



# Fort Dodge Child Care Market Analysis

## Key Findings

### Declining Population, Growing Child-Bearing Population

The total population of Fort Dodge has been declining over the last several decades. Since the 2000 Census the number of children ages 0-9 has declined but the number of adults age 25-34, prime child bearing ages, has increased from 2,839 to 3,261.

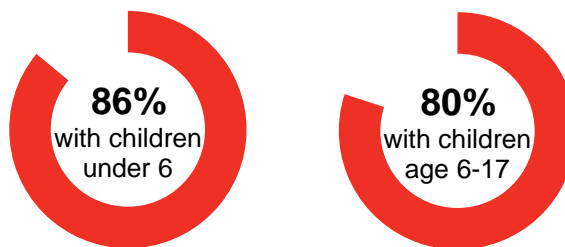
### Large Regional Labor Force

The total potential labor force of the regional laborshed is 137,219, this includes people living in other communities but willing to commute. The top industries based on the total number of employees are wholesale and retail, followed by health care and social services. Both of these industries tend to have nontraditional or extended hours, with many working past 5:00 p.m. and some even 12-hour shifts.

### Most Parents are in the Labor Force

Most families that live in Fort Dodge have all parents working. Eighty six percent of families with children under the age of 6 and 80% of families with children ages 6-17 have all parents working. That means, if a family is headed by a couple both parents are working, and if it is a headed by a single parent that parent is working.

#### Families with All Parents Working



### Family Incomes Higher than Child Care Assistance Thresholds

The median family income in Fort Dodge is \$51,035, and the average family size is 2.89. To qualify for the Iowa Child Care Assistance (CCA) program according to the 2016 eligibility criteria, a family of 3 must have an annual household income below \$29,232 and a family of 4 must have an annual household income below \$35,235 (145% of poverty).

Parents that completed the 2016 child care needs survey were asked about their family size and household income. Of those that currently have children under the age of 12, 64% indicated their family size is 3 or 4 and 54% stated their annual household income exceeds \$65,000.

### Declining Child Care Supply

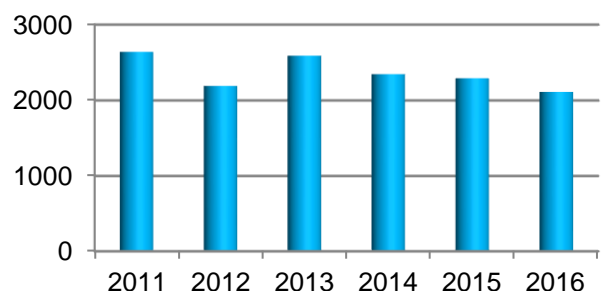
Since 2011, Webster County has lost 530 child care spaces. Today there are 2,111 spaces within licensed centers and preschools, registered homes, and non-registered homes across the county; 1,821 (86%) of those spaces are in Fort Dodge. Fort Dodge also has 124 preschool spaces within local schools, these spaces are not included in the above totals.

### About this Analysis

Fort Dodge is the county seat and home to a majority of Webster County's residents as well as several large employers. As a regional hub for both living and working Fort Dodge needs to have an adequate supply of child care. For working parents, choosing child care may be one of the most critical decisions they can make as the child care environment has lasting effects on the child. Getting *any* care in Fort Dodge is a challenge; options for *quality* care that meet the needs and preferences of families is even more challenging.

In 2016 Linking Families and Communities Early Childhood Iowa commissioned this analysis to better understand the child care market in Fort Dodge. The need for such an analysis is a result of residents and employers reporting to the agency that there are not enough quality child care spaces in Fort Dodge to meet demand. The goal of this analysis is to provide Linking Families and Communities, its partners, and the community, with an analysis of the current supply of child care in Fort Dodge. This data can be used for future planning purposes.

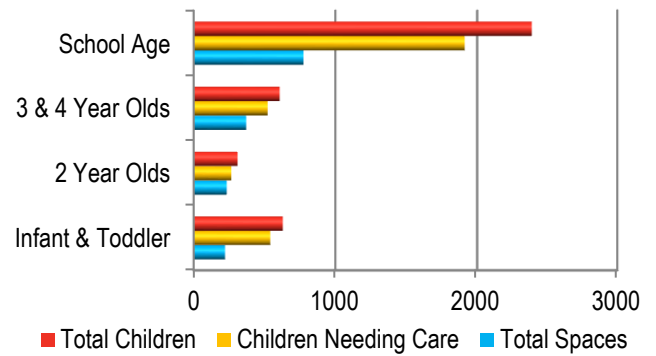
#### Child Care Supply in Webster County



## Shortage of Child Care Spaces

According to the 2010 Census there were 3,934 children ages 0 to 12 living in Fort Dodge. Based on the percentage of families with children that have all parents working, approximately 3,239 children need some form of care. With 1,945 total child care and preschool spaces in Fort Dodge there is a deficit of 1,294 spaces. If the 344 part-time, school year only preschool spaces are subtracted that deficit increases to 1,638 spaces.

Children Needing Care vs. Total Spaces



## Parents Having Difficulty Finding Quality Care

When asked if they had difficulty finding care, 60% of parents completing the 2016 child care needs survey indicated they had. The most common reasons cited were difficulties related to scheduling or providers' hours of care, no openings within quality homes/centers, and no openings for infants.

When parents made their current arrangements, they were not always able to put their child in the environment of their preference. Currently the most common form of care is a registered child development home, followed by a relative in their home, and a spouse or partner staying home. Parents indicated their preferences are registered child development homes, followed by licensed centers, and then a spouse or partner staying home.

### Parent Comments

- *"My schedule needs flexible times, I work all shifts, on all days, and my child needs transportation to and from school."*
- *"No one in town is accepting infants. I have been waiting a year now to get into a daycare of any sort (home or center)."*
- *"Availability for 2 children of different ages."*
- *"Nowhere to drop off before 6 am ...and no centers staying open until 8 pm when I typically return home."*

## Employers Feel the Effects of Child Care Challenges

Nearly half of the employers that completed the 2016 child care needs survey indicated their company had experienced challenges related to employee productivity or absenteeism due to employees' child care challenges; while 18% indicated they had had problems hiring new employees due to child care issues.

In addition, 58% of parents with children under the age of 12 answered that child care challenges had caused them to arrive at work late or leave early, 57% answered that they were not able to stay late or work overtime, and 55% had missed an entire day due to child care challenges.

### Employer comments

- *"There seems to be a lack of quality, affordable daycare options."*
- *"Hours outside of normal working hours (8 am-5 pm) can be the most difficult in finding child care."*
- *"It would be nice if childcare center was available in the evenings, maybe until 8 pm."*