAKES YMCA  
ALISON MEDECK - BLAEDC  
MOLLY RASKE - ISD 181  
MEGAN REHBEIN - BLAEDC

**The following data represents highlighted perspectives within the community.**

### EXPECTED OUTCOME AND IMPACT:

**THE SURVEY DATA WILL BE USED TO INFORM THE STRATEGIC SUPPLY PLAN TEAM OF THE STRENGTHS AND NEEDS RELATING TO CHILD CARE IN CROW WING COUNTY.**

# Crow Wing County

PARENT PERSPECTIVE  
279 RESPONDENTS

## PARENTS OF CROW WING COUNTY

Just over 275 parents were represented in the survey. These parents had approximately 330 children under the age of 5; 7 were parents expecting a child.



**75% CURRENTLY USE PAID CHILD CARE**

## FOR THE 25% WHO DO NOT USE PAID CARE:

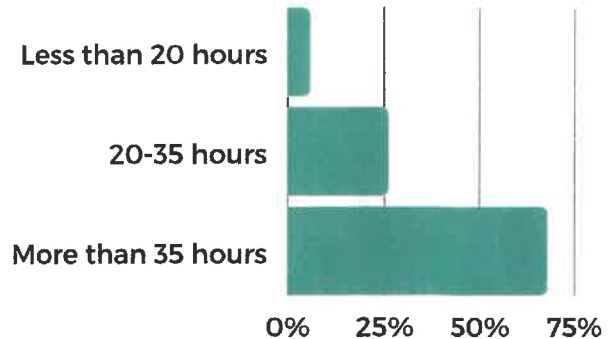


- 7% Have chosen to stay home
- 22% Have adjusted work schedules with spouse/partner
- 19% Cannot afford it
- 17% Cannot find the appropriate option

**43%**

Shared that availability of child care impacted their decision to limit family size

## HOURS OF CARE NEEDED (PER WEEK)



**59 parents**

Have declined employment or withdrawn from employment due to child care issues

## WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTIC IN YOUR CHILD CARE: 1 = MOST IMPORTANT

1. SAFE AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT
2. LICENSED BY DHS
3. EDUCATIONAL CURRICULUM
4. CONVENIENTLY LOCATED
5. PROVIDER HAS HIGH LEVEL OF EDUCATION
6. PROVIDER IS PARENT AWARE RATED
7. PROVIDER IS SOMEONE I KNOW

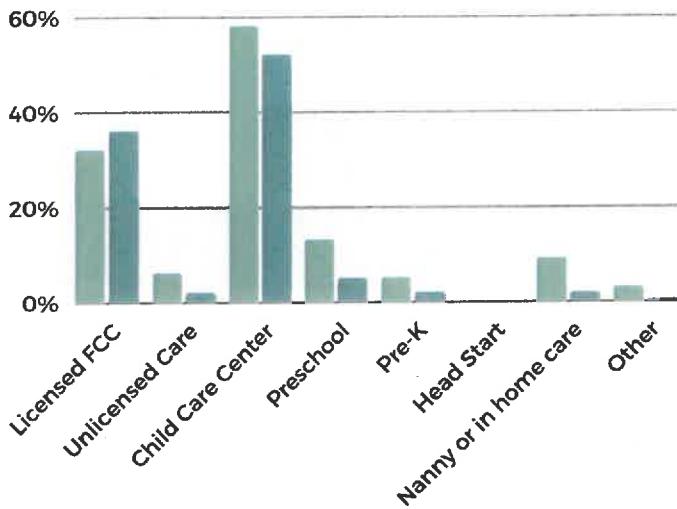
"We had to wait for 2 years for daycare availability to open up for both children at our chosen place, we had to wait for a full year for each child for the family daycare we brought our children to while waiting for our preferred spot. We could not find {child care available anywhere} else we checked. We ended up relying very heavily on family to take care of our children while on waiting lists."

- Crow Wing County Parent

# Crow Wing County

PARENT PERSPECTIVE  
279 RESPONDENTS

## TYPE OF CARE USED TYPE OF CARE PREFERRED



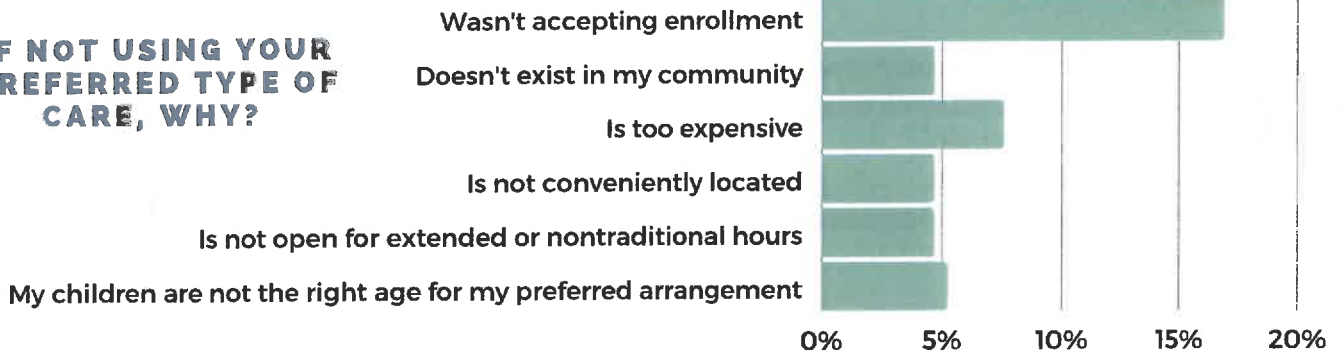
26% Travel 11 miles or more (one direction) to their child care provider



"PEOPLE ARE DEMANDING HIGH LEVELS OF EDUCATION FROM THE PROVIDER BUT LOW COST CHILD CARE. WE CAN'T EXPECT SOMEONE WITH COLLEGE DEBT TO ACCEPT MINIMUM WAGE."

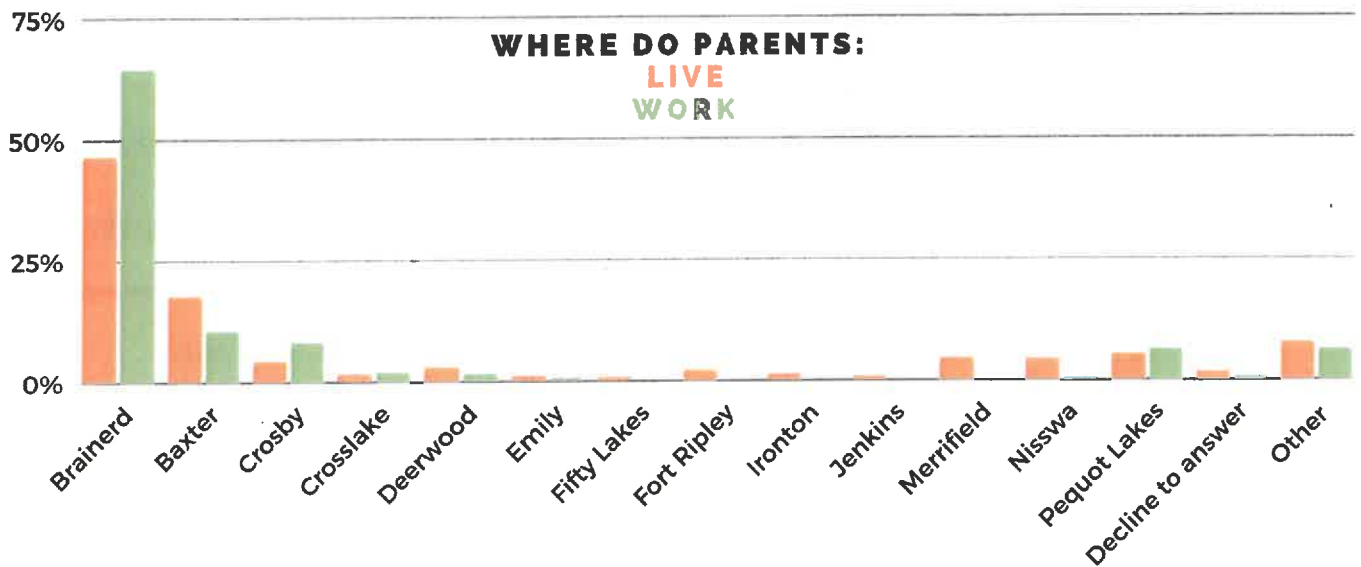
- LOCAL PARENT

## IF NOT USING YOUR PREFERRED TYPE OF CARE, WHY?



## WHERE DO PARENTS:

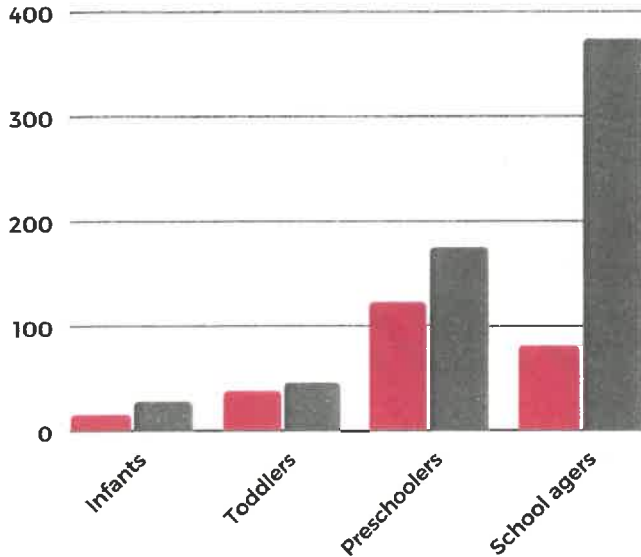
LIVE  
WORK



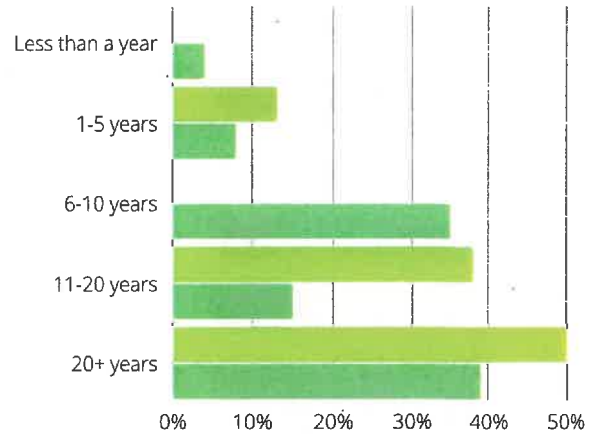
# Crow Wing County

PROVIDER DATA  
 34 RESPONDENTS (26 FCC/8 CCC)  
 APPROXIMATELY 33% RESPONSE RATE

## FAMILY CHILD CARE ENROLLMENT CENTER CHILD CARE ENROLLMENT



## CENTER CHILD CARE | YEARS IN OPERATION FAMILY CHILD CARE | YEARS IN OPERATION



Providers in the field less than 5 years and more than 20 are most likely to leave the field

**TOTAL FAMILY ENROLLMENT: 255**  
**TOTAL CENTER ENROLLMENT: 619**

### OF THE FAMILY CHILD CARE PROVIDERS SURVEYED

**19%** Employ an assistant or aide  
**11%** Utilize a substitute as needed  
**70%** Do not utilize substitutes

**42%**

OR 11 FAMILY PROVIDERS ANTICIPATE LEAVING THE FIELD IN THE NEXT 9 YEARS



**\$563**

per month /infants

### Cost of family child care

County level data from 2018 DHS Market Rate Study

**\$862**

per month /infants



### Cost of center child care

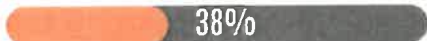
County level data from 2018 DHS Market Rate Study

# Crow Wing County

## PROVIDER DATA

### FAMILY CHILD CARE CENTER CHILD CARE

#### ENROLLED IN FOOD PROGRAM



\*Not all centers qualify for food program reimbursement

#### ACCEPT CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE (CCAP)



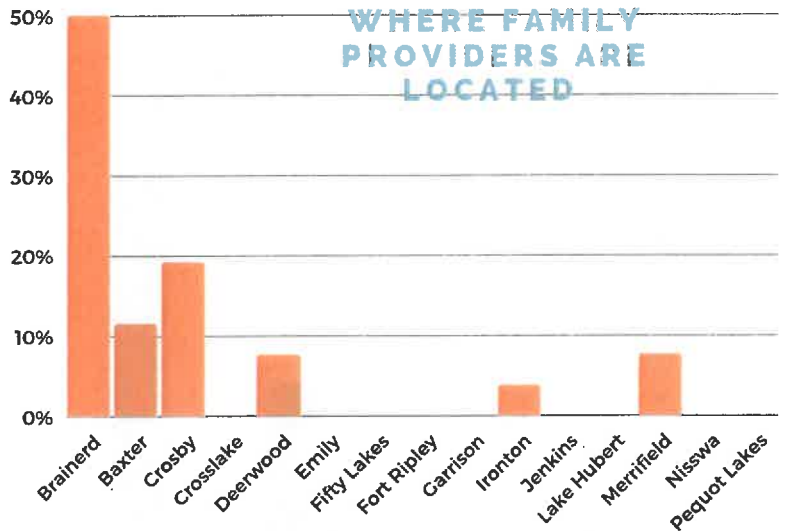
#### PARTICIPATE IN PARENT AWARE



#### ACCEPT EARLY LEARNING SCHOLARSHIPS



The above resources provide additional funding for child care programs, but only supplement their finances, they don't fully support actual costs.



### BIGGEST START-UP CHALLENGES

#### CENTER CHILD CARE



COSTS



STAFFING

#### FAMILY CHILD CARE

ENROLLMENT

#### COST OF START-UP AND



OPERATIONS

REGULATIONS

TRAININGS



### PROVIDER FEEDBACK ON OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH AND AREAS OF CHALLENGE IN THE COMING YEARS

Child care programs and providers in the area report support through partnerships, additional funding, training support and insurance would help the field as a whole. Family child care providers are concerned about maintaining enrollment. Child care often loses great employees and business owners because of the low pay and high risk.

**"THERE IS JUST NOT ENOUGH CARE FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS LET ALONE OLDER KIDS AROUND THIS AREA" - PROVIDER**

**"I FEEL LIKE IF DAYCARES GOT MORE SUPPORT THERE WOULD BE MORE OF THEM" - PROVIDER**

# Crow Wing County

EMPLOYER DATA  
37 RESPONDENTS

**38%**  
YES

**SHORTAGE OF CHILD CARE HAS IMPACTED ABILITY TO ATTRACT EMPLOYEES**

DO NOT TRACK THIS DATA  
**38%**

**43%**

HAVE IMPLEMENTED OR CHANGED EMPLOYEE POLICIES TO ADAPT TO THE CHILD CARE SHORTAGE

**42%**

SHARED THE CHILD CARE SHORTAGE HAS IMPACTED ABILITY TO RETAIN EMPLOYEES

**55+**

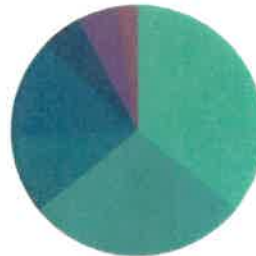
EMPLOYEES HAVE LEFT BECAUSE OF A LACK OF CHILD CARE

## BUSINESSES ARE WILLING TO SUPPORT CHILD CARE

Own and operate a child care business  
5.1%

Provide space for a child care business  
12.8%

Provide \$ to employees to use for child care expenses  
10.3%

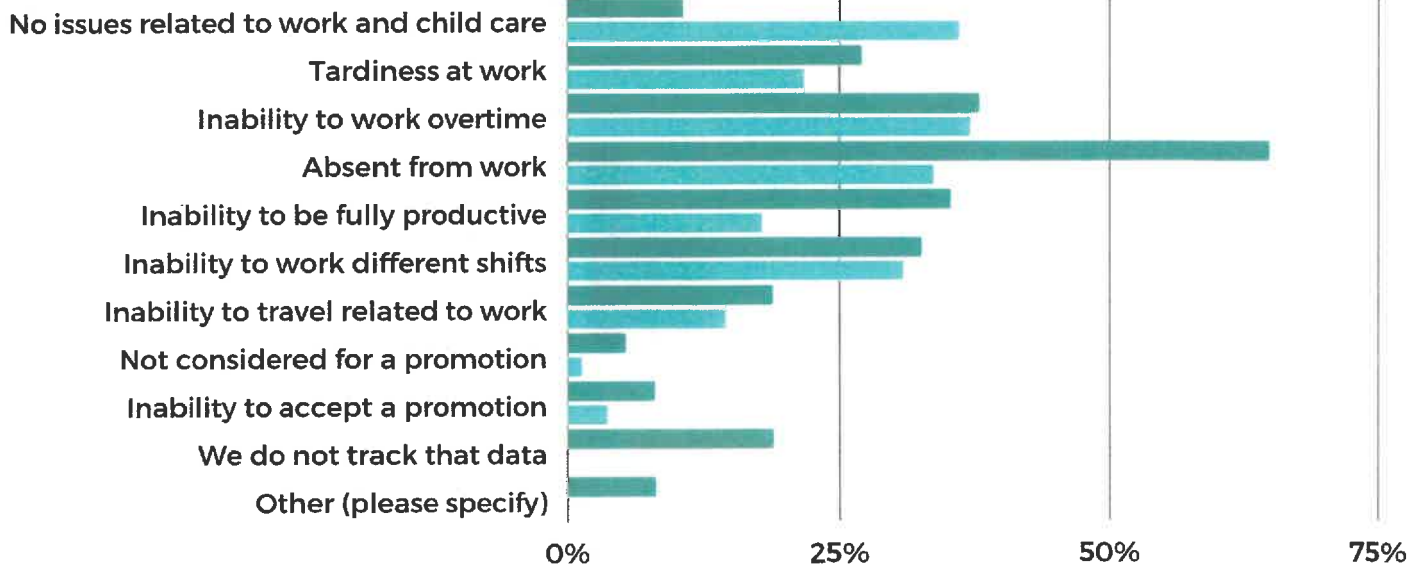


Create a flexible schedule for employees  
35.9%

Provide flexible spending accounts  
28.2%

## CHALLENGES CAUSED BY CHILD CARE ACCORDING TO

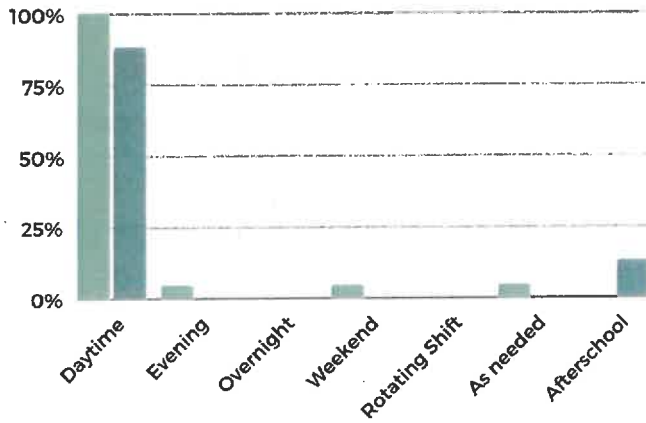
## EMPLOYERS PARENTS



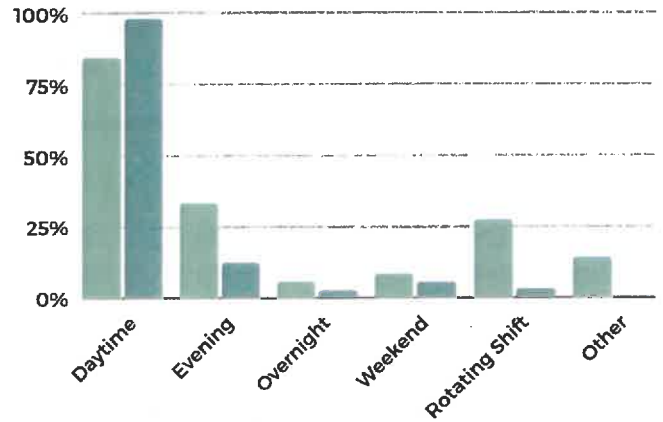
# Crow Wing County

## COMBINED PERSPECTIVES

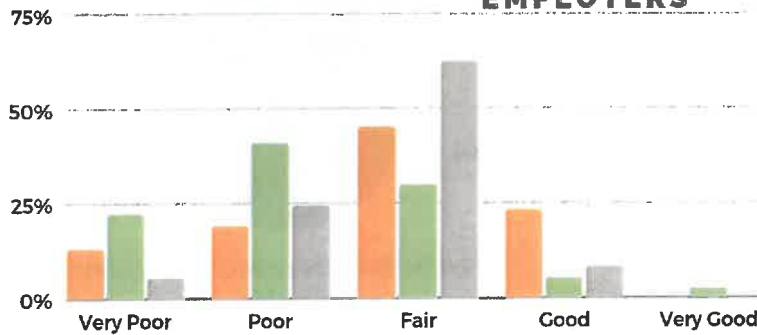
**FAMILY CHILD CARE | HOURS OF OPERATION**  
**CENTER CHILD CARE | HOURS OF OPERATION**



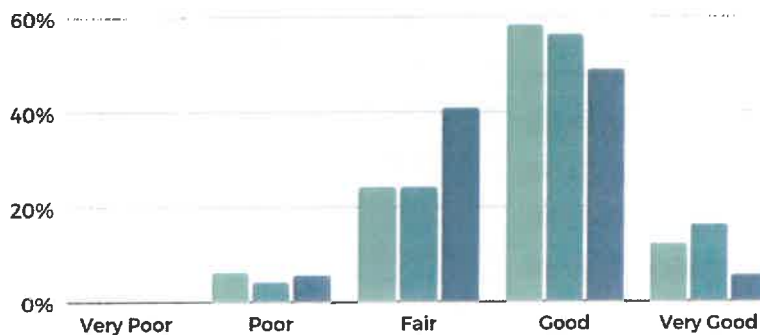
**CHILD CARE SCHEDULES NEEDED ACCORDING TO** | **EMPLOYERS PARENTS**



**AVAILABILITY OF CARE**  
PROVIDERS PARENTS EMPLOYERS



**QUALITY OF CARE**  
PROVIDERS PARENTS EMPLOYERS



**EMPLOYERS REPORT 34 EMPLOYEES**

**59 PARENTS REPORTED THEY**

HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO ACCEPT EMPLOYMENT BECAUSE OF LACK OF CHILD CARE



# Crow Wing County

## REPORT SUMMARY

### COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS IMPACT:

Beyond families and children, the greater community and local businesses can also be impacted by child care challenges and issues. As shown in this report, parents have left the workforce due to child care shortages; employers have had difficulty recruiting employees. Child care is often framed as an economic development issue by communities facing declining populations or challenges with the workforce. These issues can compound and further extend into the business community by causing loss of workers due to unavailable child care or by businesses relocating to environments with better availability of care.

### CHILD CARE IMPACT:

It is challenging to be a child care provider, parents want high quality care, but they can not pay enough to highly compensate providers. Start-up costs can be high and often the first year of a child care business will not have a positive cash flow. The lack of living wage pay and benefits often has high quality providers leaving the field.

### ABOUT FIRST CHILDREN'S FINANCE

Founded in 1991, First Children's Finance is a national nonprofit organization based in Minneapolis, Minnesota with regional offices in Iowa and Michigan. First Children's Finance works to stabilize, improve and expand high-quality child care businesses serving low- and moderate-income families. First Children's Finance provides financing, child care business training and consulting, and build partnerships that connect child care businesses with the resources and expertise of public and private sectors.

First Children's Finance understands the issues and challenges child care businesses face in today's world. We have industry-specific expertise and a shared commitment to the success of child care. In addition, First Children's Finance aligns its work with child care leaders, businesses and regional initiatives that are committed to quality. We define quality as the creation of environments that support healthy brain development for young children to enhance early learning. FCF brings a unique perspective, approach, and experience to providing business, planning and financial assistance to our child care and economic development partners.

For more information about First Children's Finance visit [www.firstchildrensfinance.org](http://www.firstchildrensfinance.org)

**This project is possible with generous support from:**



