

Access to Quality, Affordable Child Care in Rural Areas

Needs Assessment Survey Results: Kansas

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K-STATE
Research and Extension

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NCRCRD
North Central Regional Center
for Rural Development

About the Project

Co-Investigators: Bradford Wiles, PhD, Kansas State Research and Extension; Holly Hatton-Bowers, PhD, University of Nebraska, Lincoln; Alison Brennan, PhD, North Central Regional Center for Rural Development (NCRCRD; Michigan State University). **Graduate Research Assistant:** Jessie Piper, MS, CFLE, Kansas State University.

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Corresponding author: Dr. Bradford Wiles, bwiles@ksu.edu or 785-532-1939.

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Background

Securing child care in rural areas, irrespective of cost, can be difficult due to general lack of options. Furthermore, lower income families often experience the added challenge of prohibitive costs and may find themselves unable to enroll children for financial reasons. Finding solutions to problems of child care access, affordability and quality is crucial for the long-term viability of rural communities, as child care arrangements have major implications for child development, parenting stress, family functioning, civic engagement, retention of residents and workforce participation. The present collaborative project assessed child care needs in rural Kansas and Nebraska, with the ultimate goal of moving rural communities toward sustainable, long-term strategies to meet the needs of diverse families.

Needs assessment included in-person focus groups and anonymous surveys. Surveys were designed to capture a variety of perspectives and experiences around child care access, affordability, quality, barriers, and impact/importance within rural communities. Four distinct audiences were targeted for participation in survey needs assessment: adults seeking child care; adults who currently have child care; early childhood professionals; and members of the general public. The present document reports on survey results in Pottawatomie County and surrounding areas.



Cities

Belvue, Blaine, Emmett, Havensville,
Louisville, Manhattan (mostly in Riley Co.),
Olsburg, Onaga, St. George, St. Marys,
Wamego, Westmoreland, Wheaton

People

Total population: 22,920

Median age (years): 34.8

High School Graduates: 95.4%

Bachelors Degree or Higher: 32%

Economy and Labor Force

Number of Companies: 2,250

Civilian Employment (ages 16+): 10,727

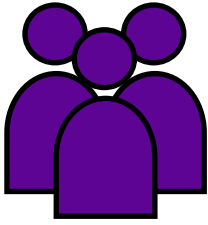
Unemployment Rate: 3.7%

Residents Working within the County: 50.3%

Median Household Income: \$62,500

Individuals Below Poverty Level: 9%

Adults Seeking Child Care



Characteristics

$n = 65$

Race/ethnicity

Age

Gender

Education

Residence

Household income

Employment status

Household Size

98.5% White, 98.5% non-Hispanic

78.4% ages 22-42, mode 28-32

95.4% women

Bachelor degree (median, mode)

86.2% Pottawatomie County

Five additional counties represented

\$60,000 to \$69,999 (median)

84.6% working as paid employee

3 people (median, mode)

Top Three Barriers

(Select all that apply from a list of 13 options)



Cost/affordability ($n = 35$)



Scheduling to match work schedule ($n = 23$)



Location of care ($n = 22$)

Average number of barriers encountered: **2.75**

Median number of barriers encountered: **3**

Important Factors in Search for Care

Factor	Mean (SD)	Median
Cost	2.57 (1.79)	2
Provider is someone you know and trust	4.24 (4.06)	3
Provider offers stimulating activities/programs	5.10 (2.86)	4
Provider's discipline and guidance styles match yours	5.51 (2.66)	6
Provider emphasizes school/academics (e.g., reading)	7.27 (3.23)	7

Note: Top five ranked from a list of 23 choices.

Money Matters

Compared to respondents with household income of \$90,000 or above ($n = 15$)...

Respondents with income of \$40,000 to \$89,999 ($n = 27$) were **1.94 times more likely** to report cost as a barrier

Respondents with income under \$40,000 ($n = 19$) were **1.57 times more likely** to report cost as a barrier

Preferred Care Arrangements

(Select all that apply from a list of 10 options)



Childcare center

($n = 29$)



Childcare by me in our own home

($n = 22$)



Combination of care as needed

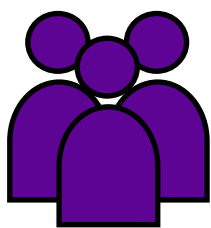
($n = 22$)



School-based program

($n = 20$)

Adults Who Currently Have Child Care



Characteristics

$n = 138$

Race/ethnicity

Age

Gender

Education level

Residence

Household income

Employment status

Household Size

98.6% White, 97.8% non-Hispanic

97.8% ages 22-42, mode 33-37

87.7% women

Associate degree (median, mode)

91.3% Pottawatomie County

Five additional counties represented

\$90,000 to \$99,999 (median)

87.7% working as paid employee

4 people (median, mode)

Top Three Barriers

(Retrospective; select all that apply from a list of 13 options)

#1

Cost/affordability ($n = 96$)

#2

Quality of care ($n = 88$)

#3

Location of care ($n = 84$)

Average number of barriers encountered: **4.28**

Median number of barriers encountered: **4**

Money Matters

Compared to respondents with household income of **\$90,000 or above** ($n = 68$)...

Respondents with household income **below \$90,000** ($n = 67$) were **2.34 times more likely** to report cost as a barrier

While **29%** of adults seeking care reported household income **under \$40,000**, only **5%** of adults who **currently have child care** reported household income **under \$40,000**.

Important Factors in Search for Care

Factor	Mean (SD)	Median
Cost	3.59 (2.62)	3
Provider is someone you know and trust	4.33 (3.52)	3
Provider offers stimulating activities/programs	5.5 (2.81)	5
Provider's discipline and guidance styles match yours	5.98 (2.87)	6
Provider had a reputation for good care	5.99 (3.93)	5

Note: Top five ranked from a list of 23 choices.

Care Arrangements

Current

1

Care in non-relative's home ($n = 63$)

2

Childcare center ($n = 57$)

3

School-based program ($n = 20$)

Preferred

1

Childcare center ($n = 86$)

2

School-based program ($n = 62$)

3

Care in non-relative's home ($n = 44$)

Comparisons



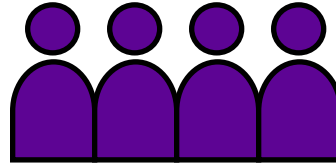
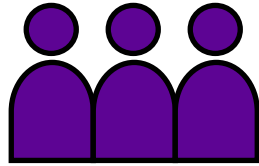
Seeking Care



Have Care

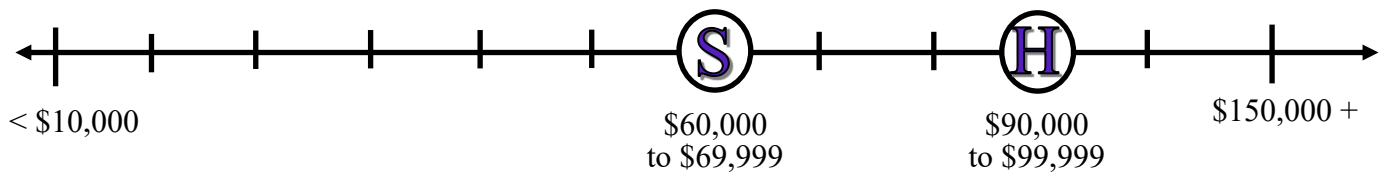
Family Size

Median & Mode



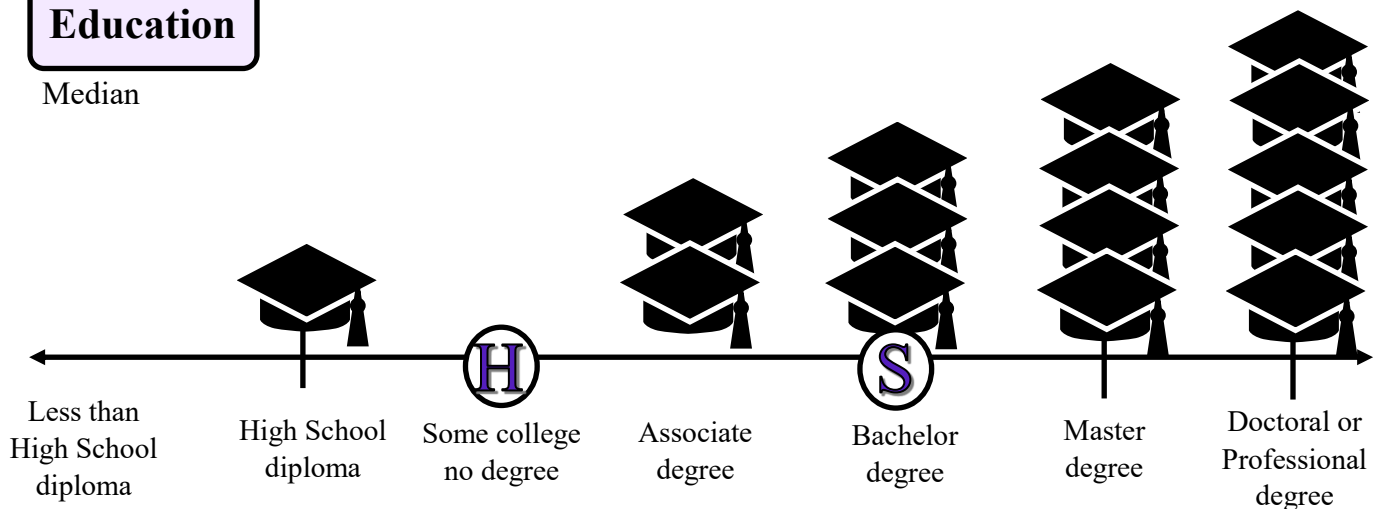
Household Income

Median

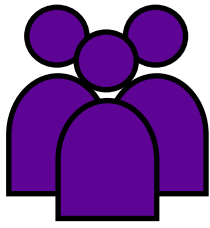


Education

Median



General Public



Characteristics

$n = 117$

Race/ethnicity	97.4% White, 94% non-Hispanic
Age	42.7% ages 22-42, mode 52+
Gender	93.2% women
Education	Bachelor degree (median, mode)
Residence	91.5% Pottawatomie County Three additional counties represented
Household income	\$80,000 to \$89,999 (median)
Employment status	71.8% working as paid employee
Household Size	3 people (median), 2 people (mode)

Select open-ended responses

- ♦ “ ‘Large’ communities have much more access to care, despite high cost. **Small communities have almost no access to care**, even expensive care.”
- ♦ “Adequate numbers of childcare facilities in small towns is an issue. Cost was not an issue. **When you have to plan pregnancies around provider openings, that’s an issue.**”
- ♦ “There needs to be a cap on how much daycares can charge per child. The less expensive daycares **rarely have openings**, and you **have to be on a waitlist for months.**”
- ♦ “Since Head Start closed in Wamego, the families of our at risk students in Pott County have **minimal affordable options** to provide preschool.”
- ♦ I am amazed at how many people reach out to strangers online to babysit/daycare for their kids! **Complete strangers answer to watch kids.** The area is just asking for a problem to arise without inspections and safety out there!”

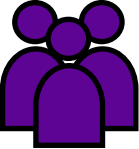
Perceptions of Child Care Issues

Statement	Frequency of Response				
	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
In general, families in our community have access to an adequate supply of child care services.	28 (23.9%)	34 (29.1%)	18 (15.4%)	26 (22.2%)	4 (3.4%)
Access to quality, affordable child care is an economic development issue.	6 (5.1%)	7 (6%)	14 (12%)	36 (30.8%)	47 (40.2%)
Federal and/or state government should make child care services more affordable than they are at present.	11 (9.4%)	11 (9.4%)	20 (17.1%)	30 (25.6%)	37 (31.6%)
County government has a role to play in access to quality, affordable child care.	10 (8.5%)	11 (9.4%)	21 (17.9%)	37 (31.6%)	30 (25.6%)
Churches have a role to play in access to quality, affordable child care.	12 (10.3%)	13 (11.1%)	32 (27.4%)	33 (28.2%)	20 (17.1%)

Note: Due to missing data, percentages may not total 100.

Early Childhood Professionals

Due to low response, the survey for early childhood professionals was reissued. The reissued survey contained all items from the previous version, plus one item regarding willingness to partner with various types of community organizations. Given the anonymous format of the survey, it is not possible to determine if individuals who completed the original survey participated in the reissued survey.

Characteristics		Sample One <i>n</i> = 28		Sample Two <i>n</i> = 25	
		Race/ethnicity		96.4% White, 96.4% non-Hispanic	
		Age		92% White, 96% non-Hispanic	
		33-37 (median, mode)		22-27 (median), 18-21 (mode)	
		Gender		100% women	
		96.4% women		100% women	
		Education		Some college (median, mode)	
		Bachelor (median, mode)		80% Pottawatomie County	
		Residence		Two other counties represented	
		89.3% Pottawatomie County		Two other counties represented	
		Household income		\$70,000 to \$79,999 (median)	
		\$30,000 to \$39,999 (median)		Household size	
		3.5 (median); 3 (mode)		3 (median); 2 (mode)	
		Completion rate		12/28 = 42.9%	
		16/25 = 64%		Professional role	
		Administrator/Owner 14.3%		Administrator/Owner 8%	
		Lead teacher 10.7%		Lead teacher 28%	
		Assistant teacher 0%		Assistant teacher 12%	
		Other 17.9%		Other 16%	
		Missing data 57.1%		Missing data 36%	

Hours of Operation

Start Time	6:30am earliest
	7:00am/7:30am most common
End Time	5:30pm most common
	8:00pm latest
Weekend Hours?	No programs open weekends

Potential Partners

(Item on reissued survey)

“If a community partner were to approach you regarding expanding your childcare center or daycare, which of the following would you have interest in (check all that apply)?”

- Collaborating with an older adult care or retirement facility to incorporate intergenerational care. *n* = 1
- Collaborating with a place of employment to provide care. *n* = 4
- Expanding your current facility to include more ages or numbers. *n* = 10
- I would not be interested in expanding my childcare center or daycare. *n* = 3

Money Matters

Are fees based on family income?

	Sample One	Sample Two
Yes	4 (14.3%)	0 (0%)
No	7 (25%)	16 (64%)
Missing data	17 (60.7%)	9 (36%)

During your last fiscal year, did your program lose money, break even, or profit?

	Sample One	Sample Two
Lost money	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Broke even	2 (7.1%)	4 (16%)
Made profit	2 (7.1%)	5 (20%)
Unsure	5 (17.9%)	7 (28%)
Missing data	19 (67.9%)	9 (36%)