



# Child Care Market Analysis Summary of Key Findings

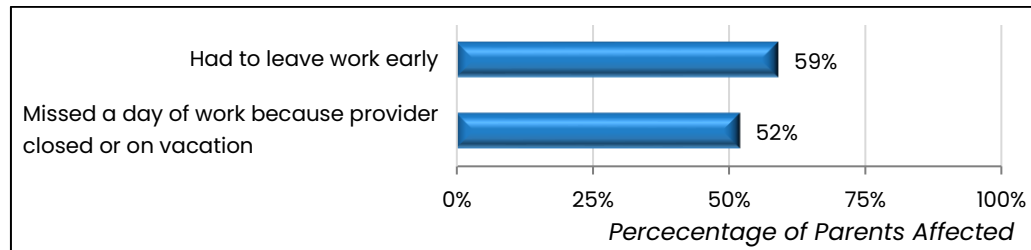
## Adair-Casey Area

### Key Findings from the Child Care Market Analysis

**Finding 1: Most families in the Adair-Casey area have all parents participating in the labor force.** According to the US Census Bureau as of 2023, 78% of families with children ages 0 to 5, and 77% of families with children ages 6 to 17 living in the Adair-Casey 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. The state-wide averages are 76% and 81%, respectively.

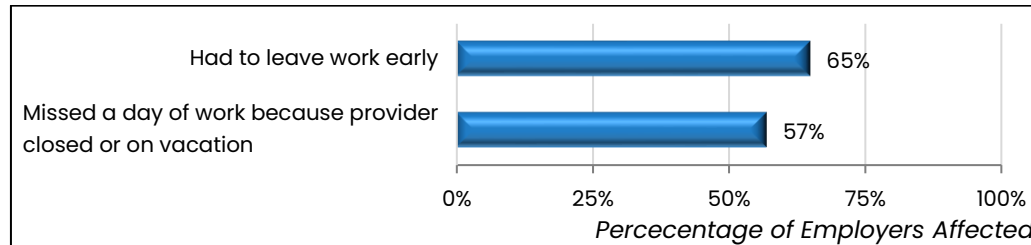
**Finding 2: Parents report that child care challenges are adversely impacting their job.**

Over the last 12 months, parents have experienced child care challenges that have in turn affected their job. The top adverse effects reported were that they had to leave work early (59%) and missed a day of work because the provider was closed or on vacation (52%).



**Finding 3: Employers indicate child care challenges are affecting their employees.**

Over the last 12 months, employers have been impacted by the adverse effects their employees experienced because of child care challenges. The top effects experienced by employers were employees had to leave work early (65%) and employees missed a day of work because their child care provider was closed or on vacation (57%).



**Finding 4: Child care providers are full and turning away families.** Through the child care needs survey conducted as part of this study, child care providers were asked if they had turned away families or put them on a waitlist due to a lack of spaces or openings in their program during the last 12 months. Among those that participated, 50% (both homes and centers) indicated yes.

### About this Analysis

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

In 2025, a study was commissioned by Little Smiles & Company, Inc., a licensed child care center in Adair, Iowa, to better understand the supply and demand for child care. Research included surveys developed by First Children's Finance for the purpose of determining how child care affects employers and parents, and to gain insight from child care providers about current challenges and opportunities.

This document is a summary of the full *Child Care Market Analysis* report, which was completed and provided to Little Smiles in September 2025.

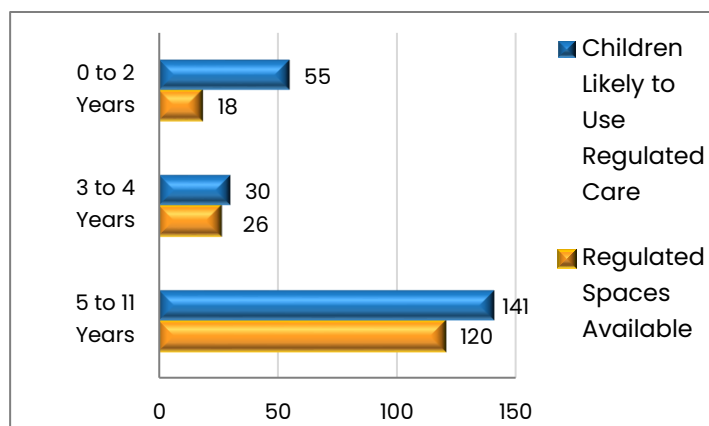


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### Finding 5: There is a shortage of child care spaces in the

**Adair-Casey area.** There are 343 children ages 0 to 11 in the 50002 and 50048 zip codes, referred to here as the Adair-Casey area. Of those, First Children's Finance (FCF) estimates 261 have all parents working and 226 are from families who prefer a regulated child care setting. According to Iowa HHS along with self-reported data from local child care programs, there are 164 spaces available, leaving a gap of 62 spaces.



### Finding 6: Most parents prefer to use a child care

**center.** Through the child care needs surveys parents were asked if they were selecting child care today, which setting they would most prefer. The top choice was a licensed center, was selected by 71% of parents.

**Finding 7: Most parents prefer to use child care year-round.** Through the child care needs surveys parents were asked if you were selecting child care today, what is your preferred time of year. The top choice is year-round for all age groups. Among parents with children ages 0 to 2, 89% prefer year-round care while 94% of parents with children ages 3 to 4 prefer year-round care. Parents of school age children also prefer year-round care, with 50% of parents with children ages 5 to 6 preferring year-round care, and 50% of parents with children ages 7 and older preferring year-round care.

### Finding 8: Parents with children age 4 to 6 are very likely to enroll at Little Smiles if more space was available.

Parents were asked, if Little Smiles were to expand and there were more spaces for children ages 4 and older, how likely are you to enroll your child, now or when they are old enough. When it comes to children ages 4 to 6 (preschool through first grade), 50% indicated they are very likely, while an additional 14% of parents indicated they are somewhat likely. For children ages 7 to 12, 21% of parents indicated they are very likely to enroll, while an additional 18% of parents indicated they are somewhat likely.

### Finding 9: Parents are very likely to enroll their child in three-year-old preschool at Little Smiles if it was offered.

Parents were asked, if Little Smiles were to offer three-year-old preschool, how likely are you to enroll your child, now or when they are old enough. Fifty-eight percent (58%) indicated they are very likely, while an additional 31% of parents indicated they are somewhat likely.

Since 1991, First Children's Finance (FCF) has been a national leader in building sustainable child care businesses. We have helped thousands of child care providers, communities and government systems across the country solve issues that impede access to accessible child care. Our mission is to grow the supply and business sustainability of excellent child care. We accomplish this by providing financial and business development assistance to child care businesses serving low-and moderate-income families, and building partnerships that connect these vital businesses with the resources of the public and private sectors. For more information on these and other topics, contact [info@FirstChildrensFinance.org](mailto:info@FirstChildrensFinance.org).