

# **Child Care Market Analysis**

**Storm Lake, Iowa**

**October 2023**

**Child Care Market Analysis**  
**Storm Lake, Iowa**  
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City of Storm Lake

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## INTRODUCTION

In 2023, First Children's Finance was commissioned by City of Storm Lake to conduct this *Child Care Market Analysis*. This analysis provides relevant child care data, child care market analysis, and First Children's Finance's key findings of the child care market of Storm Lake, Iowa.

The data in this report has been collected from three original surveys developed by First Children's Finance along with data provided by the US Census Bureau, US Department of Health and Human Services, Iowa Workforce Development, Iowa Department of Health and Human Services, and Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral. This analysis is First Children's Finance's professional interpretation of the data available as of the date of this report. The information and analysis presented in this document are intended to provide a basis for sound business and community planning decisions, but no warranty is stated or implied as to completeness or accuracy.

## PUTTING THIS STUDY INTO USE

This report can be used by employers and other community members that may be considering recruiting or adding new child care businesses, to better understand what parents most prefer for settings and offerings. It can also be used by both existing and future child care programs to understand the families wanting child care and to make operational decisions, such as what ages to care for, hours of operation, and understanding what factors are important to parents.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the purpose of this *Child Care Market Analysis*, the child care market area is defined as the 50588–zip code, which includes the city limits of Storm Lake, Lakeview, and the adjacent unincorporated areas, and will be referred to in this report as “the Storm Lake area” or simply “Storm Lake”. Storm Lake is in Buena Vista County, which is located in northwest Iowa.

The US Census Bureau estimates both total population and the number of children ages 0 to 11 of the Storm Lake area (50588–zip code) have increased over the last 10 years. As of 2021, the total population is 13,258 and the total number of children ages 0 to 11 is 2,301. Taking into consideration the data collected through this study, First Children’s Finance estimates there are 1,251 children whose families prefer and would be likely to use an Iowa Department of Health and Human Services regulated child care setting, either a licensed child care center or registered child development home.

In the Storm Lake area, the average family size is 3.83 people and the median income for families with children under the age of 18 is \$66,597 per year. According to Iowa Workforce Development, as of Quarter 1 of 2023, there are an average of 10,946 people employed by companies in Buena Vista County, and the average weekly wage among those workers is \$970. The industry that employs the most people is manufacturing and the average weekly wage in that industry was \$1,113.

A key part of this analysis was a survey to gain input from parents on their child care needs and preferences, compared to the current supply. Of the parents that participated, 144 reported they currently have children ages 12 or younger and they want to use child care within Storm Lake. This group is referred to as “current parents”. An additional 17 participants do not currently have children, but plan to have or adopt children in the next 5 years and want to use child care within Storm Lake. This group is referred to as “future parents”.

Using the most popular responses, a current parent would be described as married (83%) and living in the 50588–zip code (87%). They work first–shift Monday through Friday (85%) in Storm Lake (94%), and the nature of their job is health care & social assistance (29%). Their spouse also works first–shift Monday through Friday (79%) in Storm Lake (74%), and the nature of their job is other services (18%). They currently use child care in Storm Lake (68%), Monday through Friday. They use child care 40 to 49 hours per week for younger children (58%), less than 10 hours per week for before and after school care (53%), and 40 to 49 hours per week for older children during the summer (42%). They are satisfied with their current child care provider (67%).

Using the most popular responses, a future parent would be described as married (59%) and living in the 50588-zip code (71%). They work first-shift Monday through Friday (94%) in Storm Lake (94%), and the nature of their job is health care & social assistance (35%). Their spouse also works first-shift Monday through Friday (80%) in Storm Lake (90%), and the nature of their job varies.

For working parents, choosing child care may be one of the most critical decisions they make. According to longitudinal research, the child care environment parents choose will have lasting effects on their child. When there are not enough child care spaces in a community, finding *any* care is a challenge; and options for *quality* care that meet the needs and preferences of families can be even more challenging.

There are several forms of early care and education available in Iowa to meet family's varying needs and preferences. The educational experiences are different for each type of care and most communities desire to have multiple types of care and education available. Through a child care needs survey developed by First Children's Finance and conducted in the Storm Lake area in 2023, it was determined that most of the parents that are likely to use "outside" care want their child in a setting that is regulated by the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services. The most preferred child care setting among both current and future parents is a licensed child care center.

Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) data shows that as of October 2023 there are 304 spaces within 6 HHS regulated child care programs in Storm Lake. Among them, 3 are licensed centers or preschools, and offer preschool and/or after school care between the hours of 8:00 am and 5:30 pm, Monday through Friday, during the school year only. There are no licensed centers offering full-time, year-round child care in Storm Lake. Among the HHS registered child development homes, all 3 operate between the hours of 7:30 am and 5:30 pm Monday through Friday, and one of those also operates 8:00 am through 5:00 pm on Saturday and Sunday.

### **Key Findings of This Analysis**

Complete details of these key findings are contained in this report. These key findings are based on research and conditions of the child care market at a specific point in time. If the community or the child care environment changes significantly, these findings may be affected.

#### **Finding 1: Families with All Parents in the Labor Force is Declining**

According to the US Census Bureau as of 2021, 52% of families with children ages 0 to 5, and 70% of families with children ages 6 to 17 living in the Storm Lake area have all parents

in the labor force. US Census Bureau data shows that the percentage of families in the Storm Lake area with children and all parents working has declined over the last 10 years. In 2011, those percentages were 86% and 81% respectively, and in 2016 they were 70% and 84% respectively.

**Finding 2: Parents Want Regulated Child Care that is Available Full-Time and Year-Round**

Overall, 88% of parents (both current parents and future parents combined) prefer a setting that is regulated by Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), either a licensed center or a registered home. When asked if they were selecting child care today, parents indicated they would prefer to drop-off children during the 7:00 am hour (62%) and pick them up during the 5:00 pm hour (27%), Monday through Friday (97%-99% per day). Most parents (75%) with children ages 0 to 5, but not in kindergarten, indicated they prefer year-round care for this age group. Parents with school age children were split, with 40% indicating they want year-round care and 44% indicating they want care during the summer only.

**Finding 3: Parents are Concerned with the Quality of Some Child Care Options**

Parents were asked to rate the quality of child care in Storm Lake on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being low quality, 3 being quality, and 5 being high quality. The weighted average among current parents was 2.78, and among future parents it was 1.94, indicating parents feel the quality of care available is less than adequate. In addition, employers rated quality 2.73 and child care providers rated quality as 2.40.

**Finding 4: There is a Shortage of Child Care Spaces Among All Age Groups**

First Children's Finance estimates there are approximately 1,251 children ages 0 to 11 in Storm Lake that are from families that would likely use HHS regulated child care. According to Iowa HHS, there are currently 304 HHS regulated spaces, of which 32 are available year-round. When broken down by age group and only full-time year-round child care spaces are considered, calculations show there is a shortage of 240 spaces for ages 0 to 2 (infant, toddler, and two's), 167 spaces for ages 3 to 4 (preschool) and of 820 spaces for ages 5 to 12 (school age).

**Finding 5: Parents Indicate Child Care Challenges are Affecting their Job**

Over the last 12 months, parents have experienced child care challenges that have in turn affected their job. The adverse effects experienced by 30% or more of the parents that participated in the child care needs survey were: missed a day of work because the provider did not have room or space (79%), had to leave work early (75%), arrived late to

work (53%), unable to work overtime (32%), had to supervise a child while working from home (30%), and had to reduce the number of hours worked (30%).

### **Finding 6: Child Care Challenges are Limiting Employment for Nearly One-Half of Parents**

Through the child care needs survey conducted as part of this study, parents were asked if child care challenges are currently limiting their or their spouse's or partner's employment (ex. working part-time when full-time preferred, or not working within preferred field). Forty-six percent (46%) indicated they had.

### **Finding 7: Employers Indicate Employees are Missing Work Due to Child Care Challenges**

Through the child care needs survey conducted as part of this study, employers were asked in what ways child care challenges have affected their employees in the last 12 months. The top adverse effects that were experienced by participating employers were employees had to leave work early (100% of employers), employees arrived late to work (93%), employees missed a day of work because the child care provider was closed, on vacation, or not available (80% of employers), and employees had to reduce the number of hours they worked (53% of employers).

Employers were also asked about employee productivity and absenteeism due to child care challenges. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of employers indicated they had challenges related to productivity due to employee's child care challenges, while 74% of employers indicated they had experienced employee absenteeism due to employee's child care challenges.

### **Finding 8: Child Care Providers Indicated They Are Not Utilizing Opportunities that May Improve Business Operations**

Through the State of Iowa there are currently multiple opportunities for licensed centers, registered child development homes, and some unregistered homes that are intended to assist child care programs to improve business operations (including retaining staff and improving quality) and potentially supplement income. Current opportunities are: T.E.A.C.H., Child Care WAGE\$ IOWA, FieldPrint Fingerprinting, state funding to utilize child care management software, and Child Care Assistance pilot program for the child care workforce. Through the child care provider survey, most child care providers reported they have not participated in these opportunities.

# MARKET DESCRIPTION

## Market Area

For the purpose of this *Child Care Market Analysis* the market area is defined as the 50588–zip code, which includes the city limits of Storm Lake, Lakeside, and the adjacent unincorporated areas. This area will be referred to in this report as either “the Storm Lake area” or “Storm Lake”. The market area is located in Buena Vista County in Northwestern Iowa.

## Population and Demographics

### Population

According to the US Census Bureau both the total population and the number of children have increased. As of 2021 the population of the Storm Lake area (50588–zip code) is 13,258, a net change of +705 since 2011 when the population was 12,553. As of 2021, there is a total of 2,301 children ages 0 to 11, a net change of +390 since 2011 when the total number of children was 1,911.

### Fertility

Fertility reflects how many women give birth each year and it may be helpful to give an estimate of how many babies are born each year. It must however be recognized that a single birth may result in more than one child, and there are circumstances where the new born child may not live within the community after the birth. As of 2021 there are 3,055 women ages 16 to 50 living in the Storm Lake area. The US Census Bureau estimates that 11% (341 women) gave birth in the prior 12–month period, while 6% (195 women) both gave birth and are in the labor force.

### Race

Within the Storm Lake area 91.9% of the population identifies as one race, while 8.1% identifies as two or more races. The race that most residents identify as is White, which is 63.0%, followed by Asian (13.4%), and Some Other Race (8.9%).

Table 1: Race

|   |               |              |
|---|---------------|--------------|
| <b>Total Population</b>                   | <b>13,258</b> | <b>100%</b>  |
| <b>One Race</b>                           | <b>12,185</b> | <b>91.9%</b> |
| White                                     | 8,347         | 63.0%        |
| Black or African American                 | 471           | 3.5%         |
| American Indian or Alaska Native          | 36            | 0.3%         |
| Asian                                     | 1,781         | 13.4%        |
| Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | 369           | 2.8%         |
| Some Other Race                           | 1,181         | 8.9%         |
| <b>Two or More Races</b>                  | <b>1,073</b>  | <b>8.1%</b>  |

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2021)

### **Hispanic or Latino**

Creating an inclusive child care program by recognizing and welcoming different cultures can help build strong relationships with families and children. As of 2021, 35.5% of the residents in the Storm Lake area are Hispanic or Latino, with the largest group being Mexican (26.8%).

*Table 2: Hispanic or Latino Origin by Specific Origin*

|   |               |              |
|---|---------------|--------------|
| <b>Total Population</b>                 | <b>13,258</b> | <b>100%</b>  |
| <b>Hispanic or Latino (of any race)</b> | <b>4,711</b>  | <b>35.5%</b> |
| <i>Mexican</i>                          | 3,542         | 26.8%        |
| <i>Puerto Rican</i>                     | 7             | 0.05%        |
| <i>Cuban</i>                            | 159           | 1.2%         |
| <i>Costa Rican</i>                      | 15            | 0.1%         |
| <i>Guatemalan</i>                       | 263           | 2.0%         |
| <i>Nicaraguan</i>                       | 57            | 0.4%         |
| <i>Panamanian</i>                       | 7             | 0.05%        |
| <i>Salvadoran</i>                       | 389           | 2.9%         |
| <i>Spaniard</i>                         | 4             | 0.0%         |
| <i>Spanish</i>                          | 251           | 1.9%         |
| <i>All Other Hispanic or Latino</i>     | 17            | 0.1%         |

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2021)

### **Language Spoken at Home**

It can be helpful to look at what languages are spoken within a community to determine if there may be barriers for parents that want to use child care but do not speak English. In the Storm Lake area 45% of residents speak a language other than English at home. After English, the most common language spoken at home is Spanish with 30.8%. Among the 5,547 residents that speak a language other than English at home, 44.2% (2,453 people) also speak English very well, while 55.8% (3,094 people) speak English less than very well.

*Table 3: Language Spoken at Home*

|   |               |              |
|---|---------------|--------------|
| <b>Population Age 5 and older</b>           | <b>12,334</b> | <b>100%</b>  |
| <b>Speaks Only English</b>                  | <b>6,787</b>  | <b>55.0%</b> |
| <b>Speaks Language Other than English</b>   | <b>5,547</b>  | <b>45.0%</b> |
| <i>Spanish</i>                              | 3,793         | 30.8%        |
| <i>Other Indo-European Language</i>         | 22            | 0.2%         |
| <i>Asian and Pacific Islander Languages</i> | 1,526         | 12.4%        |
| <i>Other Languages</i>                      | 206           | 1.7%         |
| Speaks Language Other than English          | 5,547         | 100%         |
| <i>Speaks English Very Well</i>             | 2,453         | 44.2%        |
| <i>Speaks English Less than Very Well</i>   | 3,094         | 55.8%        |

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2021)

## Educational Attainment

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in the Storm Lake area over one-half (68.4%) of the population age 18 to 24 has some type of college degree (associate's or higher). When it comes to the population age 25 and older, almost one-third (31.5%) has some type of college degree (associate's or higher).

Table 4: Educational Attainment

|                                     |              |             |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| <b>Total Population 18-24</b>       | <b>1,776</b> | <b>100%</b> |
| Less than High School               | 200          | 11.3%       |
| High School Graduate, or equivalent | 361          | 20.3%       |
| Some College or Associate's Degree  | 1,082        | 60.9%       |
| Bachelor's Degree or Higher         | 133          | 7.5%        |
| <b>Total Population age 25+</b>     | <b>8,005</b> | <b>100%</b> |
| Less than High School               | 2,206        | 27.5%       |
| High School Graduate, or equivalent | 2,279        | 28.5%       |
| Some College, No Degree             | 996          | 12.4%       |
| Associate's Degree                  | 755          | 9.4%        |
| Bachelor's Degree                   | 1,165        | 14.6%       |
| Graduate or Professional Degree     | 604          | 7.5%        |

Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2021)

## Working Families

As of 2021 there are 4,628 total households in the Storm Lake area, of which 2,554 are family households. The average household size is 2.68 persons, while the average family household size is 3.83 persons. Over one-half of all households are family households (55%), while just over one-quarter of all households (27%) have children under the age of 18.

The median income<sup>1</sup> for all households is \$51,234, while the median income of families is \$83,107, and \$66,597 for families with children under the age of 18. When it comes to working parents 52% of families with children ages 0 to 5 and 70% of families with children ages 6 to 17 have all parents in the labor force. All parents in the labor force means if there are two parents in the home, they both work, or if there is a single parent that parent is working. See table on the next page.

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<sup>1</sup> Median income is the amount which divides the income distribution into two equal groups, half having income above that amount, and half having income below that amount.

*Table 5: Household Types and Characteristics*

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| Total Households  | 4,628    |
| Average household size  | 2.68     |
| Median household income   | \$51,234 |
| Family Households   | 2,554    |
| Average family size   | 3.83     |
| Median family income  | \$83,107 |
| Family Households w/children under 18                                     | 1,290    |
| <i>Married couples</i>  | 1,026    |
| <i>Male householder (no spouse present)</i>                               | 63       |
| <i>Female householder (no spouse present)</i>                             | 201      |
| Median income for families w/children under 18                            | \$66,597 |
| <i>Median family income married couples</i>                               | \$82,731 |
| <i>Median family income male (no spouse present)</i>                      | \$32,007 |
| <i>Median family income female (no spouse present)</i>                    | \$44,154 |
| Households w/children ages 0 to 5   | 1,051    |
| Households w/children ages 0 to 5, and all parents in labor force         | 542      |
| <i>Percent households w/ages 0 to 5, and all parents in labor force</i>   | 52%      |
| Households w/children ages 6 to 17  | 2,268    |
| Households w/children ages 6 to 17, and all parents in labor force        | 1,587    |
| <i>Percent households w/ ages 6 to 17, and all parents in labor force</i> | 70%      |

*Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2021)*

## **Economy in the Area**

### ***Labor Force and Unemployment***

A competitive job market can make it hard for child care programs to attract and retain quality staff. According to Iowa Workforce Development, as of July 2023 the total labor force (residents age 16 or older that are choosing to participate in the workforce) living in Buena Vista County was 12,060 (data by individual cities is not available). Of those, 11,690 are employed, while 370 (3.0%) were unemployed. In comparison, in July 2018 the total labor force was 11,620 with 11,320 employed, and 300 (2.6%) unemployed. This data indicates that the labor force has grown by 70 workers in the last 5 years.

### ***Place of Work and Time Leaving Home***

According to the US Census Bureau as of 2021, there is a total of 6,478 workers age 16 and over in the 50588–zip code, of those 93.6% work in Buena Vista County, 6.4% work outside the county but

within Iowa, and 0.0% work out of state. The most popular hour for residents to leave home to go to work is 7:00 am to 7:59 am (25.3%), and the mean travel time is 11 minutes.

*Table 6: Place of Work and Time Leaving Home to Go to Work*

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| Total workers 16 years and over        | 6,478    |
| Workers who work from home             | 6.7%     |
| <i>Time leaving home to go to work</i> |          |
| 12:00 am to 4:59 am                    | 6.6%     |
| 5:00 am to 5:29 am                     | 4.8%     |
| 5:30 am to 5:59 am                     | 8.6%     |
| 6:00 am to 6:29 am                     | 6.4%     |
| 6:30 am to 6:59 am                     | 4.7%     |
| 7:00 am to 7:29 am                     | 10.1%    |
| 7:30 am to 7:59 am                     | 15.2%    |
| 8:00 am. to 8:29 am                    | 9.5%     |
| 8:30 am to 8:59 am                     | 3.0%     |
| 9:00 am to 11:59 pm                    | 31.3%    |
| Mean travel time (minutes)             | 11 mins. |
| <i>Place of Work</i>                   |          |
| Within county of residence             | 93.6%    |
| Outside county of residence            | 6.4%     |
| Outside Iowa                           | 0.0%     |

*Note: Data from US Census Bureau (2021)*

### **Employees and Wages**

According to Iowa Workforce Development, as of Quarter 1 of 2023, there is an average 10,946 people employed by companies located in Buena Vista County, which is a decrease of 31 from the same period 5 years ago, in 2018. The average weekly wage of those working at these companies is \$970, up from \$792 in 2018. Of all the industries based in Buena Vista County, the industry that employs the most people on average is manufacturing (3,885), followed by educational services (1,407). Average wages range from a low of \$302 per week for accommodations & food service, to a high of \$2,135 per week for utilities. See *the table on the next page*.

Table 7: Employees and Wages for Buena Vista County

|                                      | Q1 2018         |                   |               | Q1 2023         |                   |               |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------|
|                                      | Total Locations | Average Employees | Avg. Wk. Wage | Total Locations | Average Employees | Avg. Wk. Wage |
| Accommodations & Food Service        | 45              | 689               | \$225         | 42              | 732               | \$302         |
| Administrative & Waste Management    | 23              | 295               | \$706         | 22              | 241               | \$840         |
| Agriculture, Fishing & Hunting       | 43              | 652               | \$860         | 37              | 420               | \$1,168       |
| Arts, Entertainment & Recreation     | 15              | 32                | \$367         | 9               | 30                | \$430         |
| Construction                         | 64              | 248               | \$1,058       | 59              | 419               | \$1,324       |
| Educational Services                 | 18              | 1,453             | \$716         | 21              | 1,407             | \$796         |
| Finance & Insurance                  | 50              | 278               | \$1,296       | 48              | 254               | \$1,404       |
| Health Care & Social Assistance      | 52              | 1,148             | \$741         | 64              | 1,131             | \$963         |
| Information                          | 7               | 68                | \$593         | 9               | 59                | \$662         |
| Management of Companies              | 2               | ---               | ---           | 4               | 22                | \$1,832       |
| Manufacturing                        | 28              | 3,649             | \$937         | 26              | 3,885             | \$1,113       |
| Mining, Quarrying, & Oil & Gas       | 0               | ---               | ---           | ---             | ---               | ---           |
| Other Services (except Public Admin) | 44              | 170               | \$592         | 34              | 137               | \$891         |
| Professional, Scientific, Technical  | 43              | 257               | \$902         | 43              | 220               | \$1,050       |
| Public Administration                | 28              | 354               | \$930         | 28              | 360               | \$1,132       |
| Real Estate, Rental, Leasing         | 19              | 45                | \$476         | 18              | 57                | \$718         |
| Retail Trade                         | 92              | 1,109             | \$479         | 88              | 1,113             | \$613         |
| Transportation & Warehousing         | 36              | 131               | \$687         | 36              | 130               | \$932         |
| Utilities                            | 5               | 74                | \$1,422       | 7               | 58                | \$2,135       |
| Wholesale Trade                      | 40              | 325               | \$1,168       | 40              | 271               | \$1,624       |
| <b>Total</b>                         | <b>654</b>      | <b>10,977</b>     | <b>\$792</b>  | <b>635</b>      | <b>10,946</b>     | <b>\$970</b>  |

Note: Data from Iowa Workforce Development (2108, 2023)<sup>2</sup>

### Child Care and Preschool Workforce and Wages

Most child care and preschool workers fall under one of three categories as defined by the US Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system: Childcare Workers<sup>3</sup>, Education and Childcare Administrators, Preschool and Daycare<sup>4</sup>, or Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Sectors without data are non-disclosable. Grand totals for all sectors will not necessarily equal the total due to data suppression for certain areas and sectors that don't pass confidentiality restrictions.

<sup>3</sup> SOC Definition: Attend to children at schools, businesses, private households, and childcare institutions. Perform a variety of tasks, such as dressing, feeding, bathing, and overseeing play. Illustrative examples: Au Pair, Daycare Provider, Nanny.

<sup>4</sup> SOC Definition: Plan, direct, or coordinate academic or nonacademic activities of preschools or childcare centers and programs, including before- and after-school care. Illustrative examples: Childcare Center Administrator, Head Start Director, Preschool Director.

<sup>5</sup> SOC Definition: Instruct preschool-aged students, following curricula or lesson plans, in activities designed to promote social, physical, and intellectual growth. Illustrative examples: Home-based Preschool Teacher, Nursery School Teacher, Preschool Head Start Teacher.

According to Iowa Wage Report Data from Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) for Northwest Iowa Local Workforce Area<sup>6</sup> for 2022, the entry wage<sup>7</sup> for Childcare Workers in the region is \$8.40 per hour, while the mean<sup>8</sup> wage is \$10.25 per hour and experienced wage<sup>9</sup> is \$11.17 per hour. There are 360 of these workers in the region, and 5,250 across the state.

For Education and Childcare Administrators, Preschool and Daycare in the workforce region, the entry wage is \$14.39 per hour, the mean wage \$21.36 per hour, and experienced wage \$24.84 per hour. There are 80 of these workers in the region, and 1,170 across the state.

For Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education, the entry wage in the area is \$9.70 per hour, the mean wage \$14.01 per hour, and experienced wage \$16.17 per hour. There are 240 of these workers in the region, and 5,370 across the state.

*Table 8: Local Workforce Area Childcare and Preschool Workforce and Wages*

|  | <b>Total Jobs<br/>in Region</b> | <b>Total Jobs<br/>Statewide</b> | <b>Entry<br/>Wage</b> | <b>Mean<br/>Wage</b> | <b>Experienced<br/>Wage</b> |
|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Childcare Workers                                | 360                             | 5,250                           | \$8.40/hr.            | \$10.25/hr.          | \$11.17/hr.                 |
| Education & Childcare Admin, Preschool & Daycare | 80                              | 1,170                           | \$14.39/hr.           | \$21.36/hr.          | \$24.84/hr.                 |
| Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education     | 240                             | 5,370                           | \$9.70/hr.            | \$14.01/hr.          | \$16.17/hr.                 |

*Note: Data from Iowa Workforce Development (2022)*

<sup>6</sup> Northwest Iowa Local Workforce Area– Aggregate data for the counties of Buena Vista, Clay, Dickinson, Emmet, Kossuth, Lyon, O’Brien, Osceola, Palo Alto, Sioux.

<sup>7</sup> Entry Wage is the average of the lowest third of reported wages for the occupation.

<sup>8</sup> Mean Wages is the average wage and is computed by dividing the estimated total wage for an occupation by its weighted employment.

<sup>9</sup> Experienced Wage is the average of the upper two-thirds of reported wages for the occupation.

## EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

### Early Care and Education Environments in Iowa

There are several forms of early care and education available in Iowa to meet each family's varying needs and preferences. These include:

- Licensed Child Care Centers and Preschools
- Head Start and Early Head Start
- School-Based Programs
  - School-Age Care
  - Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program
- Registered Child Development Homes
- Legal Unregulated Home Care
  - Nanny or Au Pare
  - Family, Friend or Neighbor care

The educational experiences are different for each type of care and most communities desire to have multiple types of care and education available.

### Iowa Department of Health and Human Services<sup>10</sup>

In Iowa, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), formerly Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS), oversees programs that fall into three categories—Licensed Centers, Registered Child Development Homes, and Child Care Homes. The level of regulation and requirements placed on the provider varies based on the type. *See table starting on page 20 for a side-by-side comparison.*

#### *Licensed Centers*

Licensed Centers include child care centers (including child care programs operated by school districts), preschool programs, and Head Start. A center can care for larger groups of children, which are typically separated by age groups according to specific staff-to-child ratios. All centers are required to have an Iowa HHS inspection prior to opening and an annual inspection

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<sup>10</sup> Information in this section adapted from "Child Care Overview". Iowa Department of Health and Human Services. <https://hhs.iowa.gov/childcare/overview>.

after that. A licensed center may apply for a Child Care Assistance<sup>11</sup> Provider Agreement and may participate in the voluntary Iowa Quality for Kids (IQ4K) quality rating system<sup>12</sup>.

### *Registered Child Development Homes (a.k.a. Registered Homes)*

Anyone caring for more than 6 children at a time is required to register with the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services. Registered child development homes can provide care for up to 8, 12 or 16 children at a time depending on the registration level. Registration levels A, B, or C are based on the providers' experience and if there are any assistants or co-providers present. These programs are required to have an Iowa HHS inspection prior to opening and an unannounced annual inspection after that. A registered child development home may apply for a Child Care Assistance Provider Agreement with HHS and may participate in the voluntary ChildNet<sup>13</sup> program and IQ4K.

### *Child Care Homes*

Child Care homes can care for 6 or fewer children at any given time. These programs are not required to register but have the option to do so. A Child Care Home may apply for a Child Care Assistance Provider Agreement with HHS. Child Care Homes serving children eligible for child care assistance must complete an unannounced inspection once per year to assure compliance with health, safety, and fire standards. These providers are not eligible to participate in ChildNet or IQ4K.

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<sup>11</sup> Child Care Assistance (CCA) is a tuition assistance program available to children of income-eligible parents. The tuition reimbursement is paid directly to the child care program based on the child's attendance.

<sup>12</sup> IQ4K is voluntary rating system for Licensed Centers and Preschools, Registered Child Development Homes, Head Start programs, and child care programs that are operated by school districts. Participating providers achieve a rating on a scale of 1 to 5, by meeting key indicators of quality in the areas of nutrition & physical activity, professional development, leadership & administration, family & community partnerships, environment, teaching staff qualifications, and teaching & learning for centers, and the areas of nutrition & physical activity, professional development, family & community partnerships, environment, provider qualifications, and teaching & learning for homes.

<sup>13</sup> ChildNet certification is a requirement for Child Care Home providers wishing to achieve a Level 2 and higher in the Iowa Quality Rating System. To earn ChildNet certification, the provider must complete the ChildNet training series with Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R), enroll in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and demonstrate 100% compliance with the Iowa Department of Human Services' Registration checklist through a certification visit with their local CCR&R Child Care Consultant.

Table 9: HHS Requirements for Child Care Providers in Iowa

|  | <b>Non-Registered Home w/out HHS agreement</b> | <b>Non-Registered Home w/HHS agreement</b> | <b>Child Development Home A</b> | <b>Child Development Home B</b>          | <b>Child Development Home C (1 provider)</b> | <b>Child Development Home C2 (2 providers)</b> | <b>Licensed Center</b>                          |
|--|--|--|---------------------------------|--|--|--|---|
| State Regulated                                | No   | Yes  | Yes                             | Yes                                      | Yes  | Yes  | Yes   |
| Maximum Capacity <sup>14</sup>                 | 6  | 6  | 8                               | 12                                       | 8  | 16   | Varies by license                               |
| Inspection prior to Registration/Licensing     |  |  | •                               | •  | •  | •  | •   |
| Annual Facility & Records Inspection           |  | •  | •                               | •  | •  | •  | •   |
| Minimum age of caregiver                       |  | 18 years                                   | 18 years                        | 20 years                                 | 21 years                                     | 21 years                                       | Lead teacher 18 years                           |
| Iowa child abuse registry check <sup>15</sup>  |  | •  | •                               | •  | •  | •  | •   |
| Iowa criminal records check <sup>7</sup>       |  | •  | •                               | •  | •  | •  | •   |
| National (FBI) Fingerprint-based records check |  | •  | •                               | •  | •  | •  | •   |
| Experience required                            |  |  |                                 | 2 years or 1 year w/child related degree | 5 years or 4 years w/child related degree    | 5 years or 4 years w/child related degree      | Combination of experience and education         |
| Minimum education required                     |  |  |                                 | High school or GED                       | High school or GED                           | High school or GED                             | Director/ On-Site Supervisor High school or GED |
| Minimum pre-service & orientation trainings    |  | •  | •                               | •  | •  | •  | •   |
| Professional Development (every 2 years)       |  | 6 hours                                    | 24 hours                        | 24 hours                                 | 24 hours                                     | 24 hours                                       |   |
| CPR and First Aid Certification                |  | •  | •                               | •  | •  | •  | •   |
| Mandatory Reporter Training                    |  | •  | •                               | •  | •  | •  | •   |
| Emergency Preparedness Response Training       |  | •  | •                               | •  | •  | •  | •   |

<sup>14</sup> A home provider's own children are included in their legal capacity. Their school-age children are not unless they are being home-schooled.

<sup>15</sup> Iowa child abuse registry and Iowa criminal records checks are required for all household members age 14 and older.

|  | Non-Registered Home w/out HHS agreement | Non-Registered Home w/HHS agreement | Child Development Home A | Child Development Home B | Child Development Home C (1 provider) | Child Development Home C2 (2 providers) | Licensed Center |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|-----------------|
| Non-smoking environment                |   | •                                   | •                        | •                        | •                                     | •                                       | •               |
| Fire-extinguishers and smoke detectors |   | •                                   | •                        | •                        | •                                     | •                                       | •               |
| 2 direct exits                         |   |                                     |                          | •                        | •                                     | •                                       | •               |
| Space requirements                     |   |                                     |                          | •                        | •                                     | •                                       | •               |
| Quiet area for sick children           |   |                                     |                          | •                        | •                                     | •                                       | •               |
| Reference letters                      |   |                                     | 3 letters of reference   |                          |                                       |   |                 |

Adapted from: Iowa Department of Human Services (2011)  
<https://ccmis.dhs.state.ia.us/providerportal/ChildCareRequirements.aspx>.

*Additional HHS Requirements for Child Care Providers in Iowa*

- Non-Registered Homes may have up to 6 children, as long as at least one child is school-aged.
- Child Development Home A: Limit of 6 preschool children with a maximum of 4 aged 24 months or younger. Of these, no more than 3 can be 12 months of age or younger. They can also care for 2 school-aged children for a total maximum of 8 children in care at any one time.
- Child Development Home B: Limit of 8 preschool children with a maximum of 4 children aged 24 months or younger. Of these, no more than 3 can be 12 months of age or younger. They can also care for 4 school-aged children for a total maximum of 12 children in care at any one time. When there are more than 8 children present for more than 2 hours, an assistant 14 years or older needs to be present.
- Child Development Home C (2 providers): Limit of 14 preschool children with a maximum of 6 aged 24 months or younger. 2 additional school-age children can also be in care for a total maximum of 16 children in care at any one time. Whenever there are more than 8 children present, the business co-provider needs to be present.
- Child Development Home C (1 provider): Limit of 8 children with a maximum of 4 aged 24 months or younger.
- Center and preschool staff to child ratios: babies up to 23 months 1:4; 2-year-olds 1:6; 3-year-olds 1:8; 4-year-olds 1:12; 5-year-olds and older 1:15.

## **Iowa Department of Education**

Iowa's Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program administered by the Iowa Department of Education provides an opportunity for all young children in the State of Iowa to enter school ready to learn by expanding voluntary access to quality preschool curricula for all four-year-old children. Participating school districts receive funding to offer at least 10 hours of preschool per week during the school year. Districts may provide the preschool directly or contract with a community partner to provide preschool on their behalf.

Until January 2016 some schools that offered child care, preschool (other than the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program), or before and after school care, were exempt from being licensed with Iowa HHS, because they were overseen by the Iowa Department of Education. Now many of those programs need to be licensed as a child care center under HHS. An instructional program for children who are attending prekindergarten, as defined by the State Board of Education under Iowa Code section 256.11, or a higher grade level and are at least four years of age, or are at least three years of age and eligible for special education under chapter 256B, administered by a public or nonpublic school system accredited by the Department of Education or the State Board of Regents, or a nonpublic school system that is not accredited by the Department of Education or the State Board of Regents, is exempt from child care licensing under HHS.

## **Legal Unregulated Care**

In Iowa, parents may choose "family, friend, or neighbor care" or other unrelated caregiver such as a nanny or au pair. These types of care are not regulated and typically not tracked, unless the provider has an agreement with HHS to accept child care assistance, at which time they are considered a Child Care Home as described earlier. Because these providers are "off the radar" and data is not available, the data in this section does not include unregulated providers. These homes are reflected in the column titled "Non-Registered Home without HHS agreement" in the table below.

## **Early Care and Education Supply**

The total number of HHS regulated child care providers and child care spaces across Iowa has changed over the last few years. According to Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) data, from 2017 to 2022 the total number of child care providers in Iowa declined by 24%, yet the total number of child care spaces increased by 5%. During that same time, across Child Care Resource & Referral Northwest Iowa (Region 1)<sup>16</sup> the number of child care programs declined by 19%, while the number of child care spaces increased by 4% and the number of children age 0 to 5 declined by 2%.

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<sup>16</sup> Includes the counties of Buena Vista, Calhoun, Cherokee, Clay, Crawford, Dickinson, Emmet, Hamilton, Humboldt, Ida, Kossuth, Lyon, O'Brien, Osceola, Palo Alto, Plymouth, Pocahontas, Sac, Sioux, Webster, Winnebago, Woodbury and Wright.

Industry changes that occurred during this time that may have influenced these changes are:

- As of January 2016, child care, preschool (other than the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program), and before and after school programs operated by a school district are no longer exempt from licensing. In some communities this resulted in a shift with some spaces previously counted under the Department of Education being counted under HHS.
- Starting in September 2016, all child care center staff, registered child development home operators, and child care home operators that accept Child Care Assistance were required to take the 12-hour “Essential Child Care Preservice” training.
- As of July 2017, Child Care Home operators that accept Child Care Assistance were required to complete preservice training, have their home inspected at least once a year, and meet other regulations that had not previously been required.
- Since being established in 2007, participation of school districts in the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program has increased significantly. Overall participation of school districts reached 99% in 2022, with 324 of 327 districts participating. Overall enrollment has increased from 5,126 children in 2007, to 24,497 children in 2022. As more districts participate, this has increased the number of child care spaces under both HHS and Department of Education.

According to Child Care Resource & Referral data, from 2017 to 2022 Buena Vista County experienced a net increase of 77 regulated child care spaces. The only child care setting where there was a gain was 147 spaces within licensed centers. Despite this gain, there were losses among registered child development homes (28 spaces) and non-registered child care homes (42 spaces). There was no change among Department of Education programs.

Table 10: Programs and Spaces in Buena Vista County

|                               | 2017       | 2018       | 2019       | 2020       | 2021       | 2022       | Net Change |
|-------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <b>Total Programs</b>         | <b>35</b>  | <b>27</b>  | <b>26</b>  | <b>24</b>  | <b>26</b>  | <b>22</b>  | <b>-13</b> |
| HHS Centers & Preschools      | 8          | 8          | 8          | 7          | 8          | 7          | -1         |
| Dept. of Ed. Programs         | 4          | 4          | 4          | 4          | 4          | 4          | ---        |
| Registered Child Dvpmt. Homes | 11         | 10         | 9          | 10         | 9          | 8          | -3         |
| Child Care Homes              | 12         | 5          | 5          | 3          | 5          | 3          | -9         |
| <b>Total Spaces</b>           | <b>750</b> | <b>715</b> | <b>695</b> | <b>798</b> | <b>866</b> | <b>827</b> | <b>+77</b> |
| HHS Centers & Preschools      | 435        | 435        | 435        | 536        | 598        | 582        | +147       |
| Dept. of Ed. Programs         | 135        | 135        | 135        | 135        | 135        | 135        | ---        |
| Registered Child Dvpmt. Homes | 120        | 120        | 100        | 112        | 108        | 92         | -28        |
| Child Care Homes              | 60         | 25         | 25         | 15         | 25         | 18         | -42        |

Note: Data from Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral.

Iowa HHS data shows that as of October 2023, there are 6 HHS regulated programs in Storm Lake (50588 zip code) with a collective capacity of 304 spaces. Child care programs breakdown as follows:

- Licensed Child Care Centers and Preschools- There are 3 licensed child care centers and preschools, which account for 272 spaces (89%).
- Registered Child Development Homes- There are 4 registered child development homes, which account for 32 spaces (11%).
- Child Care Homes- There are no child care homes.

The following table shows the child care programs tracked by HHS within Storm Lake (50588 zip code). It is possible there are additional home providers or school-based programs not listed because they are not regulated by HHS, comparable data is not available for those programs.

*Table 11: HHS Licensed Centers and Preschools in Storm Lake, October 2023*

| <b>Program Name</b>   | <b>Hours</b>  | <b>HHS Capacity</b> | <b>Child Care Assistance</b> | <b>QRS Level</b> | <b>Ages</b> | <b>Year-Round</b> |
|---|---|---------------------|------------------------------|------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| Grace Lutheran Preschool  | 9:30 am-11:00 am<br>Mon-Fri   | 24                  | No                           | 0                | 3-4         | No                |
| Storm Lake Early Childhood Center (East Elementary and Gingerbread House) | 8:00 am-3:30 pm<br>Mon-Fri  | 200                 | No                           | 1                | 2-5         | No                |
| Storm Lake St Mary's Preschool  | Preschool:<br>8:00 am-3:00 pm, M-F<br>After School:<br>3:00 pm-5:30 pm, M-F | 48                  | Yes                          | 0                | 3-12        | No                |

*Note: Data from Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (2023)*

*Table 12: HHS Registered Child Development Homes in Storm Lake, October 2023*

| <b>Program Name &amp; Type</b>          | <b>Hours</b>                                     | <b>HHS Capacity</b> | <b>Child Care Assistance</b> | <b>QRS Level</b> |
|---|--|---------------------|------------------------------|------------------|
| Cassandra Hartwell<br>Registered Home B | 7:30 am-5:15 pm<br>Mon-Fri                       | 12                  | No                           | 0                |
| Israelle Moukylat<br>Registered Home A  | 7:30 am-5:30 pm<br>Mon-Fri                       | 8                   | Yes                          | 0                |
| Jody Childs<br>Registered Home B        | 7:30 am-4:30 pm, M-F<br>8:00 am-5:00 pm, Sat-Sun | 12                  | Yes                          | 1                |

*Note: Data from Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (2023)*

Residents of Storm Lake are served by 1 public school district and 1 private school, St. Mary's. Storm Lake Community School District (CSD) is based out of Storm Lake, and all buildings are located in Storm Lake. The district also serves a small unincorporated area in Sac County. The district has 3 buildings for preschool through 4<sup>th</sup> grade, and a middle school building for 5<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades. East Early Childhood Center houses preschool, Storm Lake Early Elementary houses Transitional Kindergarten and Kindergarten, and Storm Lake Elementary houses grades 1

through 4. Certified enrollment for the 2022–2023 school year was 2,712 students, with 1,035 of those being elementary (PK–4<sup>th</sup>).

Students in pre-kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade can sign up for Tornado Club, before and after school program, which is offered at each of the 3 elementary/preschool buildings and the middle school buildings. Hours for each of the programs are 7:15 am or 7:30 am until school starts, and after school until 5:00 pm or 5:30 pm. Parents pay a registration fee and tuition to attend.

Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program (SWVPP) is available through Storm Lake Community School District. According to certified enrollment numbers reported to the Iowa Department of Education for the 2022–2023 school year, there were 83.5 FTE students enrolled in SWVPP. The district operates their own SWVPP classrooms and has community partner agreements with 2 other organizations to offer SWVPP. The community partners are St. Mary’s School and Gingerbread House, which is operated by Upper Des Moines Opportunities, Inc. and located on the same campus and included within the HHS licensing for the Storm Lake Early Childhood Center site.

St. Mary’s School is a private school based out of Storm Lake, with all buildings located in Storm Lake. Certified enrollment for the 2022–2023 school year was 217 students, with 112 of those being elementary students (PK–5<sup>th</sup> grade). Of those elementary students, 86 are residents of the Storm Lake CSD.

St. Mary’s also offers “After Care Program” an after-school program for students enrolled in Pre-K through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The program accommodates up to 30 children in 3-year-old preschool through 1<sup>st</sup> grade from 3:30 pm (or 3:00 pm for preschool age) until 5:30 pm. For children in grades 2<sup>nd</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> (or age 12), the program can accommodate up to 15 students from 3:30 pm until 5:30 pm. Parents pay a weekly fee based on the number of children they have attending and the ages of those children. The After Care Program is not available on no school or early dismissal days.

### **Price Point**

Over the last 5 years, the average weekly tuition rates for care within a licensed center or preschool within Buena Vista County has increased for all ages. Besides individual providers changing their rates, changes in the average tuition rates can be the result of providers going out of business, new providers coming into the market, providers no longer reporting their tuition rates if they stop accepting child care assistance, or homes that let their registration expire and no longer report their tuition to HHS (centers cannot let their license expire or the license will be

revoked). When comparing rates, it is important to note that some providers charge tuition that is all-inclusive, while others may charge separate fees, or charge for specific items or require parents to furnish supplies, snacks, or other items, and some programs operate full-time while some are only part-time.

According to Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral, as of July 2022, the average weekly rates for care in a licensed center within Buena Vista County ranged from a low of \$165.00 per week for ages two through five, plus full-time school age care, to a high of \$167.50 per week for infant and toddler care. Before & after school care averaged \$73.33 per week.

*Table 13: Average Weekly Tuition Rates of Licensed Centers, Buena Vista County*

|                        | <b>2017</b> | <b>2018</b> | <b>2019</b> | <b>2020</b> | <b>2021</b> | <b>2022</b> |
|------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Infant                 | \$123.75    | \$123.75    | \$160.00    | \$168.75    | \$168.75    | \$167.50    |
| Toddler                | \$123.75    | \$123.75    | \$160.00    | \$165.00    | \$176.65    | \$167.50    |
| Two-Year-Old           | \$123.75    | \$123.75    | \$150.00    | \$153.75    | \$171.65    | \$165.00    |
| Three-Year-Old         | \$123.75    | \$123.75    | \$150.00    | \$153.75    | \$170.00    | \$165.00    |
| Four- & Five-Year-Old  | \$123.75    | \$123.75    | \$150.00    | \$157.50    | \$170.00    | \$165.00    |
| School-Age (full time) | \$123.75    | \$123.75    | \$150.00    | \$157.50    | \$180.00    | \$165.00    |
| Before & After School  | \$55.00     | \$55.00     | \$66.67     | \$70.00     | \$80.00     | \$73.33     |

*Note: Data from Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral.*

Over the last 5 years, the average weekly tuition rates for care within a registered home within Buena Vista County had increased until 2020, and then started decreasing. As of July 2022, average weekly rates for full time care in a registered child development home ranged from a low of \$132.50 for ages three through five, plus full-time school-age care, to a high of \$139.38 for infant care. Before & after school care averaged \$58.89 per week.

*Table 14: Average Weekly Tuition at Registered Homes, Buena Vista County*

|                        | <b>2017</b> | <b>2018</b> | <b>2019</b> | <b>2020</b> | <b>2021</b> | <b>2022</b> |
|------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Infant                 | \$131.40    | \$126.45    | \$127.35    | \$142.65    | \$156.25    | \$139.38    |
| Toddler                | \$131.40    | \$123.75    | \$123.75    | \$142.65    | \$152.50    | \$133.75    |
| Two-Year-Old           | \$131.40    | \$121.05    | \$120.15    | \$142.65    | \$152.50    | \$133.75    |
| Three-Year-Old         | \$131.40    | \$121.05    | \$120.15    | \$142.65    | \$151.25    | \$132.50    |
| Four- & Five-Year-Old  | \$131.40    | \$121.05    | \$120.15    | \$142.65    | \$151.25    | \$132.50    |
| School-Age (full time) | \$131.40    | \$121.05    | \$120.15    | \$120.15    | \$151.25    | \$132.50    |
| Before & After School  | \$58.40     | \$53.80     | \$53.40     | \$63.40     | \$67.22     | \$58.89     |

*Note: Data from Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral.*

With a portion of residents out-commuting to other counties and school districts boundaries that cross county lines, the average rates in neighboring counties can be informative. Average weekly

tuition at both licensed centers and registered child development homes varies from county to county.

When it comes to average weekly tuition at licensed centers, Clay County has the highest average for full time care for infants through age five, while Pocahontas County has the highest average for full-time school age care and before & after school care. In contrast, O'Brien County has the lowest average for full time care for infants through age five, plus before & after school care, while Cherokee County has the lowest for full-time school age.

*Table 15: Average Weekly Tuition at Licensed Centers in Surrounding Counties*

|                       | <b>Calhoun</b> | <b>Cherokee</b> | <b>Clay</b> | <b>Ida</b> | <b>O'Brien</b> | <b>Palo Alto</b> | <b>Pocahontas</b> | <b>Sac</b> |
|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------|------------|----------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| Infant                | \$150.00       | \$161.00        | \$229.50    | \$167.50   | \$142.65       | \$155.25         | \$193.75          | \$158.63   |
| Toddler               | \$150.00       | \$161.00        | \$229.50    | \$167.50   | \$142.65       | \$146.25         | \$188.75          | \$158.63   |
| Two-Year-Old          | \$150.00       | \$148.13        | \$229.50    | \$160.63   | \$141.75       | \$146.25         | \$162.50          | \$151.88   |
| Three-Year-Old        | \$150.00       | \$148.13        | \$207.00    | \$160.63   | \$136.13       | \$144.00         | \$162.50          | \$151.88   |
| Four- & Five-Year-Old | \$150.00       | \$148.13        | \$207.00    | \$160.63   | \$136.13       | \$144.00         | \$162.50          | \$151.88   |
| Full time School-Age  | \$150.00       | \$133.13        | \$157.50    | \$82.00    | \$136.13       | \$144.00         | \$162.50          | \$151.88   |
| Before & After School | \$66.67        | \$65.83         | \$70.00     | \$71.39    | \$60.50        | \$64.00          | \$72.22           | \$67.50    |
| Total HHS Centers     | 3              | 4               | 7           | 4          | 12             | 5                | 3                 | 4          |
| Spaces w/in Centers   | 124            | 235             | 721         | 164        | 628            | 291              | 176               | 202        |

Note: Data from Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral (2022)

When it comes to average weekly tuition for full-time care at registered homes, Sac County has the highest average for all ages plus before & after school care. In contrast, Palo Alto County has the lowest average for toddler through age five, plus full-time school age care and before and after school care. Pocahontas does not have any registered child development homes.

*Table 16: Average Weekly Tuition at Registered Homes in Surrounding Counties*

|                        | <b>Calhoun</b> | <b>Cherokee</b> | <b>Clay</b> | <b>Ida</b> | <b>O'Brien</b> | <b>Palo Alto</b> | <b>Pocahontas</b> | <b>Sac</b> |
|------------------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------|------------|----------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| Infant                 | \$132.08       | \$112.50        | \$138.75    | \$135.00   | \$122.25       | \$126.88         | N/A               | \$170.63   |
| Toddler                | \$128.33       | \$135.00        | \$135.42    | \$135.00   | \$136.69       | \$126.88         | N/A               | \$148.13   |
| Two-Year-Old           | \$128.33       | \$135.00        | \$135.42    | \$135.00   | \$133.88       | \$127.81         | N/A               | \$148.13   |
| Three-Year-Old         | \$128.33       | \$135.00        | \$134.58    | \$135.00   | \$128.25       | \$127.81         | N/A               | \$148.13   |
| Four- & Five-Year-Old  | \$128.33       | \$135.00        | \$134.58    | \$135.00   | \$128.25       | \$127.81         | N/A               | \$148.13   |
| Full time School-Age   | \$128.33       | \$135.00        | \$130.83    | \$135.00   | \$125.44       | \$124.44         | N/A               | \$148.13   |
| Before & After School  | \$57.04        | \$60.00         | \$58.15     | \$60.00    | \$55.75        | \$55.31          | N/A               | \$65.83    |
| Total Registered Homes | 3              | 7               | 9           | 1          | 7              | 5                | 0                 | 4          |
| Spaces w/in Reg. Homes | 32             | 88              | 100         | 12         | 76             | 64               | 0                 | 52         |

Note: Data from Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral (2022)

### **Child Care Assistance**

Child Care Assistance (CCA) is available to the children of income-eligible parents to help pay for care at Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) approved child care programs while a parent or caretaker works or attends school. Child care programs are reimbursed directly from HHS when they provide care to a family that qualifies. As of July 1, 2023, the income eligibility limit for those initially applying for CCA is 160% of Federal Poverty Level (FPL), or 200% if they have a child with special needs. According to the federally determined poverty threshold that went into effect as of January 2023, 160% of FPL is equivalent to \$39,776 for a household of 3, and \$48,000 for a household of 4. Once approved a family's income will be checked annually, and they continue to be eligible if their income does not exceed 225% of FPL, which is equivalent to \$55,935 for a household of 3, and \$67,500 for a household of 4.<sup>17</sup>

Reimbursements to the provider are based on the number of units a child attends each week but cannot exceed the number approved by HHS. A unit is a half-day (up to 5 hours). In most cases, a child that attends full time, five days a week would be approved for 10 units (2 half-day units, for 5 days) or less, depending on several factors, including the parent or caretaker work or school schedule. A child care provider is reimbursed at a rate equal to the amount they would charge a private pay family (or equivalent), with a maximum reimbursement rate based on whether or not the provider participates in the IQ4K quality rating system (QRS). At this time, 3 of the 6 HHS regulated child care programs in Storm Lake accept child care assistance. Among those programs, 2 participate in IQ4K, allowing them the potential to be reimbursed at a higher rate. *See table on next page.*

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<sup>17</sup> Starting July 5, 2023, HHS implemented a pilot program which allows the child care workforce to apply for Child Care Assistance (CCA) for their own children even if they are over the family income limit, as long as they meet all other CCA eligibility criteria, and the child will be cared for by someone other than the parent/guardian if approved.

Table 17: Half-Day Maximum CCA Reimbursement Rates

| Age Group                                | No QRS        |                  | QRS Level 1<br>or Level 2 |                  | QRS Level 3<br>or Level 4 |                  | QRS Level 5   |                  |
|--|---------------|------------------|---------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|
|  | Basic<br>Care | Special<br>Needs | Basic<br>Care             | Special<br>Needs | Basic<br>Care             | Special<br>Needs | Basic<br>Care | Special<br>Needs |
| <b>Licensed Centers</b>                  |               |                  |                           |                  |                           |                  |               |                  |
| Infant/Toddler                           | \$23.21       | \$51.94          | \$23.21                   | \$51.94          | \$23.21                   | \$51.94          | \$24.05       | \$51.94          |
| Preschool                                | \$18.98       | \$30.43          | \$19.50                   | \$30.43          | \$20.00                   | \$30.43          | \$21.00       | \$30.43          |
| School Age                               | \$15.00       | \$30.34          | \$15.50                   | \$30.34          | \$16.00                   | \$30.34          | \$17.00       | \$30.34          |
| <b>Child Development Home A or B</b>     |               |                  |                           |                  |                           |                  |               |                  |
| Infant/Toddler                           | \$14.00       | \$21.00          | \$14.00                   | \$21.00          | \$14.00                   | \$21.00          | \$15.00       | \$21.00          |
| Preschool                                | \$12.75       | \$19.13          | \$13.00                   | \$19.13          | \$13.75                   | \$19.13          | \$15.00       | \$19.13          |
| School Age                               | \$11.25       | \$16.88          | \$12.50                   | \$16.88          | \$13.00                   | \$16.88          | \$13.50       | \$16.88          |
| <b>Child Development Home C</b>          |               |                  |                           |                  |                           |                  |               |                  |
| Infant/Toddler                           | \$15.25       | \$22.88          | \$15.25                   | \$22.88          | \$15.25                   | \$22.88          | \$16.25       | \$22.88          |
| Preschool                                | \$15.00       | \$22.50          | \$15.00                   | \$22.50          | \$15.00                   | \$22.50          | \$16.00       | \$22.50          |
| School Age                               | \$13.00       | \$19.50          | \$13.75                   | \$19.50          | \$14.50                   | \$19.50          | \$15.00       | \$19.50          |
| <b>Child Care Homes (not registered)</b> |               |                  |                           |                  |                           |                  |               |                  |
| Infant/Toddler                           | \$12.98       | \$19.47          | N/A                       | N/A              | N/A                       | N/A              | N/A           | N/A              |
| Preschool                                | \$12.50       | \$18.75          | N/A                       | N/A              | N/A                       | N/A              | N/A           | N/A              |
| School Age                               | \$10.82       | \$16.23          | N/A                       | N/A              | N/A                       | N/A              | N/A           | N/A              |

Note: Data from Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (2023)

## CHILD CARE NEEDS SURVEY RESULTS

In August 2023, three electronic surveys developed by First Children’s Finance were distributed for the purpose of determining how child care affects employers and parents, as well as to gain insight from child care providers about the current challenges and opportunities in the community. To ensure there were no biases and to maintain confidentiality, surveys were distributed electronically and then collected and analyzed by First Children’s Finance. Comments made by survey participants are shared verbatim as long as an individual respondent, local employer, or child care program cannot be identified, in which case the comment may have been partially reported or edited to remove the identifying information.

### Employer Survey Results

A total of 15 companies participated in the employer survey. Employers indicated their companies represent the following industries: Accommodations & Food Service; Administrative & Waste Management; Educational Services; Finance & Insurance; Health Care & Social Assistance; Manufacturing; Professional, Scientific & Technical; Retail Trade; and Wholesale Trade.

Collectively they employ 3,502 individuals, with 2,609 of those working at or reporting to their Storm Lake location. Of those working or reporting to their Storm Lake location, 2,420 are full-time and 189 part-time. There are 85 full-time and 22 part-time vacant positions at their Storm Lake locations.

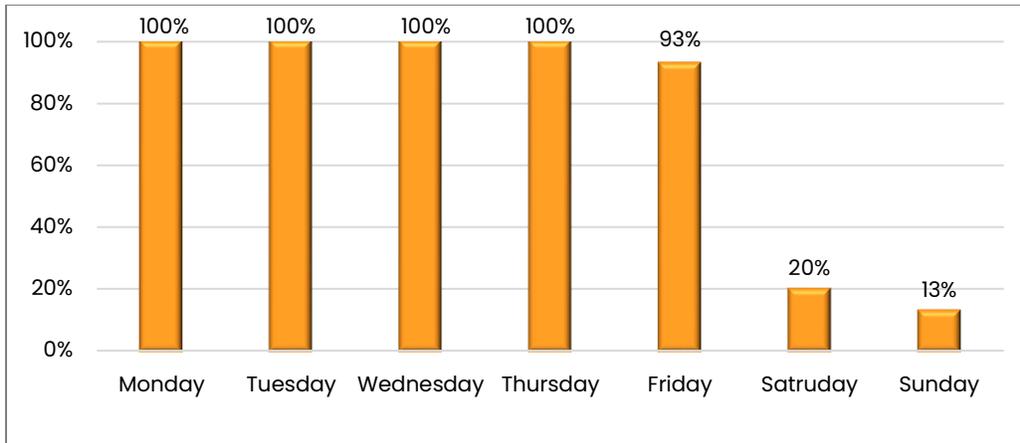
Table 18: Employees & Vacant Positions at Storm Lake Locations

|                         | <b>Full-Time Employees</b> | <b>Part-Time Employees</b> | <b>Total Employees</b> | <b>Full-Time Vacancies</b> | <b>Part-Time Vacancies</b> | <b>Total Vacancies</b> |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| First Shift (days)      | 1,928                      | 118                        | <b>2,046</b>           | 55                         | 11                         | <b>66</b>              |
| Second Shift (evenings) | 127                        | 60                         | <b>187</b>             | 14                         | 10                         | <b>24</b>              |
| Third Shift (overnight) | 365                        | 11                         | <b>376</b>             | 16                         | 1                          | <b>17</b>              |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>2,420</b>               | <b>189</b>                 | <b>2,609</b>           | <b>85</b>                  | <b>22</b>                  | <b>107</b>             |

In a separate question, employers were asked how many new positions they plan to add at their Storm Lake locations in the next 3 years. Seventy-three percent (73%) report they do plan to collectively add 78 positions. Most of those, 7 employers, plan to add 5 or fewer positions, while 3 plan to add 6-10 positions, and 1 plans to add 25 positions.

When asked which days of the week their employees typically work, 1 indicated they operate Monday through Thursday, 11 indicated they operate Monday through Friday, 1 operates Monday through Saturday, and 2 operate Monday through Sunday (7 days).

Figure 1: Days Employees Typically Work



When it comes to hours of operation the largest group, 80% (12 employers), operate first shift, with 1 operating Monday through Thursday, 10 of those operating Monday through Friday, and 1 operating Monday through Saturday. Hours of operation for these employers varies but all occur between 6:00 am and 6:00 pm. The remaining 20% (3 employers) operate 24-hours, with 1 operating Monday through Friday (weekdays) and 2 operating Monday through Sunday (7 days).

Employers were asked if some or all of their employees work set shifts, and the hours for each shift. The following comments were received:

- *First shift times- 5:00 am to 2:00 pm, 7:15 am to 4:15 pm, or 8:15 am to 5:00 pm. Second shift times- 2:00 pm to 11:00 pm. Third shift times 8:00 pm to 4:55 am, 10:30 pm to 7:00 am, or 11:15 pm to 7:45 am.*
- *7:00 am to 7:00 pm, 7:00 pm to 7:00 am, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, 7:00 am to 3:00 pm, 3:00 pm to 11:00 pm, or 11:00 pm to 7:00 am.*
- *Varies per department.*

Sixty-seven percent (67%) of employers indicated there are sometimes changes or fluctuations in their hours or days of operations. Comments received about schedule fluctuations were:

- *Between the end of May and mid-August, most employees are on summer break.*
- *Summer break.*
- *Closed on Saturdays during summer months.*
- *Inclement weather.*
- *Day shift sometimes may work 9-hour days. Saturday work can occur.*

- Faculty have summers off.
- During production manufacture schedule we have 2 employees come in for 2 hours on Saturday and 2 hours on Sunday. This happens about once per month.
- Seasonal after Labor Day until April 1st. Also, a shutdown of the indoor water park will impact staffing throughout the resort.
- We increase to 7 days per week from Thanksgiving through Christmas.
- Home visitors do home visits that can go as late as 7:00pm, just depends on the family's needs and schedules.

Employers were asked what percentage of their employees are female. Overall, the majority of employers report that over one-half of their employees are female. Six percent (6%) reported less than one-quarter, 27% reported between one-quarter to one-half, 27% reported one-half to three-quarters, and 40% reported over three-quarters.

Table 19: Composition of Workforce

|                    | Percent of Employers |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| Female 0% to 25%   | 6%                   |
| Female 26% to 50%  | 27%                  |
| Female 51% to 75%  | 27%                  |
| Female 76% to 100% | 40%                  |

Employers were asked to estimate the percentage of employees that have children age 12 or younger. Overall, most employers reported that less than half of their employees have children age 12 or younger. Twenty-nine percent (29%) reported less than one-quarter, 64% reported between one-quarter to one-half, and 7% reported one-half to three-quarters.

Table 20: Percentage of Employees with Children

|                           | Percent of Employers |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| 0% to 25% have children   | 29%                  |
| 26% to 50% have children  | 64%                  |
| 51% to 75% have children  | 7%                   |
| 76% to 100% have children | 0%                   |

Employers were asked to estimate the percentage of their workforce that lives in Storm Lake. The majority reported that more than half of their workforce lives in Storm Lake. Twenty percent (20%) reported up to one-quarter of their workforce lives in Storm Lake, 20% reported between one-quarter and one-half, 47% reported one-half to three-quarters, and 13% reported more than three-quarters. See table on next page.

Table 21: Percent of Employees Living in Storm Lake

|                                | Percent of Employers |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| 0% to 25% live in Storm Lake   | 20%                  |
| 26% to 50% live in Storm Lake  | 20%                  |
| 51% to 75% live in Storm Lake  | 47%                  |
| 76% to 100% live in Storm Lake | 13%                  |

Fifty-three percent (53%) of employers indicated their company had employees that departed during the last 12 months as a direct result of child care challenges. Collectively they lost 74 employees, with one company losing 55 employees, another losing 10 employees, and the remaining losing 1 to 3 employees each. As a follow up, employers were then asked a series of questions about productivity, absenteeism, and other challenges as they relate to child care.

When it comes to employee productivity, 67% of employers indicated they had challenges related to productivity due to employee’s child care challenges, while 13% were unsure, and 20% said they did not. Comments received were:

- *Employee attendance.*
- *Mostly from the standpoint of maternal leave. Extended leave can cause delays in projects getting completed. We also have to reduce schedules when an assistant or nurse is unable to be at work.*
- *Having to leave early to pick up children.*
- *We often run short and 90% of planned production and line speed due to absenteeism which may be due to child care issues.*
- *If employees can’t come to work due to no child care (whether provider is closed or sick for the day) this causes a hardship.*
- *Before and after school issues.*
- *PTO and flexibility to adapt schedules happen regularly. It’s hard to hone in on a specific productive metric to determine if it is due to childcare challenges.*
- *Unsure as we don’t track this data.*
- *We have had employees that had to bring a child with them due to lack of childcare and have them sit in the lobby or business center while mom works. We have also had challenges with staff calling off.*
- *Sometimes employees will have to call in late or not be able to make it due to childcare not being available.*
- *Employees have to work from home occasionally due to lack of child care.*
- *It can be hard finding substitutes or translators when specific staff are gone from an office or classroom.*

- *If school is out or regular daycare is closed, having backup daycare for people would be great.*

When asked about absenteeism due to employee's child care challenges, 74% of employers indicated they had experienced challenges, while 13% were unsure, and 13% had not. Comments received were:

- *Occasionally we will have employees unable to come to work because they could not find someone to watch their child(ren) but so far it has been pretty rare.*
- *Employee attendance.*
- *We certainly have challenges due to absenteeism.*
- *We have high daily absenteeism and then the impact is required Saturday work to make up lost production or adjusted work schedule to work 9-hour days.*
- *If employees can't come to work due to no child care (whether provider is closed or sick for the day) this causes a hardship.*
- *No school days like snow and summer.*
- *Employees have had to work from home or make schedule accommodations due to a lack of child care. It mostly impacts new employees who are trying to establish consistent child care in a new area.*
- *We have had several instances over the last year with employees calling off due to lack of childcare.*
- *Sometimes employees will have to call in late or not able to make it due to childcare not being available.*
- *Employees occasionally come in late or leave early due to lack of child care.*
- *It can be hard finding substitutes or translators when specific staff are gone from an office or classroom.*
- *Not having backup since there aren't many options for daycare in the Storm Lake area.*

In a separate question, 47% of employers indicated they had experienced difficulty hiring due to child care options or challenges, 40% were unsure, and 13% had not. Comments received were:

- *We had hoped to hire one person to fill an open teaching position and she was unable to find childcare for her son on Tuesdays and Thursdays when he isn't in preschool, so she would not accept a position.*
- *It is an issue, but it has never been the cause of not being able to fill a position.*
- *Having no child care causes many issues, especially for single parent families.*
- *It is a dealbreaker for some candidates whom we have offered jobs to. It's impacted new employees' spouse's ability to find work as they become the childcare provider with the relocation and lack of resources. It also prevents employees who move from out of state from staying. We hear annually from employees who have been here a year or two*

*moving due to the need for childcare resources and to be closer to grandparents for childcare support.*

- *We have not had anyone decline a job offer due childcare issues.*
- *Especially for evening and overnight.*
- *Sometimes we will have to hire part-time due to childcare not being readily available.*
- *Most new hires have been recent graduates that don't yet have children.*
- *If a potential hire can't find daycare for their kids or we can't accommodate to their hours, they are less likely to accept the position if offered.*

Employers were given a list of common effects their employees (not job applicants) may experience due to child care challenges and were asked to select all that they are aware of as having affected their employees in the last 12 months. The challenges that were indicated by at least one-half of the employers were employees had to leave work early, which was experienced by 100% of employers, employees arrived late to work (90%), missed a day of work because their child care provider was closed, on vacation, or not available (80%), and had to reduce the number of hours worked (53%). None of the employers indicated their employees had experienced no issues related to work and child care.

*Table 22: Effects of Child Care Challenges on Employees*

|   | <b>Percent of Employers</b> |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Had to leave work early   | 100%                        |
| Arrived late to work  | 93%                         |
| Missed a day of work because their provider was closed, on vacation, or not available | 80%                         |
| Have had to reduce the number of hours worked   | 53%                         |
| Missed a day of work because their provider did not have room or space for a child    | 47%                         |
| Unable to work overtime   | 47%                         |
| Lower productivity  | 47%                         |
| Quit a job  | 47%                         |
| Had to bring their child to work with them  | 40%                         |
| Unable to travel for work   | 40%                         |
| Unable to accept a different work schedule or shift                                   | 33%                         |
| Had to change jobs to one that works with their child care arrangement                | 33%                         |
| Did not accept a desired job offer  | 27%                         |
| Had to leave their child home alone to go to work                                     | 20%                         |
| Received disciplinary action (not including firing)                                   | 13%                         |
| Other (see comment below table)   | 13%                         |
| Got fired   | 7%                          |
| Took a job that does not fit their skills   | 7%                          |
| Our employees experienced no issues related to work and child care                    | 0%                          |

Comments received were:

- *During COVID shutdown we lost most of our employees that had children because they had to stay home to care for them and never came back to work. One employee tried to come back to work for several months, but decided it was too much time away from the kids after being home for so long with them, so she eventually quit as well.*
- *Had to have their partner/spouse miss work to stay with child so they could go to work.*

Employers were asked if their company currently offered any child care related benefits to their employees (they were asked to select all that apply). The majority of employers (60%) indicated they offer dependent care flex spending accounts and 7% indicated they offer financial assistance to help employees pay for child care, both of these typically result in some costs for the employer to pay an entity to administer the program. Forty percent (40%) indicated they do not offer either benefit.

*Table 23: Child Care Related Benefits Currently Offered*

|   | <b>Percent of Employers</b> |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Dependent Care Flex Spending Accounts                     | 60%                         |
| Financial assistance to help employees pay for child care | 7%                          |
|   |                             |
| None of the above   | 40%                         |

Employers were then asked what prevents their company from offering any or some of the benefits listed above. Comments received were:

- *Consistency and fairness. What you do for one you do for all and difficult the bigger the business. Also need to follow corporate standardized policies.*
- *It has not been a huge issue and it would be hard to keep the compensation fair.*
- *We are a small company, so cannot provide paid child care, although we would love to if we could afford it.*
- *Additional benefit cost.*
- *Cost.*
- *Not large enough of a need or business for either.*
- *Cost and availability.*
- *It is not in my control, the agency experienced major budgeting issues recently so I'm sure it wouldn't be in the budget for us.*

Employers were then given a second list of child care related benefits and asked which they offer to their employees (they were asked to select all that apply). The benefits on this list typically do not result in the employer incurring additional costs. Over one-half (53%) indicated they provide

employees with child care information in employee orientation, this was followed by 33% of employers indicating they include child care information in their employee handbook. Overall, 47% of employers indicated they offer none of the benefits listed.

*Table 24: Non-Financial Child Care Related Benefits Offered*

|   | <b>Percent of Employers</b> |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Flexible schedules if their regular child care arrangement is not available     | 13%                         |
| Work-from-home options if their regular child care arrangement is not available | 7%                          |
| Child care information is included in employee orientation                      | 53%                         |
| Child care information is included in an employee handbook                      | 33%                         |
|   |                             |
| None of the above   | 47%                         |

Employers were then asked what prevents their company from offering any or some benefits listed above. Comment received was:

- *It is difficult for schools to offer flexible schedules or work from home options because we need adults at school when the students are in school.*
- *Implementation and consistency concerns.*
- *Childcare information is limited to share with employees. Known resources have extensive waiting lists so it's become unproductive information. In-home child care options are often full too and/or not interested in having their numbers shared publicly.*
- *We are as flexible as possible.*
- *Provide information when it is requested by employee.*
- *[We are a] 24-hour operation, requires consistent staffing.*
- *Daily tasks need to be completed, but we are willing to work with anyone's schedule to accommodate.*
- *Costs.*
- *Only select staff are able to work from home.*

Employers were asked to share any other ways their business assists employees with child care.

The following comments were received:

- *Flexibility when we can, but that is not a long-term solution.*
- *Word of mouth amongst employees, especially those who are mothers sharing contacts and resources.*
- *We have allowed employees to bring their children to work if they were unable to find childcare for a few days. We are very flexible with working hours and allow as much work-from-home as possible for the various jobs. Some jobs do not allow a "work from home" option, so we find other tasks on a temporary basis that will allow them to be*

*productive from home for employees to minimize the PTO time they have to use for such events.*

- *Asking other employees for resources. Firsthand experience is best.*
- *We try to be flexible with schedules to accommodate when possible.*
- *If necessary, we can bring our children in-although not the best option. We can also work from home if prepared ahead of time.*

Employers were asked how their business would be willing to assist in addressing the child care shortage and/or supporting child care businesses. A list of options was provided, and respondents asked to select all that apply. The majority, 53%, indicated none of the above. Among those that are willing to consider helping, 33% selected “other” (see comments below), followed by a donation or financial contribution to build, remodel, or expand a child care center with 20%.

*Table 25: Child Care Solutions Employers are Willing to Consider*

|   | <b>Percent of Employers</b> |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Provide space for on-site for a child care center (owned & operated by another entity)                                      | 7%                          |
| Own and operate a child care center (either on-site or off-site)  | 7%                          |
| Provide a significant donation or financial contribution as match for a grant application                                   | 7%                          |
| Donation or financial contribution for build, remodel, or expand a child care center  | 20%                         |
| Donate land or provide a financial contribution to purchase land to build a larger child care center                        | 13%                         |
| Directly employ the Center Director (paying wages and benefits) in order to help reduce operating costs                     | 7%                          |
| Annual donation or financial contribution to a child care center that is equal to the wages of a child care center director | 7%                          |
| Annual donation or financial contribution for a portion (but not all) of the wages of a child care center director          | 13%                         |
| Other (see comments below)  | 33%                         |
| None of the above   | 53%                         |

Comments received from those indicating “other” were:

- *Since we offer both 3-year-old and 4-year-old preschool programs, we do own and operate a childcare center to an extent, but I wasn't sure if that meets your definition of a childcare center since we do not care for children under 3 years old.*
- *All options pending corporate approval.*
- *We would work in partnership to direct students, specifically School of Education students, to work for a center. Help to establish a pipeline of steady employees.*
- *We would be willing to volunteer time to provide educational programs in agriculture or science.*

- *I don't run the agency so I can't make any of those decisions. It's hard for me to make financial donations or contributions as I am already having to put a lot of money towards my child's daycare.*

Next employers were given another list of ways a business may assist in addressing the child care shortage and/or supporting child care businesses. Respondents were asked to select all that apply. Forty percent (40%) indicated they would appoint an employee to serve on the Board of Directors of a child care program, 40% also indicated "other" and were asked to specify (see comment below). Overall, 7% said none of the above.

*Table 26: Ways that Employers are Willing to Support Child Care Businesses*

|   | <b>Percent of Employers</b> |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Appoint an employee to serve on the Board of Directors of a child care program  | 40%                         |
| Provide child care providers access to purchase supplies through our company to take advantage of bulk pricing or discounts   | 7%                          |
| Provide in-kind services to reduce expenses of a child care program (ex. bookkeeping, payroll, maintenance, cleaning, etc.)   | 27%                         |
| Donation or financial contribution for the operation of a child care program  | 13%                         |
| Donation or financial contribution for child care scholarships for your employees   | 27%                         |
| Donation or financial contribution for child care scholarships for all children   | 7%                          |
| Pay a child care provider the tuition of a vacant slot in order to reserve or hold that slot for one of your employees (with the employee taking over payment upon enrolling) | 13%                         |
| Other   | 40%                         |
|   |                             |
| None of the above   | 7%                          |

Comments received from those indicating "other" were:

- *We would be open to considering some type of support but are unable to commit to anything specific at this time.*

Employers were asked, what they think is the biggest challenge facing parents in regard to child care, and what will resolve that challenge. Comments received were:

- *Lack of childcare providers. There needs to be more incentives or financial support to get people to want to operate a daycare facility. The regulations are also often so extensive that it is difficult to meet all those guidelines and be able to make a profit.*
- *Equity.*
- *The cost of paying for day care.*
- *Lack of child care facilities in the area.*
- *Parents want/expect cheap and free or don't want to work to pay for childcare. Also, many don't want to leave kids and prefer a trusted family member or friend.*

- *Reliable child care with dedicated individuals is hard to find.*
- *Having a center large enough to support the community's needs. We have employees utilizing child care services in Newell, Sioux Rapids, Alta, Aurelia, Cherokee, Schaller, and in-home options in a 35-mile radius of Storm Lake. The lack of local resources creates a financial and logistical bind for our families. The opportunity for a newly employed person to find daycare is non-existent. They have to come prepared with the resources established or it's unproductive. A child care center would provide a long-term resource used for many families. Child care is a service most families would use consistently and not move from place to place for. Many in-home options have closed in the past five years due to no longer wanting to do child care or retirement. There are not equal amounts of in-home options becoming available to offset this.*
- *Hours and management flexibility are the items we thought were most important. We changed to become much more flexible and to accommodate hours as much as possible, but still lost our employees with children.*
- *Not enough childcare providers in the region.*
- *Flexible hours and changing schedules may make obtaining childcare difficult. Also, the cost may be prohibitive.*
- *Lack of options.*
- *Cost and Availability.*
- *There are no child care facilities in Storm Lakes. Closest ones would be in Alta or Storm Lake. There are very little in home daycares as well. Waiting lists are long.*
- *Emergencies that require taking children to another daycare. Having an option for drop-off in Storm Lake area.*

Employers were asked what opportunities they see that should be explored to help address the child care supply. Comments received were:

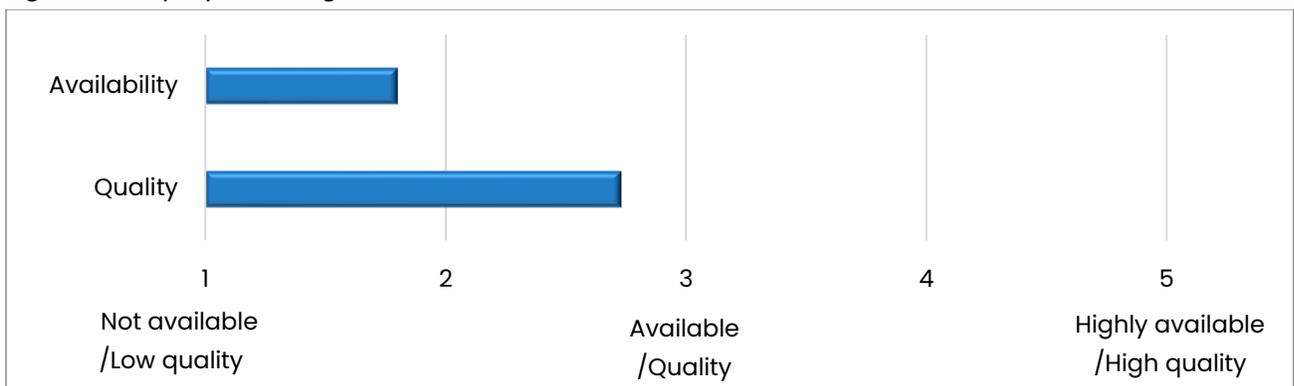
- *Facilities / space available for day care. Workforce availability to staff a facility. Funding to operate a facility.*
- *Boys & girls club, YMCA after school programs, infant care.*
- *All options.*
- *For BVU employees, a center with availability to move into a spot within a few weeks or month when relocating. Long-term for Storm Lake, a center that is open seven days a week with broad hours to support the industrial work forces. Competitive pay to the employees to ensure quality care is provided. If families are driving 30 miles one way to find adequate child care, they may be willing to pay a little more for quality care, close to home and/or work.*
- *I think it would be wonderful to have additional well-managed childcare centers in the city. We could include one in a community center building that would offer educational*

learning opportunities for all ages, perhaps even bring an eldercare and a childcare center together into the mix. A community center building would allow many diverse groups the opportunity to gather, and many groups in Storm Lake to get to know one another, as well as provide a place for teens, young adults, older adults, and seniors to gather for safe and healthy fun (i.e. city group basketball, city group volleyball, city group badminton, bowling, skateboarding, skating, Christmas Caroling, Passover gatherings, Ramadan gatherings, Dancing gatherings, community theater, rock climbing, STEM programs, GROW programs, reading programs, tutoring centers, an indoor walking track for seniors during the winter and for walking/running programs for children, etc.). This would help bring young families with children into our area and help us encourage employees with families to relocate to Storm Lake.

- Another facility or more at home providers.
- As many as possible, especially for nights and weekends.
- Partnerships with larger employers and public organizations.
- Helping Ready Set Grow expand into Storm Lake. Offering more financial incentives to the daycare workers. I don't think they are paid the best, causing high turnover and short staffing.

Employers were asked to rate the *availability* of child care in Storm Lake on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not available, 3 available, and 5 highly available (the higher the score, the more available). The average rating was 1.80. Employers were then asked to rate the *quality* of child care in Storm Lake on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being low quality, 3 quality, and 5 high quality (the higher the score, the higher quality). The average rating was 2.73.

Figure 2: Employer Ratings of Child Care in Storm Lake



Employers were asked to provide additional thoughts about their employees' needs related to child care. Comments received were:

- We recognize that there is a great need for quality childcare in Storm Lake.
- All communities benefit from child care.

- *It would certainly be easier to bring people into the Storm Lake area for employment if there were more child care, educational programs, and fun activities for older children to do year-round.*
- *Having more bi-lingual providers or options for different ethnicities to find care that reflects their child/family's needs.*

The final question asked employers to provide any additional thoughts about the supply of child care in Storm Lake. Comments received were:

- *Storm Lake is a wonderful and diverse community, but as an employer it is sometimes difficult to get people to relocate to the area when they have a family. Additional childcare options would help this challenge immensely.*
- *We hope that Storm Lake will be able to develop a larger daycare with more flexible options for working parents.*

## Child Care Provider Survey Results

A total of 5 child care providers surveys were completed. Four (4) providers are located in the 50588–zip code which is Storm Lake, and the other is in the 51002–zip code which is Alta. The provider located outside the zip code indicated they serve several families that live in Storm Lake and that they would consider expanding and having a second location in Storm Lake. Three (3) home–based providers and 2 child care centers are represented. Two (2) of the home providers are registered child development homes with the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and 1 is not registered but does have a current agreement with HHS to accept Child Care Assistance.

All 5 providers answered questions about the length of time they have been providing care, and how much longer they plan to provide care (home providers only). One (1) center has been in business for 41 years, while the other center has been in business for 5 to 9 years. Among home providers, 2 have been in business for more than 10 years and 1 in business for less than 1 year. All 3 home providers indicated they intend to continue providing child care for an additional 5 or more years.

*Table 27: Years Child Care Business Has Been in Operation*

|         | <b>20+ Years</b> | <b>10 to 19 years</b> | <b>5 to 9 years</b> | <b>1 to 4 years</b> | <b>Less than 1 year</b> |
|---------|------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Homes   | ---              | 2                     | ---                 | ---                 | 1                       |
| Centers | 1                | ---                   | 1                   | ---                 | ---                     |

The providers that participated collectively care for 98 children, with 56 of those enrolled full-time and 42 enrolled part-time. Although the capacity is assigned to a center or registered home by HHS is based on usable square footage, there are often reasons for the provider setting a lower preferred capacity, such as the ability to staff all classrooms, or large spaces like multi-purpose rooms in centers counted in the total license that do not work well for a classroom. One (1) center and 1 registered home reported they prefer to operate at a capacity that is lower than the maximum they are allowed by HHS. According to Iowa HHS, the capacity of the licensed center is 157, while their preferred capacity is 86, and they currently have 50 children enrolled, both full-time and part-time. According to Iowa HHS, the registered home has a legal capacity of 12 children, while their preferred capacity is 8, and they currently have 6 children enrolled full-time. *See table on next page.*

Table 28: Participating Programs by Type

|                           | <b>Total Providers</b> | <b>Legal Capacity</b> | <b>Preferred Capacity</b> | <b>Full-Time Enrollment<sup>18</sup></b> | <b>Part-Time Enrollment</b> |
|---------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| Licensed Center/Preschool | 2                      | 181                   | 86                        | 43                                       | 40                          |
| Registered Homes          | 2                      | 20                    | 16                        | 7  | 0                           |
| Unregistered Homes        | 1                      | 6                     | 7                         | 6  | 2                           |

The centers reported they collectively employ 8 full-time employees (36 hours per week or more) and 11 part-time (35 hours per week or less) employees. During the previous 12 months, 4 full-time and 3 part-time employees left one of the centers (voluntarily or involuntarily) while the other center had no employees depart. Currently there are 5 vacant staff positions at one of the centers, all of the positions are full-time. When asked how hiring staff had been over the last 12 months, 1 center indicated it was very difficult, and the other reported they have not tried to hire. Centers were asked to provide comments about hiring, no comments were received.

One home provider indicated they have 1 full-time co-provider, assistant, or employee. During the previous 12 months, none of the home providers had staff or assistance leave and none currently have vacant positions. When asked how hiring has been over the last 12 months, all 3 home providers indicated they have not tried to hire. No additional comments were received.

When asked if they had to limit enrollment or close a classroom due to not having enough staff during the last 12 months, 1 center indicated yes. Comments received were:

- *Not enough staff to cover rooms We don't have staff/space to enroll more students currently.*

When asked if they had turned away families or put them on a waitlist due to lack of openings during the last 12 months, 1 center and 2 homes indicated yes. Comments received were:

- *We need more staff to accept more students. We need a bigger space to offer more care.*
- *I am only allowed 8 kiddos non-school age. I have also had to turn families away due to disabilities. I do not have a bathroom on the main level, the child was not able to go up stairs. I am trying to get my facility handicap approved. I am trying to find a grant to help with that. I have had to turn away infants. I am allowed so many and not a lot of people take them. We do not have many daycare providers in this area, so unfortunately there are a lot of children turned away.*

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<sup>18</sup> It is possible for a child care program to have more children enrolled than what their capacity allows due to varying attendance schedules of the children.

One (1) center and all 3 of the homes operate between the hours of 5:00 am and 6:00 pm (exact hours for each program vary), Monday through Friday, year-round. The remaining 1 center offers part-time preschool, operating a couple of hours each morning, Monday through Friday, during the school year only. None of the providers are open for what are considered extended hours (after 6:30 pm), one of the homes also provides care during the day on Saturday and Sunday.

Child care providers were asked, when parents contact you about child care, which factor is most important, and were asked to select one from a multiple-choice list. Two (2) providers indicated available space, 2 indicated tuition rates or price, and 1 indicated positive interactions between staff and children.

*Table 29: Factor Most Important to Parents Inquiring About Care*

|   | <b>Number of Providers</b> |
|---|----------------------------|
| Available space/timing of enrollment                  | 2                          |
| Care includes preschool                               | ---                        |
| Dependable staff or provider                          | ---                        |
| Drop-in or occasional care                            | ---                        |
| Educational curriculum used                           | ---                        |
| Evening or 2 <sup>nd</sup> shift care (after 7:00 pm) | ---                        |
| Health and safety policies                            | ---                        |
| Iowa Quality Rating System (QRS) rating               | ---                        |
| Location  | ---                        |
| Part-time options                                     | ---                        |
| Positive interactions between staff and children      | 1                          |
| Second-shift care                                     | ---                        |
| Secured entrance                                      | ---                        |
| Special needs care                                    | ---                        |
| Third shift/overnight care                            | ---                        |
| Transportation to and from school or preschool        | ---                        |
| Tuition assistance or scholarships                    | ---                        |
| Tuition rates or price                                | 2                          |
| Upkeep or appearance of the facility and playground   | ---                        |
| Weekend care  | ---                        |

Many providers will participate in programs that improve business operations or provide funding to off-set costs. Providers were asked about multiple federal and state programs available to licensed centers, registered homes, and some unregistered homes. All of the programs are familiar with the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), Iowa HHS Child Care Assistance, and the Child Care Assistance pilot program for child care workforce, even if they have not participated. *See table on next page.*

Table 30: Child Care Programs Participation in Funding Opportunities

|  | <b>Current or Past Participant</b> | <b>Aware of, But Never Participated</b> | <b>Not Familiar With/Not Heard Of</b> |
|--|------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)                                    | 1 center<br>3 homes                | 1 center<br>---                         | ---<br>---                            |
| Iowa HHS Child Care Assistance   | 1 center<br>3 homes                | 1 center<br>---                         | ---<br>---                            |
| Child Care Assistance (CCA) Pilot Program for Child Care Workforce           | ---<br>2 homes                     | 2 centers<br>1 home                     | ---<br>---                            |
| Agreement with school to provider Universal Preschool (4-year-old preschool) | ---<br>---                         | 1 center<br>1 home                      | 1 center<br>2 homes                   |

As a follow up, providers were asked about additional programs involving quality improvement, technology and education. Overall, most programs are not participating in the current opportunities, with the exception of 1 registered home provider that reported they are participating in 4 of the 5 programs. There was 1 center and 2 homes that reported they are not familiar with or had not heard of most of the programs.

Table 31: Child Care Programs Participation or Knowledge of State Programs

|  | <b>Current or Past Participant</b> | <b>Aware of, But Never Participated</b> | <b>Not Familiar With/Not Heard Of</b> |
|--|------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| New IQ4K Quality Improvement Rating System   | 1 center<br>1 home                 | ---<br>1 home                           | 1 center<br>1 home                    |
| TEACH Scholarship Program  | ---<br>1 home                      | 1 center<br>1 home                      | 1 center<br>1 home                    |
| Child Care WAGE\$® salary supplement   | ---<br>1 home                      | 1 center<br>---                         | 1 center<br>2 homes                   |
| FieldPrint Fingerprinting  | ---<br>---                         | 1 center<br>1 home                      | 1 center<br>2 homes                   |
| Current opportunity for HHS-funded monthly subscription fees for either Playground or brightwheel child care management software | ---<br>1 home                      | 1 center<br>---                         | 1 center<br>2 homes                   |

Child care providers were also asked how many children enrolled in their program are receiving or are eligible for some form of financial assistance such as child care tuition assistance, the food program (CACFP), or other needs-based grants or scholarship programs. One (1) center indicated a total of 3 full-time children and 2 homes indicated a collective total of 7 full-time children. No programs indicated any part-time children are eligible for these programs, and 1 center and 1 home indicated they have no children enrolled in their program that are receiving or are eligible for any financial assistance.

Providers were asked a series of open-ended questions about being a child care provider, what they see for the future of child care, and to share other comments about child care. Each of these questions and responses are shared below.

Child care providers were asked if they had the opportunity, would they wish to expand their current child care program to serve more children. One (1) center and 1 home said “yes”.

Comments received were:

Those indicating yes, they would expand said:

- *If we have the funds and location we would wish to expand into Storm Lake to open a larger facility.*
- *Change category and do other training.*

Those indicating no, they would not expand said:

- *I would not expand because it is too hard finding good people to work with you or kids. People just quit or switch jobs all the time.*

If you wish to expand your program, what kind of support would you need in order to be able to serve more children? Comments received were:

- *Funds, staffing.*
- *If I did expand, I would like to have an additional room or larger house. That would be great for more activities. Also, older children and children with disabilities.*
- *Funds to develop my basement which is so vast, as well as the playground.*

What is the greatest challenge or barrier for expanding an existing child care program and what solutions would help? Comments received were:

- *Funds. We need grants or a business to help support us to offer benefits to staff.*
- *I would love to have a larger area for kids to play. I have taken school aged children, but it is too hard with also having younger children. The younger children need naps and the older children do not. All the kids are to stay on my main level, and I have no additional area for them to go. I am a single mom, so due to only having 1 income, I do not qualify for any loans to increase my area which I have tried for years to get. The older children are hard too when the little ones need a nap. I am planning on not taking older children for this reason.*
- *Manage children and their whims, patience.*

What is the greatest challenge or barrier for starting a new child care program, and what solutions would help? Comments received were:

- *Funds.*

- *I wish I would have known more about the start-up process. They would have helped me with everything, but once you start without asking, you no longer qualify, which would have helped me out a lot. I just do not have the room.*
- *Have customers, communication.*

How do you think the community could better support child care providers? Comments received were:

- *Add additional building room for daycare in school.*
- *People do not like to pay childcare providers. I understand that it is expensive. But it is our job and if you have kids and want to work then you will have to pay a provider. When a parent brings a sick child and I get sick they get upset that I will close for the day because now I am sick. Not all parents have someone that can watch the kids. Also, most workplaces do not understand. I am a home provider so I am here all by myself. If I need an appointment, I have to take the day off, I do not get a lunch break where I can run to an appointment. With daycare being so short in Storm Lake there are not backup providers.*
- *Convey the message, communication.*
- *Support for fundraising and partnerships to offer benefits to staff.*

What challenges do you see in the future for child care in Storm Lake? Comments received were:

- *If there are no child care centers, parents will need to leave their jobs to stay home with their child, as there are no spaces available.*
- *Job losses due to lack of daycares.*
- *It will probably get worse. You will see siblings watching kids. and kid being unsupervised and no food. That way the parents can still go to work. I see it now. Childcare is not an easy job and not everyone can do it. I see so many people do it and they can't handle it, then they quit.*
- *Open a large child care center in Storm Lake.*

What opportunities do you see in the future for child care in Storm Lake? Comments received were:

- *A new facility opening.*
- *There need to be more childcare centers. But there has to be someone able to run it. So many people cannot afford childcare. Yes, it is expensive but if you want to have kids it is something that you need to work into your budget.*
- *It will help many parents to go work if they know that their children are safe.*

Child care providers were asked to rank the *availability* of child care in Storm Lake on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not available, 3 adequate, and 5 highly available (the higher the score, the more available). The weighted average was 1.8. Providers were then asked to rank the *quality* of child care in Storm Lake on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being low quality, 3 quality, and 5 high quality (the higher the score, the higher quality). The weighted average was 2.4.

Figure 3: Child Care Provider Ratings of Child Care in Storm Lake



The final question allowed providers to share any additional comments they had about child care in Storm Lake. Comments received were:

- *Good providers out there but they exceed their limit, and not enough providers or care takers to continue help/ support.*
- *I have done childcare for years and there are a lot of people that know me. Lots of the time people will share my name. When families ask for a childcare provider, my name is shared. I have had so many parents that have a hard time with [other] providers. I could list tons of things, providers leave their kids with someone else the parents do not know, or the provider will take off with the kids and the parents cannot get a hold of the childcare provider. I have had parents tell me that their child was in the street when they went to pick up their child. I think you should be able to help the providers that have done this for years and are good at it. If I could get some additional help with my projects that would be so helpful for me to take older kids and kids with disabilities. If you have any further questions, please contact me. Thank you, I hope we can fix these problems.*
- *We would like to obtain financial support to improve our conditions for home children.*

## Parent Survey Results

A total of 161 individuals that currently have children ages 12 or younger completed the parent survey. This group was filtered and only the responses from those that indicated they do plan to use child care and they prefer that care to be located in Storm Lake were used. This group, consisting of 144 parents, is referred to as “current parents”. Results were filtered again, and a second group referred to as “future parents” was identified. These 17 individuals indicated they do not currently have children ages 12 or younger but plan to have or adopt children in the next 5 years and they prefer to use care located in Storm Lake. Current parents completed questions that provide information about both their current and future child care needs, while future parents completed only questions about their future child care needs. Some questions were required while others were not, therefore responses from all questions are included in the aggregate data, even if an individual did not complete all survey questions.

Using the most popular responses, a current parent would be described as married (83%) and living in the 50588-zip code (87%). They work first-shift Monday through Friday (85%) in Storm Lake (94%), and the nature of their job is health care & social assistance (29%). Their spouse also works first-shift Monday through Friday (79%) in Storm Lake (74%), and the nature of their job is other services (18%). They currently use child care in Storm Lake (68%), Monday through Friday. They use child care 40 to 49 hours per week for younger children (58%), less than 10 hours per week for before and after school care (53%), and 40 to 49 hours per week for older children during the summer (42%). They are satisfied with their current child care provider (67%).

Using the most popular responses, a future parent would be described as married (59%) and living in the 50588-zip code (71%). They work first-shift Monday through Friday (94%) in Storm Lake (94%), and the nature of their job is health care & social assistance (35%). Their spouse also works first-shift Monday through Friday (80%) in Storm Lake (90%), and the nature of their job varies.

Parents were asked where they live. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of current parents and 71% of future parents indicated they live in Storm Lake. *See table on next page.*

Table 32: Parents' Place of Residence

|                                    | Current Parents |     | Future Parents |     |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|-----|----------------|-----|
|                                    | 129             | 87% | 12             | 71% |
| <b>Storm Lake (50588 zip code)</b> |                 |     |                |     |
| Albert City                        | 2               | 2%  | ---            | --- |
| Alta                               | 3               | 3%  | 4              | 24% |
| Aurelia                            | 3               | 3%  | ---            | --- |
| Early                              | 1               | 1%  | ---            | --- |
| Linn Grove                         | 1               | 1%  | ---            | --- |
| Nemaha                             | 2               | 2%  | ---            | --- |
| Newell                             | 2               | 2%  | ---            | --- |
| Rembrandt                          | ---             | --- | 1              | 5%  |
| Schaller                           | 1               | 1%  | ---            | --- |
| Sioux Rapids                       | 2               | 2%  | ---            | --- |
| Varina                             | 1               | 1%  | ---            | --- |
| Webb                               | 1               | 1%  | ---            | --- |
| Undisclosed                        | 1               | 1%  | ---            | --- |

Current parents that live outside of the 50588-zip code were asked if the availability of child care in Storm Lake influenced their decision to live elsewhere. Forty-five percent (45%) (9 parents) answered, yes. Comments received were:

- *We live in Linn Grove but work in Storm Lake, if we didn't have our daycare provider we might have to work elsewhere.*
- *Because of the cost of living and limited options for childcare and family available.*
- *Had to move away because of the lack of child care opportunities.*

In a separate question, parents were asked if their children are enrolled in or are most likely to be enrolled in the Storm Lake Community School District when they become school aged. The majority of current parents, 82%, indicated yes, while 82% of future parents also indicated yes.

Parents that indicated "no" were asked to name the district. Comments received were:

- Albert City Truesdale (2 parents)
- Alta-Aurelia (6 parents)
- East Sac County (1 parent)
- Schaller Crestland (2 parents)
- Sioux Central (2 parents)
- St. Mary's (8 parents)
- "Private school" (1 parent)
- "Unsure" (1 parent)
- Other/Did not name (3 parents)
- Storm Lake or Alta-Aurelia (2 parents)

The most common industry or occupational nature of the individual completing the survey (self) among both current and future parents, was health care & social assistance (29% and 35%, respectively). The most common occupation among the spouses or partners among current parents was other services (18%). The occupations among the spouses or partners of future parents were split among 8 different industries.

*Table 33: Nature of Job or Occupation*

|                                      | Current Parents |                   | Future Parents |                   |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|
|                                      | Self            | Spouse or Partner | Self           | Spouse or Partner |
| Accommodations & Food Service        | 3%              | 4%                | ---            | 10%               |
| Administrative & Waste Management    | 1%              | ---               | ---            | ---               |
| Agriculture, Fishing, Hunting        | 3%              | 12%               | ---            | 10%               |
| Arts, Entertainment & Recreation     | ---             | ---               | 6%             | ---               |
| Construction                         | 1%              | 6%                | ---            | 10%               |
| Educational Services                 | 28%             | 16%               | 23%            | 20%               |
| Finance & Insurance                  | 5%              | 4%                | 6%             | ---               |
| Health Care & Social Assistance      | 29%             | 11%               | 35%            | 10%               |
| Information                          | ---             | 2%                | ---            | ---               |
| Management of Companies              | 1%              | 2%                | ---            | ---               |
| Manufacturing                        | 3%              | 7%                | 6%             | ---               |
| Mining, Quarrying, & Oil & Gas       | ---             | 1%                | ---            | ---               |
| Professional, Scientific & Technical | 3%              | 4%                | 6%             | ---               |
| Public Administration                | 2%              | 1%                | ---            | ---               |
| Real Estate, Rental, Leasing         | 1%              | ---               | ---            | ---               |
| Retail Trade                         | 1%              | 4%                | ---            | 10%               |
| Transportation & Warehousing         | ---             | 6%                | ---            | ---               |
| Utilities                            | ---             | 2%                | 6%             | 10%               |
| Wholesale Trade                      | ---             | ---               | ---            | ---               |
| Other Services                       | 13%             | 18%               | 12%            | 20%               |
| Do not work                          | 5%              | 2%                | ---            | ---               |

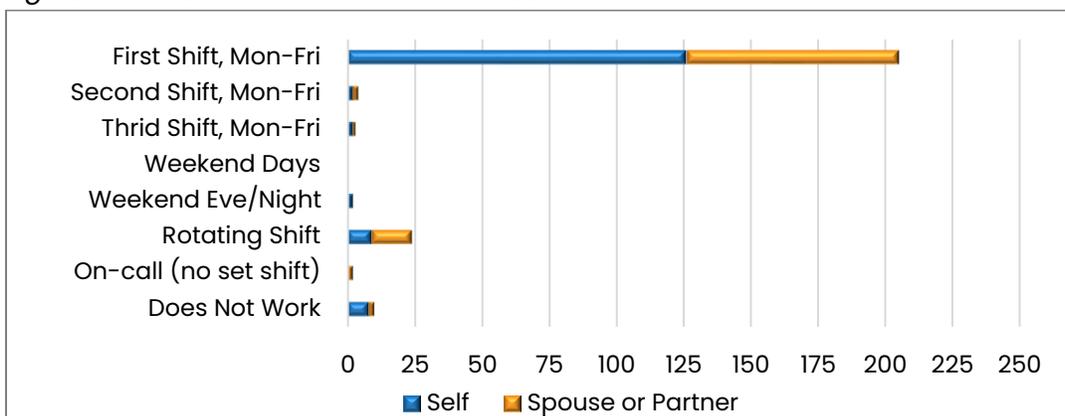
In a separate question, parents were asked where their job is located, or where they do most of their work. Among current parents, 95% indicated Storm Lake for their own job and 71% for their spouse's or partner's job. Among future parents, 100% indicated Storm Lake for their own job and 90% for their spouse's or partner's job. *See table on next page.*

Table 34: Town Where Job is Located

| Town               | Current Parents |                    | Future Parents |                    |
|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|----------------|--------------------|
|                    | Self            | Spouse/<br>Partner | Self           | Spouse/<br>Partner |
| <b>Storm Lake</b>  | <b>94%</b>      | <b>71%</b>         | <b>100%</b>    | <b>90%</b>         |
| Alta               | ---             | ---                | ---            | 10%                |
| Aurelia            | ---             | 2%                 | ---            | ---                |
| Cedar Rapids       | ---             | 1%                 | ---            | ---                |
| Cherokee           | ---             | 5%                 | ---            | ---                |
| Denison            | ---             | 1%                 | ---            | ---                |
| Early              | 1%              | 2%                 | ---            | ---                |
| Ida County         | 1%              | ---                | ---            | ---                |
| Le Mars            | 0%              | 1%                 | ---            | ---                |
| Marathon           | 0%              | 1%                 | ---            | ---                |
| Nemaha             | 0%              | 2%                 | ---            | ---                |
| Newhall            | 0%              | 2%                 | ---            | ---                |
| Odeboldt           | 0%              | 1%                 | ---            | ---                |
| Pocahontas         | 1%              | ---                | ---            | ---                |
| Rembrandt          | ---             | 2%                 | ---            | ---                |
| Sac City           | 1%              | 1%                 | ---            | ---                |
| Spencer            | ---             | 1%                 | ---            | ---                |
| Wall Lake          | 1%              | ---                | ---            | ---                |
| Webb               | ---             | 1%                 | ---            | ---                |
| Travel/Drive Truck | 1%              | 5%                 | ---            | ---                |
| Other in Iowa      | ---             | 2%                 | ---            | ---                |
| Other Out of Iowa  | ---             | 1%                 | ---            | ---                |

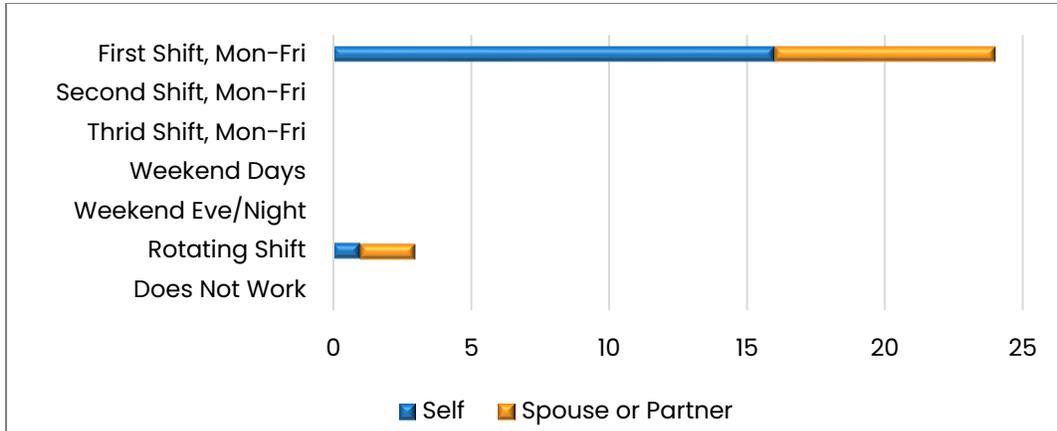
The majority of current parents and their spouse or partner work first-shift, Monday through Friday, with 85% for self and 79% for spouse or partner. The next most common work schedule is rotating shift, with 6% for self and 15% for spouse or partner.

Figure 4: Current Parent Work Schedules



Among future parents, the most popular schedules are again first-shift, Monday through Friday, followed by rotating shift.

Figure 5: Future Parent Work Schedules



The most common child care related benefit offered by employers of both current and future parents was dependent care flex spending accounts, which was selected by 25% of current parents and 29% of future parents. Other benefits offered included flexible work schedules if the family’s regular child care arrangement is not available, and work from home options if regular care is not available. Approximately 38% of current parents and 59% of future parents indicated neither their employer, nor their spouse’s or partner’s employer offers any of these benefits, while 11% of current parents were unsure.

Table 35: Child Care Related Benefits Offered by Employer

|   | Current Parents | Future Parents |
|---|-----------------|----------------|
| Dependent Care Flex Spending Accounts                     | 25%             | 29%            |
| Financial assistance to help employees pay for child care | 1%              | 0%             |
| Flexible schedule if regular care is not available        | 13%             | 12%            |
| Work from home options if regular care is not available   | 8%              | 12%            |
| Child care information included in employee orientation   | 1%              | 0%             |
| Child care information included in employee handbook      | 1%              | 6%             |
| Other   | 3%              | 0%             |
| Unsure if employer offers any of these                    | 11%             | 0%             |
| Employer does not offer any of these                      | 38%             | 59%            |

Those that selected other were asked to explain. Comments received were:

- *Employer has told co-worker to find child care so she is able to come to work. No support is offered to keep current position.*
- *We need more insurance coverage for families that are self-employed.*

- *If we can't make it to work because of child care we HAVE to take our 2 paid personal days and after that do not receive pay for that day.*

Current parents were asked if they or their spouse or partner is not working (unemployed) because of child care challenges. Twelve percent (12%) said yes. Comments received were:

- *If I were working, I would be only paying for the childcare.*
- *My partner and I take days off work as needed to provide child care.*
- *1. No available openings 2. Cost is too high for the number of children requiring childcare 3. Currently only trust our children's safety with specific individuals*
- *No sitter so I quit my job and stay home now.*
- *I would be strictly paying for child care and would not earn a good enough income, so I stay home with my children while my husband works.*
- *We are expecting, most likely will have to go to part time for child care needs.*
- *I am working but cannot continue more hours without childcare for our 1-year-old.*
- *I'm a stay-at-home mom but try to substitute when my husband (a farmer) is available to care for our child.*
- *I am working part time partly due to day care options and partly due to other reasons.*
- *No day care is available, so I am a stay-at-home mom until my youngest goes to school.*
- *One of us stays home to take care of the children.*
- *Lack of child care options have made it difficult to find back up in the event daycare closes. Also, the younger school-aged children (East to Elementary) are a forgotten age group making it very difficult to find child care when there is no school.*

Current parents were asked if child care challenges are currently limiting their or their spouse's or partner's employment (ex. Working part-time when full-time preferred or not working within preferred field). Forty-six percent (46%) indicated yes. Comments received were:

- *Currently am considering going part time to take care of children.*
- *I have to take no school days off because I do not have day care for my school aged kid.*
- *Option to work during the summer due to lack of child care when school is not in session.*
- *Can't work without child care, not making enough money to pay for childcare.*
- *Unable to work late or extra hours- do not have sitter for no school days.*
- *My partner and I take days off work as needed to provide child care.*
- *Partner desperately wants at LEAST a part-time job, desires full-time employment but unable to due to lack of child care.*
- *My brother helps me pick up my daughter. He changed to first shift to be able to pick her up after school. I tried getting her in the after-school program, but she was put on the waitlist. Which I hear from other parents is basically useless because you pretty much remain there.*

- *We have a child with Type 1 Diabetes that causes providers to not want to take her. We have to coordinate schedules to make it work.*
- *Work full time from home but can't find summer help kids are home and my work suffers.*
- *Prior to three weeks ago, work schedules had to be arranged around who could stay home with the baby because we could not find daycare for over a year.*
- *Daycare is closing and nothing is available.*
- *Will most likely have to go part time due to daycare not being available.*
- *I need to work part time when we don't have child care.*
- *I cannot work as many hours as we need to afford bills and food. I'd like to work during the day while the older kids are at school and my husband is at work so we can be together as a family in the evenings.*
- *I believe that I stay at my current position because they have been very flexible with me when school is out, or my son is sick. Especially as a single mother, flexibility is dire due to me being the sole caretaker and provider.*
- *The only reason it isn't limiting us is because we were having to drive to Aurelia to find childcare as there were no options available in Storm Lake.*
- *Child care does not open early enough for my husband's schedule.*
- *Working part time days but longer hours those days. to afford daycare.*
- *When I have appointments with my children and can't bring the youngest along, my husband has to miss work to watch him.*
- *We are unable to work when our childcare is closed.*
- *We have to work different hours to adjust and take care of our son.*
- *Would like to adjust my hours.*
- *Use private daycare, if she is off, spouse takes off to care for children.*
- *Poor options for child care and preschool. Only work part-time.*
- *We were put on a waiting list for the before and after school program and there are days that we can't work because we have to pick up the kids and watch them.*
- *I have to work while they are in school and part time.*
- *Unable to work additional hours, holidays, or weekend due to inability to have childcare, limited hours due to childcare needs.*
- *If options for daycare were available, I could take a better paying job outside of town, or in town, but not worry about where my child would go during school break.*
- *There are not many daycares open early for the manufacturing plants - if we want to find daycare will be on waitlists for who knows how long.*
- *Limiting available working days due to early outs or no school days as it affects daycare.*
- *Once my maternity leave is over, I will have to work part-time from home until a spot opens at a daycare center in a nearby town.*

- *It is extremely challenging to cover child care needs when we have variable schedules, and one person is a shift worker.*
- *Can only work a few mornings a week due to limited daycare.*
- *Can't work the hours I'd prefer to because no one to watch our baby.*

Current parents were asked if they or their spouse or partner had declined employment or withdrawn from the workforce during the last 12 months due to child care. Twenty-two percent (22%) said yes. Comments received were:

- *My partner is unable to work due to my current schedule fluctuating shifts and picking up incentive hours.*
- *No, only because my brother was able to change to first shift or else, I would have needed to quit my job or find a part time job rather than a full-time job.*
- *I couldn't find childcare for almost 4 years. Finally found an in-home daycare at the beginning of this school year.*
- *Baby is not here yet, but we have friends who have had this experience.*
- *I had no job for 1 year at the end of pregnancy and first 6 months of baby's life as we had no childcare for him. I've since been able to have family watch him. But it is not reliable and is affecting my ability to work.*
- *Again, having to drive a great distance in order to continue to work.*
- *I was presented with an excellent work opportunity outside of town but declined due not having daycare for before and after school.*
- *I was unemployed for 3 months and struggled to get to interviews (during summer break) due to no sitter. The job offers that I got I had to turn down because they would start at like 6:00 am and I had no one to drop him off with during that time. It's very difficult, if not there were jobs that finished at 5:00 and the one sitter I could find I had to pick up by 5:00.*
- *Was unable to find daycare for the times needed - was even told waitlists aren't even open due to the length already.*

Current parents were asked to indicate how many children were living in their household by age groups. The "Households" column of the following table shows how many parents indicated they have at least one child in each age group, while the "Children" column reflects how many total children are represented in the survey. Because some households have children in each age group, the household's column may be duplicative and therefore cannot be totaled. A total of 322 children are represented in the survey. In addition to the children represented here, 49% of current parents (73 individuals) indicated they plan to have or adopt more children in the next 5 years. See table on next page.

Table 36: Children Represented in Parent Survey

|                                   | Households | Children   |
|-----------------------------------|------------|------------|
| 0 to 5 (not started Kindergarten) | 132        | 188        |
| 5 to 12                           | 93         | 134        |
| <b>Total</b>                      | <b>N/A</b> | <b>322</b> |

Fifty percent (50%) of current parents and 88% of future parents indicated that the availability of child care in Storm Lake has impacted their decision to have or adopt children or caused them to limit the size of their family. Comments received were:

- *Our current babysitter is old and can't take care of any more kids.*
- *It's too stressful managing current family size with limited dependable daycare options.*
- *We can't afford to be a one-income household and there is no available alternatives for child care.*
- *It is such a stressful situation to try to find childcare for a baby right now.*
- *No more children due to the inability for both parents to work while kids are not in school.*
- *Absolutely, I have to work to provide for my family, but who's going to watch them while spouse and I work?*
- *Yes, because there aren't enough day cares or babysitters in our area. It causes you to think about the future and decide not to have any children to prevent this type of situation.*
- *We decided not to have more because there are no daycare options.*
- *Can't afford more children if I can't work.*
- *Can't find daycare to get one kid in, so it is going to be even more difficult to find care for two kids.*
- *Possibly if can't find reliable quality care.*
- *Not many daycares with openings.*
- *Not knowing where my children will go for daycare has been stressful.*
- *We almost chose to not add child #3 to our family because daycare has been so stressful, especially when we found out our non-registered, in-home provider was going to retire. However, we were already pregnant with #3.*
- *My spouse and I are considering adopting a child but have held off due to the lack of available, competent care.*
- *We cannot expand our family with only one parent income coming in and nobody to watch our children so both parents can work. Our financial needs come first but if we had child care services it would help us financially so both parents can work.*
- *It's very difficult to find a good babysitter.*
- *I would like to have one more child, but daycare is what stops me.*
- *The worry of who would care for my kids.*

- *We chose to wait longer between kids because finding day care for two small kids together is really hard. We also don't feel like we could afford more day care expenses or find a day care that would take more than 2 kids. If we had more than 2 kids, I feel like we would have to utilize more than one day care location.*
- *Childcare is limited, employers don't support time off for children.*
- *I am waiting more between children due to the lack of daycare and the price.*
- *Partially because of the continually shrinking number of daycare providers in the area, we will not be having more children.*
- *It has been one of the factors, but not a deal breaker.*
- *Babysitter retiring made not having more children a good choice.*
- *Can't find care for my one now and can't afford much more to even think about a second.*
- *It is extremely difficult to find daycare. Luckily, we are established at the daycare we are at now, but it is very stressful trying to find one for a new baby.*
- *Not a lot of child care options for a new born.*
- *Not sure where children would go if we had another.*
- *Child care is so expensive, and I was a stay-at-home mom for two years when my kids were newborn and we did that because we couldn't afford to pay so much so we decided to not have any more children because we both would have to get part-time [jobs] to be able to pay for child care for more kids.*
- *We currently want to expand our family but the cost and complexity of finding care for an infant and limited time off for maternity leave has caused us to pause those plans.*
- *We want to have another child; however, I am concerned with finding an appropriate provider who would take a baby that would be no more than 3 months old upon my return to work.*
- *We did not decide to have a second child until we knew there was an opening at our current daycare.*
- *We need a daycare center.*
- *I wouldn't say it's the final factor by any means, but it's been considered before having kids.*
- *Having to find someone to take care of another baby to have in family, would like to have another one day.*
- *Child care has been extremely limited in the area and our jobs are inflexible, so having children has been something that is realistically tough to manage at the moment.*
- *We are pregnant and haven't found daycare yet. It is frightening. I do not want to quit my job over daycare availability when I worked so hard to get this far in my career.*
- *Yes, because there are not a lot of day cares with openings and some of them have bad reviews and are not the best day cares.*

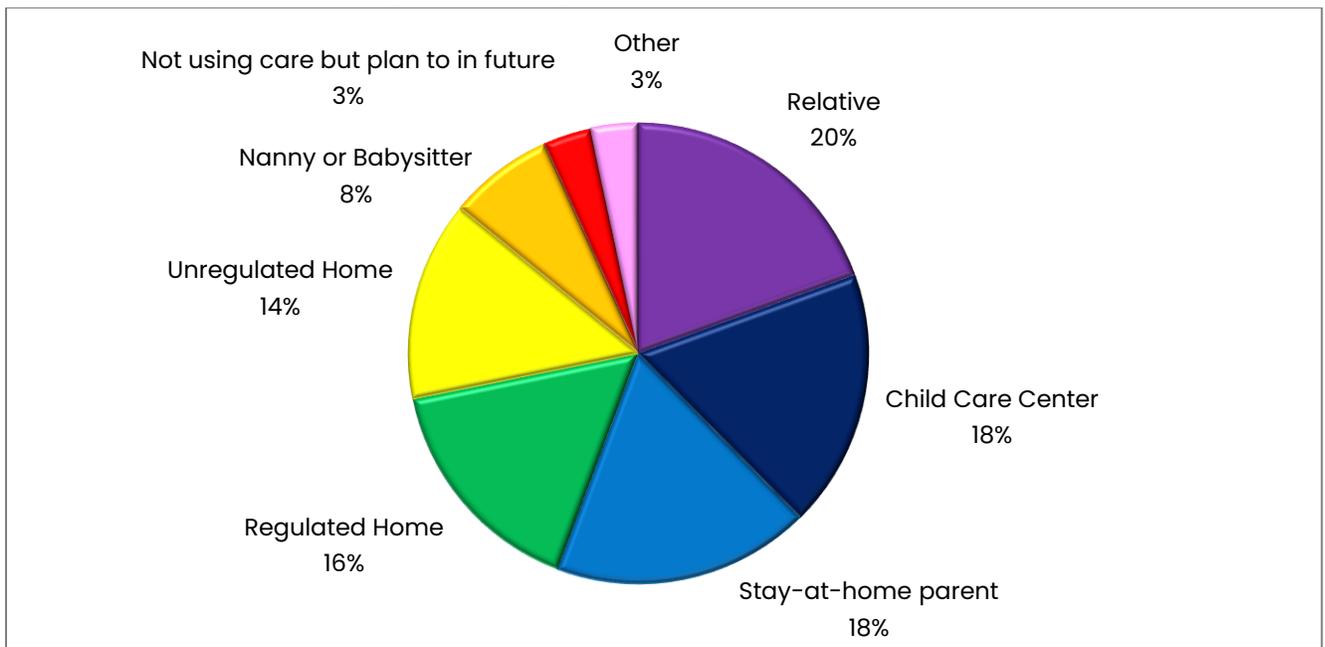
- *Child care is a big thing for us as we want to work to provide for our children.*

When asked about their current child care situation, 61% of parents indicated they are using an “outside” child care arrangement such as a center or home provider, with a formal arrangement. Twenty-five percent (25%) are using a relative with no formal arrangement and no money exchanged, 9% a stay-at-home or work-from-home parent, 1% their children are old enough to be home alone, and 4% are not using any form of child care. Those that are not currently using outside child care were asked if they are likely to in the next 5 years, all 58 parents indicated yes. Comments received were:

- *Would be using, but no openings currently. Also lack of trust.*

When asked more specific details about their primary child care setting during the last 12 months, 20% of parents indicated they are using a relative, such as older siblings or grand parents. Other top settings being used are child care center (18%), stay-at-home parent (18%), regulated child care home (16%), and unregulated home (14%).

*Figure 6: Primary Care Setting Used During the Last 12 Months*



A list of possible effects child care challenges may have had on parents’ jobs was presented, and parents were asked to select all that apply to their own or their spouse’s or partner’s employment in the last 12 months. The most common effects were missed a day or work because provider did not have room or space for your child (79%) and had to leave work early (79%). Eight percent (8%) of parents indicated they experienced no problems related to their job as a result of child care. *See table on next page.*

Table 37: Effects of Child Care Challenges on Job

|   | Percent of Parents |
|---|--------------------|
| Missed a day of work because provider was closed, on vacation, or not available | 79%                |
| Had to leave work early   | 75%                |
| Arrived late to work  | 53%                |
| Unable to work overtime   | 32%                |
| Had to supervise child while working from home                                  | 30%                |
| Had to reduce the number of hours worked  | 30%                |
| Missed a day of work because the provider did not have room or space for child  | 28%                |
| Unable to accept a different work schedule or shift                             | 25%                |
| Had to take child to work with me/them  | 22%                |
| Considered changing jobs to one that works with child care                      | 21%                |
| Unable to travel for work   | 21%                |
| Lower productivity  | 14%                |
| Did not accept a desired job offer  | 9%                 |
| Had to change jobs to one that works with child care                            | 7%                 |
| Had to leave child home alone to go to work                                     | 6%                 |
| Other (please specify)  | 4%                 |
| Received disciplinary action (not including firing)                             | 3%                 |
| Quit a job  | 2%                 |
| Took a job that does not fit my/their skills                                    | 1%                 |
| Got fired   | 0%                 |
|   |                    |
| Experienced no problems related to work and child care                          | 8%                 |

Comments received from parents selecting "other" were:

- *Nothing because I take care of my baby.*
- *My oldest child is 3 and I have already been to 3 different in-home daycares because of the first 2 closing.*
- *Elderly grandparents watching children went on vacation, unable to find coverage I called over 20 in home daycares, state certified and family/friends which were all unable to help with daycare- all of which had no openings, long wait lists, unable to take drop-ins or a combination of all of the above. There is an extreme disparity of childcare availability in the Storm Lake community with a large need.*
- *Also could not find child care easily.*
- *Having to force older siblings to watch the younger ones.*

Forty-four percent (44%) of current parents indicated that there are changes that could be made to their current child care arrangements that would allow them to perform better at work.

Comments received were:

- *Be open later.*
- *Childcare availability on school breaks and no school days.*
- *Be open on days school is closed- snow days, etc.*
- *Availability of a daycare center that would still be able to care for my children if staff member is out sick, at funerals, or vacation. Between all three of these, it consumes all personal PTO and more.*
- *Outside sitter available when needed.*
- *Consistent daycare that won't close last minute or change times.*
- *More options around surrounding area, early drop off options.*
- *Something closer instead of driving 30 miles out of my way to get my son to daycare before heading to work. Also, I am forced to get up at 4:45 to get to work by 8:00 because of the drive. It would be better to get more sleep so I could be at 100% during the day.*
- *Take her to an actual day care provider.*
- *No worries about my child and the care they are receiving. Know that I can be at work with reliable care.*
- *In town daycare.*
- *A reliable sitter would allow me to work more and have a higher paying position in management. I also don't need full-time care, but there is not part-time care available.*
- *I have had to take days off, leave work early, [and] arrive late due to lack of child care during early dismissals, sickness, holidays, etc. A center or YMCA that had events/camps that my child could go to on early dismissals would be beneficial to me.*
- *Having a local child care center in our community. Child care in Storm Lake has been incredibly stressful for the 10 years we have been utilizing. We went from a non-registered in-home provider who retired two years ago and now we have been driving to Aurelia for a year and a half because we are not able to sustain a child care center in a town of 10,000 which seems almost unbelievable. This has been a huge stressor for our family.*
- *I would like him in an after-school program in town so I can pick him up.*
- *Less miles to find daycare.*
- *More child care in Storm Lake.*
- *Having a back-up, drop-in day care that could watch our kids when our provider is ill or has a family emergency.*
- *A daycare would be great as you'd always have coverage. Although when utilizing one previously I had to get off work early to pick up child prior to their closing, and no weekend coverage.*

Comments continued... Changes parents indicated could be made to their current child care arrangements that would allow them to perform better at work.

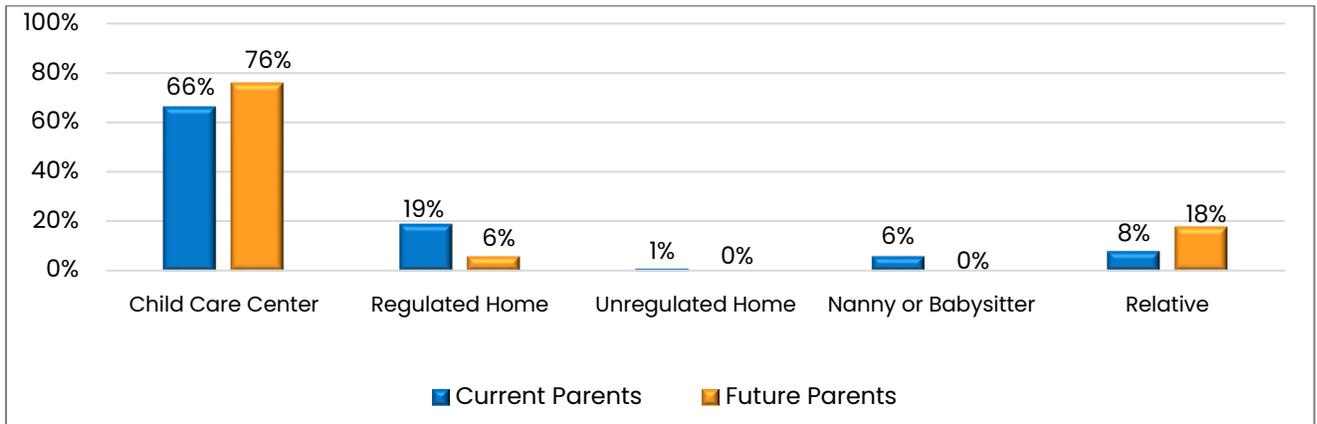
- *Have a place to drop off my child where I know she will be safe and cared for and be able to socialize with other children.*
- *It would help if there was another place I could utilize if my home day care provider is sick or on vacation. I have a whole week in September [where] I am trying to find people to help watch my 6-month-old since my provider is on vacation. I'm relying on finding friends and family that don't work outside the home for help. Although, in our rural community it is also when harvest starts so some of those farmer wives that don't work outside the home are busy helping out with things on the farm while their husbands are in the field, along with taking lunch out to their tractors/combines and even hauling grain into town, which really makes it hard to find friends who can help watch. Spring and Fall are the planting and harvesting seasons here so when a day care closes down and you need help it's even harder to find.*
- *There is no back-up available for my regular daycare if she is closed for any reason.*
- *If we had consistent, affordable daycare coverage, we could work more hours to pay for normal home and daily living expenses.*
- *More consistency.*
- *Before and after school program care. I go to work at 8:00 am and school won't take my daughter until 8:00 so I end up showing up late to work in the morning every weekday.*
- *There are no reliable childcare options in Storm Lake for school aged children. The center we were using only provides childcare until the child goes to kindergarten. Once a child is beyond that there is no care for them, it is extremely difficult to find care for school-age children who are not yet old enough to stay home alone safely.*
- *Have my son accepted to the afterschool program at school and not be on a waiting list. Would be nice to be allowed to drop off the children at school prior to 7:30 [or] even 7:00 am would be ideal.*
- *Having something open at least one day on the weekend for a few hours.*
- *I need a formal place to take her that's always available.*
- *After-school day care would be great! Would not have to worry about leaving work early to pick up my child from school.*
- *Costs, availability of adults and quality programming.*
- *I currently have a limited number of hours that I can use for child care with my current provider. There's no one else in town that will accept a baby.*
- *Having childcare in Storm Lake. Not having to spend 20-30 minutes to and from daycare each day would be invaluable.*
- *In Storm Lake. Not have to drive to Alta.*
- *Having local child care.*

Comments continued... Changes parents indicated could be made to their current child care arrangements that would allow them to perform better at work.

- Not following school weather related closings. I understand why this is done, but often the roads are still okay to drive.
- 24-hour daycare.

Both current and future parents were asked, if all choices were available and you were selecting child care today, which setting would you most prefer. Among current parents, the top choices were a licensed center (66%), followed by regulated home provider (19%). Among future parents, the top choice is a licensed center (76%), followed by a relative (18%). Overall, 88% of respondents prefer a child care setting that is regulated by Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)- either a licensed center or a regulated home.

Figure 7: Preferred Child Care Setting



Overall, 37% of current parents indicated their children are enrolled in their preferred type of care. Those that are not, were asked the primary reason. The most common reason selected was provider not accepting enrollments (24%), followed by other (9%), and not able to afford (7%).

Table 38: Reason Children are Not in Preferred Type of Care

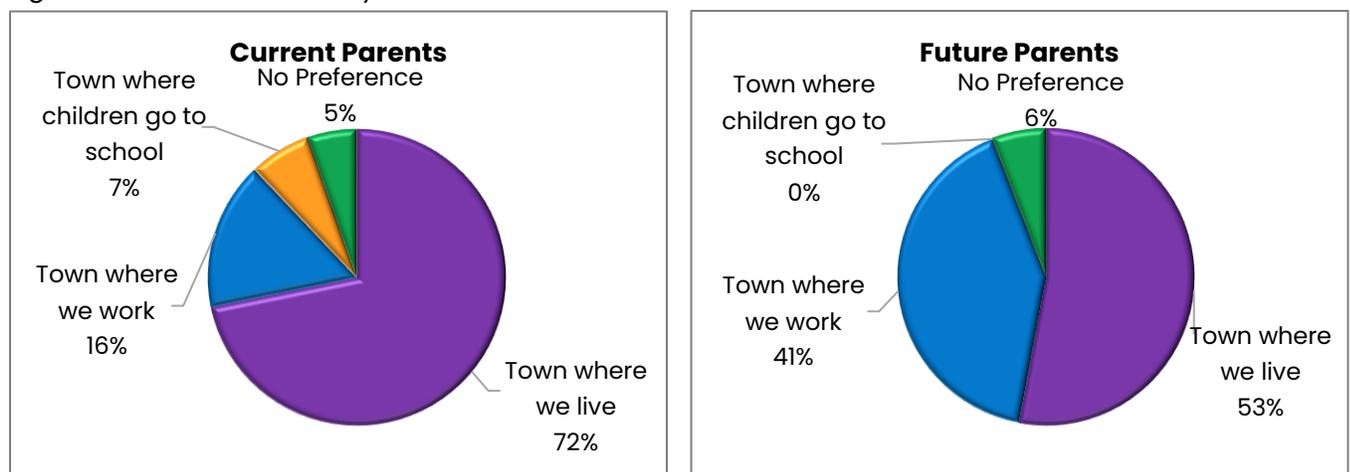
|   | Total |
|---|-------|
| Provider not accepting enrollments                          | 24%   |
| Other   | 9%    |
| Not able to afford  | 7%    |
| Transportation to and from school/preschool not available   | 6%    |
| Not conveniently located                                    | 6%    |
| Location too far away                                       | 4%    |
| Not open for extended or nontraditional hours               | 4%    |
| My children are not the right age for preferred arrangement | 3%    |
| Children are in my preferred type of care                   | 37%   |

Comments from those selecting other were:

- *There literally is no daycare option.*
- *Ready Set Grow closed.*
- *My child has summer daycare but takes a lot of time off and is located out of town.*
- *After school care is full.*
- *Unable to attend and has been on waitlist since 1.*
- *My 6-month-old is in my preferred type of care, a home daycare, I just struggle when she takes time off. My 6-year-old on the other hand would benefit so much if there was a care place for school-aged kids in the area. I grew up in a rural area [outside Iowa] and the Boys & Girls club is where all school aged kids went for after school and summer care. The busses would take kids straight from school to the club and then parents could come pick them up. One of our reasons for choosing Alta-Aurelia school district was because you don't have to try to get in to the after-school program like you do in Storm Lake. I don't have to worry about finding her after-school care because in Alta if you sign up you are automatically in it.*
- *Many factors not just one, only one income, single mother, home and bills, can't afford a daycare, even if a daycare was looked into there were none located here, they were outside of town. Then transportation to/from school was not going to be provided.*
- *I do not trust people.*
- *Family members were busy.*
- *My daughter can't get into Tornado Club.*

Respondents were asked their preference of proximity if they were selecting care today. Among both current and future parents, the most preferred proximity is the town where they live, followed by the town where we work.

Figure 8: Preferred Proximity of Child Care



Parents were asked several questions about the average number of hours of child care used per week, preferred child care schedule, and current and preferred drop off and pick up times. Most parents with children ages 0 to 5 are using between 40 and 49 hours a week (54%). Parents with school age children use less than 10 hours per week during the school year (53%), and 40 to 49 hours a week during the summer (42%).

Table 39: Average Hours per Week Child Care Currently Used

|                                | Less than 10 Hours | 10 to 19 Hours | 20 to 29 hours | 30 to 39 hours | 40 to 49 hours | 50 or more |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------|
| Age 0 to 5 (not Kindergarten)  | 6%                 | 3%             | 8%             | 19%            | 54%            | 4%         |
| Age 5 to 12 during school year | 53%                | 21%            | 12%            | 7%             | 3%             | 3%         |
| Age 5 to 12 during summer      | 18%                | 7%             | 9%             | 15%            | 42%            | 9%         |

Currently, the most popular hour to drop-off children is from 7:00 am to 7:59 am (61%), followed by 8:00 am to 8:59 am (15%). When it comes to picking-up children, 40% of parents are currently picking-up between 4:00 pm and 4:59 pm, followed by 19% picking-up between 5:00 pm and 5:59 pm.

Parents were also asked their preferred drop-off and pick-up times. Among current parents, the most preferred drop-off time is 7:00 am to 7:59 am (62%) (85 parents), followed by 8:00 am to 8:59 am (14%) (20 parents), and 6:00 am to 6:59 am (13%) (18 parents). When it comes to picking-up children, the most preferred time of current parents is 5:00 pm to 5:59 pm (27%) (39 parents), followed by 4:00 pm to 4:59 pm (25%) (36 parents).

The following figures show the current vs. preferred drop-off and pick-up times for current parents.

Figure 9: Drop-off Times of Current Parents

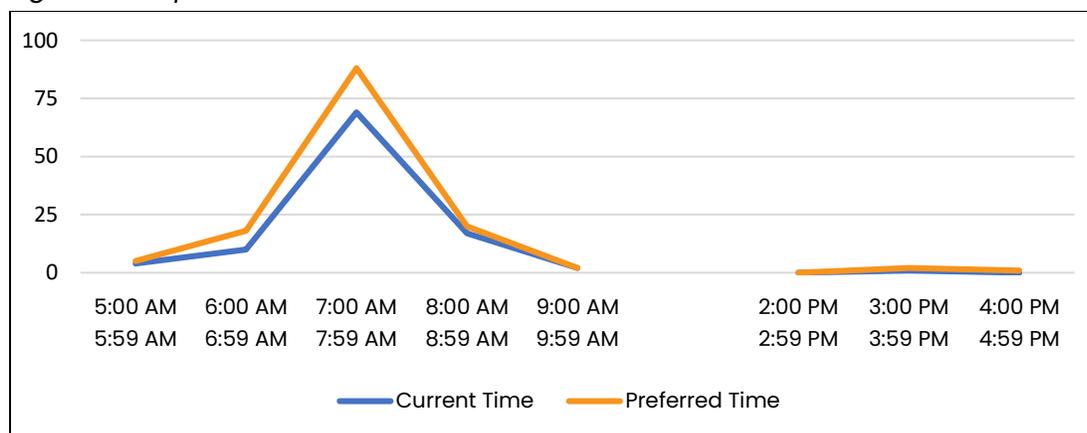
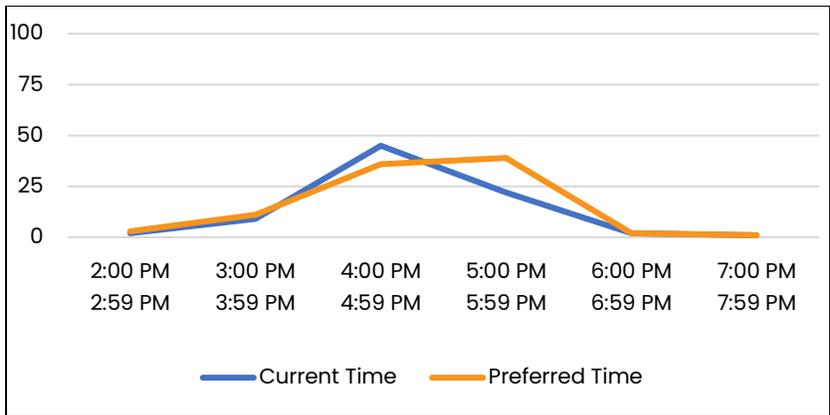


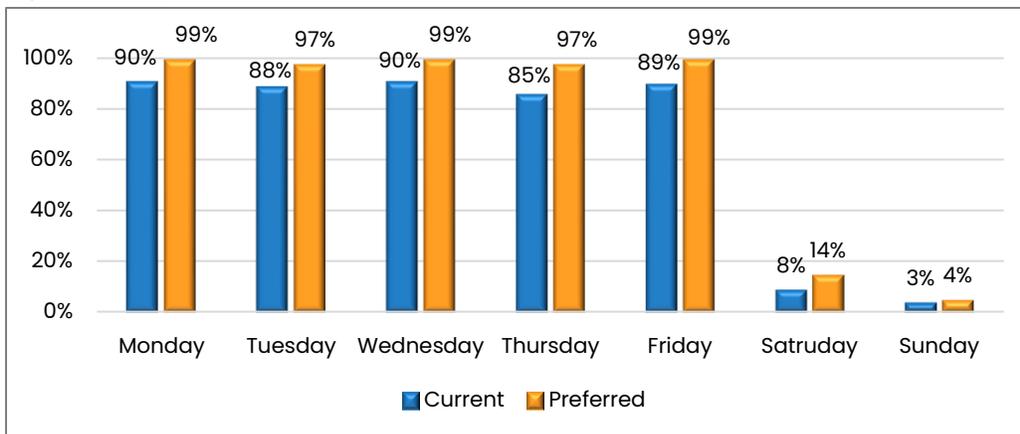
Figure 10: Pick-Up Times of Current Parents



Future parents were also asked their preference related to times to drop-off and pick-up children if they were selecting care today. The most desired hour to drop-off children is 7:00 am to 7:59 am (59%) (10 parents), followed by 8:00 am to 8:59 am (24%) (4 parents). Meanwhile, the most desired hour to pick up children is 4:00 pm to 4:59 pm (35%) (6 parents), followed by 5:00 pm to 5:59 pm (24%) (4 parents).

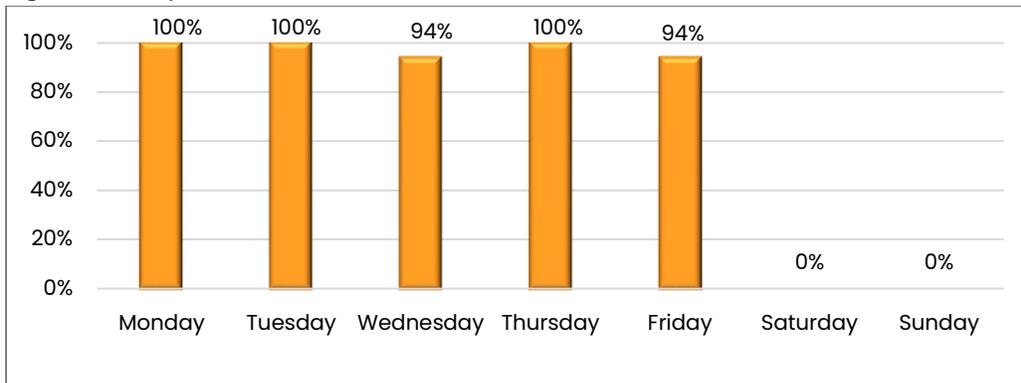
Most current parents indicated they currently use care Monday through Friday (ranging from 85% to 90% per day), while 8% use care on Saturday and 3% on Sunday. When it comes to preferred days for care, Monday through Friday are still the most preferred, ranging from 97% to 99% per day. Meanwhile, 14% prefer Saturday care, and 4% prefer Sunday care.

Figure 11: Days Parents Use Child Care vs. Prefer to Use Child Care



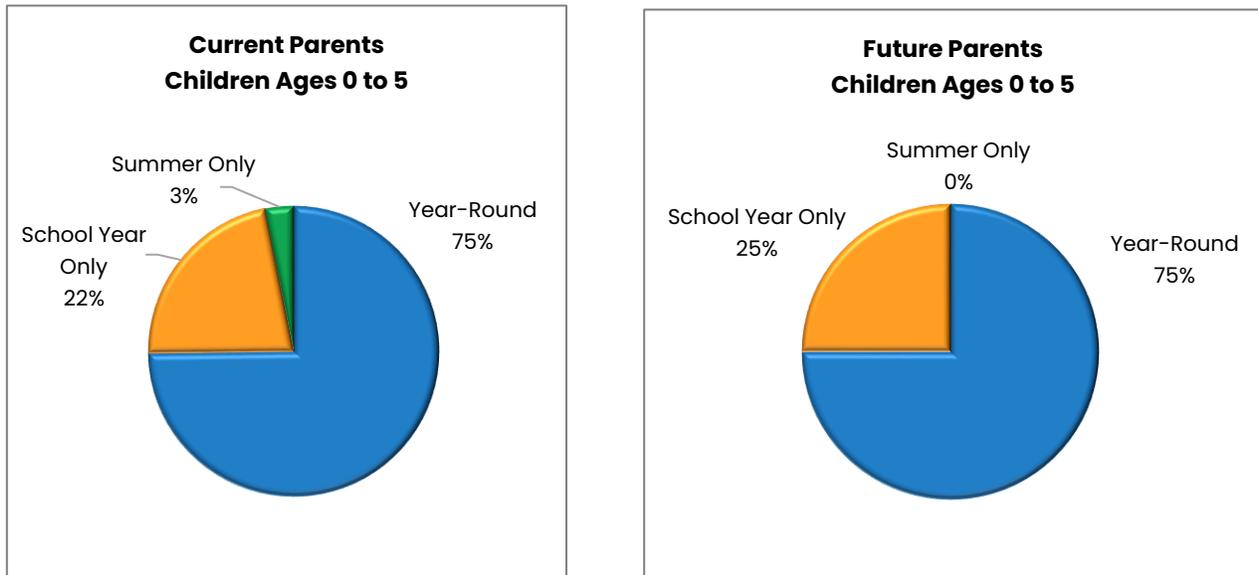
All future parents indicated they prefer to use care Monday through Friday, ranging from 94% on Wednesday and Friday, to 100% for Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday. No future parents indicated they prefer care on the weekends. See figure on next page.

Figure 12: Days Future Parents Prefer to Use Child Care



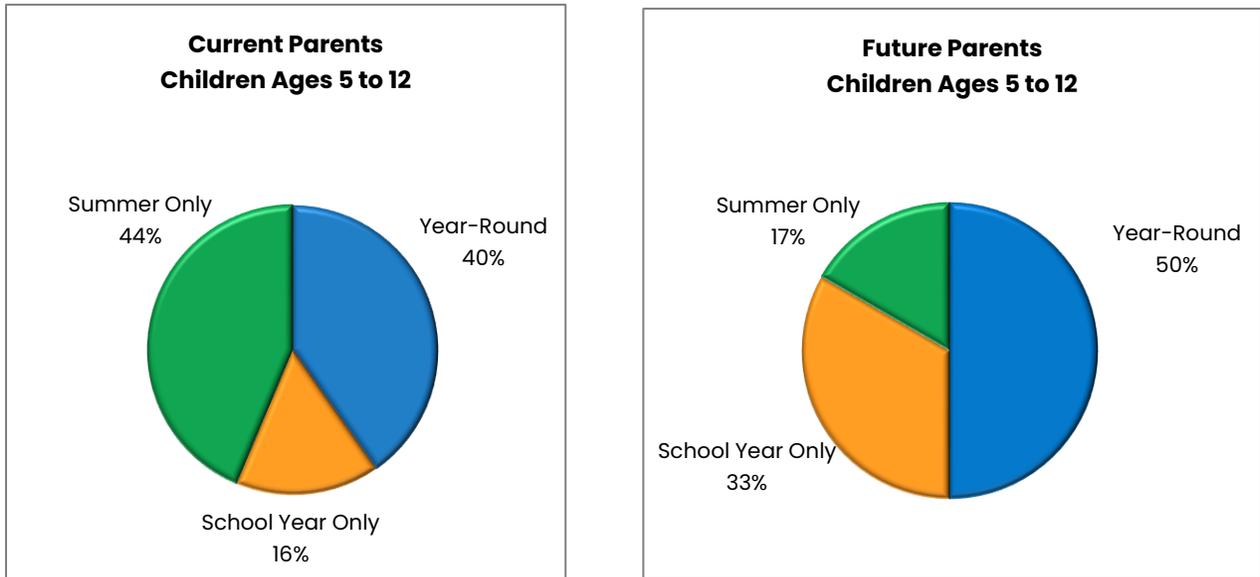
When asked what their preferred time of the year would be if they were selecting child care today for ages 0 to 5, the majority of both current and future parents prefer year-round care. Among current parents 75% prefer to use child care year-round, 22% during the school year only, and 3% during the summer only. Among future parents, 75% prefer year-round, while 25% prefer school year only, and 0% summer only.

Figure 13: Time of Year Families Prefer to Use Child Care for Children Ages 0 to 5



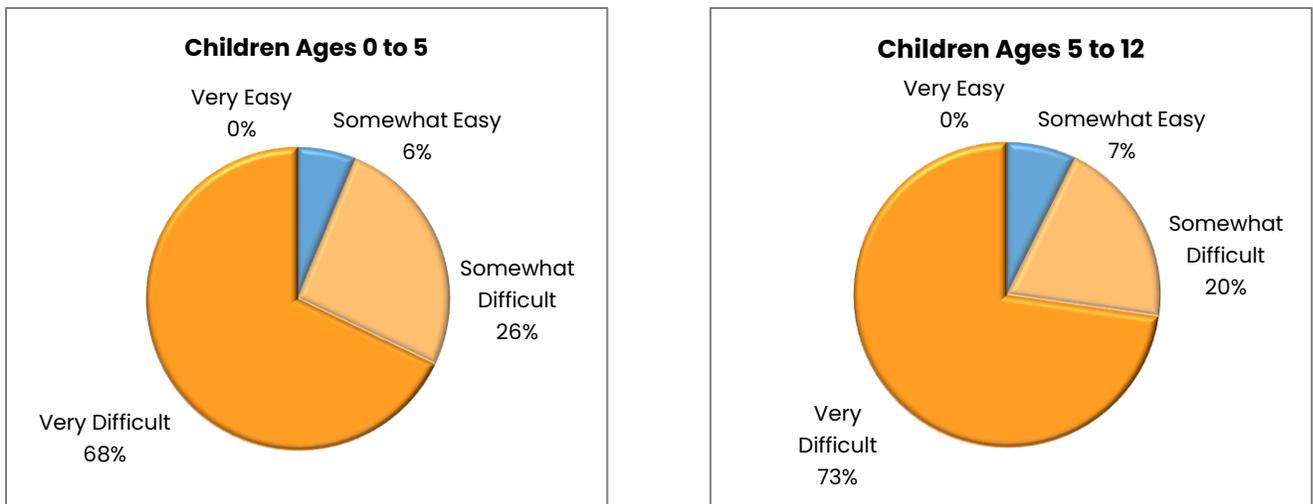
When asked what their preferred time of the year would be if they were selecting child care today for ages 5 to 12, the majority of both current and future parents again prefer year-round care. Among current parents, 40% prefer to use child care year-round, 16% during the school year only, and 44% during the summer only. Among future parents, 50% prefer year-round, 33% school year only, and 17% summer only. See figure on next page.

Figure 14: Time of Year Families Prefer to Use Child Care for Children Ages 5 to 12



Current parents were asked if they had looked for child care in the last 12 months. Among the 81 parents that looked for care for children ages 0 to 5, 94% indicated they experienced some level of difficulty—either somewhat difficult (26%) or very difficult (68%). And among the 55 parents that looked for care for children ages 5 to 12, 93% indicated they experienced some level of difficulty—either somewhat difficult (20%) or very difficult (73%).

Figure 15: Ability to Find Child Care During Last 12 Months



Parents that had looked for care in the last 12 months were asked what obstacles they had experienced. Eighty (80) parents provided comments about the obstacles they experienced.

Comments received were:

- *Family members were busy.*
- *Don't pick my daughter up at Tornado Club.*
- *Couldn't take my child to a certain babysitter or grandparent because an abusive non-relative child was located there.*
- *Lack of availability.*
- *Nothing was available that met our standards.*
- *Not enough daycare people in Storm Lake.*
- *Center closed in Alta for a period of time. Could not find quality care for my youngest in Alta and had to go to Storm Lake [to] uncertified in-home care. Also, no school aged day care available.*
- *Wait lists, no availability.*
- *There is none available.*
- *Needed person with transportation for activities, high cost in order to get someone, high cost of food to have extra meals.*
- *Costs and finding one.*
- *Unavailable providers.*
- *Finding places that had room to take my children and places that worked within my timeframe of being to work.*
- *Center closed down.*
- *Everyone is full.*
- *There is/was nothing available. I reached out to multiple people and got on waiting lists, but never heard back from most.*
- *Finding trustworthy day care.*
- *Had to call several people.*
- *I don't just trust any random person to take care of my child, if the school after school program had more openings or staff that would have been my top choice to have her until I was able to pick her up after work. To my knowledge there is no after school child care for upper elementary age children.*
- *Most day care providers are full. There are other in-home day care providers who are not licensed and take care of more than the regulated amount of children.*
- *There are no childcare options in Storm Lake. Summer especially - bigger cities have day camps where kids do things like go to the pool, park, and different activities so parents can work 8:00-5:00.*
- *Providers not having enough space. Called or texted 4 providers 1 year in advance before getting a spot.*

Comments continued... *Obstacles experienced while looking for child care during the last 12 months.*

- *Been fine but today [our provider] closed and we are in a critical situation with nowhere for daycare.*
- *Every home daycare is full.*
- *Not many choices. Full daycares.*
- *Daycare was too full.*
- *Not being able to find anyone that wasn't already full.*
- *The after-school care we use fills up very quickly, so it's hard to get a spot. The number of students they take depends on how many employees they have to work.*
- *No part-time positions. No openings. All providers are full. All centers are full.*
- *During the summer, I had trouble finding my son, age 6, child care. There are no centers or camps that he could attend. My parents worked full-time still and my grandmother passed away last year and she would usually watch him. Hiring a nanny for him such as a college student was too spendy, especially as a single mom and many kids want \$10-\$15 an hour to nanny.*
- *After our in-home provider retired, we found an in-home provider who then moved away. I was on several waiting lists with no luck and ended up driving to Aurelia for 1.5 years which added on to our mornings and evening times significantly, along with extra money for gas, etc. This was a major stressor on our family. Aurelia had no openings for my school [age children] for the summer, so this was an additional stressor to find additional at home care in the summer for my school age children.*
- *Unavailability.*
- *There is none available in Storm Lake especially for babies.*
- *The after-school program being short staffed and my child not fitting into the after-school program.*
- *No space available 9 months in advance on waiting lists.*
- *No one had openings or the environment was unsafe.*
- *There are no child care centers within 40 miles of where we live that take drop ins so if daycare was unavailable then we would stay home.*
- *No availability for child care in Storm Lake.*
- *All providers had a large waitlist, child care facilities not responding to applications, not enough staffing for after school programs.*
- *No openings and if there were it's out of town.*
- *When babysitter goes on vacations, [takes a] month in December [and a] month in June or July.*
- *There are hardly any daycare facilities in Storm Lake.*
- *Summer, as providers are full.*

Comments continued... *Obstacles experienced while looking for child care during the last 12 months.*

- *I haven't looked in the last 12 months but when my children were younger it was very hard to find daycare. I was on multiple waiting lists and often times never heard anything back. My youngest got into a center in a town outside of Storm Lake and we stayed there from the time she was an infant until she started preschool this fall. I know of a few new moms right now who are unable to find places for their babies.*
- *As I mentioned above...I'm on my 3rd in-home daycare. The first 2 closed and the waiting list is over a yearlong in every facility/in-home daycare around here. I just happened to know this current daycare provider, so I think that is how I got in. Otherwise, it is luck of the draw.*
- *Full, no one would take here limited time of hours cared for.*
- *Most home day cares in our area will not take drop ins. You have to start looking for day care almost immediately after getting pregnant in order to hopefully find one. Once you find one you hope they honor their word to hold your spot, or you have to pay to hold the spot. I know of home day cares that watch teachers' kids and when the teachers are off in the summer, even if their child doesn't attend day care in the summer, [they] still have to pay full to half price to keep their spot. Although at the same time these day care providers are able to take extra kids in the summer because they are missing some of their regular kids from the school year. I know a lot of home day cares take more kids than HHS recommends because they feel bad that these parents can't find day care. Also, there is NO day care for older children in our area. In our area most people with kids in school that need summer care have to hire a high school or college kid to watch them, which costs even more than day care. This summer I had my 6-year-old and 6-month-old at a home day care, she was one of 2 six-year-olds, I paid \$45 a day for both girls. When I checked with a recently graduated high school kid, she wanted \$45 a day for just my 6-year-old. Also, most of these kids are opting for actual jobs because they get paid more than what a parent with 1 child can offer.*
- *Availability.*
- *Elderly grandparents watching children went on vacation, unable to find coverage. I called/contacted over 20 in home daycares, state certified and family/friends which were all unable to help with daycare- all of which had no openings, long wait lists, unable to take drop ins or a combination of all of the above. There is an extreme disparity of childcare availability in the Storm Lake community with a large need.*
- *NO availability or reliable child care openings.*
- *All daycares in the Storm Lake area (whether state licensed or not) are full with very long waiting lists.*
- *Not enough options or availability.*

Comments continued... *Obstacles experienced while looking for child care during the last 12 months.*

- *Someone who had space and provided activities.*
- *No child care available.*
- *Contact information very difficult to find, many providers would not return my calls, only provider that offered a possible spot couldn't tell me for certain for about 3 months whether we'd have a spot or not.*
- *We had an arrangement for the last 7 years with the same provider, so have not had to look.*
- *Reliable, trustworthy, and experienced providers are difficult to find. School age care for ages 5-9 is nearly impossible.*
- *Providers and or open space.*
- *There is no service for older children.*
- *Day cares that weren't full, day cares that were in town, all were out of town that had some sort of capacity. There were some people that advertised babysitting jobs, but they only worked until certain hours.*
- *Finding an in-home provider in Storm Lake.*
- *Finding someone that would work with my 8:00 am to 5:00 pm schedule.*
- *No one had openings.*
- *None available.*
- *Finding a child care provider that had room for my children. And if they did, it was difficult with their hours not accommodating our work schedules.*
- *Everyone is full and trying to find daycare is really hard.*
- *Moved to Storm Lake in 2023 and it was hard to find any childcare availability. You pretty much just have to take what you can find and that's scary.*
- *Providers not having enough spots, providers wanting me to take children every day not just a couple of days during the week, providers charge a lot of money.*
- *No child care available.*
- *Nothing available, waitlisted.*
- *Required contract, not certified, too expensive, closed rooms due to heat or lack of staff, sickness and unavailability or sick children themselves, too far from home and job, long waiting list.*
- *No one in town accepts daycare. Hardly anyone is registered. There is very little care for kids who are school-aged during the summer.*
- *Would have liked to enroll child in 3-year-old preschool but no child care available for the times needed.*
- *Finding QUALITY childcare. Finding somewhere to take my child.*
- *No availability.*

Comments continued... *Obstacles experienced while looking for child care during the last 12 months.*

- *I am a former childcare director in Buena Vista County and I took a director position in [a different county]. I know how important childcare is for the community [where I now work]. Their partnership/ their commitment to their citizens for starting a childcare center 20 years ago and ensuring the benefit for their businesses to sustain such an important piece of the economy. Childcare is obsolete in our areas. I currently have a waitlist of 30 kids (all ages) needing care, foster families can't accept children in need of a loving home because childcare has no openings. A good high-quality center is needed in Storm Lake!*
- *Sitter is usually flexible, however when she needs to take a day or week off it is sometimes difficult to find an alternate sitter. It also ends up costing more, sometimes having to hire multiple sitters to cover various days she is not able to work. If there is a need for childcare later in the evening or into the night, she is unavailable, as she starts her day early with childcare.*
- *I've considered looking for other options in child care, but care is so limited that I didn't anticipate having luck finding a decent placement for 3 children. For that reason, I didn't look.*
- *Finding care for evening hours.*

Despite difficulty finding care, once families find care, they are satisfied with their provider.

Overall, 67% of current parents indicated they are satisfied with their current provider, while 33% are not. Those that indicated they are not satisfied with their current provider were asked to explain. Comments received were:

- *Dangerous environment.*
- *Shouldn't have to rely on grandma to watch children every day.*
- *Current provider is great with children but has a lot of doctor appointments and takes a lot of vacation for weeks at a time, in which I am unable to be at work as I have to split time with other parent taking care of children while trying to work.*
- *Do not have one available.*
- *When the center is open yes we are. There are not many spaces available for the entire community.*
- *Can not claim child care at end of year due to having to have undocumented person care for my child.*
- *Relative doesn't provide real educational resources.*
- *There are no daycare options.*
- *They are closed and have major issues to deal with.*
- *No communication. Staffing issues.*

- *Currently looking for daycare.*
- *Family is great but isn't always available. If I'm scheduled to work and so are they, I have to miss my shift.*
- *Luckily, we have a good one. But I know many people that can't get in to someone and have no options.*
- *I have to say yes and no. In the summer, my son went to my sister's house a lot because she works from home part-time and has my nephews (8 and 1), so my son would go there and hang out with his cousins. Unfortunately, it is a 4-hour drive and I was without him for weeks in the summer. My parents recently sold their business and are retiring so they have been very helpful with my son as of lately. I am satisfied with my parents helping but sometimes I think my son needs more stimulation than watching tv with his grandparents.*
- *Partially satisfied- children are safe and taken care of but not many activities are offered.*
- *The babysitter is back in school too and I need a babysitter for when I give birth to my baby on Nov 5, 2023.*
- *I need more reliability.*
- *Yes, I am but she has too many kids at a time.*
- *My mom is currently watching my youngest, but she will start working soon and won't be able to watch my youngest anymore.*
- *Leaving work too much as provider full or off.*
- *I am for my 6-month-old, although back up options would be great to have. I am not satisfied with my current child care provider for my 6-year-old in the summer. She attends with my 6-month-old and while I love our provider and she takes great care of the kids, my 6 year old gets so bored because most of the kids are 3 and 4 years old and younger. She gets bored because it is geared towards younger kids and most of the provider's attention is on the younger kids.*
- *Elderly grandparents are unreliable and deserve to enjoy their retirement instead of taking care of grandchildren.*
- *The only issue is that I have to leave work to pick up my daughter and drop her off at daycare.*
- *Too many kids in the current daycare.*
- *My daughter is not adjusting well. If we had other options, we'd try to change, but we don't feel like we do.*
- *We do not have one.*
- *I have none currently, so very unsatisfied.*
- *I need to have consistent care.*
- *Having to drive to another town for a daycare facility.*
- *Yes and no.*

Comments continued... *Reasons why parents are not satisfied with their current child care provider.*

- *Don't have a reliable [provider].*
- *To clarify, I'm satisfied with the care received. Through no fault of their own, I would just be more satisfied if the location was in Storm Lake.*
- *Low quality and out of town.*
- *Relying on family favors currently.*
- *There must be more choice.*
- *My current provider is my eldest daughter, but she has to work and will no longer be able to take care of her sisters. And that's hard for me because my work schedule doesn't allow me to pick them up from school.*

Respondents were given a list of factors that are often important to parents when choosing child care and told to select all that apply to them. The top choices among current parents were available space/timing of enrollment (80%), followed by evening or 2<sup>nd</sup> shift care (79%), and Iowa Quality for Kids (IQ4K) quality rating improvement system. Current parents were then asked to select the single factor that is most important to them. The most important factor to current parents was positive interactions between staff and children, which was selected by 23%.

Among future parents there was a tie for the top choices for all factors between available space/timing of enrollment (88%) and overnight or 3<sup>rd</sup> shift care (88%). The single factor that is most important to future parents was positive interactions between staff and children, which was selected by 35% *See table 40 on next page.*

Responses of current parents were sorted to take a deeper look at those that indicated evening or second shift, or overnight or third shift care was an important factor to them. Of the 144 current parents, 32 parents (22%) indicated second shift and/or third shift was an important factor. Among those parents 1 (0.6% of all current parents) indicated they currently work second shift and 1 (0.6% of all current parents) indicated they work third shift, and none indicated their spouse or partner currently works second or third shift. Among the 32 parents that indicated second or third shift is important, 3 indicated they are not currently in their preferred child care arrangement because of the hours. When asked what hours they prefer to use child care, 23 of the 32 indicated they prefer to drop off their child between 6:00 am and 9:59 am, while 2 indicated they prefer to drop off their child after 7:00 pm.

When it comes to picking up their children, 22 of 32 indicated they prefer to pick up their children between 2:00 pm and 6:59 pm, while 2 prefer after 9:00 pm, and 5 prefer from 5:00 am to 5:59 am. When it comes to open-ended questions where parents could provide detailed information,

there were only 3 comments that referred to needing evening hours, later hours (past 6:00 pm), or nontraditional hours.

Table 40: Important Factors When Selecting Child Care

|   | Current Parents                |                       | Future Parents                 |                       |
|---|--------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
|   | All Factors that are Important | Single Most Important | All Factors that are Important | Single Most Important |
| Available space/timing of enrollment                  | 80%                            | 16%                   | 88%                            | 17%                   |
| Care includes preschool                               | 46%                            | 3%                    | 29%                            | 0%                    |
| Dependability   | 80%                            | 13%                   | 76%                            | 12%                   |
| Drop-in or occasional care                            | 46%                            | 5%                    | 24%                            | 0%                    |
| Educational curriculum used                           | 60%                            | 4%                    | 59%                            | 6%                    |
| Evening or 2 <sup>nd</sup> shift care (after 6:30 pm) | 79%                            | 1%                    | 82%                            | 0%                    |
| Health and safety policies                            | 31%                            | 15%                   | 35%                            | 12%                   |
| Iowa Quality for Kids (IQ4K) quality rating system    | 68%                            | 2%                    | 47%                            | 0%                    |
| Location  | 41%                            | 1%                    | 12%                            | 6%                    |
| Overnight or 3 <sup>rd</sup> shift care               | 77%                            | 1%                    | 88%                            | 0%                    |
| Part-time options                                     | 21%                            | 3%                    | 0%                             | 0%                    |
| Positive interactions between staff and children      | 52%                            | 23%                   | 65%                            | 35%                   |
| Secured entrance                                      | 12%                            | 1%                    | 24%                            | 6%                    |
| Special needs care                                    | 11%                            | 1%                    | 0%                             | 0%                    |
| Transportation to and from school or preschool        | 30%                            | 5%                    | 41%                            | 0%                    |
| Tuition assistance or scholarships                    | 29%                            | 3%                    | 12%                            | 6%                    |
| Tuition rates or price                                | 43%                            | 1%                    | 6%                             | 0%                    |
| Upkeep or appearance of the facility and playground   | 62%                            | 1%                    | 53%                            | 0%                    |
| Weekend care  | 16%                            | 1%                    | 6%                             | 0%                    |

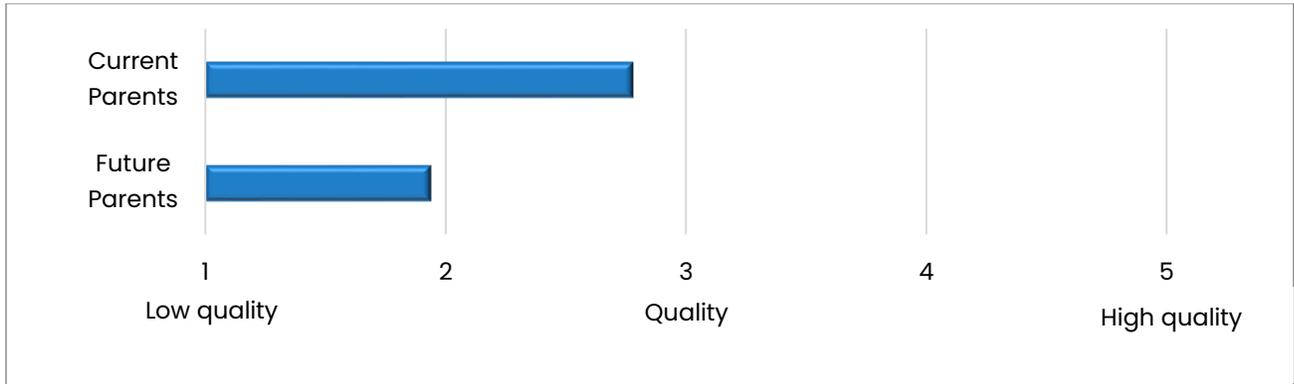
Parents were asked to rate the availability of child care in Storm Lake on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not available, 3 adequate, and 5 highly available (the higher the score, the more available). The weighted average from current parents was 1.72 and the weighted average from future parents was 1.59.

Figure 16: Parents' Ratings of Child Care Availability in Storm Lake



Parents were then asked to rate the *quality* of child care in Storm Lake on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being low quality, 3 quality, and 5 high quality (the higher the score, the higher quality). The weighted average from current parents was 2.78, and the weighted average from future parents was 1.94.

Figure 17: Parents' Ratings of Child Care Quality in Storm Lake



At the conclusion of the survey, both current and future parents were asked several open-ended questions about child care and Storm Lake. Each question and the responses received are on the following pages.

What do you think is the biggest challenge facing parents regarding child care, and what will resolve that challenge? Comments received were:

- *Have a childcare place.*
- *There are no childcare facilities.*
- *Losing my job and if this is approved, they would help me a lot in taking care of my daughter after school.*
- *Lack of child care providers in the community.*
- *Very expensive.*
- *Lack of availability and options for childcare. If Storm Lake could offer an option for a daycare through the school district that works with teachers in that district that would be helpful.*
- *If the kids are barley sick, they can't be in care for 24 hours.*
- *Not having any other options when school is closed, and you can't take a day off work. Having a childcare center available for drop-in care would be a game changer for myself and a lot of other parents that don't know what they are going to do when that situation comes up.*
- *A place you can trust with enough people that can care for children. Communication due to language barriers.*
- *Lack of quality childcare center in Storm Lake.*

Comments continued... *What do you think is the biggest challenge facing parents regarding child care, and what will resolve that challenge?*

- *Availability.*
- *We need a child care in town somewhere that's dependable.*
- *Not enough people.*
- *Not enough care options available.*
- *Availability, dependability, affordability.*
- *There isn't any child care available.*
- *There are a few issues, but the one that is the very first challenge is even finding a provider. After that, it might be cost and schedule that care is available.*
- *Availability- a childcare center in the community would help.*
- *Limited opportunities available for parents to choose from when it comes to child care. Opening a center would help resolve that challenge and allow parents to have a place to send their children and provide employment opportunities.*
- *There are not enough spaces available for families in a town our size.*
- *Availability within our town/county. More children than daycares/babysitters available. Lack of trust in caretakers. COST.*
- *Drop off times. Multiple private undocumented people here in town knowing they can charge an arm and a leg, taking advantage of parents knowing there are poor resources and options for child care. Gingerbread fills up so fast, even with kids being in school, only 20% of applications for afterschool programs can be accepted.*
- *There isn't enough child care available. There needs to be a big center in Storm Lake.*
- *No day care facilities.*
- *Finding it in this town.*
- *Cost.*
- *Availability of days cares or babysitter.*
- *After school care within the school that had enough staff to service more families in the community.*
- *There are such limited providers. We need more!*
- *There are no daycare options. None. THAT is the challenge.*
- *Availability. Having a center that can handle multiple children in multiple age groups at one time. Parents shouldn't have to try and secure a daycare spot before even knowing they are pregnant.*
- *We need openings. I've called as far as 45 minutes away and every single one of them has told me they are completely full with a waitlist.*
- *Availability. There are not enough openings.*
- *Having a child care center in Storm Lake.*
- *Not able to find decent care and is reliable.*

Comments continued... *What do you think is the biggest challenge facing parents regarding child care, and what will resolve that challenge?*

- *No centers around and in-home daycares are full with waiting lists.*
- *The lack of available childcare providers in town. Opening a center or encouraging more people to open in home daycare.*
- *No place available that is reliable. Staffing issues so not sure if open. Staff not qualified or quality workers.*
- *Opening a daycare center.*
- *Finding an opening in a daycare center.*
- *Getting a daycare facility in the city of Storm Lake. Storm Lake is a big sized town with a lot of businesses that can be impacted by having consistent reliable daycare services. My husband and I both work full time and rely on both of our incomes to continue to provide for our family. If we don't have a good reliable daycare to support our community and businesses how will our community continue to grow?*
- *Storm Lake no longer has a community-based daycare (following the closure of Gingerbread House).*
- *Finding an available spot at a good provider.*
- *Not enough care available. We need a child care center and more providers.*
- *There are no child care facilities in a town that has two packing plants and there are not many in-home child care places. The population is getting bigger but child care needs are not being met.*
- *Childcare is (understandably) expensive. Raising the wages/salaries of all workers in our community will resolve this, so a parent isn't putting such a high percentage of their income towards childcare.*
- *Limited number of centers and in-home facilities.*
- *Please open a daycare center in Storm Lake. I cannot believe a town of our size cannot sustain a place to provide daycare services. We almost moved from Storm Lake back to Des Moines between lack of daycare and lack of housing.*
- *The lack of it. We need to allocate more resources.*
- *Limited options of places to take your children.*
- *There is none.*
- *Availability, cost, having good child care. Tuition, options for payments.*
- *Daycare is expensive.*
- *The fact that we don't have a day care in our town! We have Gingerbread but it goes by your income, if we had a daycare that took any child that didn't it would be helpful for working parents instead of us trying to find a sitter who over charges and doesn't have a license to care for children. We don't know if our kids are being cared for correctly while at work.*

Comments continued... *What do you think is the biggest challenge facing parents regarding child care, and what will resolve that challenge?*

- *Not enough places that offer child care, so parents can go to work.*
- *Availability and affordability. An affordable childcare center.*
- *Not having any options when school is out. If there was a daycare center to drop off, then that would help parents the work so they don't have to leave in the middle of the day to get there kids from school and stay home.*
- *The cost, making more affordable child cate options.*
- *Finding babysitter overall and being able to afford child care.*
- *Childcare out of home and in home are all full with waitlists.*
- *Having a reliable daycare. Having a daycare that is open to the public and not just certain minorities. I tried applying for the Gingerbread House but with both incomes we don't qualify which is unfair. My child should not be denied education and care.*
- *Finding open spots in either day care centers or in home day cares. Affording daycare. More daycare centers and in-home.*
- *There are not enough providers in this town. We are a population of 10k+ and we don't have a daycare center??*
- *Our biggest problem is not having back-up care available. Having a trusted place for drop-ins would help immensely.*
- *Dependability.*
- *Not being able to work due to no child care centers/daycare. Having my child taken care of when I am at work would help.*
- *The biggest in our area other than the cost, is the lack of child care. So many children are left home alone before they should be due to lack of care. Many parents in our area have chosen to work opposite shifts so that they have someone at home to take care of the kids but 90% of them are actually sleeping when they are taking care of the kids because they still have to work. If the parent works the night shift and the other one is working currently during the day, the parent that works at night watches the kids for a while then falls asleep, this is when these young kids are getting out of the house and found wondering around our city streets alone. I feel like a large portion of kids in our area having to raise themselves and their siblings because the parents have to work and sleep and they have no one to watch their kids.*
- *Knowing others that work 2nd shift, it's very difficult to find reliable and safe providers.*
- *Open up a facility that takes children that are unable to attend school yet.*
- *Price & availability.*
- *There is limited to no availability. There are several packing plants in the community who work around the clock, hospital employees who are in dire need of resources.*

Comments continued... *What do you think is the biggest challenge facing parents regarding child care, and what will resolve that challenge?*

- *There is a major shortage of daycare options. Most often I have to find a friend/family member when my current daycare closes, often at the last minute, which is very stressful.*
- *Very simply the availability of high-quality child care in Storm Lake is the biggest challenge. We need a daycare center here in town and could use several more in-house, private daycares.*
- *Cost.*
- *Limited options. More providers are needed.*
- *Older age kid activities.*
- *No childcare available.*
- *No space available.*
- *Knowledge - having all providers on an accessible list. Also having a center in town would be huge.*
- *There is nowhere to take children in Storm Lake as they are full or low income, so, families have to drive outside of the community to find care causing higher stress on parents and more time away from work or home with their families*
- *Quality care in a clean safe environment.*
- *The biggest challenge is finding safe and dependable people and safe locations for care to be provided.*
- *Daycare.*
- *Lack of quality child care available.*
- *Safety for their children. Mental health special needs.*
- *Limited options and availability and opening and closing options.*
- *Early times are not readily available and there is a lack of openings.*
- *No space. Having a daycare center in Storm Lake.*
- *After school child care/pick up when the after-school programs constantly have a wait list.*
- *Lack of childcare makes it hard to find consistent daycare.*
- *No daycare in town. Needs to be one.*
- *Good, dependable care and availability.*
- *Not enough child care providers, not enough certified providers, child care being very expensive in general.*
- *Availability, price, location.*
- *Location and cost.*
- *Finding good childcare. There are very few options. If you get in somewhere you have to take it.*

Comments continued... *What do you think is the biggest challenge facing parents regarding child care, and what will resolve that challenge?*

- *The biggest challenge is that there are very limited childcare options in Storm Lake. It is ridiculous that a town with a population over 10,000 does not have a daycare center. Everyone I know with young children here struggles to find daycare unless they know someone to watch their children. The only options we have are in-home daycares or traveling out of town for a center. In-home daycares are typically always full and limited on the number of kids they can take or don't take infants. A reasonable solution would be to open a daycare center in Storm Lake.*
- *There are not enough childcare facilities or providers for the immense needs of this community, which means that there are people that can enter the market, provide unsafe and/or subpar care, negatively impact children, and will make money doing so. Simply because the demand is so high, and the supply is so low.*
- *Availability. More facilities with more staff.*
- *Not having any institution with child care.*
- *Availability and cost.*
- *There is no child care facility in Storm Lake.*
- *Lack of local child care services.*
- *Lack of a licensed child care center in Storm Lake. Having the city be supportive of a center would be highly valuable to the economic growth of the city.*
- *I feel that the ability to pay for childcare is a major issue for many families, especially if they have more than one child requiring care. I would like to see employers more involved in helping with childcare, whether it's a financial benefit or having "official" providers for that place of employment. It is helpful that our provider uses a trust system for payment and does not mind when I bring her cash at the end of my work week, based on pay day.*
- *Very limited options. I was fortunate to get in with our oldest when there was an opening, then we got family preference spots for our next two over new families. Having more options/providers for daycare would certainly help with this.*
- *Availability of child care options.*
- *Finding care for my toddler.*
- *We need more reliable/dependable daycare facilities in this area. Both registered in-home and facilities.*
- *Being able to find child care in the area and not have to drive very far.*
- *Finding a place to send our children. I went through the process of finding child care starting May 2024 and many places already say they don't have any openings.*
- *Having someone dependable and trusted to take care of our children.*
- *No center options in Storm Lake.*

Comments continued... *What do you think is the biggest challenge facing parents regarding child care, and what will resolve that challenge?*

- *Their older kids are having to watch the young ones. Those older children miss important developmental activities like school, sports, friends, or working a job. Having daycare that is reliable, not siblings, and not expensive, takes that role away from the older sibling. Giving them a chance to learn and grow and be a kid.*
- *Dependable.*
- *No availability or open spots for enrollment.*
- *Availability and space in facilities.*
- *Finding a reliable but most importantly safe child care.*
- *Not enough daycare for everyone. Need to open more centers. Would be great if there was one within the hospital or school. Then there is the challenge of dependability, safety, quality care, and education.*
- *Child care not available.*
- *Not enough daycares.*
- *Availability and high cost.*

The next question asked, what opportunities do you see for the future of child care in Storm Lake?

Comments received were:

- *A place where kids can be in care longer.*
- *I hope to see a childcare center that is available for all ages and that includes activities for even older kids to participate in, so they have something to do as well. I think a YMCA would be a huge asset to this community for our children. Right now, there is nothing for our youth to do when not in school.*
- *There is a great need for childcare with the amount of people moving to Storm Lake. Especially with people from different ethnic backgrounds.*
- *Definitely a need for childcare in Storm Lake.*
- *Definitely need more people or to start a day care center.*
- *Hope haven closing- would be very good location for day care center.*
- *Registered daycare center with dependable staff, appropriate health and safety standards.*
- *I would love a facility with well-educated employees that are education focused for soon to be preschool children.*
- *The need is high, so I believe any sort of center would be utilized. If it is located in Storm Lake, I believe staffing would be less of an issue due to some people not having transportation out of town.*
- *More job opportunities, adequate care, positive relationships for at risk children and their families.*

Comments continued... *What opportunities do you see for the future of child care in Storm Lake?*

- *If BVRMC, Tyson, BVU, City of Storm Lake or the Storm Lake School district could band together to make a center, the center will work. The cost of a daycare center is way too expensive to be on its own and have the ability to operate and cover all of its overhead costs.*
- *Our schools are continuing to expand yearly, which has increased our taxes for Storm Lakers. This IS a necessary tax increase, however none of this increase goes to supporting our children that are still too young for school. Our community continues to grow at a rapid rate, and many babies are being born. As these numbers both rise, this only increases our need for childcare. The hospital SHOULD open a care center, with a discount for employees, but also offering services to those in our community if possible. Not only would this provide childcare, but it would also provide jobs to those with thorough background checks to provide the highest level of safety for our children.*
- *Hopefully something reliable, strongly staffed with knowledgeable employees. PRIVATELY FUNDED. Maybe you can up our property taxes some more to fund it? Can you feel the sarcasm?*
- *The opportunity is endless. There is a huge need and there is a need for 24/7 availability, especially with what workforce we have in town.*
- *More day care facilities.*
- *More day care providers and babysitters.*
- *Gives some high school kids jobs and preparation for life.*
- *A YMCA with a summer camp - I'd pay any amount for it!! Price would not matter.*
- *First of all, just having more than just an in-home option would be a start. With the makeup of Storm Lake and the businesses in the community, having child care available more than just 7:00 am-5:00 pm would be beneficial for many families who work on a shift schedule.*
- *We need a child care facility with quality trained and certified workers. When I worked for the school, we used a program called virtues and then we had to also go through AEA and take about 6 hours of classes just so we could work in the after-school program.*
- *A YMCA with preschool and childcare would be amazing.*
- *Opportunities are endless.*
- *It's a major need.*
- *A daycare center and preschool would be beneficial.*
- *I think the school could be a great partner with the city to provide a child care center. High school and college students wanting to go into the early childhood field could work at the center and get experience.*
- *A center run by a business not volunteers.*

Comments continued... *What opportunities do you see for the future of child care in Storm Lake?*

- *Opening a daycare center.*
- *Building a care center. Maybe partner with the hospital or even BVU's teaching program or students to help support and employ the care center to be able to continue to grow our working community.*
- *I strongly believe Storm Lake needs something similar to Gingerbread House. A community-based daycare is so important to attract and retain quality employees and businesses.*
- *A community-wide facility. Assistance for after school care to help find and pay for employees. A YMCA type facility where kids can go during the summer and after school.*
- *We need a center.*
- *I think that there is an opportunity for a center that is run well that could accommodate many different shifts. Storm Lake also needs more things for youth and children such an Y or community center. Community education does some things, but I don't feel like it's advertised well.*
- *Childcare that includes more education, and schools having more childcare availability.*
- *Storm Lake needs a child care center or incentive for more in-home care providers.*
- *It is too difficult to influence people to start in-home daycare so the main solution for our town would be to have a daycare center. Again, it's incredibly frustrating for two full-time working parents that smaller surrounding towns are able to keep a daycare center running, but our larger town of Storm Lake cannot manage this. It's really unacceptable.*
- *Storm Lake desperately needs a day care center. Also, would love to have some sort of employee daycare center for the larger employers such as Tyson or the hospital.*
- *A center for families.*
- *A Y center type building that offers child care [and a] place for kids to go and run around while parents get off of work.*
- *I would hope to see the city working with those who want to help open a daycare center to help the community rather than building another city park.*
- *More job openings that parents can take on knowing their child is in daycare.*
- *Open a child care center maybe like the one in Alta Ready, Set, Grow!*
- *Tremendous enrollment and safer children.*
- *A lot of parents leave their older children with the younger children so they can work due to no availability of childcare, so that will help those parents that have to make that choice.*
- *More work opportunities.*
- *Opening a childcare center.*

Comments continued... *What opportunities do you see for the future of child care in Storm Lake?*

- *Storm Lake's population has grown, and we are behind in certain things like daycare. We are trying to catch up, like housing for instance, there was a time when people couldn't find homes to buy or rent. Now there are duplexes that were just built that helped the community.*
- *A place the size of Storm Lake should have multiple day centers. Many of the small towns around us all have centers. There is absolutely no reason Storm Lake should not have at least one. To recruit people to our town to keep businesses, the hospital, and the university prospering we need daycare for their children.*
- *A safe learning and caring environment that allows parents to engage in work and support the community. A place that we can take pride in.*
- *Storm Lake is a fast-growing community and child care providers will definitely have job security.*
- *I feel like if we had a lot more stable and reliable day care options in our area we would see less kids getting into trouble. So many of these young school-aged kids that are left home alone too early are getting into trouble because there is no one around to take care of them and teach them. I feel more people would be working within the community as I see a lot of people looking for day care because they want to find a job but need to secure day care first. I have seen so many people stop working because they cannot find day care. Once a parent choses to stop working so they care provide care for their child a large number of them need government help to pay for things such as food and housing because their income is one instead of two. I feel like if day care is more available in our area, the more parents can work and the chances of getting these families out of poverty would improve. I also feel that if these kids grow up with care and have care available in the summer time for older kids then more would stay out of trouble which is beneficial to the community and the families.*
- *Daycare provider open 5:00 am-12:00 pm? I have staff that have difficulty finding care, they come in late or need to leave early.*
- *Storm Lake could do better with opening a care facility for children. They would have enough children to keep the building running.*
- *Opening one or two more daycare centers.*
- *If someone were to pair with the school or hospital as a way to provide healthcare, decent pay for the employees and/ or even IPERS it would be a great way to obtain and retain great staffing for a new facility.*
- *A daycare center (or two)!*
- *A daycare center and more in house daycare providers.*
- *More opportunities for child care.*

Comments continued... *What opportunities do you see for the future of child care in Storm Lake?*

- *Hahaha, none, this place doesn't even work to build a recreation center when town a quarter its size has one. The people complain about tax increases and the effect on property value.*
- *There are a lot of families that do not have care. We went through 4 daycares.*
- *Day care center - maybe connected to BVU education department?*
- *If there was a YMCA/Rec center where people could send their kids during the summer with child care or camps, other opportunities for them to learn and be active with other kids would be great. Exposure to new things that working parents cannot always expose their kids to either.*
- *With a worker shortage, an [employer] run childcare could be a game changer for large employers.*
- *This community could benefit hugely from a program that offers childcare that is safe and affordable. It would reduce the safety risk to children in our community and significantly reduce stress, and poverty by allowing parents to work full time.*
- *More jobs if they open a daycare center, there will be more people applying for jobs as well as there will be options for their kid's needs.*
- *A combined daycare and nursing home. After school and summer child care for older children.*
- *I see people trained to be able to take on children with different needs than others. such as a calm down room or sensory to help those kids in need as well.*
- *More daycare centers or after school programs for kids.*
- *Would love to see a child care center again.*
- *Hopefully grow.*
- *Helps grow and get kids out of the house to interact and learn to be around others.*
- *Lots of opportunities. Especially for single parents, second shift parents.*
- *We have so many schools but no daycare for young kids not old enough for those programs. If Hope Haven leaves their RCF building on west end of town, have a neighboring daycare take over that space. Plenty of room for playgrounds or to build/add on. Or larger employers in town like Tyson, schools, hospital, etc. start daycare for employees' kids but others can apply to use it too.*
- *I wish there was an organization/company of some type that has been doing this for a while and that they can open a child care in Storm Lake like when we had Gingerbread House, that place helped so many parents with their child care needs. If a company was able to open a child care facility in Storm Lake, it would be nice that they made sure everyone they hire would have some kind of training before they start working with kids and every so often after they start working.*

Comments continued... *What opportunities do you see for the future of child care in Storm Lake?*

- *Opening a child care center in Storm Lake would be a very reasonable, logical, and necessary choice. With the college, hospital, several schools, and Tyson plant in town there are many young families but a deal breaker to move to the area is having no childcare options. Having a center would draw more young families to town, create jobs and help local families who are in need of childcare. Children could also take local field trips which would help support Storm Lake businesses. I think a fantastic opportunity is to build a center next to Methodist Manor. Students can interact with residents, and it would be close to the college so students would be close for employment opportunities or to do activities with the kids.*
- *Preschool, daycare attached to school or close to schools, partner with college or high school.*
- *Center style daycare in storm lake. DHS regulated. Some other system that monitors their work like [Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards] QPPS or [National Association for the Education of Young Children] NAEYC.*
- *I see a severe need.*
- *It would provide parents with the opportunity to know that their children are safely cared for while they are working various hours.*
- *Storm Lake needs a child care center! The community and businesses need to be supportive by finding ways to partner with the center to ensure its success!*
- *I would like to see later availability. Many providers don't keep children past 5:00-6:00 pm. My husband and I both work in public safety. My schedule rotates from day to night every other week, however he is on-call 24/7 outside of his office hours. So far childcare has worked out for us, but I would like to see later availability for some of his obligations after 5:00 pm. I think it would be great to have advertising at [Iowa Central Community College] ICC and [Buena Vista University] BVU. I would personally love a responsible young adult who can watch my children at home based on college class schedules.*
- *Centers seem to be more reliable than in-home. Better pay for daycare employees would help reduce turnover and could have higher quality staff. Potentially partner with one of the local colleges for a preschool/curriculum and students could develop and lead those programs for class credit. I'm hesitant to be in favor of local businesses securing X number of spaces for their employees, granted I'm not employed by any of those employers.*
- *A center with dedicated and reliable staff with an educational curriculum and outdoor play for all seasons*
- *More nontraditional hour care.*
- *None, right now. Something must be done about it.*

Comments continued... *What opportunities do you see for the future of child care in Storm Lake?*

- *Being able to accommodate families.*
- *It would be nice to get a center in town, if it could be with the school or college that would be amazing.*
- *Investing in those older siblings, gives them a chance to grow and learn to become success adults and work in the Storm lake community. They will want to be a part of this community and raise their kids here.*
- *Maybe day care centers would help.*
- *More centers for day care.*
- *Expansion of availability.*
- *Employers (Tyson, hospital, City) offer child care services to employees.*
- *One or two daycare centers. There is just so much need for it. I have contacted 8 different places/people and no one has an opening for my baby who is due later this year. I wish the hospital or a school would have a daycare center for employees/the general public.*
- *Sports, art, theatre.*
- *Low-income community. Kids just stay home with each other, and parents how did the best because there is no choice.*

The final question asked parents to share any additional comments you have about child care in Storm Lake. Comments received were:

- *Children should be in a safe place with professionals.*
- *More help is needed in childcare because in the last few years quite a few people have come to Storm Lake and we need help because our work schedule does not allow us to take care of them, it is difficult for a parent to miss work.*
- *Would be nice to have a part-time place that doesn't charge an insane amount of money to put kids in care for days that sitter isn't available.*
- *This is something we have needed in this community for a long time, and I hope they are serious about bringing something like a YMCA or daycare center in this town because we have not had anything for almost 20 years and obviously our town has grown since then. And just think of all the kids that do get left home alone because the parent cannot miss another day of work. This should be our number 1 priority getting something done about the lack of child care in Storm Lake.*
- *There are no places in Storm Lake that have open childcare positions.*
- *This has been an issue for years. Large employers in Storm Lake and surrounding areas need to work together or we are going to lose good employees and new people moving to Storm Lake.*

Comments continued... Share any additional comments you have about child care in Storm Lake.

- *If BVRMC, Tyson, BVU, City of Storm Lake or the Storm Lake School district could band together to make a center, the center will work. The cost of a daycare center is way too expensive to be on its own and have the ability to operate and cover all of its overhead costs.*
- *There have NOW been two childcare locations within the last couple of years that have been shut down due to safety and health concerns. One facility, and one at-home sitter. People can have their hearts in the right place and want to provide great care, however caring for many children is a mental, emotional, and physical load on individuals. The lack of trust that I, as well as many others, have in our children being safely and properly cared for by anyone else is high.*
- *Having to rely and take the word on undocumented child care providers, taking advantage of being able to charge whatever they want vs. our town ignoring a problem.*
- *I would like to see the community or work places get together and come up with a solution.*
- *I am grateful I found a sitter, but she is a little way out of town. I looked and looked for a sitter 5 years ago and there was barely anything. It's gotten worse from what I see.*
- *I have probably made my point clear, but my husband and I have demanding, full-time jobs and daycare has been our biggest hurdle to living in this community for the past 10 years. We use most of our vacation time on no-school, no daycare days, or time off when providers or daycare is closed versus being able to determine when we would like a vacation as a family. I hope it is possible to start a center in our town so future families don't have to go through the stress that we did raising our family. On multiple occasions we considered leaving this community due to the lack of daycare and housing options.*
- *Fingers crossed you can get child care facilities going in Storm Lake. Not just one. Either an extremely large center or multiple centers.*
- *Storm Lake needs an affordable child care opportunity. The hospital should have child care available for their employees at no cost. Major companies like Tyson the school system and other money-making companies should have an agreement for a daycare center that allows x amount of money to be taken another check in order for their child to go to daycare while they're at work. Too many parents and families can't find child care thus are unable to work and are not bringing in enough money for their families. I would love to work a few days a week, but my husband works full time from 8:00 to 5:00 so my only options would be 6:00 at night to 2:00 in the morning or 3:00 in the morning and then I would have to get up with my daughter at 7:00 so no daycare, no income, no quality of life.*
- *The quality of care my children get now is great, in the past not so much.*

Comments continued... Share any additional comments you have about child care in Storm Lake.

- *There needs to be a center ran by a qualified individual that runs as a business. Parents need to pay on time and not be allowed to get behind. Also, staff need to be qualified but know that staffing is an issue all around. Pay the staff well to take care of our most vulnerable little people who are our future. Get businesses like Tyson, hospital, university to buy in and help support it. Look to other places who run daycares and how they succeed and make it work. Wasn't there a survey done awhile back and nothing changed. Get on board to make a change and help our families and little precious citizens. It is a severe need.*
- *For the size of this community, there is no reason we cannot work together with other local businesses to support a community daycare to support our workforce.*
- *We need one.*
- *Like I said. I have a great daycare and I am thankful. But having my second child I will be taking my kids to 2 different in-home daycares and locations to be able to work!! Ridiculous!! And I have many friends that can't work due to not finding daycare options.*
- *Please open a daycare soon this town has been needing one for a long time now!*
- *Very low child care.*
- *Child care during summer is most needed for most parents who want to both work. Because if both parents work, we have we need child care on weekend such as Saturday and summer. Because this day we work and can't take care of the kids.*
- *There are so many benefits to all parents in Storm Lake if there was a daycare center available to drop off children when they need to work earlier than school start time and later than school dismissal time.*
- *Child care in Storm Lake and surrounding towns are very needed, I can't afford quitting my job to stay home with my kids.*
- *Childcare has been so difficult my entire time of raising my children. Improved childcare options would improve our whole community.*
- *I love our daycare provider. The only time life gets difficult are the rare times over the course of the school year that she needs to be closed. Having a place that we could use those handfuls of times would be nice. It would also be nice to have a place that could watch our kids during parent-teacher conference nights when we work until 7.30 for our students and their families.*
- *Care givers will need to be diverse; meals will need to be provided due to social determinants.*
- *Please help our community with a desperate need for childcare opportunities.*
- *Our provider was awesome but is retiring.*

Comments continued... Share any additional comments you have about child care in Storm Lake.

- Home providers. Day shift hours only. Expensive! No or very limited space for families with 2+ young kids in need of care.
- Our community (Storm Lake) desperately needs a daycare center and more private daycare options. Many young children are being watched by older siblings as young as late elementary or early middle school age after school and in the evening hours. These same older siblings are responsible for getting their younger siblings fed, dressed, and ready for school in the mornings. Even parents with "normal" 8:00–5:00 jobs are struggling to find quality, affordable childcare in Storm Lake. It's a very real problem!
- We're looking to move because of lack of childcare, community, and education.
- Child care in our area is something that is desperately needed. Not just for babies and children under 5 or 6, but also for in school children. Most parents can't take their kids to Vacation Bible Schools and Day Camps in our area because they are at work during the start and end times, and most of them are morning only. We see so many kids and young children in the news in our area because they have gotten out of the house while a parent was sleeping or because these kids have gotten into trouble. You should get numbers from all of the area schools, the local DHHS case workers, Juvenile Court Services, Sheriff's Office, Storm Lake Police Department and the County Attorney's office on how many kids are getting into trouble that are under 12 or 13 years of age and how many children are found out alone while a parent is sleeping. Find out how many children that do not fit the criteria to stay home alone are staying home alone and caring for younger siblings on top of that. I know of a family that had a 11-year-old watching their 3-year-old sibling, their 2-year-old sibling, and 1-year-old sibling so the parents could work. Also, in these smaller neighboring towns these kids do not access to immediate emergency help if something were to go wrong. The fire department and EMTs are all volunteer in these small towns and are on call, and they don't have police departments (if they do it is 1 officer only) and they would have to wait for a sheriff's deputy to get to the emergency. So, depending on what the emergency is, the location, and what volunteers are in the small town it may take a while for any emergency personnel to get to them. Also, just like so many places, many of these emergency responders are short staffed, even in Storm Lake. We are putting more and more kids at risk every day without a large day care/school aged care facility option.
- Childcare is very needed, and it should be a priority for the city.
- Thank you for gathering information. Please DO something with the information!
- Not having enough child care options available to families increases the risk of children being left alone while parents are working to support their families.
- Please involve Ready Set Grow into future conversations of child care in Storm Lake.

Comments continued... Share any additional comments you have about child care in Storm Lake.

- *It is known Storm Lake needs child care so bad, you can see on press releases how many kids are wandering now and then, I personally see kids as little as 6-7 year old and specifically during the summer wandering around and trying to play with neighbors when the only thing that comes to my head is "where are their parents?" But then it hits me that they're maybe working and they have no other choice but to leave those kids home alone.*
- *It is going to cost my family almost an hour out of our day every week when we account for driving to and from daycare (whether we choose the center in Alta or an in-home daycare almost 20 minutes away). We will also have to pay for that extra gas and it will impact our work schedules.*
- *Help us find places where our children can go. We need a center for Storm Lake.*
- *For families that live in Storm Lake's school district, it would be nice to see availability for younger ones who aren't quite preschool age, whether it's a standalone childcare facility or somehow integrated into one of the schools. I think it would be a great opportunity for high school kids if there was a daycare facility in the school, it allows parents a safe place to have their children and it can be a great opportunity for students interested in pursuing college degrees in education or childcare or anything working with children. It could even be helpful for health education to teach young kids about the responsibilities of caring for children of all ages once they become parents themselves.*
- *Make each parent volunteer 1 day each month, etc. to help keep costs down. Have each large employer responsible for some form of assistance based on #of employees, etc.*
- *Open daycare centers.*
- *I don't know what I am going to do in the next 6 months if I don't find daycare. I will have to either quit my job or beg family to help me even though they are busy themselves.*

## CHILD CARE GAP ANALYSIS

Calculating the gap in a child care market needs to take into consideration multiple factors, and as solutions to address this gap are considered, it must be kept in mind that not all families will utilize child care, and those that do will have a variety of needs with some children attending full-time while others attend only part-time and therefore may share a space. If there was exactly one space for each child, some spaces would not be utilized, or would be utilized in a manner that would not allow the child care provider to maintain a sustainable business model.

The following summary of the supply and demand provides an estimation of the gap between the number of children likely to use regulated child care and the number of spaces available in programs currently regulated by Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)<sup>19</sup> in the Storm Lake area.

As of October 2023, there are 6 HHS regulated child care programs offering a total of 304 spaces. There are 3 HHS licensed centers and preschools (272 licensed spaces). All 3 programs offer part-time preschool, serving only children ages 2 and older, and operating during the school year. While one of the programs does offer wrap-around and after school care for older children, the hours are still limited to 8:00 am to 5:30 pm during the school year only. There are also 3 registered child development homes (32 registered spaces). All of the registered homes offer care between 7:30 am and 5:30 pm, Monday through Friday, while one of those also offers 8:00 am to 5:00 pm on Saturday and Sunday.

In the Storm Lake area, there are 2,301 children ages 0 to 11. Of those, First Children's Finance (FCF) estimates 1,422 have all parents working. If it is assumed these families are represented by responses of current parents that participated in the child care needs survey, then 88% or approximately 1,251 are from families who prefer and would be likely to use an HHS regulated child care setting. According to Iowa HHS, there are currently 304 regulated spaces, with 32 of those being available on a full-time year-round basis.

The following table shows the number of children likely to use HHS regulated child care versus the number of regulated spaces available, and the number of regulated spaces available year-round. When broken down by age group, calculations show there is a shortage of 192 spaces for infants and toddlers, and 795 spaces for school age children. When it comes to preschool age (ages 3 and 4), the calculations show there is a surplus of 40 spaces, however if the part-time school year only preschool spaces are not included, there is a shortage of 167 spaces. If the same

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<sup>19</sup> Includes all Iowa HHS Licensed Centers and Preschools, Registered Child Development Homes, and Child Care Homes listed with Iowa HHS as of July 2023.

is done to the other age groups (remove the school year only spaces), the shortage for infants and toddlers grows to 240 spaces, and for school age it grows to 820 spaces.

*Table 41: Estimated Child Care Gap in the Storm Lake Area*

|              | <b>Children w/All<br/>Parents<br/>Working</b> | <b>Likely to Use<br/>Regulated<br/>Care</b> | <b>HHS<br/>Listed<br/>Spaces</b> | <b>Child Care<br/>Gap</b> | <b>Year-<br/>Round<br/>Spaces</b> | <b>Year-<br/>Round<br/>Gap</b> |
|--------------|---|---|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Age 0 to 2   | 282   | 248   | 56                               | -192                      | 8                                 | -240                           |
| Age 3 to 4   | 199   | 175   | 215                              | +40                       | 8                                 | -167                           |
| Age 5 to 11  | 941   | 828   | 33                               | -795                      | 8                                 | -820                           |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>1,422</b>                                  | <b>1,251</b>                                | <b>304</b>                       | <b>-947</b>               | <b>32</b>                         | <b>-1,227</b>                  |

According to results of the child care needs survey, there are both current parents and future parents prefer care in Storm Lake, regardless of where they live.

Storm Lake has more children likely to use regulated child care than spaces available. Additionally, some families from outside the community indicated they prefer to use child care there, indicating the number of child care spaces needed in Storm Lake is even greater than the child care gap.

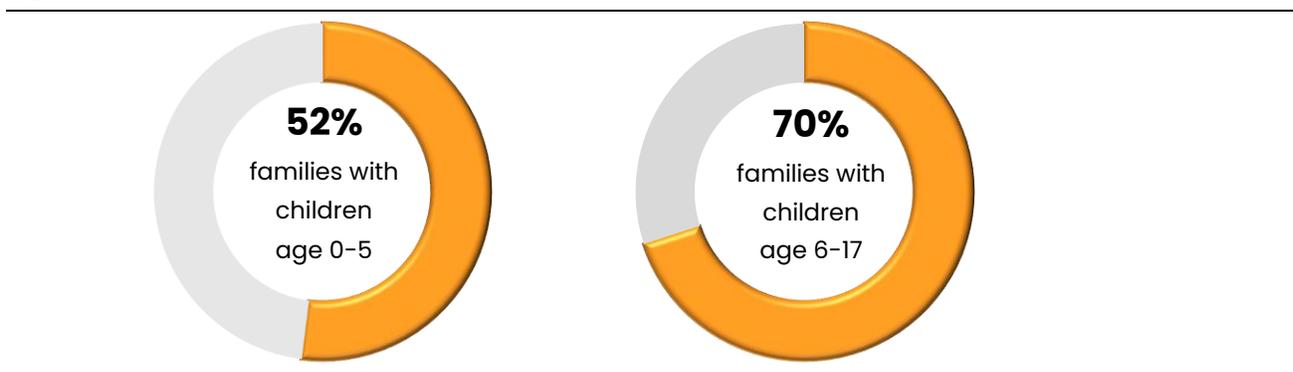
## KEY FINDINGS

These key findings are based on research and conditions of the current child care market in the Storm Lake area as of October 2023. If the community or the child care environment changes significantly, current findings may be affected.

### **Finding 1: Families with All Parents in the Labor Force is Declining**

According to the US Census Bureau as of 2021, 52% of families with children ages 0 to 5, and 70% of families with children ages 6 to 17 living in the Storm Lake area have all parents in the labor force. All parents in the labor force means if a family is headed by a couple, both parents are working and if it is headed by a single parent that parent is working.

Figure 18: Families with All Parents in the Labor Force



Through the employer and parent surveys, a few comments were received that indicate there are parents who have had to quit working to stay home with their children because of a lack of child care. US Census Bureau data shows that the percentage of families in the Storm Lake area with children and all parents working has declined over the last 10 years. In 2011, those percentages were 86% and 81% respectively, and in 2016 they were 70% and 84% respectively.

While every community and each family is unique, an additional comparison can be made between the Storm Lake area, Buena Vista County where Storm Lake is located, the state of Iowa, and the United States. As a whole, the state of Iowa is known to have a high percentage of families with all parents working and is often ranked number one, in addition through First Children's Finance's experience, communities and counties in Northwest Iowa often have a high percentage of families with all parents working. The following table shows a comparison of these different geographies. See table on next page.

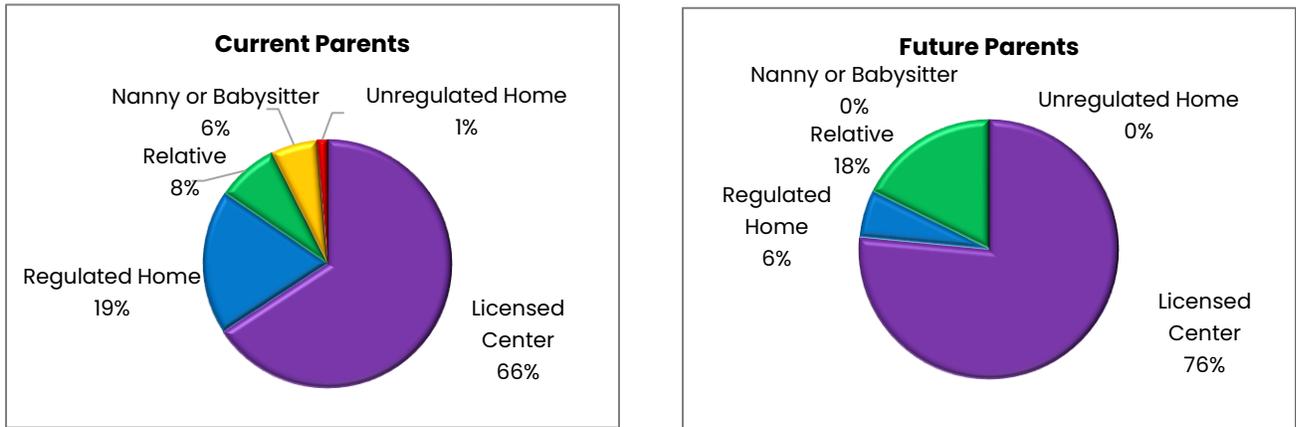
Table 42: Comparison of Families with All Parents Working (2021)

|                    | With children<br>age 0 to 5 | With children<br>age 6 to 17 |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Stom Lake area     | 52%                         | 70%                          |
| Buena Vista County | 63%                         | 72%                          |
| Iowa               | 76%                         | 81%                          |
| United States      | 67%                         | 72%                          |

**Finding 2: Parents Want Regulated Child Care that is Available Full-Time and Year-Round**

Through the child care needs surveys completed by parents in August and September of 2023, parents were asked several questions about their child care needs and preferences. The most preferred child care arrangement chosen by current parents on the child care needs survey was a licensed child care center, which is preferred by 85%, followed by an HHS registered child development home (19%). Among future parents the top choice is again a licensed center, which is preferred by 76%, followed by a relative (18%). Overall, 88% of parents (both current parents and future parents combined) prefer a setting that is regulated by Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), either a licensed center or a registered home.

Figure 19: Preferred Child Care Setting



When asked if they were selecting child care today, parents indicated they would prefer to drop-off children during the 7:00 am hour (62%) and pick them up during the 5:00 pm hour (27%), Monday through Friday (97%-99% per day). Separately parents were asked when they prefer to use based on the age of their children. A majority of parents (75%) with children ages 0 to 5, but not in kindergarten, indicated they prefer year-round care for this age group. Parents with school age children were split, with 40% indicating they want year-round care and 44% indicating they want care during the summer, only so children are not home alone.

### **Finding 3: Parents are Concerned with the Quality of Some Child Care Options**

Parents were asked to rate the quality of child care in Storm Lake on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being low quality, 3 being quality, and 5 being high quality. The weighted average among current parents was 2.78, and among future parents it was 1.94, indicating parents feel the quality of care available is less than adequate. In addition, employers rated quality 2.73 and child care providers rated quality as 2.40.

Through multiple open-ended questions, parents provided additional insight into their perception of child care quality. Related comments include:

- *...There are other in-home day care providers who are not licensed and take care of more than the regulated amount of children.*
- *No one had openings or the environment was unsafe.*
- *Hardly [any child care providers are] registered.*
- *...she has too many kids at a time.*
- *[My 6-year-old] gets bored because it is geared towards younger kids and most of the provider's attention is on the younger kids.*
- *Too many kids in the current daycare.*
- *Low quality and out of town.*
- *...if we had a daycare that took any child... it would be helpful for working parents instead of us trying to find a sitter who overcharges and doesn't have a license to care for children. We don't know if our kids are being cared for correctly while at work.*
- *Very simply the availability of high-quality child care in Storm Lake is the biggest challenge.*
- *Finding a reliable but most importantly safe child care. (Biggest challenge)*
- *Safety for their children. (Biggest challenge)*
- *Quality care in a clean, safe environment. (Biggest challenge)*

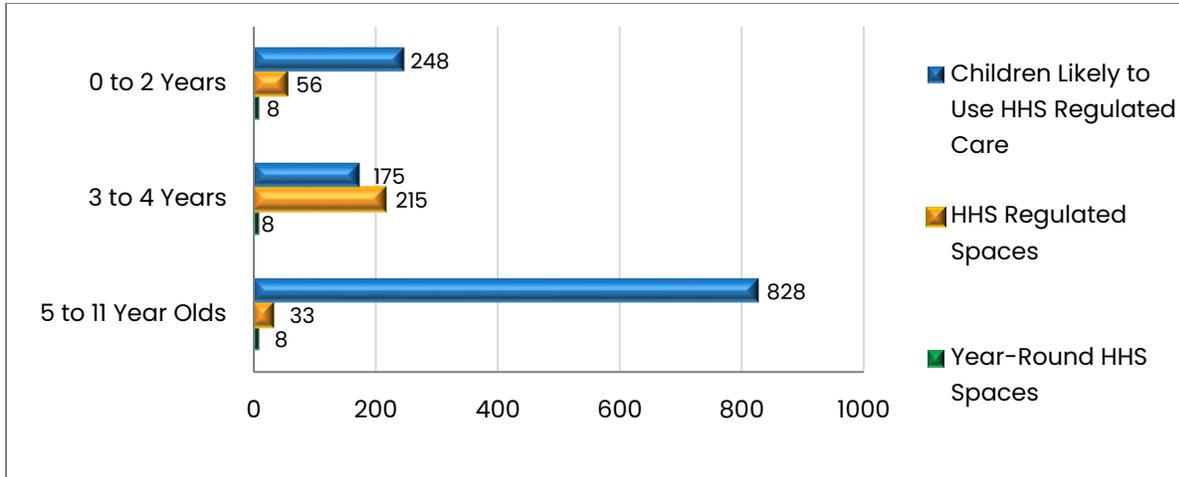
### **Finding 4: There is a Shortage of Child Care Spaces Among All Age Groups**

In the Storm Lake area, there are 2,301 children ages 0 to 11. Of those, First Children's Finance (FCF) estimates 1,422 have all parents working. Based on the percentage of families that have all parents working, and parents' preferences of child care settings, First Children's Finance estimates that approximately 1,251 of those children are from families that would likely use HHS regulated child care. According to Iowa HHS, there are currently 304 HHS regulated spaces, of which 32 are available year-round.

When broken down by age group and only full-time year-round child care spaces are considered (part-time preschool and school year only spaces not included), calculations show

there is a shortage of 240 spaces for ages 0 to 2 (infant, toddler, and two's), 167 spaces for ages 3 to 4 (preschool) and of 820 spaces for school age children.

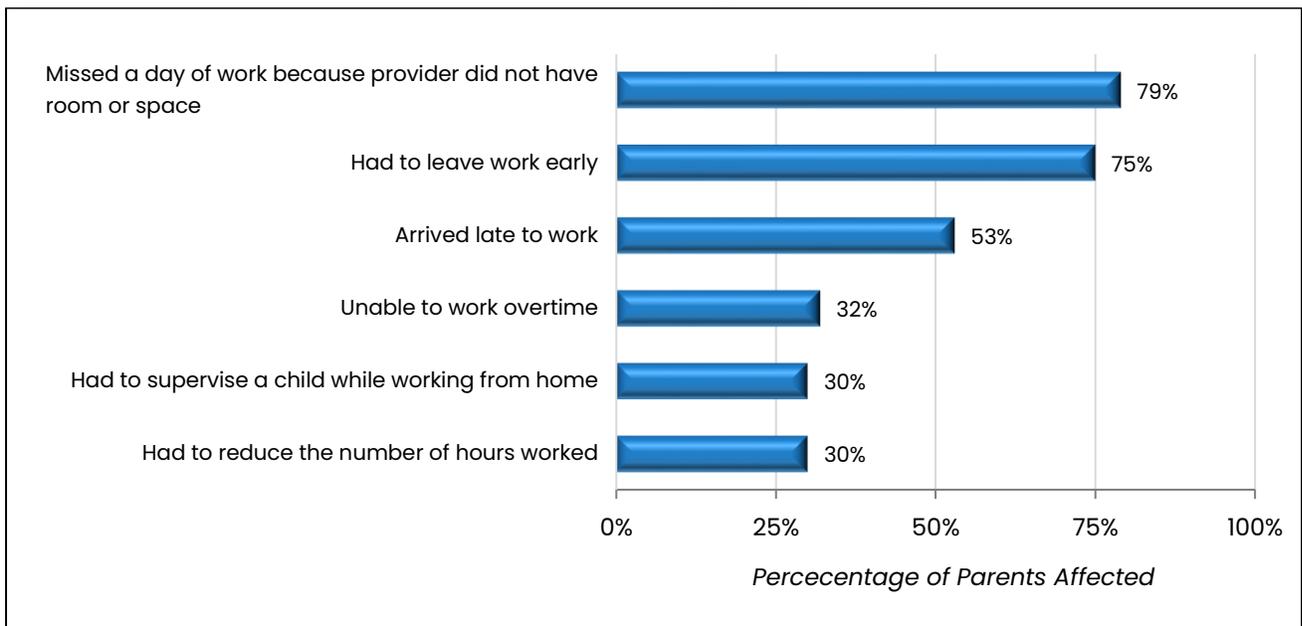
Figure 20: Children Need Care vs. Child Care Spaces



**Finding 5: Parents Indicate Child Care Challenges are Affecting their Jobs**

Over the last 12 months, parents have experienced child care challenges that have in turn affected their job. The adverse effects experienced by 30% or more of the parents that participated in the child care needs survey were: missed a day of work because the provider did not have room or space (79%), had to leave work early (75%), arrived late to work (53%), unable to work overtime (32%), had to supervise a child while working from home (30%), and had to reduce the number of hours worked (30%).

Figure 21: Most Common Effects of Child Care Challenges Reported by Parents



Separately, 22% of parents indicated that in the last 12 months they or their spouse or partner has declined employment or withdrawn from the workforce due to child care, while 12% indicated they or their spouse or partner is not working (unemployed) due to child care challenges.

### **Finding 6: Child Care Challenges are Limiting Employment for Nearly One-Half of Parents**

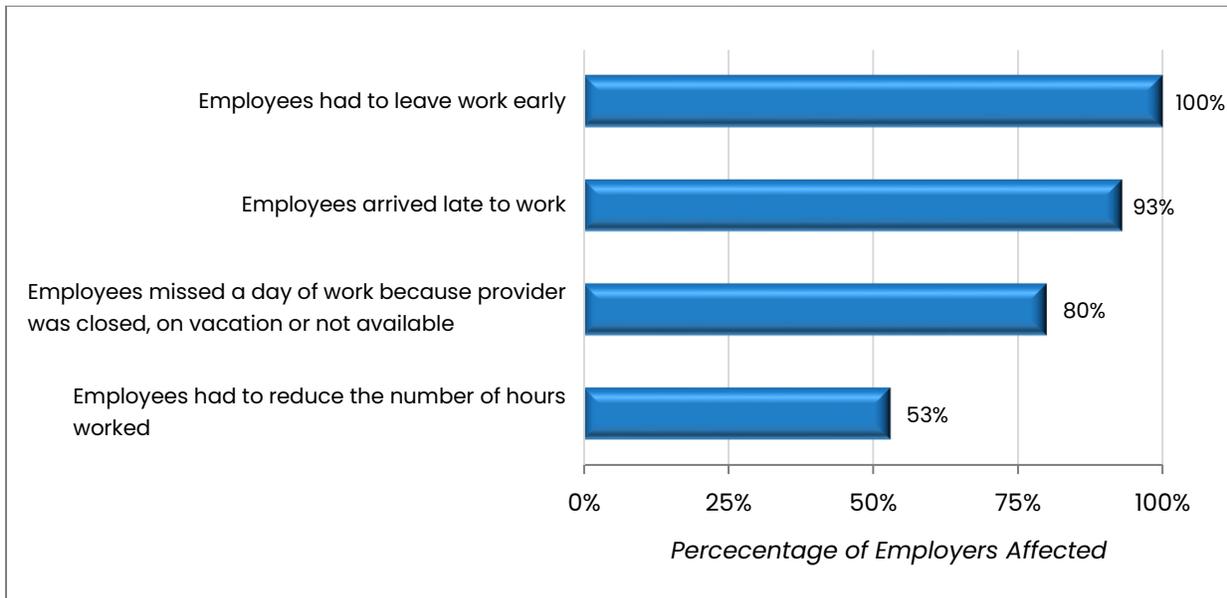
Through the child care needs survey conducted as part of this study, parents were asked if child care challenges are currently limiting their or their spouse's or partner's employment (ex. working part-time when full-time preferred, or not working within preferred field). Forty-six percent (46%) indicated it is. Those parents were asked to explain, some of the comments received were:

- *Unable to work late or extra hours.*
- *Partner desperately wants at least a part-time job, desires full-time employment, but unable to due to lack of child care.*
- *Prior to three weeks ago, work schedules had to be arranged around who could stay home with the baby because we could not find daycare for over a year.*
- *Unable to work additional hours, holidays, or weekends due to inability to have childcare, limited hours due to childcare needs.*
- *Once my maternity leave is over, I will have to work part-time from home until a spot opens at a daycare center in a nearby town.*
- *Can only work a few mornings a week due to limited daycare.*
- *Can't work the hours I'd prefer because no one to watch our baby.*

### **Finding 7: Employers Indicate Employees are Missing Work Due to Child Care Challenges**

Through the child care needs survey conducted as part of this study, employers were asked in what ways child care challenges have affected their employees in the last 12 months. The top 4 adverse effects that were experienced by participating employers were employees had to leave work early which was experienced by 100% of employers, employees arrived late to work which was experienced by 93% of employers, employees missed a day of work because the child care provider was closed, on vacation, or not available which was experienced by 80% of employers, and employees had to reduce the number of hours they worked which was experienced by 53% of employers. See figure on next page.

Figure 22: Most Common Effects of Child Care Challenges Reported by Employers



Employers were also asked about employee productivity and absenteeism due to child care challenges. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of employers indicated they had challenges related to productivity due to employee's child care challenges, while 74% of employers indicated they had experienced employee absenteeism due to employee's child care challenges. For each question employers were allowed to make additional comments. Some of the comments received were:

- *Mostly from the standpoint of maternal leave. Extended leave can cause delaying in projects getting completed. (Productivity challenge)*
- *We often run short and 90% of planned production and line speed due to absenteeism which may be due to child care issues. (Productivity challenge)*
- *Before and after school issues. (Productivity challenge)*
- *We have had employees have to bring a child with them due to lack of childcare and have them sit in the lobby or business center while mom works. (Productivity challenge)*
- *We have high daily absenteeism and then the impact is required Saturday work to make up lost production or adjusted work schedule to work 9-hour days. (Absenteeism)*
- *We have had several instances over the last year with employees calling off due to lack of child care. (Absenteeism)*
- *Employees have had to work from home or make schedule accommodations due to a lack of child care. It mostly impacts new employees who are trying to establish consistent child care in a new area. (Absenteeism)*

## **Finding 8: Child Care Providers Indicated They Are Not Utilizing Opportunities that May Improve Business Operations**

Through the State of Iowa there are currently multiple opportunities for licensed centers, registered child development homes, and some unregistered homes that are intended to improve business operations (including retaining staff and improving quality) and potentially supplement income. Current opportunities the child care providers participating in the survey were less familiar with and had lower participation are: T.E.A.C.H., Child Care WAGE\$ IOWA, FieldPrint Fingerprinting, state funding to utilize child care management software, and Child Care Assistance pilot program for the child care workforce.

The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Iowa program is part of a comprehensive national strategy that provides teacher education and compensation to Iowans who work with children birth to five years old. The program is offered by Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children (Iowa AEYC). Staff who utilize T.E.A.C.H. receive pay increases or bonuses and scholarship dollars towards their formal education while achieving individual professional development goals, which leads to staff retention. T.E.A.C.H. participants average a much lower turnover rate, 5-6% annually, compared to the national average of around 30%. Additionally, participants agree to continue working in their current child care program. Through the child care provider survey, only 1 program indicated they have used T.E.A.C.H., while 2 are familiar but have not participated, and 2 are not familiar with the program.

Child Care WAGE\$® Iowa (WAGE\$) is a salary supplement program offered by Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children (Iowa AEYC). Individuals receiving WAGE\$ can earn an annual stipend between \$525 and \$9,200 annually (in addition to their regular pay), depending on their education level and the child care program's Iowa Quality for Kids (IQ4K) level. The amount of the annual supplement increases as more education is completed and as the child care program maintains or increases their IQ4K rating. Through the child care provider survey, only 1 program indicated they have used WAGE\$, while 1 was familiar but had not participated, and 3 are not familiar with the program.

FieldPrint Fingerprinting can be used for meeting the requirements for licensed centers (and preschools), registered child development homes, and child care homes accepting child care assistance to conduct background checks on all staff and in some cases individuals residing within the home (if home-based care). These federal record checks are required every 4 years. Child care providers can use FieldPrint at no cost. Through the child care provider survey, 2 programs indicated they have heard of but haven't used FieldPrint, and 3 programs are not familiar with the program. None of the 5 programs have actually utilized this program.

Child care management software (CCMS) is software specifically designed to help child care programs automate their day-to-day operations so that staff have more time to spend with children. Child care programs that utilize CCMS can increase efficiency in their operations, reduce costs, and collect all payments that are owed. Currently regulated child care programs in Iowa that are using or sign up to use one of two selected CCMS (brightwheel and Playground) are eligible to have their CCMS license paid for by the State of Iowa for up to 12 months. Participating programs are also eligible for up to \$1,000 technology grant/support to enable the use of a CCMS. Through the child care provider survey, the 1 provider indicated they are currently participating in this program, while 1 provider is aware of but not using, and 3 programs are not familiar with the program.

Child Care Assistance (CCA) pilot program for the Child Care Workforce went into effect July 5, 2023. This program allows the child care workforce to apply for Child Care Assistance (CCA) for their own children even if they are over the family income limit. To be approved, the child care worker must meet all other CCA eligibility criteria excluding household income, but if approved, the result could be free child care for child care staff. Through the child care provider survey, 2 programs indicated they are a current participant of the CCA pilot program, while 3 programs indicated they are familiar with but are not participating in the program.