



Child Care Needs Assessment Report WASHINGTON COUNTY 2022

The COVID Pandemic is having a major impact on child care across America; Washington County is no exception. The last few years has witnessed an alarming drop in the supply of child care. Many providers have decided to close their doors permanently, others on a temporary basis. Programs and center classrooms have closed periodically due to COVID exposures and quarantining, as well as from staff shortages.

Parents scramble to find care, often when there is simply none to be found. The roller coaster ride of the past many months (since March 2020) has taken its toll on parents and providers who struggle to meet the many challenges of these times. Federal and State funded grants have helped to mitigate some of the stressors experienced by working families and child care providers. Essential workers have had opportunities to receive funds to help pay their child care fees. Child Care providers who have been open during the Pandemic have been able to apply for funding to help stabilize and grow their programs.

Focused efforts to address the child care shortage crisis in our area must be a top priority now and for the next several years. Rebuilding the supply of child care is needed for all age groups, but especially for infants and school age children. NYS Office of Children and Family Services has recently initiated a “Child Care Desert Grant” opportunity to help new child care programs open in our area.

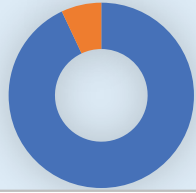
SACCN is partnering with several organizations in Warren and Washington Counties to implement child care recruitment plans and is also in the process of hiring a staff person to focus on these supply building efforts. And while these steps are critically important to regaining the balance of child care supply and demand in the immediate future, much work is still needed on a Community, State and Federal level to address-- and to change underlying issues in our child care system. Although space here does not allow for more on this topic, contact the Child Care Network for further information and resources (contact information on back of this report).

During the COVID 19 Pandemic, the supply of child care in Washington County has declined to crisis levels. The following chart indicates the high number of licensed/registered program closings in a two- year period.

Type of Child Care	2019	2021	Change Status
Centers	4	2	2 centers have closed (50 %)
Family/Group child care	47	33	A loss of 14 active sites (30 %)
School Aged Child Care	3	2	A loss of 2 active sites/1 new site (34 %)

The numbers in the above chart do not include the 5 Head Start Sites.

There are enough child care slots for only 7% of the children who live in Washington County



A Few Other Facts About Washington County

Population	61,302 ('20 census)
% of single parent householders	41.5% ('19 census)
% of children in living below the poverty level	19% ('21 KWIC)
Towns with no child care providers	Whitehall, Fort Ann, Hartford, Hampton
Towns with only 1 or 2 providers	Argyle, Salem, Cambridge

Decline of Child Care Supply by Available Slots

	2019 (pre-COVID)	2021	# of Slots Loss	% of Decline
B-2 years	218	112	106	49%
2-4 years	596	307	289	48%
5-12 years	289	198	91	31%
TOTALS	1103	577	526	48%

Child Care Challenges During the COVID Pandemic

PARENTS

Survey results of parents' experiences finding child care during the past year, leave no doubt that there is a large supply shortage in our area. When asked about challenges in their search experience, most parents surveyed (75%), reported that there were "no openings".

Of those surveyed:

- 24% **overall** were able to find child
- 27% of parents seeking **school aged care** were able to find licensed/registered child care
- For those seeking **infant care**, the success rate was far lower at only 13%

Many parents expressed stress and frustration at needing to work, but not being able to do so without child care. The many changes necessitated by COVID as well as the unpredictability caused by program closures (permanent and temporary) reveal the paramount need for a stable, quality child care supply so that parents can continue to work, and the economy can grow.

CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

COVID 19 has had an immense impact on the lives of child care providers in our communities. As essential workers, themselves, providers play a major role in making it possible for other essential workers to do their jobs, especially during the early days of the pandemic. Reduced enrollments, temporary closures, financial losses, staff shortages, mask wearing and maintaining health/safety supplies and procedures are among the many challenges reported by providers.

Providers were asked to rank various challenges since the pandemic began. The following ranked as most challenging:

- Mask wearing with young children ranked #1 (81%)
- Financial loss ranked # 2 (58%)
- Closures due to COVID exposures/quarantining ranked # 3 (52%)

44% had enrollment decreases due to parents being out of work or working from home. 50% of providers surveyed, experienced temporary closures.

Note: Warren and Washington County providers' results were combined for this child care provider survey

Please direct questions and/or comments to Liz Mahon-Laidlaw at 518.798.7972, Ext. 210 or by emailing her at laidlawe@saccn.org.

The following data sources were used to compile this report: U.S. Census, Kids' Well-being Indicators Clearinghouse (KWIC) 2021 NYS OCFS Child Care Facility Database (CCFS), Empire State Child Care Match database (ESCCM), Parent Survey (child care referral follow ups surveys)(March-Sep 2021), Provider Survey (December 2021)