

2010



**child care in cook county:  
elements of child care  
supply and demand**

# 2010

## **child care in cook county: elements of child care supply and demand**

**FY 2009 (July 1, 2008–June 30, 2009)**

an illinois action for children research report funded in  
part by the illinois department of human services



4753 N. Broadway, Suite 1200, Chicago IL 60640  
(312) 823-1100 • [www.actforchildren.org](http://www.actforchildren.org)



# Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction: Families and Child Care in Cook County</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Section I. Family Dilemma: Child Care Affordability</b> .....	<b>6</b>
A. The Cost of Child Care .....	6
B. Trends in Child Care Rates .....	7
C. What Percent of Income is Reasonable to Spend on Child Care? .....	8
D. Helping Parents Meet the Cost of Child Care .....	8
E. Child Care Affordability with Assistance .....	9
F. The Use of Illinois Child Care Assistance .....	12
<b>Section II. Family Dilemma: Access to Available Child Care Slots</b> .....	<b>14</b>
A. Child Care Providers and Slots in Cook County .....	14
B. Where are the Providers and Slots? .....	15
C. Center Slots by Child Age .....	19
D. Referrals Given to Parents in 2009 by Child Age .....	19
<b>Section III. Family Dilemma: Finding Child Care that Matches the Family’s Schedule</b> .....	<b>21</b>
A. Providers Offering Child Care During Non-Traditional Hours .....	21
B. Referrals Given to Parents in Need of Non-Traditional Hours of Child Care .....	22
<b>Section IV. Family Dilemma: Finding the Right Provider</b> .....	<b>23</b>
A. What Do Children Need? .....	23
B. Special Needs .....	23
C. Language Needs .....	24
<b>Section V. Public Dilemma: Who Needs Child Care? Who Needs Support?</b> .....	<b>25</b>
A. Child Population, Poverty and Low Income .....	25
B. Children With All Working Parents .....	26
C. Children Eligible For but Without Child Care Assistance .....	27
<b>Section VI. Child Care Choices of Cook County Families</b> .....	<b>29</b>
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>31</b>
<b>Footnotes</b> .....	<b>33</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix 1: The Six Cook County Regions .....	35
Appendix 2: The Demand for and Supply of Child Care—Basic Factors .....	37
Appendix 3: Sources for Data on Child Care Providers in Cook County .....	39
<b>Glossary of Terms</b> .....	<b>40</b>



# Executive Summary

Finding child care has never been easy—our reports in previous years, as well as this one, have outlined the issue in great detail. However, child care has taken on an even more important and complex role in the lives of Illinois' families as Illinois faces dramatic budgetary and economic challenges.

As such, it is important to look at both the need for child care and the capacity of child care available in Cook County. Children of working parents spend a significant percentage of each day with a child care provider; as a result, a parent's choice of child care providers is undoubtedly one of the most important decisions they will make.

For myriad reasons including but not limited to: insufficient capacity, high cost of care and provider schedules that do not match a parent's working hours, many children end up with the provider their parent(s) can find given those limitations rather than the highest quality child care available.

In 2009, the child care picture for families in Cook County looked like this:

- A family earning \$46,069—the 2008 Chicago median family income—would pay anywhere from 15 percent (for licensed home child care for an infant or toddler) to 23 percent (for center-based care in Chicago for an infant) of a Chicago family's typical income. This makes child care cost-prohibitive in many cases.
- The cost of center care is rising at an alarming rate—much higher than consumer prices are rising nationally. While consumer prices have risen 25 percent since 2000, center rates have seen sharp increases of anywhere from 32 percent to 61 percent over that same time period. The only exception to this is in infant and toddler care in Chicago, which has only seen costs rise by about 20 percent since 2000.

- As a comparison, the cost of infant and toddler care exceeds the cost of college tuition and fees. At \$9,452, these higher education costs would cover only 90 percent of infant care costs in Chicago and just 79 percent of infant care in suburban Cook County centers.
- For another cost comparison, the cost of infant and toddler child care in Chicago centers is equally as expensive as the cost (in 2008) of total rent in a year for the typical Chicago family: \$10,356.
- Traditionally the fastest rising costs are those of before- and after-school care. Since 2000, those prices have increased by 61 percent to 65 percent in Chicago centers and homes, and 45 percent to 46 percent in suburban centers and homes.
- Unlicensed home care—most often provided by a family member, friend, or neighbor—is still the only affordable option for many families, particularly in this difficult economic climate. This is often the only option for middle-income families who are either already earning too much income to be eligible for Child Care Assistance or, for a variety of reasons, are no longer eligible for assistance.
- With a total of 4,503 slots, fewer care options exist for infants than any other age group under school age; a similar situation exists for toddlers. It is costly for centers to provide care for these age groups, leading many families with infants and toddlers to look to family child care homes for care.
- While the number of child care centers offering evening or week-end hours is still scarce, the percentage has increased in recent years. Five (5) percent of child care centers offer evening care, a noticeable increase from the 3 percent that offered care in 2007.

- Relatively low pay makes it very difficult for child care centers to retain high-quality staff, particularly teachers.
- Only 34 percent of families surveyed that had no children with special needs reported that they had problems finding child care in Cook County, as compared with 45 percent of families that had a child with special needs. Additionally, only 38 percent of families with children with special needs said they had found child care by the time of the survey, compared to 44 percent of families without children with special needs. Families that had children with special needs were more likely to still be undecided about their child care arrangement.
- In 2009, 10 percent of families using Illinois Action for Children's referral service sought a provider who could speak a language other than English, the predominant language requested being Spanish.
- Of the providers who are on the Illinois Action for Children Referral database, 19 percent of licensed home providers reported they fluently speak a language other than English, while 43 percent of centers said they have a staff member who speaks a language other than English.

Illinois is at a critical moment when it comes to supporting child care and early education. State budget shortfalls threaten the ability of the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), Preschool for All, and other state-funded early education and after-school programs to serve Illinois families. It is our intention, through the data contained in this report, to demonstrate that child care is not something that should be cut from the State's budget or its human priorities.



## INTRODUCTION

# Families and Child Care in Cook County

More than one million children under the age of 13 live in Cook County. A large proportion, and perhaps a majority, of these children receive regular care from someone other than their parents or guardians: from another relative, a friend or neighbor, a family child care home, a child care center, or a park district or other after-school program.

This 2010 Report of Child Care in Cook County examines the availability of child care to families in different parts of Cook County. We present the different settings in which child care takes place, the number of children that can be served in each type of care, and the fees that parents pay to different types of providers. We report the experiences of some parents who seek referrals to child care providers and examine the dilemmas they face in choosing a provider and the compromises they make as a result.

### A NOTE ON SUPPLY AND DEMAND

While we subtitle this report “Elements of Child Care Supply and Demand,” we want to caution readers that the factors that determine the supply of and demand for child care are numerous and complex. We cannot simply compare the number of child care slots and the number of children in need of care. Appendix 2 provides a detailed discussion of the various elements that influence both child care supply and demand and explains why an

### EXAMINING COOK COUNTY CHILD CARE BY REGION

Throughout this *Report* we divide Cook County into six regions to show how geographic differences can affect parents’ success in finding child care.

#### CHICAGO

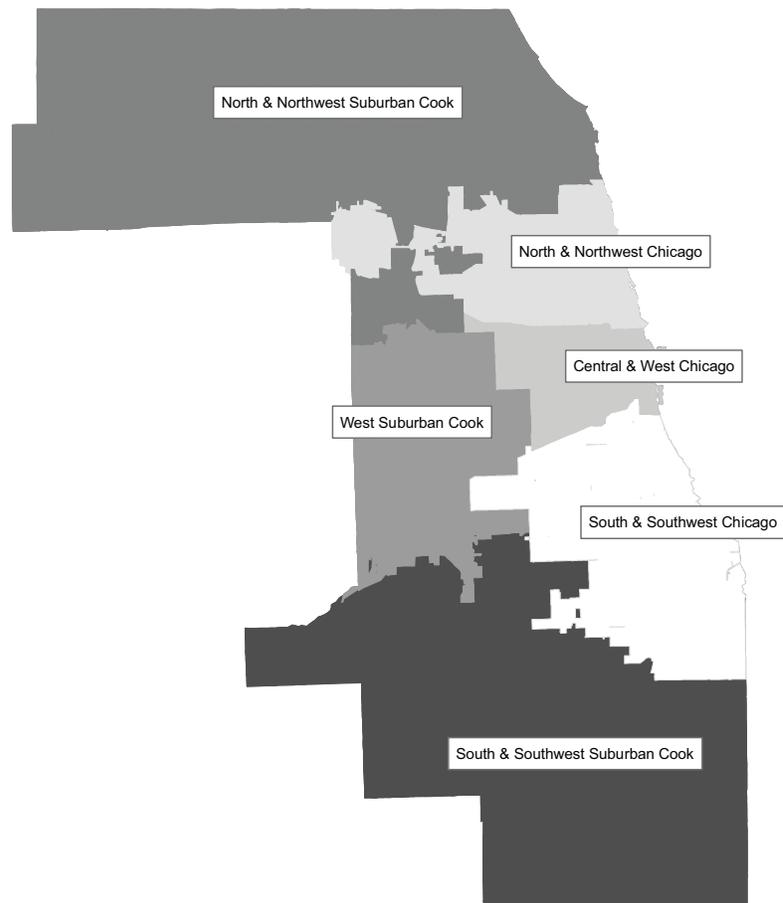
- 1) North and Northwest
- 2) Central and West
- 3) South and Southwest

#### SUBURBAN COOK COUNTY

- 4) North and Northwest
- 5) West
- 6) South and Southwest

See Appendix 1 for more detailed definitions of these regions.

### Chicago and Suburban Cook Regions



effective analysis of child care supply and demand can be so complex.

## WHAT TYPES OF CHILD CARE ARE AVAILABLE?

A family's success in finding quality child care is based on many factors including the family's location, a child's age, the hours of care needed, the amount the family can afford to pay, a child's specific needs, and the parent's particular preferences. Assuming for a moment that families can access all types of child care, let's look at the available options.

First, many families only use parental care. Either one parent stays home to care for the children, or both parents stagger their schedules so one can care for the children while the other works, goes to school, or fulfills other responsibilities.

Parents who need or want to look beyond parental care may find home child care an appealing option. They may take their child to the home of someone they know well, such as a family member, close friend or neighbor, or someone they discovered through word-of-mouth or through a referral service. They may also choose a caregiver who can provide care in the child's home, as a nanny does.

Many home-based child care providers, especially those who provide care as an on-going profession, choose to become licensed. This means the care provided in their homes is regulated by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) as well as their

local licensing agency, if one exists. Throughout this report, we refer to these caregivers as *licensed home providers*, and we refer to those without licenses as *license-exempt home providers* or *family, friend, or neighbor care* (see the glossary for detailed definitions of these terms). License-exempt home child care can be provided in the home of the caregiver or the child.

Parents also have the option of taking their child to a child care center. While most of these facilities are licensed by DCFS, centers such as those based in school or affiliated with religious groups are exempt from being licensed. Center care may include all or part-day child care programs, before- and after-school programs (including those provided by park districts and YMCAs), and full-day summer programs for school-age children.

Parents who may not need full-time child care but wish to prepare their 3- or 4-year-old child for kindergarten may consider a part-day or part-week preschool program. These programs include private, tuition-based programs as well as free public programs such as Head Start and Preschool for All (data on public and private preschool programs are not included in this report).

## HOW DO FAMILIES FIND CHILD CARE?

Families seek child care by asking relatives or friends for referrals, looking at notices and advertise-

ments, and visiting child care centers in their communities. The State of Illinois offers a resource for families in the form of a referral service— Illinois Action for Children administers this service for families in Cook County through its Resource and Referral Program, maintaining a database of child care providers who register voluntarily to be referred to parents. Child care providers supply detailed information about their programs so that referral consultants can help parents find providers that match their needs and preferences. Referral consultants help educate parents on what constitutes quality child care so parents are more equipped to evaluate the programs they visit.

## WHAT IS THE TYPICAL FAMILY EXPERIENCE?

While many parents and guardians are quite satisfied with the care their children receive, many others find the process of searching for and deciding on a child care provider stressful. These parents frequently experience frustration finding the right care at the right hours, right location, and right price.

Families search for child care under such vastly different circumstances that no one family's story can be considered wholly representative. However, we will introduce several "typical families" in an effort to explore the complex and often difficult decisions Cook County families face in arranging child care.

**GABRIELLE AND SHAWN HARRIS  
AND THEIR 10-MONTH AND  
21-MONTH OLD DAUGHTERS**

Gabrielle and Shawn together earned \$89,400 in 2009, more than the typical family in Cook County, and too much to be eligible for the Illinois Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). The child care center they would like to use would charge them \$1,834 per month for an infant and a toddler, or \$22,000 annually, although the child care tax credit would reduce that to just \$20,800—23 percent of their income. Since paying this amount would stretch their budget, they must decide whether to settle for child care somewhere other than the center, or whether Gabrielle should work a long weekend shift of three overnights at a hospital so she can be home with her children during most weekdays while Shawn works. Her sister-in-law has offered to help with the children when needed and has asked if they, in turn, could help care for her children when she works.

**CANDACE THOMAS AND HER  
2-YEAR-OLD, 4-YEAR-OLD,  
AND 8-YEAR-OLD**

Candace's three children are in care with an inexpensive licensed family child care provider. Candace works for a large retailer that recently gave her a promotion and sizeable raise. This lifted her income to an annual salary of \$44,800, making her no longer eligible for CCAP. Candace is now struggling to afford her child care but is reluctant to move her children to an even less expensive provider since she and her children are very happy with their current caregiver. She hopes for another promotion in a few months to help her with her higher child care expenses. If that doesn't happen, she is considering asking her employer to return her to her old position so she can reapply for Child Care Assistance.

**ALBERTA REYES AND HER  
THREE-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER**

Alberta is a single mother who works at a distribution center four nights per week, although sometimes she is sent home when business is slow. She earns \$7.85 per hour and receives \$200 each month in child support, giving her a total income of \$16,138 in 2009. Alberta is in need of overnight child care between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. Fortunately, her mother is available to watch her daughter in the morning so she can sleep.

These examples do not represent actual families but composites of typical incomes and work schedules for families in Cook County.

# I. Family Dilemma: Child Care Affordability

## A. THE COST OF CHILD CARE

Each year, the Illinois Action for Children Resource and Referral Program asks providers to report the rates they charge parents. Tables I-1 and I-2 present the average market rates that 729 child care centers and 2,503 homes respectively charge in the six regions of Cook County. Centers average between \$138 and \$280 each week to care for children under age six, while home providers charge an average of \$119 to \$202 weekly, depending upon age and region. The last rows of both tables show the rates that the Illinois Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) reimbursed Cook County providers in 2009. We will discuss these rates further in Section I-D.

Tables I-1 and I-2 indicate sharp differences in child care rates relative to the region in which the care occurs and the age of the child. In child care, it is well-known that the younger the children, the more expensive it is to provide their care, largely due to the additional care and supervision that young children need.

As in previous years, the South and Southwestern regions of both Chicago and suburban Cook County generally have the lowest rates. These regions also have lower average incomes and higher numbers of child care providers. [See Section II.] Private and public sector entrepreneurs have been relatively successful in building needed child care capacity in many of these communities, and this more plentiful supply may serve to keep their average rates lower.

**Table I-1. Child Care Center Full-Time Weekly Rates**

FY2009  
Source: Illinois Action for Children Resource and Referral Program

	Infant	Toddler	2- year- old	3- to 4- year-old	5- year- old to K	Before & After School	School Age: Summer
<b>Cook Co. Average</b>	\$229	\$213	\$185	\$166	\$161	\$112	\$148
<b>N &amp; NW Chicago</b>	\$238	\$212	\$185	\$164	\$158	\$110	\$145
<b>C &amp; W Chicago</b>	\$242	\$229	\$196	\$172	\$169	\$114	\$141
<b>S &amp; SW Chicago</b>	\$187	\$181	\$158	\$140	\$138	\$99	\$120
<b>N &amp; NW Suburban Cook</b>	\$280	\$257	\$228	\$208	\$201	\$129	\$197
<b>West Suburban Cook</b>	\$228	\$206	\$187	\$166	\$162	\$101	\$150
<b>S &amp; SW Suburban Cook</b>	\$201	\$190	\$167	\$150	\$144	\$109	\$140
<b>IDHS Full Time Payment Rates</b>	\$202.50	\$171		\$142.50		\$71.25 <5 hrs./day \$142.50 >5 hrs./day	\$142.50

**Table I-2. Licensed Child Care Home Full-Time Weekly Rates**

FY2009  
Source: Illinois Action for Children Resource and Referral Program

	Infant	Toddler	2- year- old	3- to 4- year-old	5- year- old to K	Before & After School	School Age: Summer
<b>Cook Co. Average</b>	\$144	\$141	\$137	\$132	\$127	\$100	\$121
<b>N &amp; NW Chicago</b>	\$164	\$160	\$156	\$149	\$144	\$116	\$147
<b>C &amp; W Chicago</b>	\$137	\$133	\$128	\$123	\$120	\$100	\$117
<b>S &amp; SW Chicago</b>	\$134	\$131	\$127	\$122	\$119	\$97	\$115
<b>N &amp; NW Suburban Cook</b>	\$202	\$197	\$194	\$191	\$184	\$123	\$167
<b>West Suburban Cook</b>	\$150	\$145	\$142	\$139	\$134	\$102	\$127
<b>S &amp; SW Suburban Cook</b>	\$138	\$135	\$130	\$125	\$120	\$94	\$115
<b>IDHS Full Time Payment Rates</b>	\$133	\$128		\$120		\$60.00 <5 hrs./day \$120.00 >5 hrs./day	\$120.00

We find similarly low rates in the child care homes of the West and Central Chicago region, reflecting that the majority of child care homes in this region are on Chicago's west side, one of the poorest areas in the county. Child care center rates in this region are higher, however, as

the centers are more evenly distributed between the poorer western portion of the region and the wealthier central portion.

The North and Northwest Suburban region stands out for having the highest rates for both centers and homes of all six regions.

**B. TRENDS IN CHILD CARE RATES**

Like most expenses, child care costs tend to rise every year. **But the cost of center care has risen more rapidly than consumer prices nationally.** Table I-3 presents the aggregate rate increases of centers and family child care homes for Chicago and suburban Cook County. The dollar columns show the most recent rates for each age group. Next to each rate is a column that presents the percent increase over the nine years from June 2000 to June 2009. Increases ranged from 13 percent to 65 percent. Over the same period of time, all consumer prices rose about 25 percent nationally.<sup>1</sup> While most licensed home rates increased near or below this average inflation rate, center rates for almost all age groups far exceeded it.

It appears, then, that Cook County parents—or those parents who can afford to pay for care—have a demand for center care growing faster than

their demand for home care, especially in the ages above toddler. Two important exceptions where home rates have outpaced those of centers are infant and toddler care in Chicago and before- and after-school care in both Chicago and suburban Cook County.

While suburban child care costs more on average than care in Chicago, **Chicago has experienced more rapid rate increases over the last nine years than has suburban Cook County.** This is the case for both center and home care for all age groups except infant and toddler center care.

Across age groups, the slowest rising center costs were that of infant and toddler care, particularly in Chicago centers where the average cost of infant and toddler care increased 20 percent and 21 percent respectively over the last nine years. Still, infant and toddler care remains the most expensive of all age groups.

The fastest-rising costs were those of before- and after-school care, rising more quickly in Chicago than in the

suburbs. The average cost of before- and after-school care rose by 65 percent in Chicago licensed homes and 61 percent in Chicago centers.

**C. WHAT PERCENT OF INCOME IS REASONABLE TO SPEND ON CHILD CARE?**

The numbers are clear; child care is an increasingly burdensome financial responsibility for families. According to the U.S. Census, the typical (median) income for families with children under 18 in Cook County was \$61,306 before taxes in 2008, and even lower for Chicago families at \$46,069.<sup>2</sup> Care for one infant in a Chicago child care center, at an average cost of \$210 per week, or \$10,500 over a fifty-week year, costs 23 percent of a typical Chicago family's pre-tax income. At \$10,000 per year, toddler care takes up 22 percent. Licensed home care for an infant or toddler is more affordable at \$6,800 to \$6,950 per year, but even this is 15 percent of a Chicago family's income.

**Table I-3. 2009 Average Weekly Market Rates, and Rate Increases Since 2000**

Source: Illinois Action for Children Resource and Referral Program. *Rounded to the nearest dollar or percent.*

Age	Chicago Centers	Percent Growth Since 2000	Chicago Homes	Percent Growth Since 2000	Suburban Cook Centers	Percent Growth Since 2000	Suburban Cook Homes	Percent Growth Since 2000
Infant	\$210	20%	\$139	26%	\$239	32%	\$154	17%
Toddler	\$200	21%	\$136	28%	\$220	34%	\$150	18%
2-year-old	\$173	52%	\$132	27%	\$196	41%	\$146	17%
3- to 4-year-old	\$153	44%	\$127	27%	\$176	39%	\$142	16%
5-year-old	\$150	42%	\$123	26%	\$171	36%	\$136	13%
Before & After School	\$105	61%	\$100	65%	\$116	45%	\$100	46%
School-Age Summer	\$131	51%	\$120	39%	\$160	34%	\$125	26%

Percent growth in consumer prices nationwide since 2000: 25%

## WHICH FAMILIES ARE ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE?

### GABRIELLE AND SHAWN HARRIS: WORKING PARENTS WITH AN INFANT AND A TODDLER. INCOME IS \$89,400 A YEAR.

The maximum income a family of four can earn to be eligible for CCAP is \$42,408 per year. Gabrielle and Shawn earn double this amount and are not eligible. Nevertheless, they feel they cannot afford to pay for quality child care.

### CANDACE THOMAS: WORKING MOTHER WITH THREE CHILDREN. INCOME IS \$44,800 A YEAR.

Candace's income exceeds the CCAP limit of \$42,408 for a family of four. She is not eligible for the assistance unless she lowers her income by \$200 a month.

### ALBERTA REYES: WORKING MOTHER WITH A PRESCHOOLER. INCOME IS \$16,138 A YEAR.

Alberta is eligible for CCAP. This opens more options to her, including the more costly care in child care centers or licensed family child care homes. Alberta will need to pay a co-payment of \$25 per week. If she chooses a child care provider who charges more than what CCAP pays, she may have to make additional payments. If she finds that her co-payment is too high, she may look for a provider, perhaps a relative or friend, willing to waive part of her co-payment or to be more flexible with when she has to make her co-payments.

The median rent in Chicago in 2008 was \$10,356, according to the same U.S. Census report. By this measure, **infant and toddler care in Chicago centers is just as expensive as rent** for the typical Chicago family. Similarly, **child care is more expensive than average fees and tuition at State colleges and universities** in Illinois. At \$9,452, these average fees and tuition cover 90 percent of the cost of infant care in Chicago centers and only 79 percent of the cost of infant care in suburban Cook centers.<sup>3</sup>

Is 15 percent or 23 percent of a family's income too much to pay for an infant's child care? Is 30 percent too much to pay for an infant and a

toddler? What is the proper proportion between child care expenses and income? There is no generally accepted level that everyone agrees is the "proper" percentage to pay.

Most national studies since the 1990s have found that average two-parent middle-income families paid between 6 percent and 10 percent of their income for child care.<sup>4</sup> If we pick the higher 10 percent level as a rule of thumb for affordability, a family in 2009 would have to earn \$105,000 for infant care in a Chicago child care center to be affordable. This family would need to earn \$181,800 to place an infant and a four-year-old in a Chicago center and keep their child care costs within 10 percent of

their income. To meet the 10 percent rule of thumb in suburban Cook County centers, a family paying for infant care would require an income of \$119,600, while center care for both an infant and a four-year-old would require an income of \$207,700.<sup>5</sup>

## D. HELPING PARENTS MEET THE COST OF CHILD CARE

Several government-funded resources exist to help families pay for their child care costs, and child care providers themselves often have tuition policies to assist families who struggle to pay.

The main source of financial assistance to help Illinois parents with child care costs is the Illinois Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). A family eligible for this program chooses a child care provider and the State reimburses this provider for his or her services. Parents pay a portion of the cost of care, a co-payment, which depends on the family's size and income. CCAP is available to families that earn at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level, or \$42,408 for a family of four in 2009.<sup>6</sup> Parents must work or participate in an approved school or training program to be eligible. CCAP is primarily a voucher system administered in Cook County by Illinois Action for Children under contract with the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS). Some child care centers, however, have direct contracts with IDHS to serve families eligible for CCAP.

## WHAT TYPES OF CHILD CARE CAN FAMILIES AFFORD?

Assuming “affordable” means paying no more than 10 percent of the family income on child care, here are the types of care our families can afford based on the average cost of care.

### **GABRIELLE AND SHAWN HARRIS: WORKING PARENTS WITH INFANT AND TODDLER. INCOME IS \$89,400 PER YEAR.**

Since this couple is not eligible for CCAP, their options are limited. Budgeting 10 percent of their income, they could pay as much as \$172 per week toward child care or \$745 per month. With that budget, few types of care are available to them. The lowest average combined price of regulated infant and toddler care, \$265 weekly, occurs in licensed family child care homes in South and Southwest Chicago. At about 15 percent of their income, even this care would be unaffordable by the 10 percent standard.

Affordable options for this couple include continuing to stagger their work schedules so that they can care for their children themselves (with the help of Shawn’s sister) and looking for inexpensive family, friend or neighbor child care.

### **CANDACE THOMAS: WORKING MOTHER WITH THREE CHILDREN. INCOME IS \$44,800 PER YEAR.**

Candace earns just \$200 a month above the annual cut off for CCAP. She can spend about \$86 per week to stay within 10 percent of her income. But if she wants to use center care, that amount would not pay for any one of her children, not even less expensive before-and-after-school care for her eight-year old, much less all three children.

Like the family above, family, friend, or neighbor care is the only type of care that might cost Candace less than 10 percent of her income. Without CCAP, the licensed family child care that she currently uses costs her 28 percent of her income, not a sustainable option. (A more typical rate for licensed home care would take 40 percent of her income.) If a raise does not come through, she might try to reduce her income back below the eligibility cutoff so that she can receive CCAP support.

### **ALBERTA REYES: WORKING MOTHER WITH A PRESCHOOLER. INCOME IS \$16,138 PER YEAR.**

To stay within 10 percent of her income, including child support, Alberta would be able to pay as much as \$31 per week on child care. If she receives CCAP support, for which she is eligible, she will have to pay \$25 per week for her co-payment. If Alberta is able to find a child care provider who accepts CCAP payments and who expects nothing beyond her co-payment, Alberta will have access to both center and licensed home child care.

However, since the rates paid by the CCAP tend to be less than the average rates charged by centers and licensed home providers, these providers might ask Alberta to pay the difference. In this case, Alberta would be priced out of average-priced center care except in the South and Southwest Chicago region. Licensed home care in the Central and West Chicago region and the South and Southwest Chicago and suburban regions would be affordable for her. In all other regions, she would only be able to afford family, friend or neighbor care.

Another state program that provides child care assistance, but to a more specific population, is the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). DCFS provides child care vouchers primarily to families with foster children.

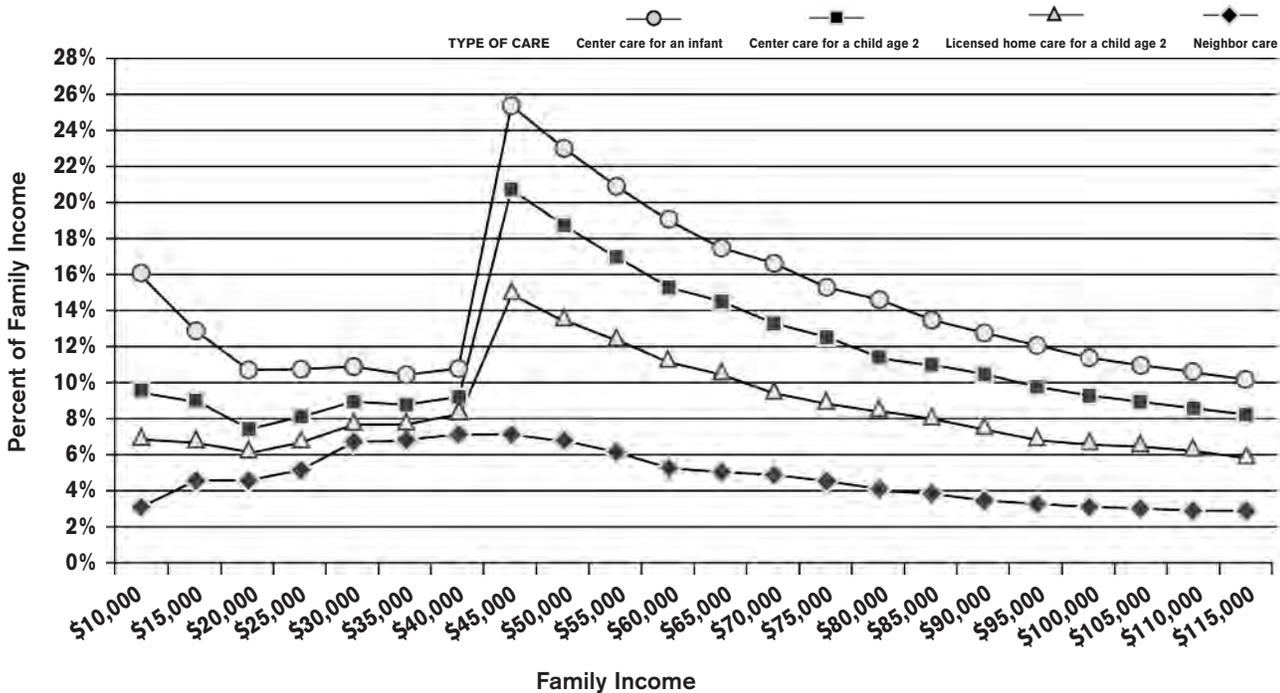
Beyond government-funded programs, a number of child care providers offer their own forms of child care assis-

tance. These include discounts for parents with more than one child in their care, sliding scale fees based on a family’s ability to pay, scholarships, and negotiable rates. Some providers will accept the CCAP reimbursement as full payment even though the amount they receive through the program may be less than what the providers typically charge.

Both the federal and Illinois income tax programs offer some relief for child care costs in the form of modest dependent child care tax credits. These credits allow families to reduce their income tax bill by a fraction of their child care expenses.

**Figure I-1. What Families Need to Spend on Child Care**

Family Size of 4, 1 Child in Care, June 2009



**E. CHILD CARE AFFORDABILITY WITH ASSISTANCE**

CCAP was designed to help working parents afford child care. Child care advocates and policy makers are keenly interested in whether the program enables low-income parents in Cook County to afford quality care. While Tables I-1 and I-2 above do not answer this question completely, they do suggest an answer. The last row of each table presents how much CCAP pays to Cook County providers for different types of care. Rate increases over the last two years have brought the amount CCAP pays to providers in lower-cost regions (South and Southwest Chicago and suburbs, and West and Central Chicago in the case of licensed homes) more in line with the average amounts providers actually charge parents. In the remaining regions, however, CCAP rates fall below the average rates that centers and homes charge.

Under the CCAP, parents must make a co-payment. They pay the provider a part of the CCAP rate listed in Tables I-1 and I-2 depending on the family's income. A family of three must pay at least \$1.00 per week and as much as \$61.00 per week for one child in care (or up to \$104 for two children). In some cases, this co-payment can be as high as 16 percent of a family's income. In 2008, legislation to cap CCAP co-payments at 10 percent of family income was introduced but did not become law. In the fall of 2009, co-payments have been temporarily cut as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to counter the economic recession.

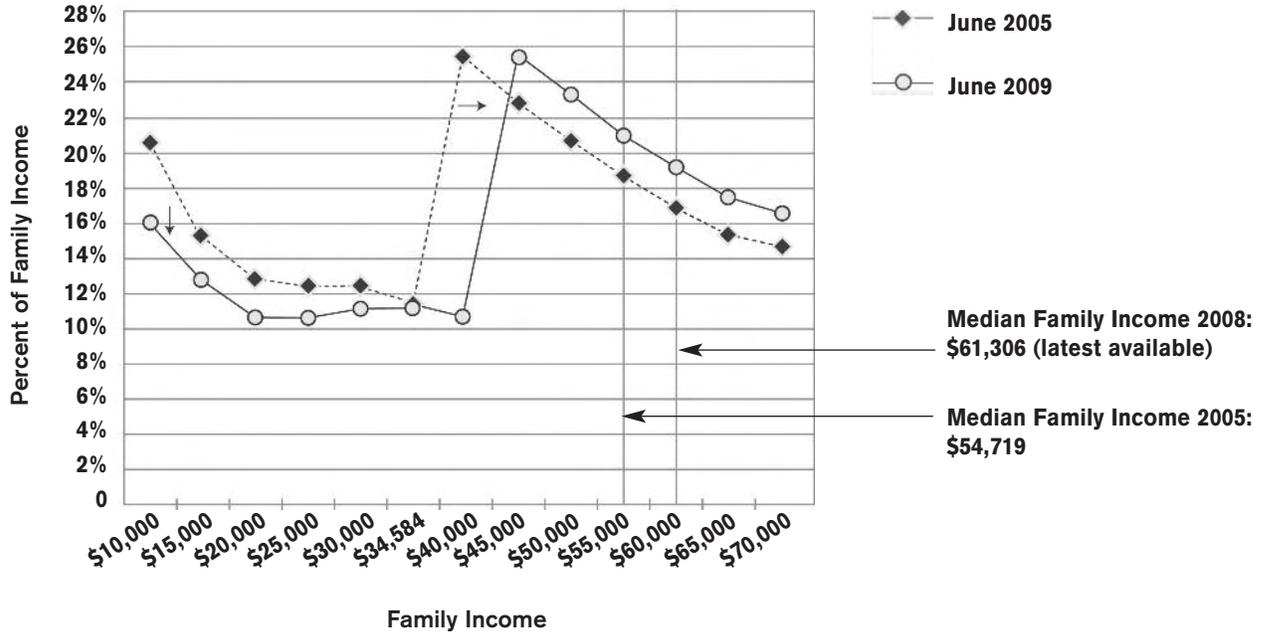
Since the average provider in Cook County charges more than what the Assistance Program will pay, parents may also have to pay that difference in addition to their co-payments or convince their providers to accept a lower payment than they normally charge.

It is fair to conclude that even after receiving CCAP support, a family's choice of provider and the quality of options can still be seriously limited. While we have hearsay evidence that some providers do work with families to determine an acceptable rate, many providers cannot afford to reduce their rates to meet a family's ability to pay.

Figure I-1 develops the story of CCAP and affordability in more detail, in this case for Cook County for a family of four.<sup>7</sup> It presents the cost of care for just one child as a percentage of different family incomes ranging from \$10,000 to \$115,000. The chart's four lines denote cost, with the highest cost line representing the high price of center care for an infant and the lowest cost line representing the more affordable price of family, friend or neighbor care for an older child. The four kinds of child care costs appear as percentages of

**Figure I-2. What Families Need to Spend on Infant Center Care**

Change from June 2005 to June 2009, Family Size of 4



each income level that is measured on the horizontal axis. The chart is realistic in the sense that it includes the effect of receiving CCAP support, which is available to a family of low income if all present parents are employed.<sup>8</sup>

Figure I-1 shows Cook County parents can pay less than five (5) percent of family income (for informal neighbor child care) and as much as 25 percent (for infant center care) for one child, depending on their level of income, the age of the child and type of care they use. Note that Figure I-1 builds upon *average* rates of care such as those in Tables I-1 and I-2. Some parents might have to pay a higher rate than the average, while others will pay below the average. Placing more children in care, moreover, will cost parents more.

Beginning with a family with almost no income on the left and moving up to a family income of about

\$40,000, we see that a family of four would spend between 3 percent and 16 percent of its income for full-time care for one child, depending on the age of the child and type of care. *It is CCAP alone that makes it possible for child care to cost this little for working families with these low incomes.* If the working family's income rises a little above \$42,000, the family ceases to be eligible for CCAP and most child care costs shoot up to a prohibitively high percentage of the family's income (from 15 percent to almost 26 percent). This is known as the "cliff effect."

Only unregulated family, friend, and neighbor care changes little as a percentage of income and remains affordable for families earning just over \$42,000. Consider the example of 10-percent-of-income we used earlier in this section to discuss affordability. Once a family's income rises above \$42,000 and the family

becomes ineligible for Child Care Assistance, it takes an income of \$68,300 before licensed home care for a two-year-old returns to 10 percent of the family's income. It takes an income of \$114,680 before the cost of infant care in a center returns to ten percent of the family's income. Again, for a family earning less than \$68,300, only informal family, friend or neighbor child care is affordable at 10 percent of family income. These higher incomes, needless to say, are substantially above the typical family income in Illinois.

**Trend in Affordability**

Over the years, the State of Illinois has made a series of improvements to CCAP, extending eligibility to a broader range of families and making child care more affordable for many other families.

Figure I-2 illustrates this. The dotted line shows the affordability of child

care for an infant in a center in Illinois in June 2005. It takes into account the cost of child care and the value of CCAP support at that time.

First, look at the peaks of the lines—the points where child care takes up the largest percentage of a family’s income. To the left of the peak are families who are eligible for CCAP, and pay less of their income for childcare. To the right are families who are not eligible and who may pay a higher percentage. The peak moved to the right from 2005 to 2009, to families with higher incomes. The shift of the peak to the right, to higher incomes, indicates that families with somewhat higher incomes have become eligible for CCAP. That represents the expansion of CCAP eligibility.

Next, notice that the 2009 line is generally below the 2005 line on the left side of the peak, while it is above the dotted line to the right of the peak. This indicates that CCAP has generally lowered the cost of care for families who use assistance (those on the left of the 2009 peak), even though child care costs have risen for ineligible families (those on the right of the 2009 peak). To a certain extent, then, changes in CCAP have been successful.

**F.  
THE USE OF ILLINOIS  
CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE**

Despite its limitations, CCAP supported an average of 47,000 Cook County families each month during the 2009 report year, while assistance for foster care helped thousands more. To take advantage of this assistance, an eligible family must first find a child care provider willing to work with the IDHS or DCFS payment system. The Illinois Action for Children Resource and Referral Program asks providers on its database whether or not they are willing to accept children with CCAP or DCFS vouchers. In 2009:

- Eighty-two (82) percent of Cook County centers listed with Illinois Action for Children said they would accept children whose families use CCAP.
- Fewer centers (just 61 percent) accept DCFS assistance for foster children.
- Ninety-one (91) percent of licensed home providers listed with Illinois Action for Children (2,656 providers) reported that they accept children whose families use CCAP. Sixty-one (61) percent reported that they

accept children who have DCFS vouchers.

Providers themselves report the above data to Illinois Action for Children. CCAP has separate reports on the number of providers who *actually* receive payment at any given time. In January 2009, for example, 1,147 child care centers and 2,962 licensed homes cared for Cook County children approved for CCAP.

**Referrals Given to Families  
Eligible for Child Care Assistance**

In 2009, Illinois Action for Children received calls from 8,239 families in search of child care referrals. Of these families, 86 percent had incomes at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level, making them income-eligible for CCAP.

Note: In Section V we return to the topic of CCAP and report on the total number of children eligible in Cook County and the number of eligible children not being served. In Section VI we report on the types of child care used by families receiving CCAP support.

## WHY DOES CHILD CARE IN CENTERS COST SO MUCH?

Child care centers are an expensive option for Illinois families. On average, center tuition in Illinois ranks 8th highest among the states for infant care and 10th highest for care of a four-year-old. As a percentage of typical family income, two-parent families in Illinois pay 13.9 percent of their income for infant care and 10.3 percent for four-year-old care.<sup>a</sup>

Centers charge so much for child care because they pay so much for salaries and benefits, which generally account for more than half of a center's expenses.<sup>b</sup> Ironically center salaries and benefits are high not because individuals earn a lot—they do not—but because centers need to employ so many people to care for children. Licensing and accreditation standards follow best practices for high quality centers in mandating high ratios of adults to children.

### SALARIES IN COOK COUNTY

It is no secret that individual child care workers generally are not well-paid. In 2007 in Cook County, full-time center teachers in full-year licensed programs earned an average of \$12.02 per hour, while assistant teachers earned \$9.00.<sup>c</sup> This amounts to less than half of what public elementary school teachers earn (in a system fully subsidized by the public sector). Elementary school teachers also are more likely to have benefits such as health insurance and retirement plans than are child care teachers.

### SALARIES AND QUALITY

In thinking about the high cost of child care, we need to be aware that staff compensation also affects the *quality* of the child care supplied by centers and homes. One major aspect of quality, the relationship between provider and child, suffers when lower compensation makes it difficult to retain staff. Better trained, more experienced, and more skilled teachers,

for example, will generally cost a center or home more to hire and retain than less trained, less experienced, and less skilled staff.

Low compensation rates in child care result in high turnover among staff. In Illinois, for every 100 early childhood teachers working for centers in 2007, some 28 left their jobs in the previous two years. For every 100 assistant teachers, 41 left their jobs. A further consequence of this high turnover rate is a lower level of job experience: in 2007, half of teachers and assistant teachers had worked in their current child care centers less than 4.0 and 2.3 years respectively.<sup>d</sup>

Since inadequate compensation is one reason why child care experiences such workforce instability, studies find that low quality is generally correlated with low cost. On average, the center or home that pays below going rates for staff will offer lower quality care.<sup>e</sup>

Child care providers thus face a vexing dilemma. They must keep staff compensation low in order to stay in business, but need to keep compensation high in order to maintain a high quality of care and pay a living wage.

<sup>a</sup> National Association of Child Care Resource And Referral Agencies, *The High Price of Child Care: 2008 Update*, Appendix, Detail Tables 2,3, 7 & 8. Accessed, February 12, 2009 at [http://issuu.com/naccrra/docs/price\\_report\\_2008?mode=embed&documentId=80804140003-bbe790955515407da7e25ef36c3bdef1&layout=white](http://issuu.com/naccrra/docs/price_report_2008?mode=embed&documentId=80804140003-bbe790955515407da7e25ef36c3bdef1&layout=white)

<sup>b</sup> A study of Massachusetts' child care centers found that 71 percent of an average center's expenses go to salaries and benefits. *The Cost and Quality of Full Day Care, Year-round Early Care and Education in Massachusetts* (A study prepared for the Massachusetts Department of Education by the Wellesley College Centers for Women, 2001).

<sup>c</sup> *Illinois Salary and Staffing Survey of Licensed Child Care Facilities: FY 2007* (A study prepared for the Department of Human and Community Development by Philip C. Garnier, May 2008.) Table 28.

<sup>d</sup> *Ibid.*, Tables 8 and 19.

<sup>e</sup> Of course, this is true only on average, and not for all programs. Many skilled and dedicated teachers remain at very low salaries.

## II. Family Dilemma: Access to Available Child Care Slots

### A. CHILD CARE PROVIDERS AND SLOTS IN COOK COUNTY

A family's access to child care depends on both affordability *and* availability. Child care supply in Cook County comes from a rich mix of entrepreneurs including individual providers, educators, non-profit and for-profit enterprises, and public agencies. Appendix 3 discusses some of the factors that enter into the supply of child care. This section examines some critical elements of that supply: the number of providers, their geographical distribution across Cook County, and the number of slots they have available.

Table II-1 shows the best count we can provide of the number of child care programs in Cook County, while Table II-2 shows the number of child care slots provided by these programs. Each table divides the programs into type of child care setting. These types of child care settings are defined in the Glossary. Appendix 4 discusses the data sources we use in more detail.

These tables understate the actual number of providers in Cook County and the children they can serve. Centers and homes that are exempt from licensing do not have to list their slots with any official source, so many go uncounted.<sup>9</sup> While a large number of license-exempt *centers* do list their programs with the Illinois Action for Children Resource and Referral Program, our list of license-exempt *home* providers in Cook County is far less extensive.

**Table II-1.  
Child Care Programs in Cook County\***

Source: Illinois Action for Children and DCFS, June 2009

Type of Program	June 2008	June 2009
<b>Child Care Centers &amp; School Age Programs</b>	1,404	1,456
Child Care Centers	1,041	1,087
School Age Only Programs	205	218
Summer Only Programs	158	151
<b>Family Child Care</b>	21,935	21,397
Licensed Homes	3,965	3,946
License-Exempt Homes	17,970	17,451
<b>Total Child Care Programs</b>	<b>23,339</b>	<b>22,853</b>

\* See Appendix 4 for methodology.

*Note that the TOTAL row adds dissimilar homes and centers together and should be considered a total only for recorded child care establishments irrespective of size.*

**Table II-2. Child Care Slots in Cook County**

Includes daytime slots only.\*

Source: Illinois Action for Children and DCFS, June 2009

Type of Program	June 2008	June 2009
<b>Child Care Centers</b>	117,994	120,005
Child Care Centers	83,269	86,343
School Age Only Programs	14,824	14,437
Summer Only Programs	19,901	19,225
<b>Family Child Care</b>	89,965	88,736
Licensed Homes	29,309	29,349
Licensed Homes—additional school age slots**	6,746	7,034
License-Exempt Homes***	53,910	52,353
<b>Total Spaces for Children</b>	<b>207,959</b>	<b>208,741</b>

\* Licensed homes have the capacity to serve an additional 14,076 children during evening hours while child care centers provide an additional 1,874 evening slots. See Section III-A.

\*\* Licensed home providers with assistants may be licensed to care for up to four school-age children during out-of-school time in addition to their regular day-time capacity.

\*\*\* To estimate slots in license-exempt homes, we multiply the number of license-exempt homes known through the Illinois Child Care Assistance Program by three children per home. License-exempt home providers legally can care for no more than three children unless all children are related. While this number reflects the potential capacity of license-exempt home providers, on average the actual number of children enrolled per provider is closer to two.

In 2009, there were 1,456 full-time child care centers offering 100,780 child care slots during the full year or school year, as well as 19,225 full-time slots during the summer months. Child care centers offered more than half of the total known full and school-year capacity in Cook County.

As of June 2009, DCFS had listed 3,946 licensed family and group child care homes in Cook County with slots for 36,383 children. Each provider was licensed to care for an average of 7.4 children during the day, not including up to four additional school age children they may be licensed to care for during out-of-school time. However, only providers with assistants can care for more than eight children at one time.<sup>10</sup>

The tables also indicate the number of known license-exempt home providers and their available slots. As mentioned, license-exempt home providers are a much more elusive group to gather statistics on. Neither DCFS nor the Illinois Action for Children Resource and Referral Program has significant information on license-exempt home providers, although we learn more about this group every year through the

Resource and Referral Program. We know most about those license-exempt home providers who receive payments from CCAP for providing child care to low-income working families, so those are the ones we report on here.

In 2009, some 34,600 Cook County license-exempt home providers received CCAP payments during at least one month of the year, though fewer participate at any one time. In June 2009, there were 17,451 license-exempt home child care providers receiving CCAP payments.

Home providers who have license-exempt status may legally care for as many as three children who are not their own.<sup>11</sup> While we provisionally estimate 52,353 slots in known license-exempt homes in Table II-2, the reader should be aware that many, though not all, license-exempt home providers do not offer child care slots in the same way that centers and licensed homes do. Instead, many are relatives, neighbors or family friends who choose to care for *particular* children for particular periods of time rather than offer care to *any* child as part of an ongoing business.

## **B. WHERE ARE THE PROVIDERS AND SLOTS?**

Some parents will have a more difficult time finding child care because of where they live. The 120,005 spaces in child care centers are almost evenly divided between Chicago and suburban Cook County, though there are some differences. School age programs are more abundant, or at least better reported, in the suburbs, while summer-only programs are more abundant, or better reported, in Chicago. Two-thirds of the 36,383 licensed home spaces are located in Chicago. Table II-3 shows how center and licensed home slots are distributed throughout the regions of Cook County.

Table II-4 presents the distribution of the 52,353 known license-exempt home slots. Again, these data represent only a portion of the actual number of license-exempt home providers—those serving families using CCAP. We know, however, that license-exempt care is used widely across all incomes.

Seventy-eight (78) percent of the license-exempt home providers

**Table II-3. Full-Time and School Age Child Care Slots in Cook County Regions**

Includes daytime slots only.

Source: Illinois Action for Children Resource and Referral Program and DCFS, June 2009

Program Type	N & NW Chicago	C & W Chicago	S & SW Chicago	N & NW Suburban Cook	West Suburban Cook	S & SW Suburban Cook
Child Care Centers	11,625	12,116	19,228	18,610	7,738	17,026
School Age Only Programs	1,676	1,487	2,005	6,056	1,128	2,085
Summer Only Programs	3,700	3,115	6,735	3,177	665	1,833
Licensed Homes	2,977	4,658	11,950	1,793	2,566	5,405
Licensed Homes— additional school age slots	809	1,122	3,127	266	580	1,130
Total Center and Licensed Home Slots	20,787	22,498	43,045	29,902	12,677	27,479
Total Slots as a Percent of Children Under Age 13	12%	17%	17%	14%	13%	18%

participating in CCAP are located in Chicago. The table shows the numerical concentration of these slots in Chicago's South and Southwestern and Central and West regions, mirroring the distribution of low-income families who are eligible for CCAP. Of the suburban license-exempt home slots, 65 percent fall within the South and Southwestern suburban region.

License-exempt home care can be broken down further into care provided by relatives versus non-relatives and care provided in the child's home versus the provider's home. Table II-4 shows the distribution of these four types of license-exempt home care for the six Cook County regions.

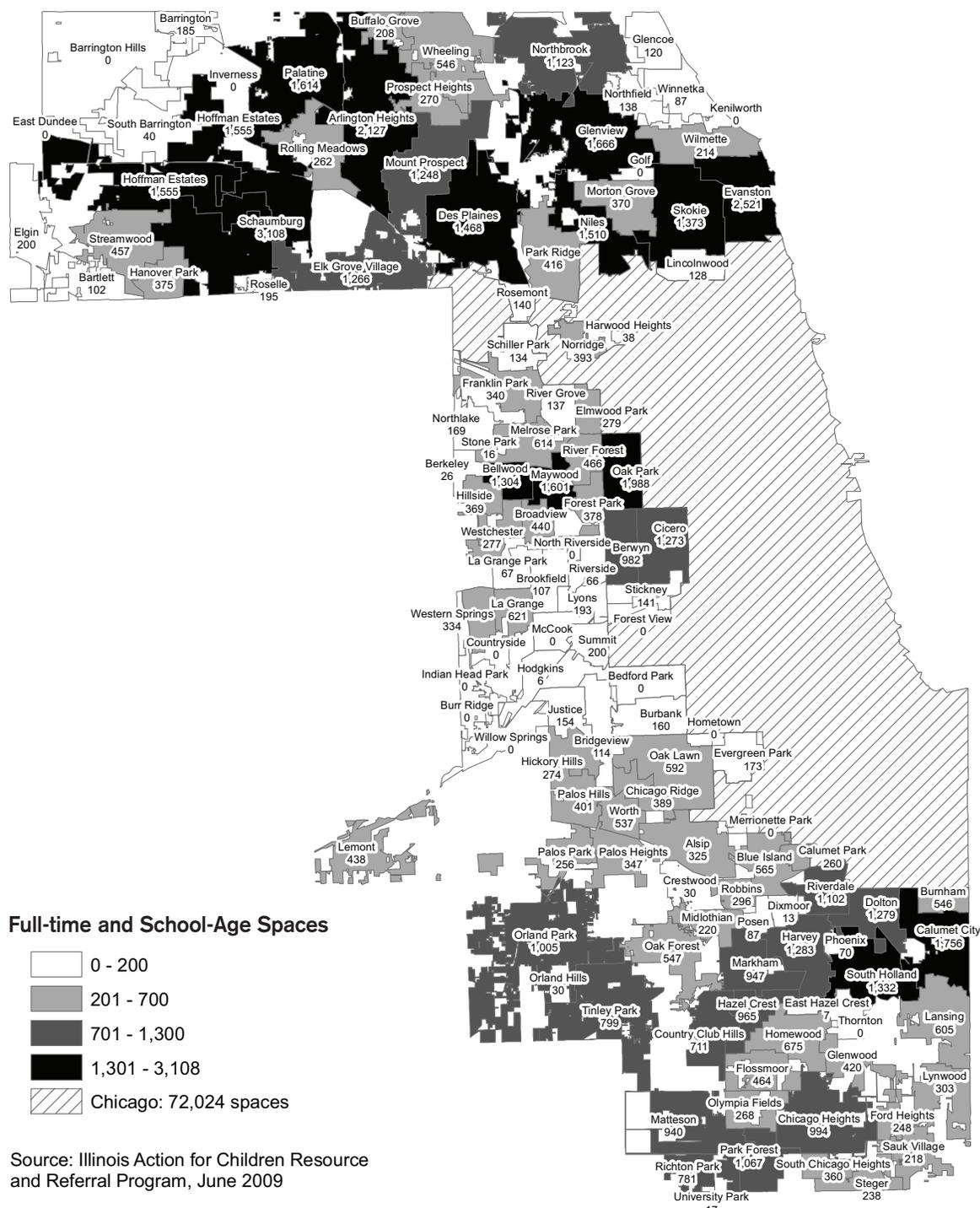
**Table II-4. License-Exempt Home Child Care Slots**

Source: Illinois Child Care Assistance Program, June 2009

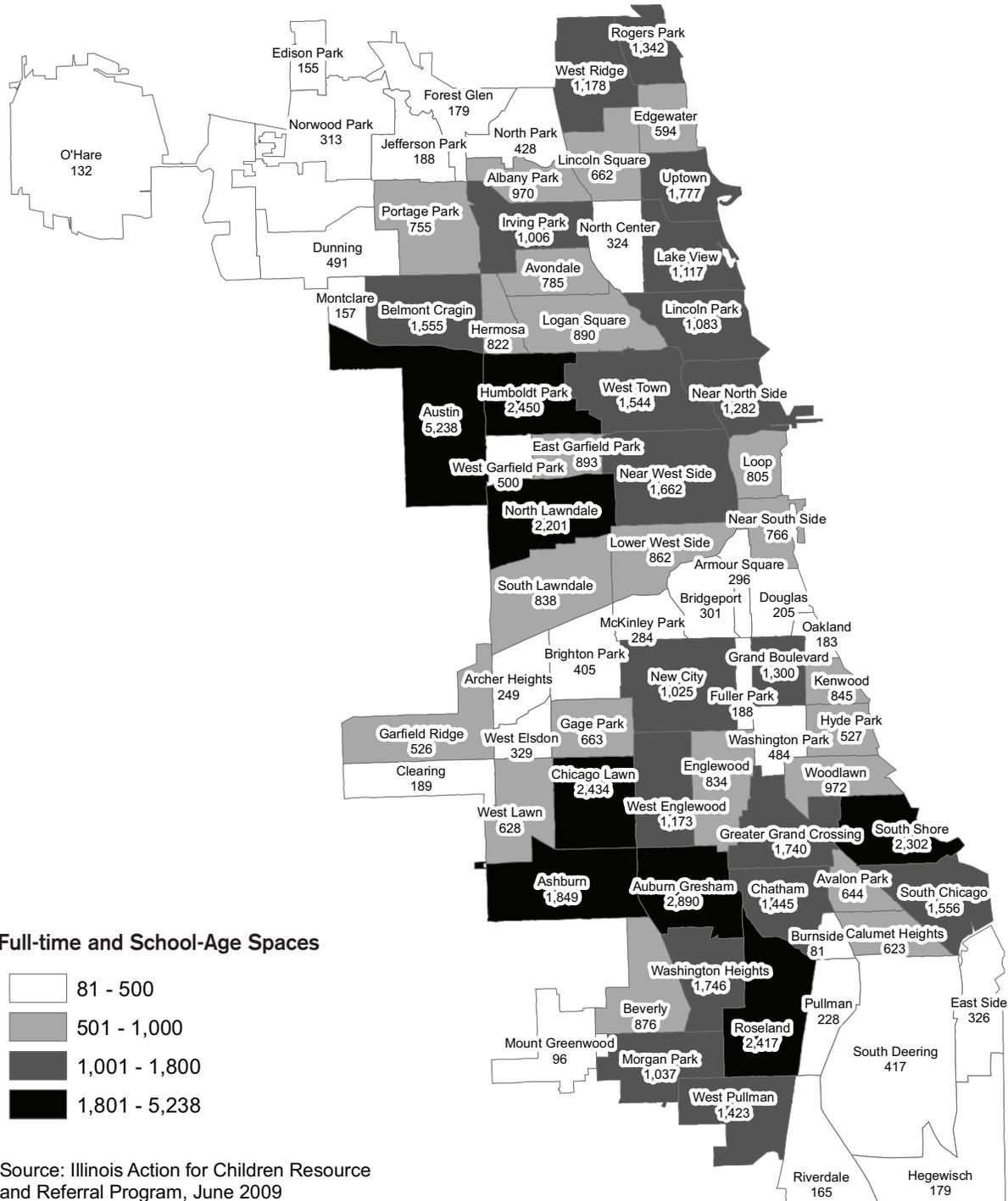
Program Type	N & NW Chicago	C & W Chicago	S & SW Chicago	N & NW Suburban Cook	West Suburban Cook	S & SW Suburban Cook
<b>Total</b>	3,366	13,071	24,306	1,218	2,835	7,557
Home of Non-Relative	621	2,097	3,879	228	459	1,314
Relative's Home	1,275	5,349	9,774	477	1,233	3,159
Non-Relative in Child's Home	558	2,442	4,662	183	411	1,272
Relative in Child's Home	912	3,183	5,991	330	732	1,812

Maps 1 and 2 show how center and licensed home slots added together are spread among the individual communities of Cook County. License-exempt home slots are not included here because the data we have provide only a portion of a widely unknown supply and because the supply of license-exempt home care is more variable than licensed care as we explained earlier in this section.<sup>12</sup> While providers have more child care slots in Chicago than in suburban Cook County overall, the number of slots varies substantially in individual suburban communities and Chicago neighborhoods.

**Map 1:  
Center and Licensed Home Full-Time & School-Age Slots in Cook County Municipalities**



**Map 2:**  
**Center and Licensed Home Full-Time & School-Age Slots in Chicago Community Areas**



Source: Illinois Action for Children Resource and Referral Program, June 2009

**Table II-5. Full-Time Child Care Center Slots in Cook County by Age**

Source: Illinois Action for Children Resource and Referral Program, June 2009

Age	N & NW Chicago	C & W Chicago	S & SW Chicago	Chicago Total	N & NW Suburban Cook	West Suburban Cook	S & SW Suburban Cook	Suburban Cook Total	Total
Infant	275	617	688	1,580	1,404	374	1,145	2,923	4,503
Toddler	450	788	960	2,198	1,746	536	1,527	3,809	6,007
2-year-old	1,334	1,538	2,889	5,761	2,680	882	2,221	5,783	11,544
3- to 4-year-old	3,543	2,901	5,607	12,051	4,670	2,318	4,136	11,124	23,175
5-year-old to K	2,341	2,024	3,966	8,331	3,523	1,528	2,794	7,845	16,176
School-Age: Before or After School	2,929	2,393	3,280	8,602	7,122	1,551	2,830	11,503	20,105
School Age: Summer Only	2,856	3,193	6,252	12,301	3,656	760	1,981	6,397	18,698
Total	13,728	13,454	23,642	50,824	24,801	7,949	16,634	49,384	100,208

### C. CENTER SLOTS BY AGE

Some parents have more difficulty finding child care because of the ages of their children. This section examines the number of children in each age group that Cook County child care centers can serve. Home child care providers have more flexibility in the ages of children they can enroll and the ages of children they serve change frequently. For this reason we do not provide comparable data for child care homes.

In 2009, 1,207 child care centers listed with Illinois Action for Children reported the number of children they serve per age group. Table II-5 shows the distribution of 100,208 known slots in licensed and license-exempt child care centers among the different age groups in the six regions of Cook County.<sup>13</sup> Overall, the total age-identified center slots are split in a fairly equal manner between Chicago and suburban Cook County regions.

It is often noted that infant care and school-age care are among the

most difficult for parents to find. Table II-5 confirms this notion. With a total of 4,503 slots, fewer places exist for infants than any other age group under school age. The situation is similar for toddlers. Chicago has only half as many infant and toddler slots as suburban Cook County; in Chicago there are more slots for two-year-olds than for infants and toddlers combined. This limited supply of infant and toddler slots is not surprising, as it is costly for centers to provide care for this age group. Many families with infants and toddlers look to family child care homes for this care; however, even family child care homes, understandably, are limited by law to care for no more than three children under age 2 at one time unless an assistant is present.

Programs for school-age children, with a total of 20,105 before- and after-school slots, have the lowest number of slots per age. There are almost twice as many slots listed for just three-year-olds through five-year-olds as there are for the entire school-age group, ages 6 through 12. The

situation is similar for school-age summer care. The North and Northwest suburban region does particularly well in providing before- and after-school slots compared to other regions. Note, however, that a significant number of school age providers are not licensed by DCFS and, if they do not list their program with Illinois Action for Children, may go uncounted.

### D. REFERRALS GIVEN TO PARENTS IN 2009 BY CHILD AGE

Parents looking for child care often seek referrals from Illinois Action for Children's referral service. As in previous years, child care referrals were most often requested for children under age 2—more than one-third of all requests. The proportion of requests for infant care was particularly high in the North and Northwest Chicago and the Central and West Chicago regions. See Table II-6 for the breakdown of referral requests by child age and region.

**Table II-6. Requests for Child Care by Age**

Source: Illinois Action for Children Resource and Referral Program, FY2009

Age	N & NW Chicago	C & W Chicago	S & SW Chicago	N & NW Suburban Cook	West Suburban Cook	S & SW Suburban Cook	Cook County Total
Under 2	1,315 50%	792 45%	1,452 40%	495 39%	438 36%	374 30%	4,866 41%
2-year-old	347 13%	263 15%	512 14%	171 14%	150 12%	173 14%	1,616 14%
3- to 4-year-old	445 17%	321 18%	703 19%	326 26%	289 24%	305 25%	2,389 20%
5-year-old & K	137 5%	92 5%	230 6%	62 5%	93 8%	84 7%	698 6%
School-Age	392 15%	303 17%	763 21%	205 16%	233 19%	297 24%	2,193 19%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,636 100%</b>	<b>1,771 100%</b>	<b>3,660 100%</b>	<b>1,259 100%</b>	<b>1,203 100%</b>	<b>1,233 100%</b>	<b>11,762 100%</b>

**BEST AND WORST REGIONS FOR FINDING INFANT CARE IN 2009**

A family looking for infant care in a center or licensed home will likely have the greatest success in finding care if they live in the South and Southwest suburban region of the county. This region has a low number of infants per infant slot, both in centers and in licensed homes, making it easier for families to find care.

The North and Northwest Suburban region also fares well in infant center care. However, for a family priced out of this type of care, there are relatively few licensed home options in the region.

Infant care is most scarce in the North and Northwest Chicago region. Here center infant care is more than twice as scarce as in any other region, and licensed home care for infants is less abundant than almost all other areas.

Families in South and Southwest Chicago will have an easier time finding licensed home care than families in other regions, but will face some challenge finding center infant care.

	Number of Infants per Center Slot	Number of Infants per Licensed Home Provider
North and Northwest Chicago	60	44
Central and West Chicago	18	18
South and Southwest Chicago	27	12
North and Northwest Suburban Cook	11	67
West Suburban Cook	21	23
South and Southwest Suburban Cook	9	14

Note: The number of infants per region is from the 2000 Census and does not reflect population changes over the last nine years.

# III. Family Dilemma: Finding Child Care that Matches the Family's Schedule

Most child care programs are available only during the daytime on weekdays, but half of part-time employees and one-third of full-time employees work non-traditional schedules that include at least some evening, night, or weekend hours. Many also work schedules that change periodically, sometimes with little notice. Some of the most common or fastest-growing jobs require non-traditional hours, including retail, food services, office cleaning, hospitals, and nursing homes. In general, low paying jobs are more likely to require parents to work non-traditional schedules than better paying jobs.<sup>14</sup> These work schedules give rise to one of the most intractable problems facing many parents seeking child care: relatively few programs accommodate parents' needs for evening child care, overnight care, weekend care, or care on a variable schedule.

## A. PROVIDERS OFFERING CARE DURING NON-TRADITIONAL HOURS

Table III-1 shows the number and percentage of centers and homes in Cook County available for Illinois Action for Children to refer parents to for evening child care, overnight care, weekend care, and care during rotating shifts.

In the table, several facts stand out about the availability of child care during non-traditional hours. First, only five (5) percent of centers offer care during evening hours, and even fewer offer overnight or weekend care. In terms of both numbers and percentages, more child care homes than centers offer non-traditional hours of care. While

**Table III-1. Cook County Providers with Non-Traditional Care\***

Source: Illinois Action for Children Resource and Referral Program, June 2009

	Chicago	Suburban Cook County	Total	Percent of All Listed Centers or Homes
<b>Centers with Any Non-Traditional Care</b>	88	139	227	20%
<b>Evening</b>	27	29	56	5%
<b>Overnight</b>	2	2	4	0%
<b>Weekend</b>	12	9	21	2%
<b>Rotating Shifts</b>	59	112	171	15%
<b>Homes with Any Non-Traditional Care</b>	1,813	698	2,511	86%
<b>Evening</b>	1,530	536	2,066	71%
<b>Overnight</b>	101	41	142	5%
<b>Weekend</b>	261	110	371	13%
<b>Rotating Shifts</b>	679	299	978	33%

\*Here evening care is defined as care provided between 7 p.m. and 2 a.m., while overnight care is care provided between 2 a.m. and 5 a.m.

more than two-thirds of homes are licensed to provide evening care, as with centers only a small percentage offer overnight or weekend care.<sup>15</sup> More centers and homes accommodate families needing care on rotating schedules.

The fact that homes are more likely than centers to offer non-traditional hours of care confirms the commonly-held belief that child care homes are more flexible than center programs in accommodating parents' work schedules. In addition, the availability of homes in more geographic areas offers greater flexibility for parents: the 2,511 home sites in Cook County offering non-traditional hours are more convenient geographically for parents than the 227 center sites. Noteworthy differences exist between Chicago and suburban Cook County: 72 percent of homes offering non-traditional hours of care fall within Chicago, while suburban Cook

County outnumbers Chicago in the number of centers offering care during rotating shifts.

Table III-2 breaks down the number of evening *slots* by type of care and region. The North and Northwest region of suburban Cook County has the fewest number of evening slots, while the South and Southwest Chicago region has the greatest number. In recent years, licensed evening capacity has been growing. Between 2003 and 2009, the total number of evening slots in licensed child care centers increased 342 percent from 428 to 1,890. During the same period, evening slots in licensed homes rose 268 percent, from 3,820 to 14,076. While more providers are being licensed for evening care in recent years, it is not clear how many *actually provide* evening care and for how many children they do so.

**Table III-2. Evening Slots by Cook County Region\***

Sources: DCFS and Illinois Action for Children Resource and Referral Program, June 2009

Type of Care	N & NW Chicago	C & W Chicago	S & SW Chicago	N & NW Suburban Cook	West Suburban Cook	S & SW Suburban Cook	Cook County Total
Child Care Centers	52	78	300	171	297	992	1,890
Licensed Homes	1,212	2,319	7,297	151	573	2,524	14,076
<b>Total Evening Slots</b>	<b>1,264</b>	<b>2,397</b>	<b>7,597</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>870</b>	<b>3,516</b>	<b>15,966</b>

\*Includes those centers or homes licensed for a nighttime capacity by DCFS (nighttime defined as the majority of care between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m.) and those licensed-exempt centers listing an evening shift with Illinois Action for Children.

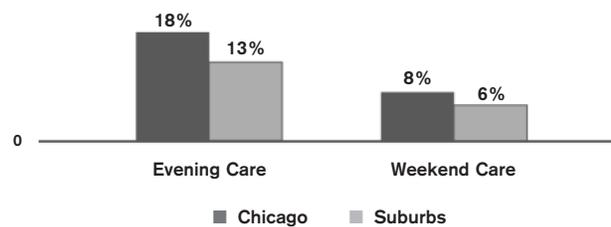
**ALBERTA REYES: WORKING MOTHER WITH PRESCHOOLER. INCOME IS \$16,138 PER YEAR.**

Each week Alberta works four 10-hour shifts overnight, except occasionally when business is slow and she is told not to come in. We have already learned that CCAP allows Alberta to afford a range of care types, including care in a center and in a licensed child care home.

However, Alberta's work schedule presents a barrier to using center or licensed home care. Less than one percent of centers and only five (5) percent of licensed homes in Cook County offer care during her overnight work hours. As a result, family, friend, or neighbor care remains the most realistic option for Alberta.

**Figure III-1. Percent of Children in Need of Non-traditional Hours of Care**

Source: Illinois Action for Children Resource and Referral Program, FY2009



Despite growth in the amount of care provided during non-traditional hours, families looking for child care during these times have a reduced pool of center and licensed home slots available to them when compared with families needing weekday, daytime care. Since non-traditional work schedules often go hand-in-hand with low-income jobs, families seeking child care during non-traditional hours are often challenged with affordability issues as well. It is not surprising, then, that many parents turn to relatives, friends and neighbors to care for their children. These providers often offer a more flexible and affordable child care alternative.

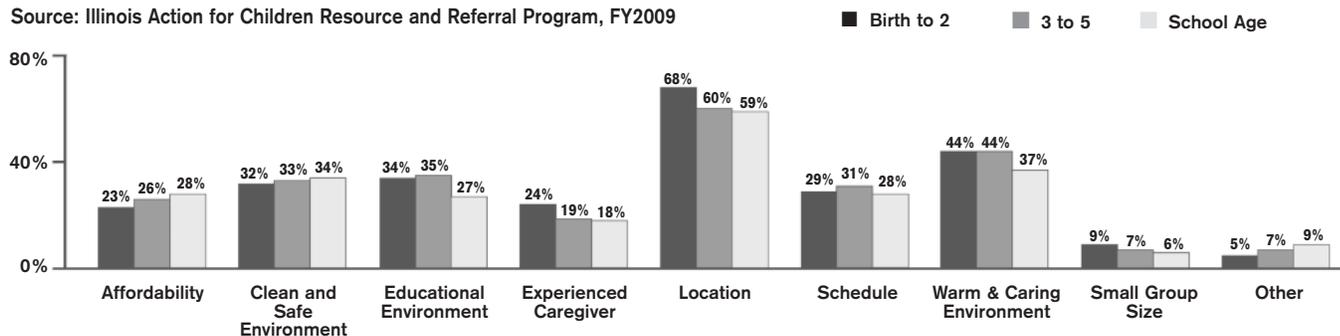
**B. REFERRALS GIVEN TO PARENTS IN NEED OF NON-TRADITIONAL HOURS OF CHILD CARE**

Parents sought child care referrals for 11,762 children through Illinois Action for Children in 2009. Sixteen (16) percent of these children needed care during evening hours, and 8 percent needed child care during weekend hours. Figure III-1 gives the percentage of children in need of evening and weekend care for Chicago and suburban Cook County.

# IV. Family Dilemma: Finding the Right Provider

**Figure IV-1. Reasons Parents Chose Their New Provider, by Child Age**

Source: Illinois Action for Children Resource and Referral Program, FY2009



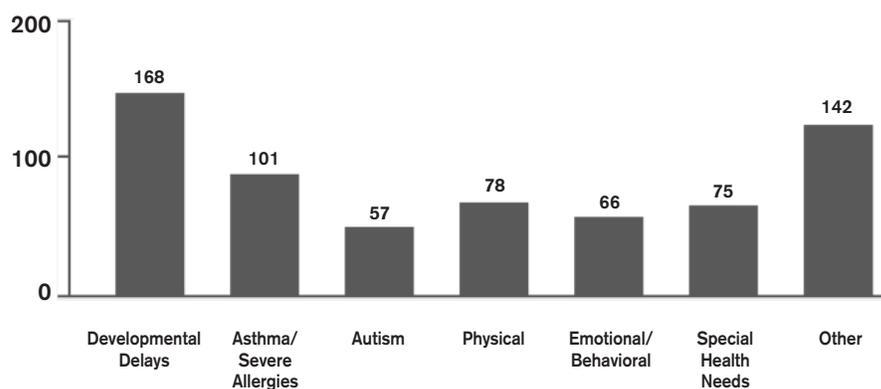
The story of parents' search for child care goes well beyond critical questions of the parents' work schedules, the region where the parents live or work, the child's age, and the type of child care setting that parents want for their child. Each child is a specific individual and has individual needs that parents hope the right provider can meet.

## A. WHAT DO CHILDREN NEED?

We have limited data on the individual needs that parents most seek to accommodate. One good piece of information about what parents look for in a provider comes from a survey of parents who use the Illinois Action for Children Resource and Referral program. As part of the survey, parents were asked to check the top three reasons why they chose their new child care provider. Figure IV-1 shows the top reasons of the 1,344 respondents in 2009 based on their child's age. The predominant reason for all age groups was the location of care, followed by a warm and caring environment. An educational environment was important, particularly

**Figure IV-2. Types of Special Needs**

Source: Illinois Action for Children Resource and Referral Program, FY2009



for children under age 5, as was a clean and safe environment for all age groups. About one quarter of families said they based their decision on affordability of care.

## B. SPECIAL NEEDS

In addition to every child's individual needs, some children have special needs. In 2009, parents requested referrals from Illinois Action for Children for 463 children with one or more special needs. Of all chil-

dren with a special need, 36 percent had a developmental delay and 22 percent had asthma or severe allergies. Figure IV-2 shows the number of children with each type of need.

Illinois Action for Children asked parents what problems, if any, they encountered while seeking child care. Only 34 percent of families with no children with special needs encountered problems with finding care as compared to 45 percent of families with a child with special needs.

In addition, 44 percent of families with no child with special needs said they had found care, compared with 38 percent of families with children with special needs. Families with children with special needs were more likely to say they were still undecided about the care they would use. Figure IV-3 presents the results of families' search for child care.

**C. LANGUAGE NEEDS**

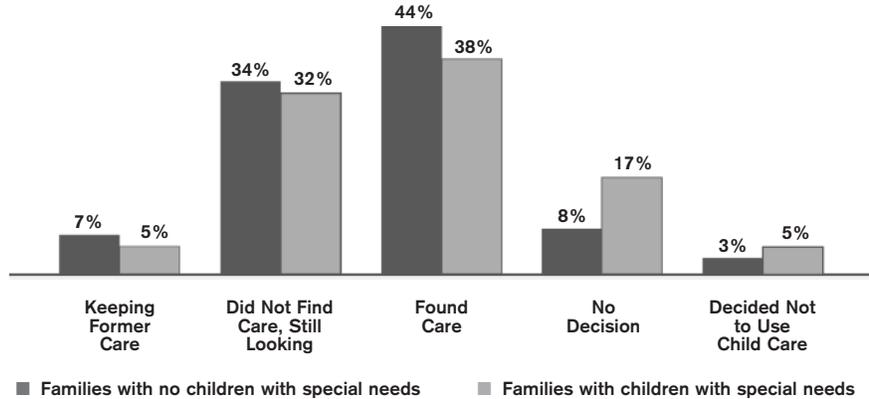
A parent's ability to communicate easily with his or her child care provider is important, as parents and providers need to share information about a child's health, well-being, and development. A common language is likely to foster a parent's sense of trust of the child care provider as well as a willingness to become involved in the child's program.

Fifteen (15) percent of the Cook County population speaks limited English, with the majority of those (63 percent) speaking Spanish.<sup>16</sup> In 2009, 10 percent of families using Illinois Action for Children's referral service sought a provider who could speak a language other than English, the predominant language being Spanish.

If families with limited English-language capacity want to communicate with their child care provider in their native language, their child care options will narrow. Of the providers who are on the Illinois Action for Children Referral data-

**Figure IV-3. Follow Up Survey: Ability to Find Child Care**

Source: Illinois Action for Children Resource and Referral Program, FY2009



base, 19 percent of licensed home providers reported they can fluently speak a language other than English, while 43 percent of centers said they have a staff member who speaks a language other than English. In centers, though, that particular person may not be the staff member who cares directly for the child.

# V. Public Dilemma: Who Needs Child Care? Who Needs Support?

The public sector in Illinois faces its own dilemmas in helping families address their child care needs, particularly in deciding how many resources should be devoted to supporting families' child care needs in comparison to other critical needs. In considering this issue, the public must decide who needs child care, how much child care the public should support, what kind of care to support, and who needs assistance paying for child care.

The majority of data presented in this section are from the 2000 Census, and over the last nine years populations may have shifted somewhat. These data should be used more as an impression of where families, children, and poverty are in Cook County in 2009, rather than as an exact count.

## A. CHILD POPULATION, POVERTY AND LOW INCOME

More than one million children ages 12 and under reside in Cook County. The first four rows of Table V-1 categorize children in Chicago and suburban Cook County by age groups based on the U.S. Census 2000. As the table shows, more than 54 percent of the children in Cook County in 2000 resided in Chicago. Potentially all of the children age 5 and under need child care or early education. Similarly, many older children ages 6 through 12 need before- or after-school care. It is unrealistic, however, to suppose that the parents of all these children actually seek care.

The next six rows of Table V-1 show levels of poverty among children in Cook County, indicating that up to

**Table V-1. Children in Cook County, 2000 Census**

Children	Chicago Total	Suburban Cook Total	Total Cook County
Under 3 Years	131,472	101,662	233,134
Ages 3 through 5	129,764	108,764	238,528
Ages 6 through 12	302,221	260,216	562,437
<b>Totals</b>	<b>563,457</b>	<b>470,642</b>	<b>1,034,099</b>
Under 3, In Poverty	36,522	8,873	45,395
% of Age Group in Poverty	28%	9%	19%
Ages 3-5, In Poverty	37,557	9,773	47,330
% of Age Group in Poverty	29%	9%	20%
Ages 6-12, In Poverty	88,077	22,868	110,945
% of Age Group in Poverty	29%	9%	20%
Under 3, Income Eligible*	69,457	24,502	93,959
% of Age Group Eligible*	53%	24%	40%
Ages 3-5, Income Eligible*	70,824	26,619	97,443
% of Age Group Eligible*	55%	24%	41%
Ages 6-12, Income Eligible	166,957	61,200	228,157
% of Age Group Eligible*	55%	24%	41%

\* Income-eligible for CCAP. The income limit is 200% of the federal poverty level based on family size. The work requirement for CCAP is not factored in here. Ages of children both in poverty and income-eligible are calculated from the proportions of all children in different age groups.

29 percent of the children in Chicago were living in poverty in 2000. Chicago children were more than three times as likely to live in poverty than other Cook County children. Because poverty rates have risen since 2000, the rates for both regions are now likely higher than the table indicates.

The final six rows of Table V-1 present the number of children living in families whose incomes make them eligible in 2009 for Illinois Child Care Assistance (CCAP). In Illinois, a family's income can rise 100 percent above the federal poverty level before the family is no longer eligible for assistance. Under this standard,

slightly more than half of Chicago children under age 13 and almost one-quarter of suburban children in Cook County are income-eligible for CCAP. Note that in addition to the income requirement, CCAP also requires that all parents present in the family be in the labor force or in education or training programs. Working parents are discussed in section B below.

Table V-2 breaks down the same information on child population, poverty and low income for the six regions of the county. Families in poverty and families with low incomes tend to concentrate in the western and southern parts of

**Table V-2. Children in Cook County by Region, 2000 Census**

Children	N & NW Chicago	C & W Chicago	S & SW Chicago	N & NW Suburban Cook	West Suburban Cook	S & SW Suburban Cook
Under 3 Years	44,551	31,292	55,629	47,193	22,465	32,004
Ages 3 through 5	39,172	30,806	59,786	49,475	24,174	35,115
Ages 6 through 12	87,102	71,408	143,711	117,634	53,412	89,170
Under 3, In Poverty and % in Poverty	7,331 16%	11,887 38%	17,304 31%	2,569 5%	2,562 11%	3,742 12%
Ages 3-5, In Poverty and % in Poverty	6,729 17%	12,142 39%	18,686 31%	2,676 5%	2,886 12%	4,211 12%
Ages 6-12, In Poverty and % in Poverty	15,682 18%	27,800 39%	44,595 31%	6,475 6%	5,671 11%	10,722 12%
Under 3, Income Eligible & % Eligible*	17,870 40%	20,173 64%	31,414 56%	8,253 17%	7,135 32%	9,113 28%
Ages 3-5, Income Eligible & % Eligible*	16,670 43%	20,311 66%	33,843 57%	8,649 17%	7,818 32%	10,153 29%
Ages 6-12, Income Eligible & % Eligible*	38,408 44%	47,987 67%	80,562 56%	20,089 17%	16,406 31%	24,704 28%

\* Income-eligible for CCAP. The income limit is 200% of the federal poverty level based on family size. The work requirement for CCAP is not factored in here. Ages of children both in poverty and income-eligible are calculated from the proportions of all children in different age groups.

Chicago. The southern and western parts of suburban Cook County also have more poverty and more families eligible CCAP than the county's North and Northwest regions.<sup>17</sup>

As much as 39 percent of children living in a Cook County region are living below the poverty line. With respect to incomes that make families eligible for CCAP, as little as 17 percent and as much as 67 percent of children in different age groups live in families eligible for CCAP.

**B.  
CHILDREN WITH  
WORKING PARENTS**

Public policy often supports working families in particular in terms of child

care. To estimate the demand for child care in a region such as Cook County, researchers often start with the number of families with every parent working outside of the home and ignore families with at least one parent not in the labor force. This approach neglects the fact that substantial numbers of parents who are not in the labor force still seek child care in order to attend school or for other reasons such as disability or illness. This also assumes that all families with every parent in the labor force must turn to external sources for child care, neglecting the fact that families might have other relatives available to care for the children and that many parents stagger their work schedules so one parent is always available to provide

care. It is important to keep these complexities in mind when reviewing the data that follow on families with all present parents working.

Of the approximately 472,000 children under age six in Cook County in 2000, about 50 percent, or 238,000 children, lived in families in which all parents present in the home were in the labor force. This means either the single parent in a single-parent family or both parents in a two-parent family were in the labor force.<sup>18</sup> The percentage of children in families with all working parents in suburban Cook County is 56 percent while in Chicago it is 53 percent. Table V-3 presents the number of such children in the six regions of Cook County.

**Table V-3. Children With All Present Parents in Labor Force, 2000 Census**

Children	N & NW Chicago	C & W Chicago	S & SW Chicago	N & NW Suburban Cook	West Suburban Cook	S & SW Suburban Cook
Children Under 6 Years	41,778 53%	26,678 49%	56,394 56%	51,614 55%	23,105 53%	38,386 61%

**Table V-4. Estimate of Unserved Children**

Children Eligible for Child Care Assistance But Not Receiving It  
 Calculated from 2000 Census and Illinois Child Care Assistance Program June 2009 data

Children	N & NW Chicago	C & W Chicago	S & SW Chicago	N & NW Suburban Cook	West Suburban Cook	S & SW Suburban Cook
Under 3 Years	6,761	5,687	7,975	3,135	1,562	1,099
Ages 3-5	5,645	5,016	7,804	3,052	1,560	926
Ages 6-12	18,103	19,255	34,245	11,402	6,504	9,758
Total:	30,509	29,958	50,023	17,589	9,626	11,783

Cook County Total: 149,489

**C. CHILDREN ELIGIBLE FOR BUT WITHOUT CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE**

For a family to be eligible for CCAP, every parent present in the home needs to be working,<sup>19</sup> and family income can be no higher than 200 percent of the federal poverty level for a family of its size. We have looked at children in families that are income-eligible in Tables V-1 and V-2 above, as well as children under age 6 with all present parents in the labor force in Table V-3 above. This section takes the analysis to its logical next step: combining the two to estimate the number of children in the six regions of Cook County who are eligible for CCAP but do not receive it.<sup>20</sup>

Table V-4 presents these estimates for the different age groups and regions. We estimate that in any

given month, 14 percent of Cook County children ages 12 and under (149,489 children) live in families that are eligible for but do not receive CCAP support. About 20 percent of Chicago children are in this group of unserved children, while the suburban Cook County portion is 8 percent.

Do all of these children have an unmet need for child care? We cannot suppose that the parents of every eligible child would choose to use CCAP even if it were offered to them. Some parents might prefer to have a relative care for the child (with little or no payment); some parents might not be able to find a child care provider to match their off-hour or changing work schedules; others might not be able to afford to pay a provider even if they receive Assistance; some parents may stagger their work schedules

in order to share caring for their children; and yet others may have enrolled children in an educational program such as Head Start or Illinois Preschool for All and are satisfied with those hours of care.

The figures in Table V-4, then, should be seen as an upper end of a range rather than an on-target estimate of unmet need for CCAP support.<sup>21</sup> We can say that as many as 149,489 children in Cook County eligible for CCA are not using it.

We should note that this estimate has important limitations. The estimate is based on 2000 Census data on families and children. It does not capture changes in child population and family income (that is, changes in eligibility for CCAP) over the last nine years.

## PUBLIC DILEMMAS

The working mother of three children introduced earlier in this report, Candace Thomas, remains ineligible for CCAP. If she earned just \$200 less, she would be eligible. Yet, the State of Illinois recently expanded the number of families eligible for CCAP and has room to expand further under the federal child care block grant. Should the state do this?

Candace pays about \$12,700 of her \$44,800 annual salary for child care in a licensed home, more than 28 percent of her income, while the national average spent on child care is about 7 percent.\* Do Candace and her children deserve child care support? If so, does she deserve as much as the \$9,564 in CCAP support that would reduce her child care expenditure to 7 percent of her income? Does she deserve the additional \$22,000 that would put her children in high quality educational settings?

Should the only realistic option available to the couple introduced earlier, Gabrielle and Shawn Harris, be license-exempt care?

Illinois policy makers, of course, face a dilemma in balancing funding for Child Care Assistance with funding for other items, such as improving education and health insurance for children. And within CCAP itself, the State must also balance two goals: increasing the number of families that receive CCAP support and increasing the amount of assistance that goes to individual families already in the program.\*\*

While others may disagree, most child care advocates believe that the State of Illinois can contribute more to both sides of the balance without threatening the public treasury even in hard times. Not only are expenditures on CCAP an effective economic stabilizer that helps prevent unemployment, but as an investment in a working mother and her children, it helps her work to her full productive potential and prevents the social isolation of children that makes them more at-risk.

Supporting working families and promoting early education strengthens our workforce and better prepares our children for success as adults.

\* Like many working parents, she may also be eligible for a very modest child care income tax credit.

\*\* Either way, an increase would go directly to a child care provider and affect the quality of care that provider can offer.

# VI. Child Care Choices of Cook County Families

There is only limited information on the type of child care used by families in Cook County and the reasons behind parents' choices. Much of what we do know comes from CCAP data and from families using Illinois Action for Children's Resource and Referral program. The results presented in this section, however, cannot be generalized to represent the entire population.

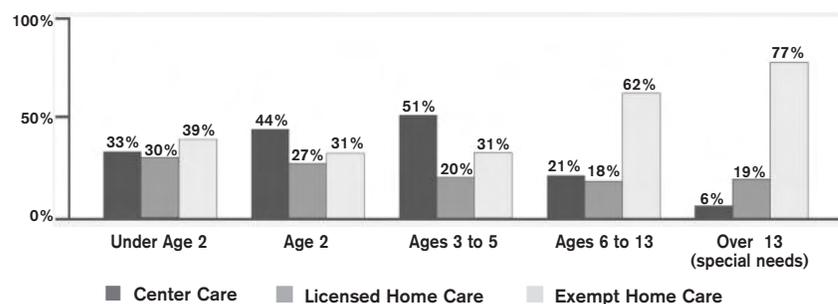
Figure VI-1 shows the types of care used by Cook County families with CCAP according to the age of the children in care. In each age group, the use of home care predominates over center care. The use of *license-exempt* home care is especially high for school-age children. Sixty-two (62) percent of 6- to 13-year-olds and 77 percent of children over 13 with special needs are cared for in license-exempt homes. Children under age 2 are also more likely to be cared for in license-exempt homes than centers or licensed homes.

Center care is utilized most by 3- to 5-year-olds; this is not surprising considering there are more center slots available for this age group and center care is more affordable for this age than for younger ages. Also, many parents wish to enroll their preschool-age children in more formal programs to prepare them for kindergarten.

Figure VI-2 presents differences in use of center care, licensed home care, and license-exempt home care for the six regions of Cook County.<sup>22</sup> In the North and Northwest suburban region, an overwhelming number of families accessing CCAP,

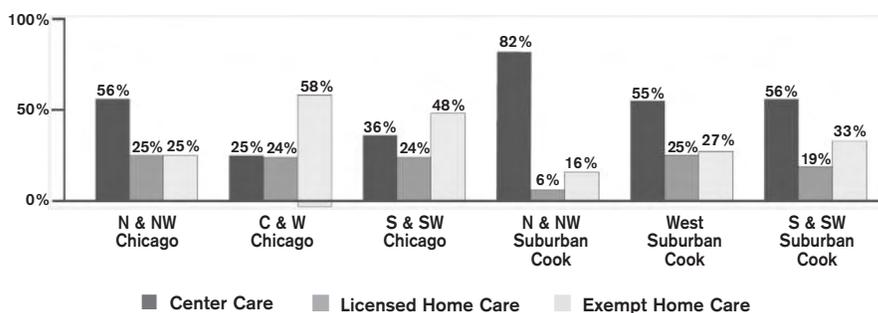
**Figure VI-1. Type of Care Used by Child Age: Cook County Families with Child Care Assistance**

Source: Illinois Child Care Assistance Program data, June 2009



**Figure VI-2. Type of Care Used by Region: Cook County Families with Child Care Assistance**

Source: Illinois Child Care Assistance data, June 2009



**Table VI-1. Type of Care Chosen by Families Using Referral Program, by Region**

Source: Illinois Action for Children Resource and Referral Program, FY2009

	N & NW Chicago	C & W Chicago	S & SW Chicago	N & NW Suburban Cook	West Suburban Cook	S & SW Suburban Cook
Relative (license-exempt)	5%	6%	10%	10%	15%	10%
Non-Relative (license-exempt)	8%	6%	13%	6%	15%	12%
Licensed Home	36%	27%	34%	21%	36%	34%
Center	52%	64%	43%	64%	35%	50%

Totals per region exceed 100 percent because some families use more than one care arrangement.

82 percent, utilize center care. The remaining suburban regions as well as the North and Northwest Chicago region use center and home care in roughly equal proportions. Families in the South and Southwest Chicago region and the Central and West Chicago region have the highest use of license-exempt home care and the lowest use of center care.

Another source of information on parents' child care decisions comes from the Illinois Action for Children Resource and Referral program. Parents use this service because they want or need to find a caregiver beyond, or in addition to, a relative or friend they already know. Data from this program represent parents who seek mainly licensed home care or center care, though these

parents may ultimately decide to use license-exempt home care.

Illinois Action for Children asks all parents who seek child care referrals to complete a follow up survey about their search experience. In 2009, 31 percent of families responded to the survey.

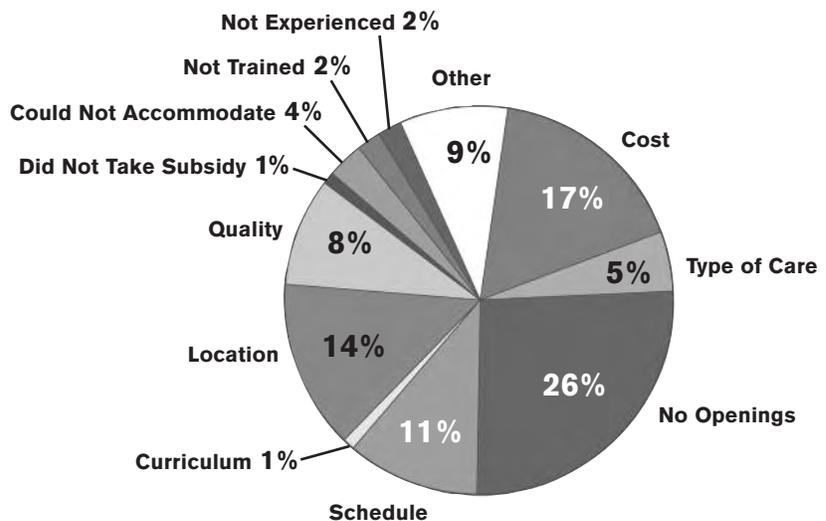
Table VI-1 shows the types of child care chosen by parents receiving referrals. In the North and Northwest suburbs where home care is scarce and in the Central and West region of Chicago, a larger percentage of families chose center care. The opposite was true for the South and Southwest region of Chicago where home care is more abundant than in other regions. Home care also was predominant in the West suburban region. While 12 percent to 30 percent of families chose license-

exempt home providers, including relatives, the majority selected licensed care.

We asked parents what problems they encountered while searching for child care. Sixty-five (65) percent of families stated they had no problems finding care. Of families reporting one or more problems, the top issues they encountered were a lack of openings, high costs, the location of care and schedule problems. Of course, many of these problems are interrelated—a parent might find no openings at the cost they can afford in the areas in which they are searching. Figure VI-4 shows the frequency of problems encountered. (See also Figure IV-3 where we report on families' success in finding care.)

**Figure VI-3  
Problems Encountered  
When Seeking Child Care**

Source: Illinois Action for Children Resource and Referral Program, FY2009



# Conclusion

Finding the right child care is one of the most important decisions that a parent faces, and with more options, the likelihood is greater that parents will succeed in finding the provider best suited for their child. But costs, schedules, and availability limit parents' choices—this is especially true for low-income parents.

Each individual child care program has characteristics that parents may find attractive—perhaps an especially warm and experienced caregiver, a well-developed curriculum, a caregiver with experience with a particular disability, or a vibrant, visually appealing facility. Ideally, a family's child care decision would be based on the program's quality and its ability to meet the child's individual needs.

Unfortunately, limiting factors play a role in the decision-making process, particularly for middle- and low-income families. Most significantly, the high cost of center or licensed home programs can prohibit families from using these types of care. While CCAP helps some families access these services, not all families who need assistance qualify for it, and sometimes even with assistance, these child care settings can still be too costly.

Many families are also limited by the number of child care openings in their community—we find this particularly the case for parents seeking infant care. Other families find that it is not just about finding openings, but finding them at the right times. A growing number of families work outside the traditional Monday through Friday daytime schedule, yet most center and licensed home settings do not offer care in the evenings, overnight, or on weekends.

While many types of child care exist, the reality is that many families do not have options. We hope this report will provide insight into the realities faced by working families and the types of support that these families and their child care providers need.

We hope this data on child care supply and demand will guide advocates and policy makers as they work to improve the accessibility of quality child care for all families in Cook County and the State of Illinois.



# Footnotes

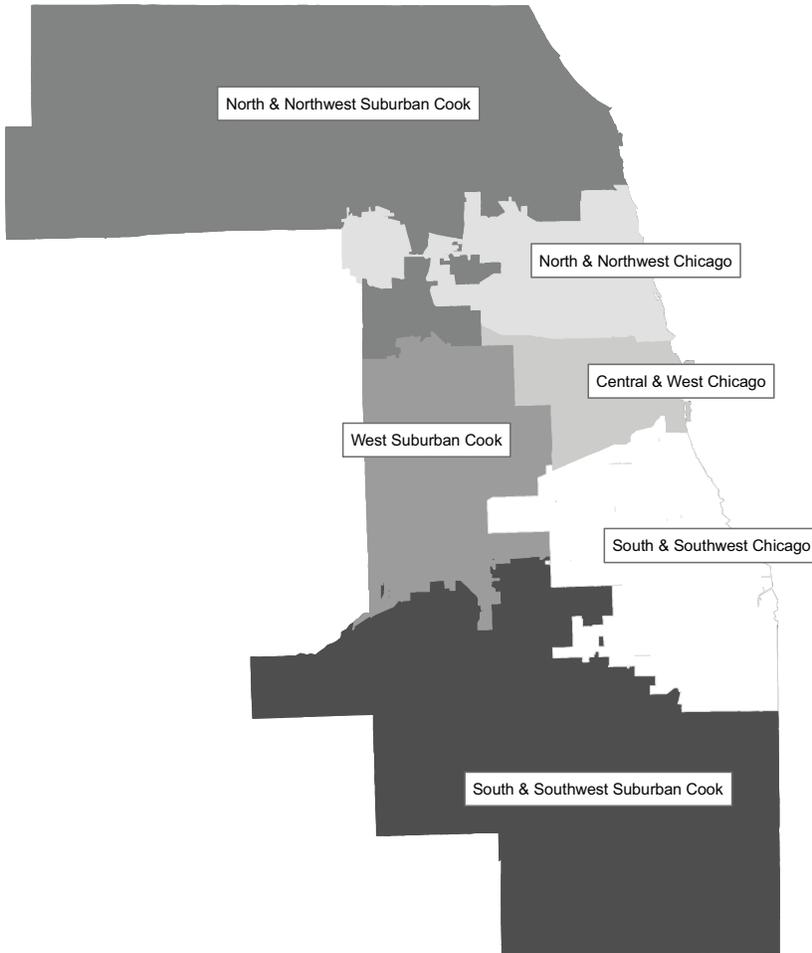
- <sup>1</sup> Consumer prices as measured by CPI-U by U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics; <http://www.bls.gov/data/home.htm>, accessed December, 2009.
- <sup>2</sup> 2008 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau. This is the last year available at the time of writing. The Census does not present data on suburban Cook County as we do.
- <sup>3</sup> Average annual tuition and fees paid for a 4-year public institution in Illinois for the 2008-2009 school year, from [www.collegeillinois.com](http://www.collegeillinois.com).
- <sup>4</sup> See for example, the National Child Care Survey, 1990 and *Child Care Expenses of American Families*, Urban Institute, 1997. The Census Bureau finds that child care payments average 7.0 percent for families with employed mothers and with children under 15. The average is higher at 9.0 percent for families with children under five. Having lower incomes raises the percentages. *Who's Minding the Kids? Child Care Arrangements: Summer 2006*, U.S. Bureau of the Census, December 2009, Table 6.
- <sup>5</sup> If we used 6 percent as a rule of thumb, these incomes must be over \$175,400 and \$303,000 respectively in Chicago and over \$199,000 and \$346,000 in suburban Cook County.
- <sup>6</sup> Effective April 1, 2008, the amount a family can earn to be eligible for Illinois Child Care Assistance rose from 185 percent to 200 percent of the federal poverty level.
- <sup>7</sup> For details, see the following: [http://www.actforchildren.org/\\_data/global/images/Cost\\_of\\_Care\\_1Child\\_Family\\_of\\_4\\_FY09.pdf](http://www.actforchildren.org/_data/global/images/Cost_of_Care_1Child_Family_of_4_FY09.pdf)
- <sup>8</sup> In some cases, the parent(s) can be in school instead of working. The chart assumes that parents receiving Child Care Assistance pay their assigned co-payment as well as the difference between the price their child care provider charges and the rate their provider is reimbursed by the Child Care Assistance Program.
- <sup>9</sup> Even when the number of slots is known, it is only an estimate of the number of children served. Some providers might have empty slots, in which case the number of slots exceeds the number of children in the care of these providers. On the other hand, two or more part-time children might fill some slots, in which case the number of children in care exceeds the number of slots.
- <sup>10</sup> A home's operator might not want to provide care for the home's full legal or licensed capacity.
- <sup>11</sup> If the children are all related, the provider can care for more than three at one time.
- <sup>12</sup> The fact that many, though not all, license-exempt homes do not strictly offer slots but have more personal and variable enrollment creates enormous problems for estimating child care supply and demand. A related but smaller problem is that while centers and homes are legally licensed for a certain number of children, some restrict their actual enrollment to a smaller number.
- <sup>13</sup> These are slots for which an age is specifically mentioned. About 18,000 slots have no age attached.
- <sup>14</sup> *Working Later in Illinois: Work Schedules, Incomes and Parents' Access to Child Care*, Illinois Action for Children, 2006.
- <sup>15</sup> Data on the number of home providers offering evening care are based on the hours a provider is *licensed* to provide care. Though 71 percent of homes are licensed to provide evening care, it is not clear how many actually provide it.
- <sup>16</sup> 2000 Census. Percent of the population age 5 and over that speaks a language other than English and speaks English less than "very well."
- <sup>17</sup> Here *low-income* means below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Of course, a closer look at each region would find that some smaller areas within a region have more heavily concentrated poverty and lower incomes than other areas.
- <sup>18</sup> Technically the labor force includes unemployed people looking for work. We count these, since parents looking for work need child care. Another 27 percent of children live in two-parent families that have only one parent in the labor force.
- <sup>19</sup> In Illinois, parents may be in training or school, but in practice relatively few parents, approximately 12 percent, get approval unless they work outside of the home.
- <sup>20</sup> To arrive at the measure of children with a possible unmet need for child care assistance, we (1) combine information on income-eligibility and work-eligibility to estimate the number of children who are eligible for CCAP and (2) from this number, subtract the number of children who actually received that assistance in a recent month (June 2009).
- <sup>21</sup> Of course, some parents who are currently ineligible because they have higher incomes or who are in training or in school might have a need for child care assistance and would use it if they were eligible. In this sense, our estimate *undercounts* some need.
- <sup>22</sup> Since some parents use more than one type of child care while their case is active, percentages can exceed 100 percent.



## APPENDIX 1

# The Six Cook County Regions

### Chicago and Suburban Cook Regions



Throughout this *Report* we divide Cook County into six geographical regions: three in Chicago and three in suburban Cook County. The map and tables on the next two pages of this Appendix define the six regions.

The most recognizable form of Chicago geographical units are the Chicago Community Areas, which correspond to city neighborhoods. This Appendix places the 77 Chicago Community Areas into three Chicago regions: North and Northwest Chicago; Central and West Chicago; and South and Southwest Chicago.

The most recognizable Cook County geographical units are municipalities. The Appendix identifies the three suburban Cook County regions according to the Cook County municipalities belonging to each region: North and Northwest Suburban Cook County; West Suburban Cook County; and South and Southwest Suburban Cook County.

When presenting census data for Chicago and Cook County in this report, we built our aggregate units from data for the individual Chicago Community Areas and municipalities. Our aggregate data, therefore, may deviate somewhat from aggregate data provided by the U.S. Census.

## The 2010 Report of Child Care in Cook County

### **NORTH AND NORTHWEST SUBURBAN COOK**

Arlington Heights  
Barrington  
Bartlett  
Des Plaines  
East Dundee  
Elgin  
Elk Grove Village  
Elmwood Park  
Evanston  
Franklin Park  
Glencoe  
Glenview  
Golf  
Hanover Park  
Harwood Heights  
Hoffman Estates  
Inverness  
Kenilworth  
Lincolnwood  
Morton Grove  
Mount Prospect  
Niles  
Norridge  
Northbrook  
Northfield  
Northlake  
Palatine  
Park Ridge  
Prospect Heights  
River Grove  
Rolling Meadows  
Rosemont  
Schaumburg  
Schiller Park  
Skokie  
South Barrington  
Streamwood  
Wheeling  
Wilmette  
Winnetka

### **WEST SUBURBAN COOK**

Bedford Park  
Bellwood  
Berkeley  
Berwyn  
Bridgeview  
Broadview  
Brookfield  
Burr Ridge  
Cicero  
Countryside  
Forest Park  
Forest View  
Hillside  
Hodgkins  
Indian Head Park  
Justice  
La Grange  
La Grange Park  
Lyons  
Maywood  
McCook  
Melrose Park  
North Riverside  
Oak Park  
River Forest  
Riverside  
Stickney  
Stone Park  
Summit  
Westchester  
Western Springs  
Willow Springs

### **SOUTH AND SOUTHWEST SUBURBAN COOK**

Alsip  
Blue Island  
Burbank  
Burnham  
Calumet City  
Calumet Park  
Chicago Heights  
Chicago Ridge  
Country Club Hills  
Crestwood  
Dixmoor  
Dolton  
East Hazel Crest  
Evergreen Park  
Flossmoor  
Ford Heights  
Glenwood  
Harvey  
Hazel Crest  
Hickory Hills  
Hometown  
Homewood  
Lansing  
Lemont  
Lynwood  
Markham  
Matteson  
Merrionette Park  
Midlothian  
Oak Forest  
Oak Lawn  
Olympia Fields  
Orland Hills  
Orland Park  
Palos Heights  
Palos Hills  
Palos Park  
Park Forest  
Phoenix  
Posen  
Richton Park  
Riverdale  
Robbins  
Sauk Village  
South Chicago Heights  
South Holland  
Steger  
Thornton  
Tinley Park  
Worth

### **NORTH AND NORTHWEST CHICAGO**

Albany Park  
Avondale  
Belmont Cragin  
Dunning  
Edgewater  
Edison Park  
Forest Glen  
Hermosa  
Irving Park  
Jefferson Park  
Lake View  
Lincoln Park  
Lincoln Square  
Logan Square  
Montclare  
North Center  
North Park  
Norwood Park  
O'Hare  
Portage Park  
Rogers Park  
Uptown  
West Ridge

### **CENTRAL AND WEST CHICAGO**

Austin  
East Garfield Park  
Humboldt Park  
Loop  
Lower West Side  
Near North Side  
Near South Side  
Near West Side  
North Lawndale  
South Lawndale  
West Garfield Park  
West Town

### **SOUTH AND SOUTHWEST CHICAGO**

Archer Heights  
Armour Square  
Ashburn  
Auburn Gresham  
Avalon Park  
Beverly  
Bridgeport  
Brighton Park  
Burnside  
Calumet Heights  
Chatham  
Chicago Lawn  
Clearing  
Douglas  
East Side  
Englewood  
Fuller Park  
Gage Park  
Garfield Ridge  
Grand Boulevard  
Greater Grand Crossing  
Hegewisch  
Hyde Park  
Kenwood  
McKinley Park  
Morgan Park  
Mount Greenwood  
New City  
Oakland  
Pullman  
Riverdale  
Roseland  
South Chicago  
South Deering  
South Shore  
Washington Heights  
Washington Park  
West Elsdon  
West Englewood  
West Lawn  
West Pullman  
Woodlawn

# The Demand for and Supply of Child Care—Basic Factors

## WHY DEMAND AND SUPPLY?

Many analysts believe that understanding the demand for and supply of child care is critical. Without such knowledge, we can never know whether a region such as Cook County has enough child care services. Nor can we understand why child care prices are rising or what the effects of rising rates are: for example, whether rising prices primarily drive working parents away from using child care or primarily encourage child care providers to expand and provide higher quality care. Finally, understanding supply and demand helps us understand ways to influence child care prices, expand the use of child care among working parents and improve child care quality. This Appendix discusses the basic concepts of demand and supply in child care and shows why it is so difficult to speak about them authoritatively.

### Demand

Families with children who want and can afford to place their children in child care are the source for demand for child care in Cook County. Their demand is simply how much child care services they would buy at a going price. In general, the size of this demand depends upon the number of children of child care age in those families, from infants to older children needing before- or after-school care. Demand also has deeper roots including these factors:

- Whether family incomes are sufficient to pay for child care,

especially in comparison to the prices of other necessities the family buys.

- Whether families have access to child care assistance programs to help pay for child care when they cannot afford to buy it directly. For example, working families' access to CCAP since 1997 has provided a powerful stimulus to demand for child care in Illinois.
- Whether parents can afford to stay at home with children or receive income from programs such as the now-terminated Aid to Families with Dependent Children that allows them to remain home with children.
- Whether families have available substitutes to purchasing child care, such as these:
  - Relatives who can care for children while parents work.
  - Alternative care that is available and subsidized (Head Start, Preschool for All, and so on).
  - Work schedules that allow parents in two-parent families to share care—one caring for children while the other works.
- Parents' preferences about letting others care for their children. This factor behind parents' demand often depends on the child's age.
- Parents' perceptions of the quality of care available.

How much child care Cook County families will want to purchase depends on all of these factors. With these

factors in the background, the amount of care families *actually* purchase and use depends on the price and availability (or supply) of this care.

### Supply

Individual providers, educators, non-profit enterprises, for-profit enterprises, and public agencies supply child care services in Cook County by mobilizing people, facilities, and materials for the purpose of caring for children. As Section II of this *Report* demonstrates, child care takes a variety of shapes across Cook County, including providers in their own homes, caregivers who go to the children's homes, non-profit and for-profit centers, public and private preschools, after-school programs, and so on. Many child care program developers and directors also engage diverse agencies that finance, regulate zoning, license, and accredit child care. Finally, they recruit in labor markets for the child care workforce and contract with suppliers of goods and services, such as food, building maintenance, and books.

Child care supply is based upon the willingness and ability of providers to bring people and such resources together given the cost of the resources they need. Among the factors that we expect to influence the supply of child care services in Cook County are the following:

- The cost of resources such as facilities, materials, equipment, supplies, overhead, and especially employees.

- Public, non-profit, or donor subsidies of child care, including wage supplements if any exist. For example, if a religious congregation or a community agency decides to supply space rent-free or at a discounted rent, this will generally increase the supply of child care services in Cook County.
- Regulatory conditions including business, zoning, child care accreditation, and licensing restrictions. These conditions change little from year to year, thereby not changing child care supply much from year to year. They can, however, affect the overall level of child care operations. And in some localities, zoning changes have seriously affected providers.

How much child care providers want to supply in Cook County will depend on all of these factors. Even non-profit providers must cover their basic costs and respect these restrictions on offering services. The amount of care that they *actually provide* at any given time depends on the income that providers derive from this care.

### USING SUPPLY AND DEMAND ANALYSIS

In economic theory, the price of child care services and the amount actually bought is determined by

levels of demand and supply. If the demand for child care is greater than the amount supplied, the price will rise as parents seek scarce slots for their children. On the other hand, if supply exceeds demand, providers may drop their prices to attract more children. That is the so-called law of supply and demand.

To determine whether or not a child care market actually works this way in Cook County would require a special study. The key point we want to underscore here is that because so many factors affect demand and supply, understanding the total effect will be extremely complex.

Supply and demand analysis must incorporate this complexity in order to be useful. It must primarily be based on excellent knowledge of all the factors identified above as influencing child care demand and supply. Leaving out any factor could spoil an analysis. Supply and demand analysis must, moreover, weigh the effects of all the factors influencing the child care market *simultaneously*. So complex is supply and demand analysis, in fact, that most economists rely on sophisticated statistical and mathematical tools to perform it.

Short of that sophisticated, comprehensive analysis, supply and demand analysis will be very partial or one-sided, and *when we use it we should acknowledge it as such*. For

example, suppose we know that new child care center licensing regulations will require child care teachers to have more education credits in college. We might predict that salaries of these teachers must rise to reimburse them for obtaining the additional credentials, and that will increase the cost of providing child care. Higher costs of providing child care, in turn, will lower the amount of child care supplied, as some providers will leave the business because they cannot afford to pay the newly credentialed teachers what they demand. We can conclude that *if nothing else is changing* in the child care market, lower supply will drive up the amount parents need to pay to find scarcer slots.

Too frequently, however, analysts do not acknowledge what we just stated in the italics above. They leave the impression that they have told the entire story. We should always acknowledge that other events in the child care market might outweigh the factor we are discussing at any given moment. Perhaps teacher salaries will not rise that much, or the new credentials will attract enough new children to centers to cover the higher costs. Or perhaps in the next month, for example, the State of Illinois will greatly increase its subsidies to child care providers. That will lower costs and could even reverse the impact of higher salaries on supply—*if nothing else is changing*.

## APPENDIX 3

# Sources for Data on Child Care Providers in Cook County

Information on Cook County child care providers in this report comes from three different sources:

1. The Illinois Action for Children Resource and Referral Program, which maintains a database of Cook County child care providers.
2. The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), which lists programs that it has licensed in Cook County.
3. The Illinois Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), which has information about providers who care for children with child care assistance.

The Illinois Action for Children Resource and Referral program is part of a statewide network of Resource and Referral agencies funded through the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS). Illinois Action for Children invites child care providers to list their programs on our database and to provide detailed information about their programs such as the rates they charge parents, the number of children they serve per age group, languages spoken, training and education they have received, and other characteristics that help referral staff match parents with providers.

Illinois Action for Children supplements its database by adding those providers licensed by DCFS who

have not agreed to list their program on our database (these providers are only added for statistical purposes and their information is not shared with parents). In this way, Illinois Action for Children maintains the most comprehensive listing of child care providers in Cook County, although we do not fully capture the child care activity that is legally exempt from licensing or the otherwise illegal care.

The third source of child care data used in this report is CCAP, which provides the best count of known license-exempt child care programs in Cook County.

Table A3 provides details on who is included in each type of child care referred to in the report.

**Table A3. Child Care Providers in Cook County in 2009: Who is Included**

Type of Program	Notes
Child Care Centers	Any child care center operating for the full year or the school year and offering some or all full-time care for children under age 5. The center might provide school-age care as well. This category does not include private preschool programs or public preschools such as Head Start-only or Preschool for All-only programs. Park and recreation programs are included if their care is full-time and for the full year or school year. Data are from June 2009.
School Age Programs	Any center that provides full-year or school-year care for children ages 5 and over only. Includes before and after school programs and part-day programs for children in kindergarten. Programs may be center based, school based or at a park or recreation program. Data are from June 2009.
Summer Only Programs	Any center that provides care only during the summer months. Only centers providing full-time care are included. Ninety-one percent of these summer-only programs are park and recreation programs. Data are from June 2009.
Licensed Homes	Any family child care home that is licensed by DCFS as of June 2009.
License-Exempt Homes	Includes license-exempt home providers participating in CCAP in June 2009. Note that the number of participating home providers varies from month to month just as the number of participating families varies. This category does not include the large number of unknown family, friend, and neighbor caregivers throughout Cook County.

# Glossary of Terms

**CCAP.** See Illinois Child Care Assistance Program (below).

**Chicago Community Areas (CCA).** Seventy-seven (77) formal designations of Chicago neighborhoods. See Appendix 1.

**Child Care Center.** When the term is used generally throughout the report it refers to any child care program in a facility outside of the home that offers full-time child care or before- or after-school care. In tables II-1 through II-3 it refers more specifically to any full-year or school-year child care center serving children under age 5 (as opposed to centers serving only school age children or centers providing only summer care). The term includes both licensed and license-exempt programs.

**Child Care Resource and Referral Agency (CCR&R).** There are 16 agencies throughout Illinois whose goal is to work with parents, business leaders, government officials and child care providers to make high quality child care available to Illinois families. This includes supporting child care providers, preparing individuals to enter the child care field, and assisting families in locating child care and accessing the Illinois Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). Illinois Action for Children is a CCR&R.

**DCFS.** See Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (below).

**Family Child Care Homes (FCC).** Child care located in providers' homes. While there are roughly 18,000 known license-exempt child care homes in Cook County, sometimes the term FCC refers solely to the approximately 4,000 licensed child care homes. In this report, it refers to both types of child care homes.

**Federal Poverty Level.** Poverty guidelines set by the Department of Health and Human Services to determine whether a person or family is eligible

for assistance through various federal programs.

**Illinois Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP).** Program established using the federal Child Care Block Grant following welfare reform to provide child care assistance for working families earning less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

**Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS).** In this report: DCFS grants and enforces licensing of child care centers and homes. It also helps pay for child care for foster children.

**Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS).** Home of the Bureau of Child Care and Development which administers many of the State's child care programs, including the Illinois Child Care Assistance Program, Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, and the Quality Counts program.

**Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA).** A member organization consisting of 16 regional Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) agencies serving communities throughout the state of Illinois. Its goal is to make high quality and affordable early care and education opportunities available for families and children of Illinois.

**Income-eligible.** A family whose income falls under 200 percent of the federal poverty level, making it income-eligible for the Illinois Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). Income eligibility in Illinois depends upon family size.

**Licensed Child Care Centers.** Centers that have been certified by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services as meeting certain health and safety standards and that are subject to inspection by DCFS.

**Licensed Child Care Homes.** Homes that have been certified by the Illinois Department of Children and Family

Services as meeting certain health and safety standards and that are subject to inspection by DCFS.

**License-Exempt Child Care Centers.** The Child Care Act of 1969 excludes some facilities from the requirement to be licensed. These exclusions from the licensing requirement may be found in Section 2.09 of the Child Care Act of 1969 [225 ILCS 10/2.09] and are explained in Department rules 89 Ill. Adm. Code 377, Facilities and Programs Exempt from Licensure. Centers that are legally exempt from licensing include those run by a religious institution, government program, school, college or university.

**License-Exempt Child Care Homes.** Sometimes called "family, friend and neighbor child care" or "kith and kin child care." Child care in a home that is legally exempt from licensure because the provider cares for fewer than four unrelated children. In the Illinois Child Care Assistance Program, the provider receiving a payment must complete a registration process and have passed a background check.

**Non-Traditional Hours of Care.** Hours of child care that fall outside the typical Monday through Friday day time schedule (defined in this report as 5 am to 7 pm). This includes evening, overnight and weekend care, as well as days and times that change from one week to the next.

**Reimbursement Rates.** The payment levels approved for centers, licensed homes and license-exempt homes under the Illinois Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). These rates vary across regions of Illinois. Parents pay part of the rate to providers as parent co-payments, while CCAP pays the remainder.

**Special Needs Child Care.** Refers to a child care provider with experience or training in caring for a child with an emotional, physical, developmental, or special health need or disability.



**4753 north broadway, chicago, illinois 60640**  
**312.823.1100 • [www.actforchildren.org](http://www.actforchildren.org)**