



Our Mission: To Strengthen the Quality of Children's Early Care and Learning

The Southern Adirondack Child Care Network is a not for profit child care resource and referral organization, founded in 1992, to strengthen the quality of children's early care and learning in Warren, Washington and Hamilton Counties. Services are offered for the purpose of supporting all child care programs, parents and the community by:

- Developing, strengthening and improving area child care services
- Recruiting, assisting and training child care providers
- Assisting parents to find and select child care
- Working with employers to assist with the child care needs of their employees
- Informing the community of child care issues

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	page	3
 Child Care Supply and Demand		
Gap analysis Warren County	page	4
Gap analysis Washington County	page	6
Gap analysis Hamilton County	page	8
Child Care Supply	page	9
Child Care Demand	page	10
The High Cost of Child Care.....	Page	13
 Quality Child Care Matters		
Providers.....	page	15
Parents.....	page	17
Other Stakeholders Speak Out.....	page	18
Employers	page	19
Economic Development.....	page	19
Government Policy.....	page	20
Quality Initiatives	page	21
 Findings and Next Steps	page	23
 Glossary of Terms	page	25
 Resources/Bibliography	page	26

INTRODUCTION

Child care is a crucial component of our community's infrastructure, one that impacts our economy, our local businesses, our families and most significantly- our children. Research is increasingly demonstrating what early care and learning professionals have known for a long time--that the first few years of life are the most important in determining a lifetime of well-being- cognitively, emotionally and socially.

This assessment report is for the purpose of illuminating the current state of child care in the geographic area served by the Southern Adirondack Child Care Network (SACCN): Warren, Washington, Hamilton and Northern Saratoga Counties. The report explores the various factors that impact early care and learning in general, as well as those issues which are determined to be especially relevant to our particular region of New York State; it is intended for those persons and organizations in our communities who have a stake in, and commitment to, the well-being of all of our children.

Methodology

Provider surveys were mailed and e-mailed in March 2016 to 121 licensed/registered providers in SACCN's service delivery area. These surveys targeted providers of family and group family child care, as well as center and school age care. There was a 42% response rate.

A center director's focus group was conducted on January 8, 2016 to learn about enrollment issues/concerns/trends. 8 center and school age program directors participated.

Parent surveys were e- mailed in March 2016 to 300 parents in the three county area. The list was comprised of parents who had used our referrals services and had requested to be on our parenting email list during the past 4 years. 11 parents responded.

Parent referral follow-up calls were made to all parents within 45 days of receiving consumer education and referral services from our agency. The response rate for these surveys is over 50%.

Other data collection sources include: NYS Child Care Facility System (CCFS), Child Care Aware of America's child care database (NACCRAWARE) and the 2010 U.S. Census with updated estimates. Additional source information is located in the appendix section of this report.

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The Southern Adirondack Child Care Network

Child Care Supply and Demand by Town (with Gap Analysis)

WARREN COUNTY

Background

Warren County has a population of approximately 65,000 residents. Located 50 miles north of Albany, it is often referred to as “The Gateway to the Adirondacks”. 75% of the county’s acreage is wooded. The mountains of the Adirondack Range cover much of the area; these along with many rivers and lakes not only attract tourists to the area, but also create large areas of rural communities. Counties that border Warren County are as follows:

- To the north- Essex
- To the south- Saratoga
- To the east- Washington
- To the west- Hamilton

Over 60% of the county’s population resides in the City of Glens Falls and the neighboring town of Queensbury. Both communities represent the financial/commercial hub of the county.

Children under 18 years of age comprise 19% of the population, with 4.7 % of the population under 5 years old. 96% of the population consider themselves white. English is spoken as the first language in 95% of households and persons of Hispanic or Latino origins make up 2.2% of the total population. The per capita household income is \$30,662 with 13% of residents living below the poverty level. Among persons living below the poverty level, 36% of these are families headed by a single mother.

Warren County

Age Groups of Children	# of Children	# of Child Care Slots	Potential Demand *	Additional Slots Potentially Needed
Birth to 3	1,879	266	1,165	899
3-4	1,262	883	782	0 (+101)
5-12	5,508	573	3,580	3,007

Data Sources: 2014 estimates U.S. Census and NYS Child Care Facility System

**Note: “Potential Demand” is calculated based on a percentage determined by Kidscount. The total number of children multiplied by .62 for under age 5 and .65 for ages 5-12.*

A significant supply gap exists in all towns for infant/toddler care as well as for school age child care. Location in which a significant gap in supply exists in all forms of care is Lake Luzerne; in 2014, the one school age program in Lake Luzerne closed creating even a greater need for care for this age group.

In Queensbury, the gap analysis indicates that for the 3-4 year old age group, there is a surplus of child care providers.

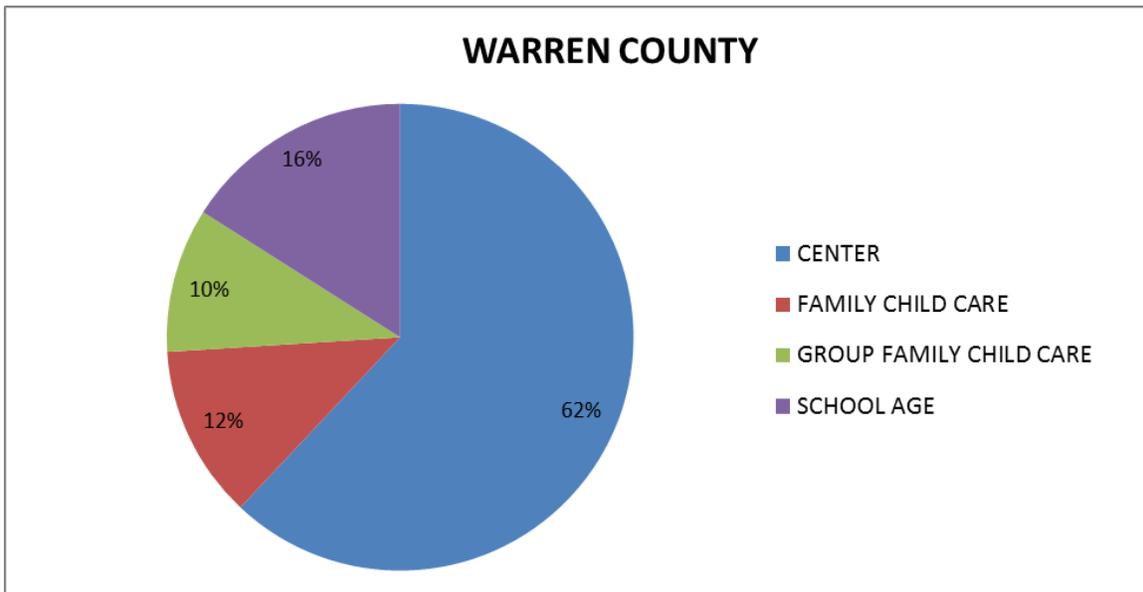
Number of child care programs in Warren County:

- Family Child Care: **28**
- Group Family Child Care: **11**
- Centers (including Head Start): **16**
- School Age Programs: **9** (7 of these sponsored by the YMCA)

Since October 1, 2013, 17 new programs have started; 30 programs have closed.

Supply of Child Care Slots by Modality of Care Licensed and Registered Providers

Note: Head Start enrollments are included in this chart



More than half of child care licensed/registered slots in Warren County are in Center facilities.

Child Care Supply and Demand by Town (with Gap Analysis)

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Background

The population of Washington County is approximately 62,000. Situated in the rolling foothills of the Adirondacks to the north and the Taconic range to the south, farmlands dominate the landscape of this rural county. Counties/states that border Washington County are as follows:

To the North- Essex

To the South- Rensselaer

To the East- the State of Vermont

To the West- Warren and Saratoga

The largest municipalities in Washington County are Hudson Falls to the west and Granville to the east. County residents frequently commute to the Glens Falls/Queensbury area for employment and commerce and at the southern end of Washington County, many Greenwich residents commute for work to the Capital District. In addition to farming (especially dairy) there are small pockets of industry throughout the county.

20% of the population is children under 18 years of age, with 5% under 5 years old.

95% of the population is white. English is spoken in more than 96% of households as a first language and persons of Hispanic or Latino origins make up 2.5% of the total population.

Persons living below the poverty level make up 14.6% of the population; of these families, 41% are headed by a single mother. The per capita household income in Washington County is \$23,877.

Washington County

Age Groups of Children	# of Children	# of Child Care Slots	Potential Demand *	Additional Slots Potentially Needed
Birth to 3	1,848	487	1,146	659
3-4	1,347	637	835	198
5-12	5,594	248	3,636	3,388

Data Sources: 2014 estimates U.S. Census and NYS Child Care Facility System

There are currently two school age afterschool programs in Washington County. One program is run by the Glens Falls Family YMCA in a Hudson Falls Public School facility and the other by the Saratoga YMCA at the Greenwich Public Schools.

Whitehall and Salem currently has no child care centers or family/group family child care programs, although there is a Head Start center in Whitehall.

In most Washington County towns, supplies of infant/toddler care do not appear to meet the potential needs of the community. The towns of Granville, Whitehall, Fort Ann and Fort Edward continue to have a need for more school age programming.

Number of child care programs in Washington County

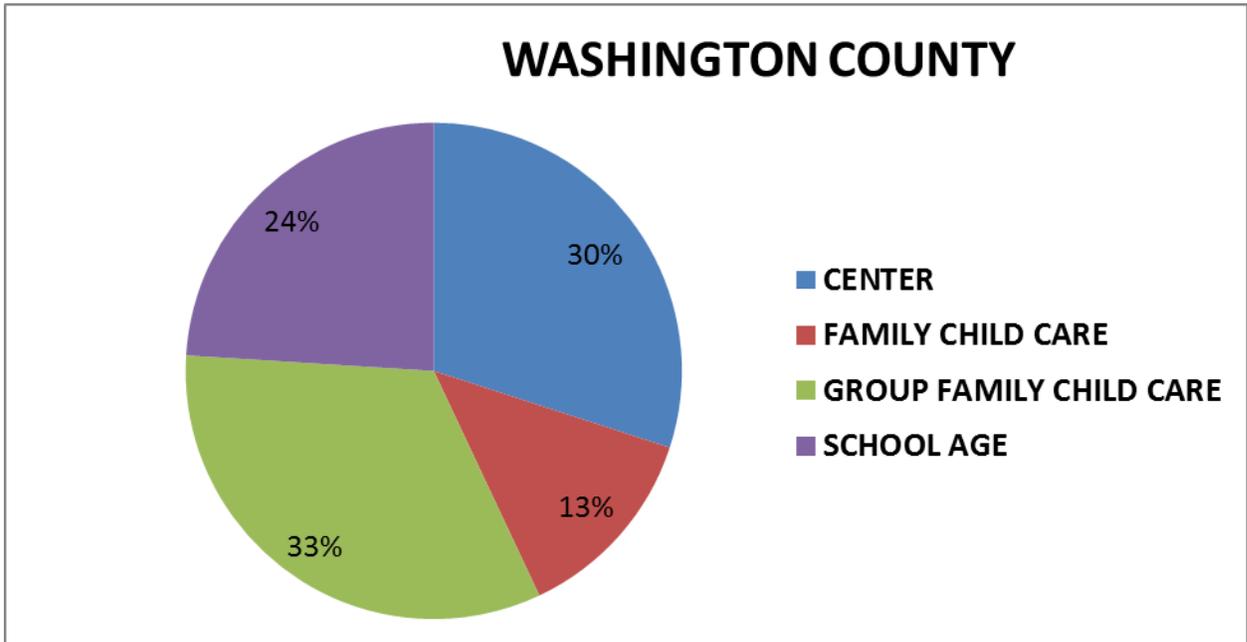
- Family Child Care: **19**
- Group Family Child Care: **25**
- Centers (including Head Start): **7**
- School Age Programs: **2**

Since October 1 2013, **11** new child care programs began in Washington County and **28** programs have closed.

**Note: "Potential Demand" is calculated based on a percentage determined by Kidscount. The total number of children multiplied by .62 for under age 5 and .65 for ages 5-12.*

**Supply of Child Care Slots by Modality of Care
Licensed and Registered Providers**

Note: Head Start enrollments are included in this chart



Family and Group Family Child Care Programs hold almost 50% of all child care slots in Washington County.

Child Care Supply and Demand (with Gap Analysis)

HAMILTON COUNTY

Background

Hamilton County is a mountainous region located entirely within the Adirondack Park. The beautiful terrain and waterways attract vacationers; however the seasonal tourism, coupled with the small industrial/commercial base of the region, make for limited employment opportunities for many of the county's residents.

The population of this county is 4,712 with a 12% decline in population since 2000. 15.1% of the population is comprised of children under 18 years of age; 3.4 % are under age 5.

Currently, there is one registered family child care providers and one group family child care provider in Hamilton County with the capacity to serve a total of 24 children. One provider lives in Wells and the other is located in Indian Lake, the county seat.

Legally-exempt and informal child care providers are the most common type of child care utilized within this geographically vast and rural county. Legally-exempt caregivers provide care for families receiving child care subsidies from their local department of social services and are exempt from licensing by caring for no more than two non-related children at any given time. Currently 3 families receive child care assistance for a total of 4 of the county's 192 children who are under the age of 6.

Hamilton County

Age Groups of Children	# of Children	# of Child Care Slots	Potential Demand	Additional Slots Potentially Needed
Birth to 3	98	4	61	57
3-4	58	8	36	28
5-12	331	4	215	211

Data Sources: U.S. 2014 Census estimates, NYS Child Care Facility System

of Family and Group Family Providers: 2

of Centers: 0

of School Age Programs: 0

Since October 1, 2013, 1 new program has opened in Hamilton County; 3 programs have closed.

**Note: "Potential Demand" is calculated based on a percentage determined by Kidscount. The total number of children multiplied by .62 for under age 5 and .65 for ages 5-12.*

Child Care Supply

There are currently 161 regulated (NYS licensed or registered) early care and learning programs in Warren, Washington, Hamilton and Northern Saratoga Counties; this number includes 10 Head Start sites. 120 providers/programs are within the counties of Warren, Washington and Hamilton. The other 41 providers/programs reside in the Northern Saratoga County towns of Gansevoort, South Glens Falls, Fort Edward, Wilton, Schuylerville and Corinth; although out of SACCN's official service delivery area, these providers receive services from SACCN because of their geographic proximity to the Washington and Warren County borders.

Since October 2013, 61 licensed/registered child care facilities have closed in the Child Care Network's service delivery area. A total of 36 new facilities have opened their doors to children and families. During this two and a half year period, almost twice as many providers have closed as have opened. Although many providers have closed due to retirement, this is only a partial explanation for the rapid decline in numbers. The economic recession that caused employment instability for many families as early as 2009 eventually impacted the numbers of providers start-ups and the number of closures as well, within our region.

The trend toward a decrease in the number of group family child care and family child care programs has likely hit its peak and we will see an increase in new licensed/registered programs during the next few years as the overall economic climate of our areas continues to improve, along with job stability. Recruitment of new providers to the field will be critical, especially to meet need for care in particular towns in our area.

As indicated by the gap analysis charts on pages 4-8, the supply of licensed and registered child care does not meet the need for child care in our area. Infant and school age child care slots, in particular, represent the greatest potential need. Given this apparent gap, where **are** parents finding care for these children if they are not finding it in the regulated child care system? In the case of school age care, it is likely that child care arrangements when not licensed, may include neighbors, friends, relatives, legally exempt care, extra -curricular activities, staying home alone and a combination of any or all of the above.

For our youngest children, many working parents are also likely to find care in informal settings. As with school age demand, the unmet need for infant licensed/registered child care is met with the use of other early care and learning settings including informal child care and legally exempt child care, both of which often include relatives and friends as caregivers. At the current time, approximately 184 children are cared for by legally exempt child care providers in Warren County, 172 children by legally-exempt providers in Washington County and 7 children by Legally-exempt child care providers in Hamilton County. These providers have completed an enrollment process through the Child Care Network that qualifies them to receive child care

subsidy payments from their local department of social services. Although not licensed, these providers are required by NYS to meet basic health and safety standards; in addition, some background checks are required as part of the enrollment process.

Child Care Demand: Parent Needs and Requests

In our region, as throughout our country, demographics in the workforce and the family have changed dramatically in the past four decades. Child care has become an essential part of our social and economic infrastructure.

- 50% of women with young children are working, up more than 30% since the late 1960's
- 61% of all U.S. children have all parents in the workforce (two working parents or single working parent)

Data Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2015

A demand for child care in our area is evidenced in the supply and demand analyses on pages 4-8 of this report. In our region the potential need for child care is far greater than the available child care slots. In addition, there are geographic pockets that have minimal or no child care, such as in Lake Luzerne in Warren County and Whitehall in Washington County.

The Child Care Network works with families to find licensed/registered child in our area. For the past several years the numbers of parent requests for child care referrals has declined. It is noteworthy that this decline has paralleled a decline in the number of child care providers during this same period.

of Families Receiving Child Care Referrals

County	2015	2014	2011	Decrease in Referrals since 2011
Warren	118	133	158	25%
Washington	107	99	122	11%

Data Source: Naccraware

The previously weak economy may be a partial explanation for the decrease in the number of parents contacting the Child Care Network for child care assistance since 2011, as well as the fact that there have been reductions of funding for child care subsidy assistance during the past several years. There is at least one other reason for the fewer referral requests-- the internet. Parents are now able to search for child care options on line through sites such as Craig's list and Care.com. In recognition of the fact that many parents today prefer the convenience and ease of using the web for information, the Child Care Network is in the process of launching an on-line referral option. This child care search option will be available in the fall of 2016.

Requests by Type of Care 2015
(Referral may include requests for more than one type of care)

County	Family Child Care	Group Family Child Care	Center-Based Child Care	School-age Child Care
Warren	173	173	155	33
Washington	163	162	131	44

Note: Numbers reflect that parents may have requested care for more than one child

Data source: Naccraware

Requests for Child Care by Age of Child 2015

County	0-11 months.	12-23 months	24-35 months	3 & 4 years	5 years and ups
Warren	32	27	22	24	42
Washington	27	15	28	37	36

Note: Numbers reflect that parents may have requested care for more than one child

Data source: Naccraware

In Washington County 48% of the child care requests were for children under two years of age; in Warren county 45% of the requests were for children of that age group. Percentages were based **on the total number of children** with referrals for each family by county as opposed to the total number of families receiving referrals.

Infant Supply Gap

	Warren	Washington	Hamilton
# Children under 2	1305	1336	64
Potential demand	837	828	40
# of slots	211	160	10
Potential need	626	668	30

Information obtained during child care referral follow-up calls with parents further substantiates the potential need for infant care displayed in this chart. Parents often report that they struggle to find a program for their infants-- and when they do find a provider who meets their needs, they are placed on a waiting list.

One explanation for the shortage of infant slots relates to staff/child ratio regulations. Child care facilities are required to maintain specific ratios, varying according to age of child. Family and group family child care programs are limited to 2 and 4 infants respectively. Child care centers are required to have a teacher/child ratio of one adult per 4 children under the age of 18 months. (Note that for purposes of staff/infant ratio state regulations, the infant age cut-off in centers is 18 months, while in family child care the infant age cut-off is 24months.) These regulations are appropriately implemented for the well-being of infants and toddlers who require special care and attention. Yet these ratios necessarily contribute to higher infant costs, as well as the shortage of child care slots for this group.

Parent Preferences- A Sampling of Individualized Requests 2015

County	Total # of parents provided referrals	Weekend/evenings And other non-traditional hours	Part-time	Special needs & medical	Before School	After school
Warren	118	26 (22%)	24 (21%)	21 (18%)	33 (28%)	35 (30%)
Washington	107	32 (30%)	21 (20%)	20 (21%)	25 (28%)	37 (35%)

Data source: Naccraware

Note: These particular requests do not reflect the total number of request options made by parents; also parents may be making requests for multiple children in their family.

In Warren, Washington and Hamilton Counties, many parents are employed in industries such as factories, retail, hospitality and health care which often function with multiple shifts including rotating schedules and weekend hours.

Not surprisingly, the most common individualized requests during 2015 were for non-traditional and part-time care. When surveyed parents are asked about the problems encountered during their search for child care, year after year the most frequent response is that care is not available for the hours needed; and for the 2014 annual parent survey, 22% of parent respondents cited finding the hours of care needed as their biggest obstacle.

The number of licensed and registered child care programs that offer child care during evening/nighttime and weekend hours are few and do not nearly meet the need for parents who work these hours. In Warren County only 3% of licensed/registered providers offer non-traditions hours of care; the number is a bit higher in Washington County at 10%.

As is the case with gaps in the supply of infant and school age child care, the gap in the supply of non-traditional hours of care is often narrowed with the utilization of informal and legally exempt child care arrangements.

Many factors impact access to, and utilization of, child care for employed parents. Even if care is available, does the available supply meet the particular needs of families? Hours of employment impact access to quality child care, as does the age of children. Other impacts to access include the location of care and its relation to families living in rural areas, as well as transportation to and from care and school while parents are working. The next section of this report focuses on another critical access issue- the high cost of quality child care.

The High Cost of Child Care

Child care affordability is a major concern for many families throughout New York State—including in our area. Every family can expect to pay over 10% of their income for every type of child care. A single parent can expect to pay over 54% of his/her income for just one child in center-based care and nearly all of it (99.6%) for two children.

New York State—Percent of Income

	Center	Family Child Care Home
Infant Care for Two Parent Households	15%	11%
Two Children for Two Parent Households	28%	21%
Infant Care for Single Parent	55%	39%
Two Children for Single Parent	100%	77%

Child Care Aware of America 2015

New York State-- Cost of Child Care

	Center	Family Child Care Home
Annual Cost of Infant Care	\$14,144	\$10,140
Annual Cost of Care for an Infant and a 4 year old	\$25,844	\$19,916

Child Care Aware of America 2015

In New York State, the cost of a year of care in a center for an infant is nearly double (94% greater than) the cost of a year of tuition at a public college, the widest gap of any state in America.

Middle class families as well as families working at the poverty level have real concerns about the high costs of child care. Child care is expensive – and generally the higher the quality of care, the more a family can expect to pay. For lower-income families, especially, the high cost of child care is often barrier to accessing quality care.

There are a myriad of factors that impact a family’s ability to move out of poverty-- and child care is one of these factors.

Child care is essential for parents to work, support their families and improve their standard of living, yet low income wage earners have a number of obstacles to overcome related to their search for child care. In addition to the high cost factor, other issues impacting the ability of parents to access quality child care include:

- Many low waged jobs have hours/shifts during which licensed care is not available
- Schedules for many retail and shift jobs are provided by employers one week at a time
- Back to work training programs require that parent find temporary child care, a type of care not generally available in our area
- Many providers choose care that is exempt from licensing (or illegal). In either case this type of care can be more unreliable than licensed care causing issues with job stability
- Non-traditional work hours require parents to put together piecemeal arrangement that include multiple providers
- Lack of transportation to a child care facility. This can especially be an issue in our rural areas.

of Subsidy Eligible Families Receiving Referrals

County	2015	2014	2011	2008
Warren	56	69	58	100
Washington	43	63	49	126

Data source: Naccraware Child Care Referral Data 2015

Note: The trend in fewer child care requests can be largely attributed to decrease funding for child care subsidy.

Families Receiving Referrals at or below 200% of Poverty

	Warren County	Washington County
Percent of parents receiving child care referrals who are at or below 200% of poverty	49%	48%
Percent of child care referrals for single female head of household	38% (98% of these were at or below 200% of poverty)	38% (100% of these were at or below 200% of poverty)

NACCRAWARE child care referral database 2015

Quality Child Care Matters

Indicators of Quality

Discussions of child care availability, accessibility and/or affordability necessarily lead to the topic of **quality** and its crucial impact on children’s development and learning. Research reveals that **children who participate in high quality early care and learning programs do better in school and in life** with the opposite outcome for children who experience poor quality care. (*Child Care Aware of America, National Association for the Education of Young Children, National Center for Early Development and Learning, Zero to Three.*)

Knowing what constitutes quality child care is a major first step in quality improvement and in a parent’s child care search. The following indicators are often cited as measures in determining a program’s level of quality:

- Adult to Child Ratio
- Group Size
- Caregiver Qualifications and Training:
- Development Approach to Learning through Play
- Staff Turnover
- Parent Involvement
- Health and Safety
- Accreditation

Child Care Providers and Quality

High quality early learning settings depend on a high quality workforce. The role of the provider/teacher is crucial to the overall picture of quality child care in our communities. The provider/teacher supports the healthy growth and development of a child, helping to ensure social, emotional and intellectual strength and resilience throughout life.

Relationships formed as the result of the daily interactions between children and their caregivers is a key ingredient in determining the level of a child care program’s quality. Adults trained in child development, who offer a warm, nurturing environment and who understand that children differ in growth rate, interest, abilities, frustration levels and family influences are better able to meet the needs of children. (*i.e. National Association for the Education of Young Children, Zero to Three, NYS Early Care and Learning Council, NYS Early Childhood Advisory Council, U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services*)

Provider Credentials and Degrees (and percentage of total survey respondents)

	Warren		Washington	
Degrees and Credentials				
Assocs. Degree	20	25%	20	25%
BA	19	24%	7	11%
MA	7	9%	6	7%
CDA	34	43%	24	30%
Admin. Credential	3	4%	0	0
I/T Credential	4	5%	3	4%

Data source: Naccraware 2014 Note: The percentages reflected in the graphs on the preceding page include providers with multiple degrees. Also data used for Center and Group family child care reflect the education of one employee (generally the owner/director) at each site.

Professional Development

Training

The Child Care Network provides training opportunities for early care and learning professionals through workshops, conferences, on site one-on-one mentoring and other networking opportunities that assist them to improve the quality of child care provided to children in the Southern Adirondack region.

of Early Childhood Professionals Who Attended SACCN Trainings

2015	2014	2012	2009
560	721	683	551

During the licensing/registration process, prospective providers are required to take a 15 hour pre-service health and safety training. SACCN offers this training as well as on-site technical assistance as needed to assist in the child care start-up phase.

Child care providers, once licensed, are then required to complete 30 hours of training every two years. These trainings address specific topics related to child care as well as the laws and regulations for child care programs in New York State. SACCN collaborates with other local agencies, as needed, to ensure that the full range of provider training needs is met; all of the state licensing requirements can be met by the trainings offered by SACCN. Since 2012, almost 50% of providers have indicated yearly that they fulfill most or all of their state training requirements through SACCN. Providers may also choose to attend trainings offered by colleges and other community sponsored continuing education programs, and an increasing number of providers also choose to take training classes on-line. Surveyed providers who prefer the online training option has increased significantly in the past 7 years. In 2009, 30% of respondents indicated online trainings as a preferred method; by 2016 68% of providers indicated a preference for the on-line training option.

Technical Assistance

In 2015, child care providers participated in 115 hours of on-site technical assistance to improve the quality of care offered to children; in addition, child care providers contacted SACCN 532 times via telephone, email, fax and in-person for specific information relating to providing services to children and parents.

Family child care providers and center programs are encouraged to contact SACCN for on the job training assistance- and also to join early childhood associations such as The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)-and/or its state and local chapters and the National Association for Family child care (NAFCC) -and its state and local chapters. Providers and programs can become accredited by these professional organizations on a voluntary basis. Studies reveal that accreditation elevates the quality of child care provided; however, there are no accredited child care programs in this service delivery area at this time.

SACCN surveys providers at least yearly to determine interest and needs regarding topic preferences and also preferences for times and locations of trainings. In addition, the results of

workshop evaluations are used to inform the planning for, and offerings of, future training opportunities.

Training and technical assistance is also provided at no charge to child care providers who are enrolled in the Child Care and Adult Food Program (CACFP), a federally funded health and nutrition program. Participation in this program is also considered an indicator of quality care. Over 70% of licensed/registered **family child care and group family child care providers in the Child Care Network’s service delivery area (including Northern Saratoga County), participate in the food program.**

Families and Quality

“Research shows 75% of brain growth and 85% of intellect, personality and social skills develop before age five. Yet parents do not have all the information they need to help them make one of the most important decisions they’ll ever face—choosing an early care and learning program for their child”. (NYS Council on Children and Families)

Parents want quality care for their children, but they may need assistance in learning how to identify what a high quality child care environment looks like. They also may need assistance to afford the ever increasing costs of high quality care. An important role of SACCN is to support parents in their search for quality child care by educating them about the importance of quality and by providing information to help them make more informed decisions in their search. Soon, *QUALITYstarsNY* will be another valuable tool in this process. (See more about *QUALITYstarsNY* and other local, state and federal quality initiatives to educate and engage parents on pages 21-22 of this report).

Parents sometimes assume that quality standards are already in place in a program because it has been licensed by the state. Yet state licenses are considered a minimum standard when measuring quality. One cannot assume that a licensed program automatically means a high level of quality (although many licensed programs provide a high quality of care including many of the indicators listed above).

Parents in our region and throughout New York State, struggle to find high quality and affordable child care for their children. Working parents must often make difficult choices—to place their children in lower quality care, resulting often to the emotional and cognitive detriment of their children-- or stay at home with no income source, thus continuing and perpetuating a cycle of poverty. (Palley, 2014, *Early Care and Learning Council, 2016*)

Traditionally, work and family struggles have been viewed as problems that each employee and family must face alone. With our children’s healthy learning and development at stake, it becomes readily apparent that the work/family juggling act calls for an integrated community response, one that includes child care professionals, parents, the health care world, the law-enforcement field, employers, economic planners, policy makers and our public schools.

What Other Stakeholders Say about Why Quality is Important for All Children

Quality Child Care Supports Children to Be Successful in Life

The early years are the most important years for affecting lifetime cognitive, emotional and physical well-being. Research now shows that approximately 85% of brain development occurs during a child's first five years of life. Quality early care and learning programs help to ensure that young children have the emotional, social and intellectual foundation to do well in school and to graduate from high school and to grow up healthy.

DOCS FOR TOTS, a nationwide network of doctors advocating for young children, believe that the early years provide the opportunity to address the roots and earliest influence on health behaviors, that the interdependence of health and early learning is clear... "Healthy children learn and children in quality early learning programs enjoy tremendous health benefits." (*Research Brief, Doc for Tots, 2008*). Their research highlights many clear evidenced-based health outcomes that are positively impacted by high-quality early learning programs. According to *Healthy People 2010*, nine out of ten leading health indicators are impacted.

- Physical activity
- Substance abuse
- Injury and violence
- Overweight and obesity
- Responsible sexual behavior
- Immunization
- Tobacco use
- Mental health
- Access to health care

Our country's law enforcement leaders, members of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, also report that investments in early care and learning will increase high school graduation rates and reduce crime. In a 2013 report, this organization analyzed the cost savings when putting funds into preschool rather than incarcerations. "An independent analysis of over 20 preschool programs demonstrated that quality preschool returned an average "profit" to society of \$15,000 for every child served, by cutting crime and the cost of incarceration, and reducing other costs such as special education and subsidy assistance". *Scope View Strategic Advantage, 2016*

Employers and Quality

Significant social and economic changes have been reshaping the lives of working American families for the past four decades. More than ever, shifts in demographics are producing a labor force with greater diversity and more women. Seven years ago, a national study found that for the first time in America's history, women comprised one half of all U.S. workers—with mothers as the primary breadwinners or co-breadwinners in nearly two-thirds of households. This is a major shift from just a generation ago when women made up only one-third of all workers. In their summary of the 2009 Shriver Report, Boushey and O'Leary write **“Women, working outside the home is not a short term blip. This is a long-term trend that shows no signs of reversing”**. (*The Shriver Report 2009*)

Investments in quality early care and learning programs benefit employers as well as their working families. Public support helps parents find quality, affordable child care and assists employers in implementing family friendly benefits that help businesses recruit and retain employees. Parents are more productive and focused on work with the knowledge that their children are being nurtured and interacted with in ways that promotes all areas of their development. Confidence in quality care creates a win-win situation for all concerned: parents, employees and children. (*Rob Grunewald, Federal Reserve Bank of Minnesota; NYS Early Care and Learning Council*.)

There are a variety of ways that employers help ease the child care stressors of those they employ including subsidizing cost of care, offering flexible work schedules, providing on-site child care and by referring parents to the child care resource and referral agency in their area.

Economic Development and Quality

Economic Development Begins at Birth. During the past decade, research by economists has increasingly shed light on the economic impacts and benefits of quality child care both at the regional and state levels. (*America's Edge Report; Mildred Warner, Cornell University; Rob Grunewald, Federal Reserve Bank of Minnesota; Ben Bernanke, Chair of the Federal Reserve Board, U.S. Chamber of Commerce*)

Our young children today will make up the workforce of our communities within the next few decades. The early care and learning experiences of our children today **will** have a significant impact on the development of knowledge and skills needed to be productive, creative and reliable employees.

A report by The America's Edge entitled: “Strengthening New York Business through Investment in Early Care and Education” argues that: **“Continued investments in early learning will [also] establish a foundation for sustained economic growth as extensive research shows these programs build the foundations for the 21st century skills New York businesses need.”** In addition, the report explains how access to quality early care and education will increase the ability of New York businesses to attract skilled employees. “Quality programs for our youngest children are needed for some of the same reasons communities strive to have a strong K-12 education system—to attract skilled workers and new businesses.”

In a recent issue of The Glens Falls Business Journal (*January 2015*), an article stated that “new jobs depend on our ability to make the best use of our resources and to invest in our communities infrastructures. The early care and learning field agrees with this statement and would further suggest that as children are a precious valuable resource, quality child care in 2016 subsequently, is a significant component of our community’s economic and social infrastructure, one that needs to be included in economic planning discussions and investments going forward.

The time is ripe for community economic planning to fully address the impact of the growing child care sector on the economy --and the benefits of quality child care investments for our children and families, both in the short and long-terms.

Government/Policy Makers and Quality

Access to quality child care is important for all families and although the issue is particularly impactful to our lowest wage earning families, it is also imperative to an American middle class, who is often faced with an increasingly large slice of the family household budget for rising child care costs.

Many leading industrialized countries have child care policies that ensure all of its citizens have access to quality, affordable child care. In her book, *In Our Hands: The Struggle for U.S. Child Care Policy*, Elizabeth Palley looks at reasons why the United States has not constructed child care and early learning as a salient political issue, why a national child care policy has yet to be developed and implemented. She suggests that the characterization of child care as a problem to be solved by individual families has gone largely unchallenged by the U.S. public and by policy makers. With a work force in 2016 in which a majority of households are comprised of two working parents or single working head of households, and where children under 5 are in a child care program, it is clear that U.S. child care policy has been out of step with this reality.

But notable and promising changes are taking place regarding federal child care policy. For the first time in America’s history, a President has addressed the need for affordable, quality child care as a national economic priority. In the 2015 State- of-the- Union address, President Obama spoke these words:

In today’s economy, when having both parents in the workforce is an economic necessity for many families, we need affordable, high-quality child care more than ever. It’s not a nice-to-have—it’s a must-have. It’s time we stop treating child care as a side issue, or a women’s issue, and treat it like the national economic priority that it is for all of us.

Quality Initiatives

At the Local Level

At the heart of designing and implementing initiatives for promoting Quality Child Care in our area is the work of **interagency collaborations**. The Child Care Network is engaged with many organizations in the community who also work with, and/or on behalf of, families and children. While day to day focuses may vary, the common goal is to enhance the lives of young children and families in the community-- with an understanding that integrated services are in the best interest of the families served. The Child Care Network specifically works with other agencies in the community to increase awareness of child care issues, to promote quality early care and learning and to plan activities and events that enhance understandings of how young children learn.

- In 2013 The Child Care Network, convened the **Early Childhood Advisory Committee**, a group including representatives from Head Start, UPK, child care providers, early care and learning specialists, parents, CARE Center and the Department of Social Services. This committee meets monthly and currently is planning a community event (for 2017) to promote the message that play for young children **is** learning and that developmentally appropriate practice in early care and learning settings is an indicator of **quality** early care and learning programs
- Collaborations with public schools to enhance understandings between early care and learning programs and UPK/Kindergarten to facilitate transitions to school settings
- Collaborations with groups in both Warren and Washington Counties to address issues of poverty and its impact on various basic social and economic needs including child care
- Collaboration with The Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce to deliver quality early care and learning message to the NYS Chamber of Commerce members at their biannual conference in Albany

At the State Level

- **Quality Investments for Children (QIC)** - a joint community awareness venture between NYS's Early Care and Learning Council and partnering Child Care Resource and Referral agencies throughout the state. Phase one of this project was just launched. This phase focuses on community education about the importance of **quality**. The Child Care Network will distribute core quality messages in multiple forms and venues to key audiences throughout the community.
- **QUALITYstarsNY**
QUALITYstarsNY is an early care and learning quality rating and improvement system, designed to help parents access the best possible care for their child; it also helps those working with young children to strengthen the quality of their programs.

A voluntary system, *QUALITYstarsNY* will eventually be available to all regulated programs serving young children. It will provide guidance, support and resources for technical assistance and professional development so that programs can improve their quality rating over time.

Many in the early care and learning field believe that a rating system will not only help to measure and identify program quality, but will also encourage a larger number of programs to improve the quality of care provided. In addition, the implementation of this rating system statewide enhances New York States competitive edge when applying for federal early care and learning grant funding. *(NYS Early Care and Learning Council, NYS Early Childhood Advisory Council, Center for Children's Initiatives)*

At the Federal Level

The federal government is involved with several efforts to support quality and the Early Childhood Workforce. As recently outlined in a June 2016 joint report by the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education, a current initiative that most directly impacts quality child care in our region is the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBGF):

- Child care providers receive training in health and safety
- states must create a progression of professional development and set annual ongoing training requirements
- quality dollars can be spent on supporting costs of professional development
- and a percentage of quality dollars is targeted for improving the quality of care for infants and toddlers

Also, as part of the CCDBG funding requirements, additional background checks will be required of all child care providers and inspection visits of child care programs will be increased. New York State, through the Office of Children and Family Services, will soon be involved with the implementation of these changes over the course of the next three years.

The Child Care and Development Block Grant bill was reauthorized by Congress in 2014 (for the first time in 18 years). While this legislation is important to improve the safety, affordability and quality of child care for all children in America, it does fall short at least in the foreseeable future in being able to fund the costs for states to implement many of the new and/or changed requirements of the bill.

Summary of Findings

The supply and demand analysis of this report indicates a continued need for additional child care slots in certain locations within The Child Care Network's service delivery area, most notably- the town of Lake Luzerne in Warren County and the towns of Whitehall and Salem in Washington County. There is also a shortage of child care for infants and school age children throughout the service area, which has been the case for many years.

Parents who are employed in industries that operate with multiple shifts that include evening and weekend hours are in need of child care during these hours. The few licensed/registered programs that offer non-traditional hours of care are not nearly enough to meet the need of the many families in our area who work in retail, health care facilities, factories and the tourist industry.

The high cost of child care is daunting for many families as it consumes an increasingly high percentage of the total family budget. While lower income families may qualify for child care assistance through the county, funding is not always available to meet the needs of all parents who have applied.

While availability of and access to child care slots is important, it is not enough. Access must be to **quality** child care for all children, quality care that all families can afford. There is a need for greater understanding among our community's stakeholders of what quality means, how quality improvements can happen and how it will impact all of our futures.

Next Steps

- 1) Build the supply of child care in specific locations of determined need, for specific age groups of children and for particular hours of care (i.e. weekends and evenings).
- 2) Collaborate with local stakeholders to enhance understandings of child care issues and to engage them in efforts to promote quality care for all children; utilize an interdisciplinary, integrated approach to address these needs.
- 3) Educate parents about how young children learn best and engage them in efforts to promote early care and learning for all children.
- 4) Advocate to community leaders and government legislators (at the local, state and federal levels) to increase funding for child care subsidies and for quality improvements that will increase access for families to affordable, quality child care.

Concluding Comments

Demographics in the workforce and the family have changed dramatically in the past four decades, consequently making it clear that child care can no longer be considered simply a personal family concern. Intersecting many of our social institutions, child care is an issue that touches children and parents, employers and schools, economist and policy makers. Impacting our homes, schools and work places on a daily basis, child care has truly become a significant part of our social infrastructure.

As a community, we have a responsibility to ensure that quality child care options are available to **all** of our children. Quality, affordable child care benefits children and families, it benefits businesses and it benefits our economies. As we assess the state of child care in our region and seek new ways to resolve concerns about supply and demand, affordability and quality, some of the solutions will become evident as we increasingly collaborate among institutions and agencies-- and as we develop a greater overall awareness of the significant connections linking children, workers and the broader economic development of our community and region.

Glossary of Terms

FAMILY CHILD CARE is provided in a home setting by one primary caregiver. When any children are under the age of two, the maximum number of children allowed in care is 8; this includes two school age children. No more than two children under the age of two may be cared for at any one time. School-aged children can fill the slots for infants and toddlers up to the total capacity permitted (8).

Family Child Care programs must be registered through the New York State Office of Children and Family Services if care is provided for three or more children. If care is provided for only two children in the home setting, it is exempt from state licensing.

GROUP FAMILY CHILD CARE is provided in a home setting by a primary caregiver and an assistant caregiver. There must be at least one caregiver present for every two children under the age of two. School-age children can fill the slots for infants and toddlers up to the total capacity permitted (16) for Group Family Child Care. A provider or assistant may care for up to 8 children when alone, and only two of those children can be under the age of two. A provider and assistant(s) may care for any combination of age groups up to a total of 12 children plus four school-age children. Group family child care programs are licensed through the New York State Office of Children and Family Services. Family and Group Family Child Care programs may be accredited through the National Association of Family Child Care.

CHILD CARE CENTERS provide care to a group of children for more than three hours per day, in a non-residential facility which must meet state licensing regulations for facility, health, safety, staffing and educational programming. In addition, to becoming state licensed child care centers may strive to become accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Age Groups in Center Care:

- Infant 6 wks. to 18 mths.
- Toddlers 18 mths. - two yrs.
- Preschool 3 and 4 yrs.
- School-age 5-11 yrs.

LEGALLY EXEMPT CAREGIVERS provide care for families receiving subsidies; they are exempt from the family child care licensing process by caring for no more than two non-related children. Legally-exempt providers are required to meet health and safety standards as determined by the State's Office of Children and Family Services.

IN-HOME CARE is care provided by a relative or non-relative within the child's home.

SCHOOL-AGE CHILD CARE is care provided for a group of school-age children from Kindergarten through age 12 before and after school, and at times when school is not in session. School-age care may be provided by child care centers, family child care programs, public schools, youth recreation groups and other community groups. School-age programs are registered through the New York State Office of Children and Family Services.

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