

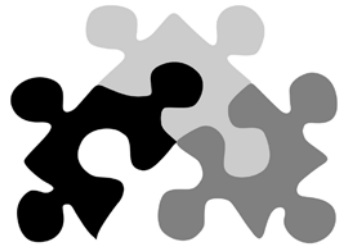
CHILD CARE
RESOURCES

State of Child Care 2002

Child Care In King County: 2000 – 2002



Child Care Resources • Bellevue, Washington
August 2002



CHILD CARE
RESOURCES

VISION:

We Lead Community efforts to ensure that every family can find safe, quality,
affordable child care.

Child Care Resources
15015 Main Street, Suite 206
Bellevue, WA 98007
425-865-9920
www.childcare.org
ccr@childcare.org

For further information about this report, please contact
Nina Auerbach, Chief Executive Officer at 206-329-1011 X208 or
Auerbach@childcare.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</u>	1
<u>NEW INFORMATION ABOUT CHILD CARE ISSUES</u>	1
<u>2000 Census Data</u>	1
<u>Analysis of Washington State Child Care Experience</u>	2
<u>DSHS Report on Licensed Child Care in Washington State: 2000</u>	3
<u>Public Health – Seattle and King County Communities Count Survey</u>	3
<u>Report of Family, Friends and Neighbor Care</u>	3
<u>AVAILABILITY OF CHILD CARE: SUPPLY AND DEMAND</u>	4
<u>Percent of Children in Child Care in King County</u>	4
<u>Factors Influencing the Use of Child Care</u>	7
<u>Number of Children in Child Care in King County</u>	8
<u>Types of Care Used by Families in King County</u>	9
<u>Licensed Child Care</u>	11
<u>Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care</u>	13
<u>Parental Satisfaction with Child Care</u>	14
<u>AFFORDABILITY OF CHILD CARE IN KING COUNTY</u>	16
<u>Cost of Child Care in King County</u>	16
<u>Subsidized Care for Low-Income Families</u>	18
<u>QUALITY OF CARE</u>	20
<u>High Attrition Rates Adversely Affect Quality of Care</u>	20
<u>Initiatives to Promote Quality Child Care</u>	21
<u>Results of Quality Initiatives</u>	26
<u>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</u>	1
<u>APPENDIX ONE</u>	1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Every two years, Child Care Resources reports on the quality, affordability and accessibility of child care in King County and identifies key issues and trends affecting child care in the region. For this 2002 report, we were fortunate in having U.S Census 2000 data, Child Care Resources data, and information from a number of local and statewide surveys and studies.

According to a recent survey conducted by Public Health - Seattle and King County approximately 48 percent of preschool-aged children 0-5 and 43 percent of school-aged children 6-12 are in regular child care in King County. From this we can estimate that there are approximately 55,200 preschool-aged children and 71,800 school-aged children regularly in child care in King County. Of these 127,000 children, about 67,500 are served primarily in a child care center, family child care home, or other center-based setting such as a Head Start program, preschool or before/after school program. About 59,300 children are cared for by a family member, friend, neighbor, or nanny, or have another child care arrangement. In addition, parents of about 12,300 children aged 0-12 would like to use child care but cannot find suitable care at a price they can afford.

Child care is taking an increasing bite out of the household budget of working families. Over the past decade, the cost of child care has risen much faster than inflation. From 1990 to 2000 the inflation-adjusted price of care increased 31 percent in centers and 28 percent in homes. Although higher child care rates allow centers to pay higher salaries and provide better quality child care, the cost to parents can be prohibitive. Child care rates vary according to the age of the child, the type of provider, and the geographic area of King County. Child Care Resources data show that average child care rates in King County range from a low of \$340 a month for school-age care in Seattle child care centers to a high of \$968 a month for infant care in child care centers in East King County.

Although child care costs more than many families can afford, it is not enough to pay decent wages and fringe benefits for child care workers. Research shows that well-trained and experienced child care teachers are the key ingredient in providing consistent high quality care that promotes children's development. Unfortunately, child care employees continue to be among the lowest paid workers in King County. As a result, child care workers are leaving the field in droves. To address this dilemma and improve the quality of child care while holding down costs, a number of inter-related initiatives are underway. These initiatives are beginning to have their desired effect of increasing the number of accredited child care centers, improving staff wages, benefits and training, and reducing turnover. Unfortunately, many of the initiatives now are in jeopardy because of the economy and funding cuts.

NEW INFORMATION ABOUT CHILD CARE ISSUES

Two years ago we reported on the state of child care in King County in 2000.¹ Since then several important sources of information have shed new light on the need for child care, and the availability, affordability and quality of child care in King County. Significant issues and trends that have been identified in the literature during the past two years are summarized below and discussed in detail in later sections of this report.

2000 Census Data

The 2000 decennial census identified several significant population trends regarding families in King County. Of particular importance:

- Between 1990 and 2000 King County grew by 15.2% and had one of the largest population increases in the United States. With a total population of almost 1.75 million, King County now ranks 12th in size among the nation's 3,100 counties.²
- Population changes in King County did not affect all age groups alike. Between 1990 and 2000 the under five age group increased by less than one percent, from 104,924 to 105,321. The five to nine age group increased by 12.5 percent, from 98,828 to 111,162. The 10 to 14 age group increased by 25.7 percent, from 87,519 to 109,992.³
- King County is growing more diverse. Almost one-third of the children are now children of color.⁴
- More children live in families where English is not the primary language. Almost one in five people in King County now speak a language other than English at home.⁵

¹ Child Care Then and Now: Child Care in King County 1990-2000, Child Care Resources, Bellevue Washington, June 2000

² US Census 2000, PHC-T-4 Ranking Table for Counties. The total population of King County increased by 15.2% from 1,507,319 in 1990 to 1,737,034 in 2000.

³ 1990 US Census C90STFIA and Census 2000 Supplementary Survey Summary Tables QT-01.

⁴ Information prepared from US 2000 Census data by Epidemiology, Planning and Evaluation Unit, Public Health-Seattle & King County.

⁵ Census 2000 Supplementary Survey Summary Tables QT-02

Analysis of Washington State Child Care Experience

The Child Care Resource and Referral Network recently published an analysis of Washington State's child care experience since 1996.⁶ Funded by the Center for Law and Social Policy through a Ford Foundation grant covering a five-state study, the report identifies what has been accomplished in the areas of availability, affordability, quality, and linkages to other aspects of the early childhood system. According to the report:

- Funding for child care services in Washington State almost tripled during the five-year period from 1996-2001. At the same time, the number of children in the state under age 13 remained fairly constant.
- Most of the growth in child care services was related to welfare reform. Now, half of all Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) dollars are used for child care. The State has used these funds to expand the number of families receiving child care subsidies, build child care capacity throughout the state, provide professional development, and provide a small increase in compensation for experienced and well-qualified child care staff.
- Although Washington has made progress in supporting the availability, quality, and affordability of child care in recent years, these improvements are fragile and very vulnerable to funding instability, taxpayer resistance to government spending, and an economic downturn.
- Subsidy rates to child care providers are not keeping up with inflation. As a result, many providers either refuse to accept families with subsidies or limit the number of subsidized children they will accept. Consequently, families with child care subsidies do not have equal access to high quality child care.
- During the past five years, Washington has developed some successful and highly innovative models for improving the quality, quantity and affordability of child care. However, recent cuts of over \$20 million in the State budget for child care endanger many of the important gains that have been made.

⁶ *The Washington State Child Care Experience Since 1996: Implications for Federal and State Policy*, Washington State Child Care Resource and Referral Network, Tacoma WA, January 2002

DSHS Report on Licensed Child Care in Washington State: 2000

Every two years, the Washington Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) publishes research and data analysis of licensed child care in the state. The most recent report⁷ shows that:

- The cost of child care in Washington has risen much faster than inflation in recent years, but DSHS maximum subsidy rates have lagged behind child care rate increases.
- In recent years the proportion of children whose child care is subsidized by DSHS has grown substantially - from 13 percent of all children in licensed care in King County in 1996 to 19 percent in 2000.
- Over the past eight years there has been a drop in the proportion of children receiving care in licensed family homes and an increase in the proportion of children in child care centers.

Public Health – Seattle and King County Communities Count Survey

As part of the Communities Count project, Public Health - Seattle and King County has just completed a survey of King County residents to determine how children, families and communities are faring today. Although the survey results have not yet been published, Public Health - Seattle and King County has generously provided data from the survey. These data have been used to estimate the number of children receiving child care in King County, the type of child care that is used, and parental satisfaction with child care.

Report of Family, Friends and Neighbor Care

In 2000, the Washington State Child Care Coordinating Committee commissioned a study to learn about child care provided by family, friends and neighbors (FFN). The study, conducted by the Human Services Policy Center at the University of Washington, showed that FFN care is the most common form of non-parental care for infants, toddlers and school-age children.⁸ Altogether, 480,000 children in Washington State receive some care from FFN providers each week.

⁷ *Licensed Child Care in Washington State: 2000*, Department of Social and Health Services, RDA Division, Olympia WA, January 2002

⁸ *Understanding Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care in Washington State: Developing Appropriate Training and Support*, Human Services Policy Center, University of Washington, February 2002

AVAILABILITY OF CHILD CARE: SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Percent of Children in Child Care in King County

To estimate how many children are in child care today, we turned to three separate studies of child care use. Taken together, these three studies shed light on the number of children in child care in King County as well as the types and amounts of non-parental care that are used, and parental satisfaction with child care.

- The National Center for Education Statistics conducted a National Household Education Survey (NHES) in 2001 that included questions about the use of non-parental care for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-aged children. The survey showed that 61 percent of infants, toddlers and preschoolers and about 51 percent of school-aged children in the United States are in child care on a regular basis.⁹
- The University of Washington survey, described in the previous section, showed that about 56% of preschool-aged children and 32% of school-aged children in Washington State are in child care for at least five hours a week.
- During the Public Health - Seattle and King County survey, respondents with school-aged children 6-12 were asked about their use of child care. A separate survey was also conducted specifically sampling families with children 0-5, with the respondent being the adult in the household most familiar with the child's care situation. The survey shows that 48 percent of preschool-aged children and 43 percent of school-aged children in King County are in regular child care.

Although these three studies have much in common, they each had a slightly different focus. Furthermore, the questions they asked about child care contained subtle, but important, differences. These differences appear to have influenced how parents responded and are one reason that the studies reported different conclusions about the use of child care.

⁹ 2001 *National Household Education Survey* as reported in ChildStats.gov

Table One Estimates of Primary Child Care Arrangements of Children			
	Communities Count	University of Washington	NHES
Date of survey	2002	2001	2001
Geographical area	King County	State of Washington	United States
Percent distribution of preschool-aged children according to type of primary arrangement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 52% parental care¹⁰ • 32% child care center or family home • 14% FFN¹¹ • 2% Other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 44% parental care¹² • 35% child care center or family home • 21% FFN 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 39% parental care • 61% regularly scheduled home-based or center-based child care
Percent distribution of school-aged children according to type of primary arrangement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 57% parental care • 18% center or family home • 19% FFN • 6% Other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 68% parental care • 15% center or family home • 17% FFN 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 49% of kindergarten-3rd grade and 48% of 4th - 8th grade in parental care • 51% of kindergarten-3rd grade and 52% of 4th grade – 8th grade in regular out-of-school care

Several factors stand out when comparing the three studies. First, the UW survey found that 72 percent of children aged 0-5 in Washington State had some amount of non-parental care. However, when the UW included only children who were in child care for five or more hours in the previous week, the proportion of children in child care dropped to 56 percent. The NHES survey showed that 61 percent of all children aged 0-5 in the nation use child care on a regular basis.

Second, compared with the other two studies, the Communities Count survey showed a lower percentage of children aged 0-5 in child care. There are several possible reasons for this.

- In the Communities Count survey, 13.5 percent of parents of children aged 0-5 whose children were not in child care said that they would like

¹⁰ This is the percentage of children not in regularly scheduled child care.

¹¹ Includes nannies and babysitters

¹² This is the percentage of children in “primary” child care for five or more hours per week. According to the UW study, the percentage of children who receive some form of non-parental care each week (including babysitting) is 72%

to use child care but were unable to obtain it, primarily for financial reasons. It may be that a higher percentage of parents in King County are unable to afford child care, or cannot obtain child care, than elsewhere in the state.

- Both the UW and the NHES surveys prompted parents with a list of types of non-parental care before asking about child care arrangements while the Communities Count survey asked parents of children 0-5 "do you use any kind of child care on a regularly scheduled basis". Only those who responded positively were then asked about the type of non-parental care they use. Some respondents to the Communities Count survey may not have considered non-parental care arrangements such as Head Start, Birth to Three Developmental Programs and FFN care to fall under the category of "child care".
- The three surveys were constructed differently and asked questions about child care in different ways. For example, the UW survey asked about "some amount of child care" and "five or more hours in the previous week", while the Communities Count survey asked about "regularly scheduled child care".
- The three surveys, all based on telephone interviews, may have reached slightly different types of respondents with respect to important demographic characteristics. Telephone surveys typically underrepresent persons of low-income, low education and non-English speakers. The NHES and UW surveys conducted oversamples to try to correct for this limitation, but the Communities Count survey did not, due to cost. Because parent's income, education and marital status are known to affect the amount and type of child care that is used by parents, King County's lower rates of child care use for children 0-5 may partly be due to these sampling differences. A detailed comparison of the representativeness of the sampling differences is beyond the scope of this report.

Third, the Communities Count survey showed that 43 percent of school-age children in King County use before or after school care. By comparison, the U.W. study found that 32 percent of children in Washington State use before or after school care and the NHES survey found that about 51 percent of school-aged children in the United States use before or after school care.

Factors Influencing the Use of Child Care

All three studies show that several factors influence whether a family will use child care, the type of child care which is preferred, and the amount of time that children spend in non-parental care.

- Preschoolers aged 3-5 are more likely to be in a child care center or family child care home while infants and toddlers aged 1-2 are more likely to be with an FFN provider.¹³
- Infants are less likely than older children to be in non-parental care. However, younger children who are in child care spend more hours per week in such arrangements than older children.¹⁴
- Children of all ages whose parents are married or cohabiting are significantly less likely to spend 25 hours a week or more in child care.¹⁵ Single heads of household use more of all types of care for 0-5 year-old children.¹⁶
- School-aged children from higher income households and whose parents are well educated are significantly less likely to spend 25 hours a week or more in before or after-school care.¹⁷
- Family income is associated with the type of primary non-parental care children receive. Compared with children from higher income families, the primary arrangements of children from low-income families are more likely to be Head Start programs, family child care, or FFN care.¹⁸ Higher income families are significantly more likely to use center-based care for their 0-5 year-olds.¹⁹
- Mothers with higher education are less likely to select FFN care as the primary care arrangement for school-aged children.²⁰

¹³ *Understanding Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care in Washington State*, page 37

¹⁴ *Characteristics of Children's Early Care and Education Programs*: Data from the 1995 National Household Education Survey, U.S Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, June 1998

¹⁵ *Communities Count survey*, Public Health – Seattle and King County

¹⁶ *Understanding Family, Friend and Neighbor Care in Washington State*

¹⁷ *Communities Count survey*, Public Health – Seattle and King County

¹⁸ *Characteristics of Children's Early Care and Education Programs*

¹⁹ *Understanding Family, Friend and Neighbor Care in Washington State*

²⁰ Ibid

Number of Children in Child Care in King County

The Communities Count survey provides estimates of the percent of preschool-aged children and school-aged children to age twelve in regularly scheduled child care in each region of the county.²¹ These percentages are displayed in Appendix One, along with the ranges which represent the 95% confidence interval. Using these percentages, we can estimate the approximate number of children in regularly scheduled child care in each region of King County. However given these sample percentages, we can only say with 95% confidence that the true population rate falls somewhere within the given range. Due to statistical chance the true rate might be higher or lower than the one used to calculate the estimates. Thus, the actual number of children in child care may be lower or higher than the estimates presented in Table Two. This is the reason we must use caution in interpreting the results from any survey.

Table Two Estimated Number of Children in Regularly Scheduled Child Care in King County					
	Seattle	N. King	E. King	S. King	All Regions
Number preschool-aged children (0-5)	28,609	8,334	27,398	51,260	115,601
Estimated percent in child care	59.4	44.4	49.2	41.2	47.8
Estimated # children 0-5 in child care	17,000	3,700	13,500	21,100	55,200
Number school-aged children (6-12)	36,334	14,283	40,718	74,846	166,181
Estimated percent in child care	52.8	46.4	39.5	40	43.2
Estimated # children (6-12) in child care	19,200	6,600	16,100	29,900	71,800
Estimated # children 0-12 in child care	36,100	10,300	29,600	51,000	127,000

Based on Communities Count data, there are approximately 55,200 children aged 0-5 in regular child care in King County. Of these preschool-aged children, an estimated 21,100 (38% of total) live in South King County, 17,000 (30% of total) live in Seattle, 13,500 (24% of total) live in East King County, and 3,700 (7% of total) live in North King County. There are also

²¹ Preschool aged children are aged 0-5 and school-aged children are aged 6-12. To account for kindergarten attendance, half of children aged five were subtracted from the population of preschool aged children and added to the population of school-aged children category for calculations. Percentages are weighted and are from the Communities Count survey. Population figures prepared by Epidemiology, Planning and Evaluation Unit, Public Health – Seattle and King County from U.S. Census 2000.

approximately 71,800 children aged 6-12 receiving regularly scheduled out-of-school care. Of these school-aged children, an estimated 29,900 live in South King County (42% of total), 19,200 live in Seattle (27% of total), 16,100 live in East King County (22% of total), and 6,600 live in North King County (9% of total).

In addition to those children who are in child care, the Communities Count survey showed that 13.5 percent of parents of preschool-aged children and 4.5 percent of parents of school-aged children would like to use child care but are unable to obtain it. The primary reason why parents cannot obtain child care is cost although child care availability at certain hours, scarcity of part-time care, and poor quality are also factors. This means that in King County parents of about 8,100 preschool-aged children and 4,200 school-aged children would like to use child care but are unable to get suitable care.

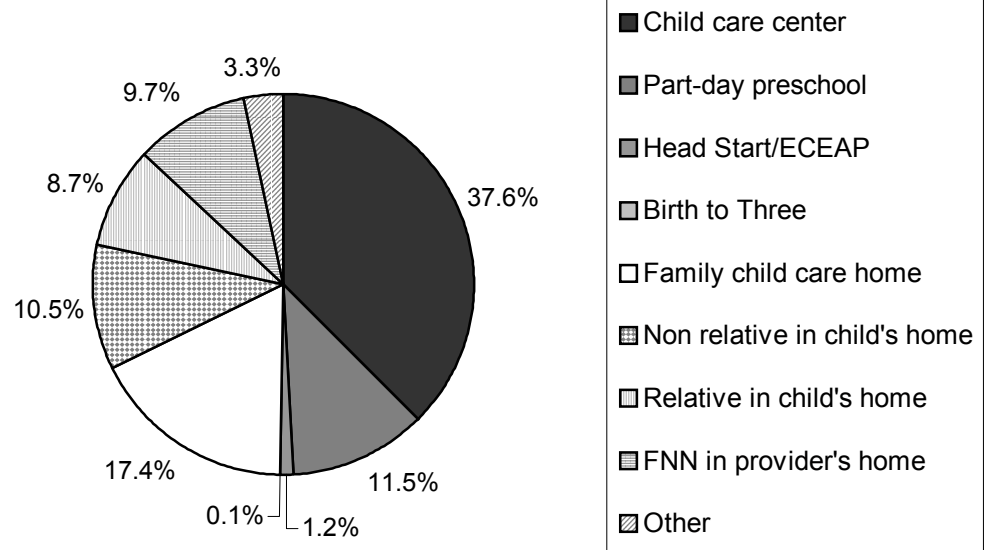
While some child care centers are struggling with enrollment, Child Care Resources data support the conclusion that there is a shortage of child care in some areas of the county, particularly for infants, children with special needs and children who need care during evening and weekend hours.

Types of Care Used by Families in King County

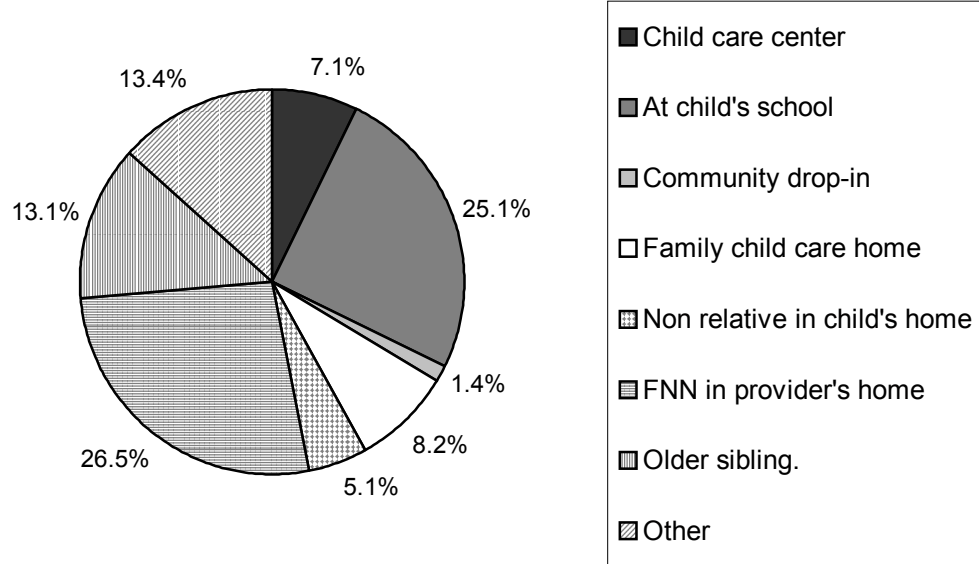
According to the Communities Count survey, two-thirds (67.8%) of preschool-aged children in child care in King County are in a child care center, family child care home, part-day preschool, Head Start/ECEAP, or birth to three developmental program. Less than one third (28.9%) are in family, friend or neighbor care or have a nanny or babysitter. (Note: the recent UW study reported a substantially higher use of FFN care; this may be due to differences in how the two studies were conducted).

Parents of school-aged children are more likely to use family, friend or neighbor care. Of those parents of school-aged children who use before or after school care in King County, more than one-third (44.7%) use FFN care, an older sibling, a nanny or a babysitter as the main type of child care. Two out of five (40.4%) use before/after school care at the child's school or a child care center or family child care home.

Communities Count Estimates of Primary Child Care Arrangements for Preschool-Aged Children in King County



Communities Count Estimates of Primary Child Care Arrangements for School-Aged Children in King County



Using these percentages, we can estimate the number of children in each type of child care in King County as well as the number of children in parental care only and the number whose parents would like to use child care if they

could obtain it. Again, we should remember that these estimates are based on the Communities County survey. The actual number of preschool-aged children in child care, particularly FNN care, may be higher or lower than the stated estimates.

Table Three			
Estimates of Number of Children Aged 0-12 By Type of Child Care in King County²²			
	Preschool (0-5)	School-Aged (6-12)	Total
Parental care only	60,400	94,400	154,800
Parental care by choice	52,300	90,200	142,500
Parental care - can't get child care	8,100	4,200	12,300
In Regularly Scheduled Child Care	55,200	71,800	127,000
Child care center	20,800	5,100	25,900
Other center-based program	7,100 ²³	19,000 ²⁴	26,100
Family child care home	9,600	5,900	15,500
Non-relative in child's home	5,800	3,700	9,500
Relative/older sibling	4,800	9,400	14,100
FFN care in provider's home	5,400	19,000	24,400
Other	1,800	9,600	11,400
Total children	115,600	166,200	281,800

Based on these estimates, of the 127,000 children in King County who are regularly in non parental care, about 67,500 are served primarily in a child care center, family child care home, or other center-based setting such as a Head Start program, preschool or before/after school program. These programs include licensed, legally exempt programs and most likely some illegal child care programs. About 48,000 have FFN care or a nanny or babysitter as their primary child care and 11,400 have another child care arrangement. In addition, parents of about 12,300 children aged 0-12 would like to use child care but cannot find suitable care at a price they can afford.

Licensed Child Care

In 2000, 50,550 of the children in regular child care in King County were served in centers, family homes, or before/after school programs that were

²² Numbers may not add due to rounding

²³ Includes Birth to Three developmental programs, Head Start, ECEAP, and part-day preschools

²⁴ Includes before and after-school programs at the child's school and community-based drop-in programs

licensed by the State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). Two-thirds (32,730) of the children in licensed centers and family homes were preschool-aged and one-third (17,830) were school-aged.

This means that about 76,800, or three out of five children in child care, are served in unlicensed settings. These could be illegal child care businesses as well as legally license-exempt programs such as Head Start or school based programs, or FFN providers who are legally allowed to provide care. We estimate that approximately 22,600 preschool-aged children and 54,200 school-aged children are regularly in unlicensed care.

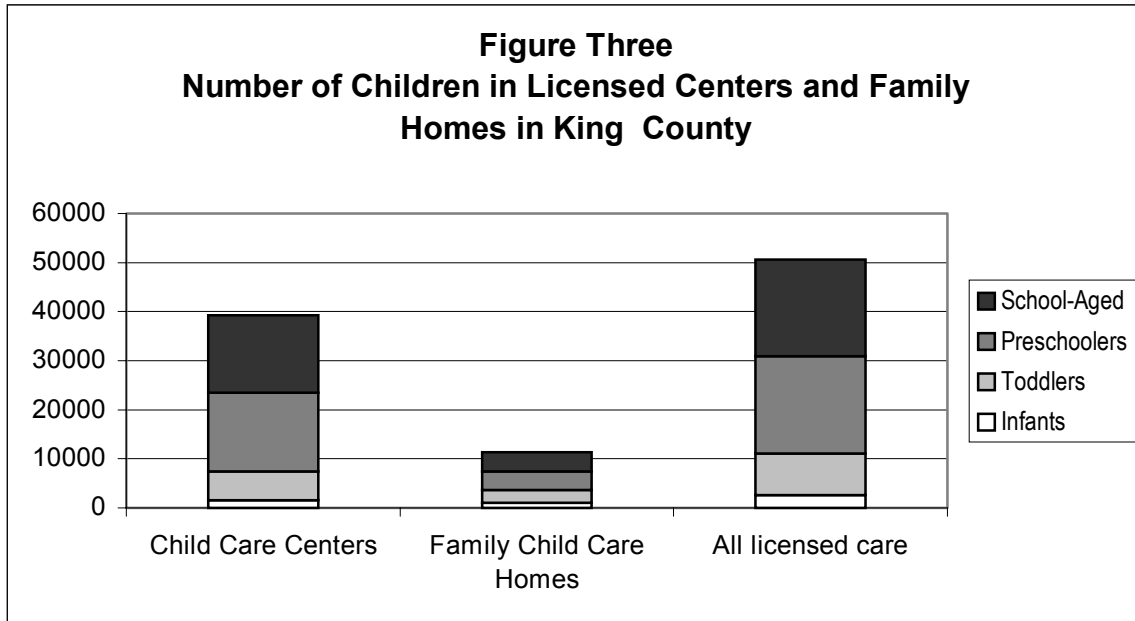
Department of Social and Health Services data show that the number of children in licensed care has grown substantially over the past five years.²⁵ However, the proportion of children in family child care homes has dropped while the proportion in child care centers has grown. For five years from 1996 to 2000 the number of family child care homes in King County steadily declined as more homes closed than opened.

Last year however, saw a dramatic reversal of this trend. In 2001 400 new homes opened while only 281 closed.²⁶ This may, in part, be due to recruitment and retention efforts provided by CCR and community partners that have been funded by the State. The downturn in the regional economy has also played a role as potential child care providers now have fewer employment options than two years ago. In spite of the increase in family child care homes last year, only one-quarter of children in licensed care are served in family homes; almost three-quarters are served in child care centers.

The proportion of children in child care centers increases with the age of the child. Older children in particular are most likely to be served in center based programs. Only one in five school-aged children are served in a family home. By contrast two out of five infants are served in a family home.

²⁵ *Licensed Child Care in Washington State: 2000*, Washington Department of Social and Health Services, Research and Data Analysis Division, Olympia, Washington, January 2002

²⁶ Child Care Resources database.



Vacancy rates in licensed centers and family homes throughout the state have dropped over the past five years indicating a tight child care market. This is particularly true in King County which has a vacancy rate of only 10.5 percent compared with 12.6 percent in the rest of the state.²⁷ Center-based child care for infants is especially hard to come by as only a small proportion of licensed centers report any vacancies for infants. At the same time, there is more demand for infant care because of changes in TANF regulations requiring mother of young children to work.

Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care

The University of Washington study has shown the important role of family, friends and neighbors in providing child care. According to the study, 19 percent of children in the state are in FNN care for five or more hours a week and a large number of children spend sufficient time with FNN caregivers that the quality of care can affect their development. However FNN providers have, on average, less education than the general adult population and most report that they have no specific training in child care, child development, or parenting skills. A majority of FNN caregivers report problems in providing care and two-thirds say that they would like some training or support.²⁸

²⁷ *Licensed Child Care in Washington State*, page 16

²⁸ *Understanding Family, Friend and Neighbor Care in Washington State*

Parental Satisfaction with Child Care

In the Communities Count survey, parents were asked several open-ended questions about their child care choices.

Fourteen percent of parents of preschool-aged children and five percent of parents of school-aged children reported that they were unable to obtain the child care that they need. Reasons reported by parents were:

- Cost. Parents reported that they could not afford child care.
- Scheduling difficulties including lack of child care during evening or early morning hours.
- Lack of suitable child care in the area.
- Scarcity of part-time care.
- Lack of child care for children with special needs.
- Poor quality of child care available in the local area.

Parents who were using child care were asked if they had obtained their first choice, or if they had to compromise. Seventeen percent of parents of preschool-aged children and nine percent of parents of school-aged children said that they had to compromise in their choice of care. Reasons reported by parents included:

- Cost. Parents could not afford their first choice of care.
- A substantial number of parents reported that they would prefer to be at home with their child but need to use child care while they work.
- The preferred child care provider got another job, returned to school, or went out of business.
- Some parents had to accept lower quality care or different hours or a less convenient location than they wanted.

Almost half (49%) of parents of preschool-aged children and one-third (33%) of parents of school-aged children implied dissatisfaction with at least one aspect of their child care. These parents were asked which single thing they would most like to change about their child care.

- Cost was the major cause for dissatisfaction among parents of preschool-aged children.
- For parents of school-aged children the highest number of responses about what they would change was not cost, but rather that they would rather not use child care at all - they would prefer to be home with their child after school.
- Other causes of dissatisfaction included overall program quality, hours and scheduling, activities and curricula, staff competence and training, and staff/child ratio.

Parents of preschool-aged children were more likely to be dissatisfied with their child care arrangements than parents of school-aged children. Socio-economic factors also can affect parent satisfaction with child care. In the survey:

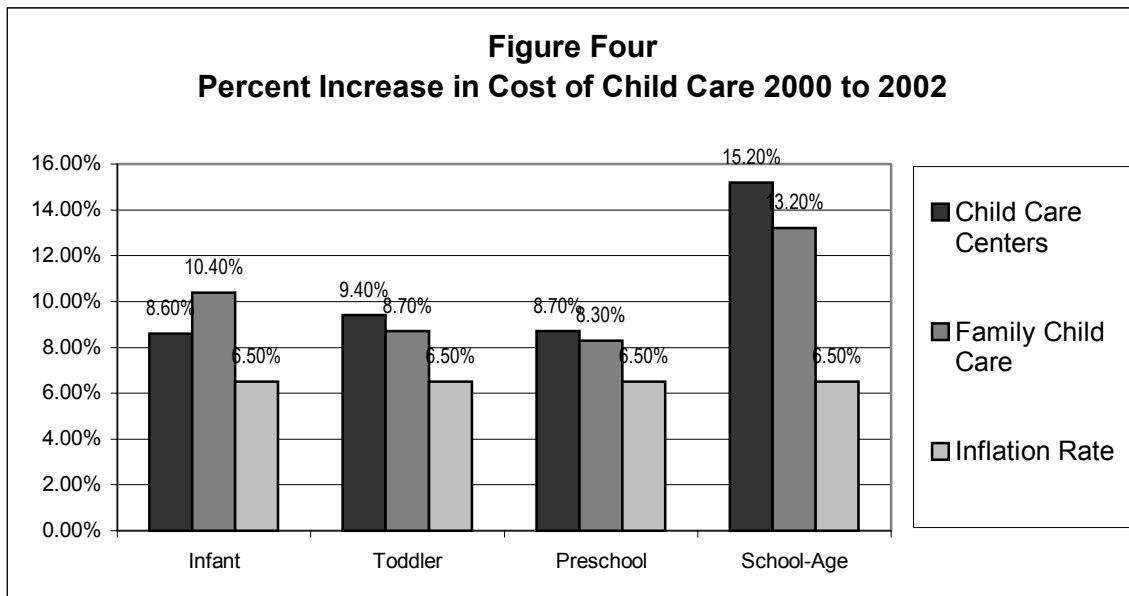
- Highly educated parents of preschool-aged children were more likely to be dissatisfied with their child care arrangements than less educated parents.
- Parents of preschool-aged children whose native language is not English were more likely to report being satisfied with their child care arrangements than native English speakers.
- More highly educated parents were less likely to have to compromise in their choice of type of child care than parents with less education.
- Higher income parents of school-age children were less likely to have to compromise in their choice of type of child care than parents with lower incomes.

AFFORDABILITY OF CHILD CARE IN KING COUNTY

Cost of Child Care in King County

Child care is taking an increasing bite out of the household budget of working families. Over the past decade, the cost of child care has risen much faster than inflation. From 1990 to 2000 the inflation-adjusted price of care increased 31 percent in centers and 28 percent in homes.²⁹

Child Care Resources data show that increases in child care rates in King County have continued to outstrip increases in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) in the area during the past two years. Between May 2000 and May 2002, child care rate increases in King County averaged between 8.8 percent for infant care in child care centers and 15.2 percent for school-age care in child care centers. At the same time, the CPI for the region rose by 6.5 percent.³⁰

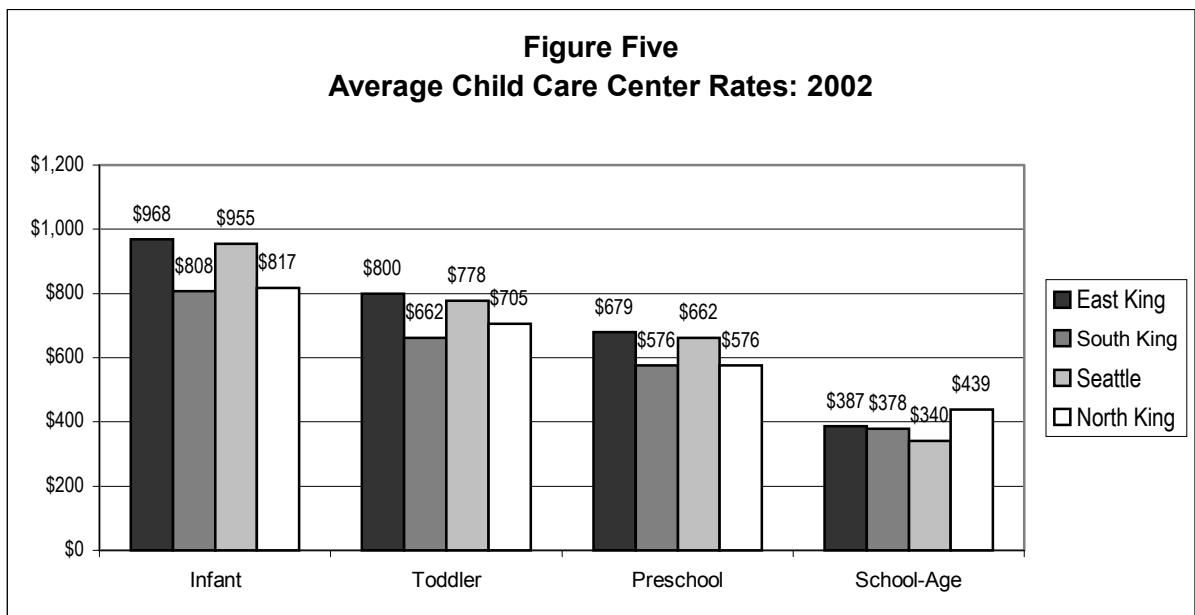


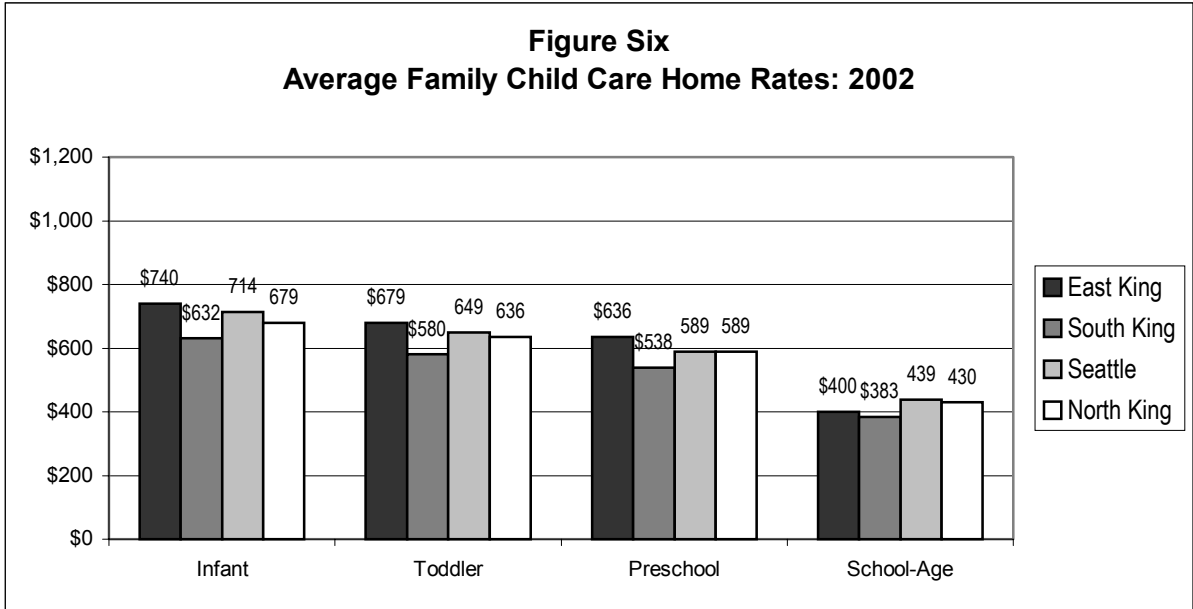
Child Care rates vary according to the age of the child, the type of provider, and the geographic area of King County. Because younger children require closer supervision, rates drop with the increasing age of the child. Child Care Resources data show that:

²⁹ *Licensed Child Care in Washington State: 2000*

³⁰ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

- Currently, average child care rates in King County range from a low of \$340 a month for school-age care in Seattle child care centers to a high of \$968 a month for infant care in centers in East King County.
- Infant care is the most expensive with rates averaging from \$632 a month in South King County FCC homes to \$968 a month in East King County centers.
- School-age care is the least expensive with rates averaging from \$340 a month in child care centers in Seattle to \$439 a month in FCC homes in Seattle.
- Family Child Care homes tend to be less expensive than child care centers for infant and toddler care, but more expensive for school-age care.
- East King County is the highest priced area, followed closely by Seattle. South King County is the most affordable area. On average, infant care in East King County costs 20 percent more than in South King County, care for toddlers costs 21 percent more, and pre-school care costs 17 percent more than in South King County.





As might be expected, King County has by far the highest child care rates in the state. There are several reasons for this. King County has the highest median household incomes in the state as well as the highest cost of living. Child care employee wages are higher and child care centers in King County are more likely to provide employee benefits including health insurance.³¹

Subsidized Care for Low-Income Families

Although higher child care rates allow centers to pay higher salaries and provide better quality child care, the cost to parents can be prohibitive. Fortunately, more families now have access to government subsidies for child care.

Since welfare reform, Washington State has broadened eligibility for subsidized child care. As a result, the number of families receiving State subsidies has risen dramatically, as has the proportion of children whose child care is subsidized by the State. From 1996 to 2000, the number of children in Washington receiving State-subsidized care rose by 65 percent.³² In 2000 approximately one in five children in child care in King County were subsidized by the State (18 percent of children in family homes and 23 percent of children in centers).

³¹ *Licensed Child Care in Washington State*

³² *Ibid*

Two-thirds (65 percent) of subsidized children were cared for in licensed settings, either a child care center or family home. One-third were cared for in unregulated care, either in the child's home or the home of a relative.

State subsidies, while making child care affordable for low-income families, do not assure equal access to high quality care. The amount that the State will pay for subsidies is falling farther and farther behind market rates. DSHS maximum subsidy rates in the spring of 2000 were based on the 71st percentile of a rate survey that was conducted in 1998. But inflation in child care prices since the 1998 survey had effectively reduced the percentile of the market that DSHS bought to approximately the 50th percentile by the time of the 2000 survey.³³ Because the purchasing power of State subsidies is very limited, parents are forced to choose between providers that are at the low end of the rate scale, or those that are willing to accept reimbursement that is below their standard rate.

King County has a higher than average percentage of centers and family homes that either refuse to accept DSHS-subsidized children or limit enrollment of subsidized children.³⁴ Eight percent of centers and ten percent of family homes in King County refuse to accept any DSHS-subsidized children and another 15 percent of centers limit enrollment of DSHS-subsidized children.

Unfortunately, low State subsidies often have a negative effect on quality. As noted in a recent report by Washington State Child Care Resource and Referral Network, the net result of low State subsidies is that "the system perpetuates the practice of caregivers subsidizing the system through depressed wages and/or lower quality services. We believe the true cost of quality care is shifted under these circumstances to low compensation for workers and to reductions in other expenditures that would enhance quality."³⁵

³³ *Licensed Child Care in Washington State*, page xvi

³⁴ *Licensed Child Care in Washington State*, page 72

³⁵ *The Washington State Child Care Experience Since 1996: Implications for Federal and State Policy*

QUALITY OF CARE

High Attrition Rates Adversely Affect Quality of Care

Trained and experienced child care teachers are the key ingredient in providing consistent high quality care that promotes children's development. Researchers have consistently found that well-trained, and well-compensated teachers are more likely to offer care that is stimulating, supportive, and age-appropriate.

The University of California at Berkeley has just released results of the first longitudinal study based on observations of quality in the same child care centers at three points in time - 1994, 1996, and 2000.³⁶ The study confirms previous concerns about the instability of the child care workforce and its impact on the quality of center-based child care available to young children.

- Seventy-five percent of all teaching staff employed in the centers in 1996 were no longer on the job when the centers were revisited in 2000.
- Teaching staff who left the programs were no less educated than those who remained but earned significantly lower wages.
- Only half of the teaching staff and administrators who left their positions remained in the child care field.
- Those working in non-child care-related jobs earned an average of \$8,000 a year more than those who accepted new child care jobs.
- New teaching staff were significantly less well-educated than those they replaced. Nearly half of those who left had completed a bachelor's degree, compared to only one-third of new teachers.
- The presence of a greater proportion of highly trained teaching staff in 2000 was the strongest predictor of whether a center sustained quality improvements over the four-year study period. Wages were also a significant predictor. Only those programs that paid higher than average wages were able to attract highly skilled staff and sustain quality over time.

³⁶ *Then and Now: Changes in Child Care Staffing: 1994-2000*, University of California, Berkeley, April 2002

Marcy, Whitebook, PhD, the study's director, notes that "The question of who will teach our children is as pressing at the preschool level, if not more so, than for older grades. Without a skilled and stable work force, efforts to provide growth-enhancing experiences for children are severely constrained. Compensation for those who care for young children must be increased dramatically and quickly".

Unfortunately in King County, as elsewhere in the nation, child care employees continue to be among the lowest paid workers. In King County in 2000, child care aides averaged only \$7.91 an hour, teachers \$9.45 an hour, and supervisors \$11.59 an hour.³⁷

On the whole, attrition is directly related to wages, with the highest attrition rates among those who earn the least. DSHS, using 1998-99 Employment Security Department data, has shown that attrition among all child care workers is 53 percent. Among child care workers earning only \$7.00 an hour, annual attrition is over 60 percent. Once wages reach \$13, the attrition rate levels off at about 30 percent.³⁸ DSHS has analyzed attrition rates among teachers in kindergarten through grade 12. Like child care, attrition among public school staff is very high at the lowest wages. As wages increase attrition rates decline. Above \$17 an hour, attrition remains between 10 and 12 percent.

Initiatives to Promote Quality Child Care

The basic conundrum is that child care continues to cost more than many families can afford but not enough to pay the higher salaries that lead to high quality care. To address this dilemma and improve the quality of child care, a number of inter-related initiatives are underway in King County. Chief among them:

1. **Project Lift-Off's Northwest Finance Circle** aims to revolutionize the system of financing early learning and out-of-school time programs by linking increased public and private investments in child care to improved quality. Several pilot projects are already underway.
 - Seven agencies are collaborating on an "opening doors to child care" pilot project to provide common access to child care subsidies for low-income families.

³⁷ *Licensed Child Care in Washington State*, page 39

³⁸ *Licensed Child Care in Washington State*, pp 46-47

- The “True Cost of Quality Care” project is analyzing the actual cost of providing high quality early care learning and out-of-school-time programs that meet all national accreditation standards.
 - The STEPS (Strategies To Expand Program Success) project is providing financial incentives and rewards to encourage child care and out-of-school-time providers to reach higher levels of quality.
 - The Mapping Funding Project is analyzing current and potential funding streams for high quality care.
2. **The Project Lift-Off Opportunity Fund** is a partnership of public and private funders that makes strategic investments in early learning and out-of-school-time programs by funding local community organizations working toward Project Lift-Off goals. The grants support a range of high-quality programming such as child care for homeless infants, out-of-school arts programs for elementary to high school youth, neighborhood-based tutoring for children, and children's literacy curricula for families to use. Recently, through a pooled fund, the Opportunity Fund contributed \$300,000 towards projects that seek to provide resources to FFN providers.
3. **Strengthening Early Learning in King County Communities** is designed to increase early learning opportunities for young children. The project is funded initially by a 17-month, \$945,462 grant from the Child Care Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, along with more than \$150,000 in local support. More than 30 Seattle and King County organizations and government agencies are collaborating in the project or have signed on as supporters. Spearheading the effort are Project Lift-Off and the Foundation for Early Learning, which is the fiscal agent. Public Health Seattle/King County will conduct the overall program evaluation. Pacific Oaks College Northwest and Talaris Research Institute will provide guidance on cultural relevancy, language acquisition, early literacy and brain development. The project involves four strategies.
- *Early Learning Access* is coordinated by Child Care Resources and will link early learning programs in new ways so that families can find high-quality opportunities for their children, no matter which agency or organization they approach first. It will also inventory programs

and training resources available in each region within King County, and develop methods for sharing new research and best practices.

- *School Readiness* is coordinated by Puget Sound Educational Service District and will engage parents, child care providers and kindergarten teachers countywide around guidelines for school readiness. The aims are to help children make successful transitions between home and child care and school so as to build a foundation for success in school and in life. In March 2002, the project held a successful School Readiness Summit to build consensus about what school readiness means and how we can help prepare children for success in school and later life. By early 2003 a kit of school readiness tools and resources will be ready for parents, caregivers and teachers to use.
 - *Family, Friends and Neighbors Child Care Enhancement* is coordinated by Child Care Resources and will work with caregivers in four underserved, ethnic or immigrant communities: Latino caregivers in North and East King County, Somali caregivers in South King County, and Southeast Asian caregivers in Seattle, or other populations identified in consultation with representatives of these areas. The activities will include informal training on child development and safety, connections with local resources, leadership development, and creation of a parent/caregiver resource guide.
 - *Family/Community Linkage* is coordinated by Children's Home Society and has two elements. "Parent Mentor/Parent Friend" will train volunteers to give parents information about children's early development and activities they can do with their children. "Family Circles" will work with ethnic and immigrant communities in the Kent area to connect them with local resources and help them engage their communities in promoting culturally appropriate early learning and successful transitions into school.
4. **The Washington State Early Childhood Career and Wage Ladder** is a \$4 million pilot project, started in July 2000, that links increased worker compensation to education and on-the-job experience. Teacher wages are increased by 50 cents an hour for each education level

achieved - from the first 20 hours of basic training all the way up in increments to a master's degree. Pay is also increased 25 cents for each year of experience and 50 cents for each level of responsibility. About 125 centers, representing about seven percent of licensed child care facilities in the state, are participating in the pilot project. Early results show that the program has done exactly what it intended. In the first ten months, average pay at participating centers rose eight percent higher than in a control group of child care centers. Turnover at the participating centers dropped from 50 percent a year to less than ten percent.

5. **The Washington State Training and Registry System (STARS)** requires 20 hours of initial in-service training and 10 hours of annual in-service training for lead caregivers and administrators. The system is administered by the Washington Association for the Education of Young Children (WAEYC). Largely as a result of STARS, the proportion of family home providers in the state who have formal training in early education or child development increased from 56 percent in 1994 to 82 percent in 2000.³⁹
6. **T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Washington** is an innovative scholarship program which supports licensed child care providers to further their education. The T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) program provides tuition and stipends to early childhood and out-of-school-time providers to enable them to work toward a Child Development Associate (CDA) two-year certificate or an associate's degree in Early Childhood Education. T.E.A.C.H. was developed in North Carolina where it has been very successful in increasing the number of highly qualified child care workers who stay in the field. In Washington, T.E.A.C.H. is operated by the Child Care Resource and Referral Network with funding from the Foundation for Early Learning, City of Seattle, King County, State of Washington, and the Paul Allen Foundation.
7. **Employer Champions for Children, an employer led initiative**, aims to increase the number of high-quality, accredited child care programs. The current funders include The Boeing Company, the City of Seattle and King County with in-kind support from the Greater Seattle

³⁹ *Licensed Child Care in Washington State: 2000*

Chamber of Commerce. In addition, the project aims to educate employees to recognize and find high quality child care, enhance the leadership and management skills of child care directors, and improve providers' access to affordable medical and dental benefits. Child Care Resources manages the accreditation portion of the project through which fourteen local child care providers are in the process of obtaining accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). One additional center was awarded accreditation in March, 2002.

8. **Better Outcomes for Out-of-School Time (BOOST) Learning** is a three-year collaborative effort to connect the learning that happens after school and when school is in session. Funded by a \$650,000 grant from the Stuart Foundation, BOOST Learning will focus on South Seattle and the north Highline area, including White Center, Burien and SeaTac. These are communities with significant numbers of children from low-income families and children of color. The project, which is coordinated by School's Out Washington, will promote community engagement, family access to out-of-school time learning; provider training and support, community education, policy development, and development of the out-of-school time field.
9. **Community Learning Centers** in Seattle elementary and middle schools offer a rich array of out-of-school-time programs for students and their families, serving as community hubs for life-long learning. The first five Community Learning Centers began operating in September 2000 with funding from the U.S. Department of Education. The following year the Seattle Public Schools received funding from the City of Seattle to open five additional Community Learning Centers. Key to the program's success are partnerships between the schools and a wide array of community organizations that provide before and after-school programs for children and their families.
10. **The Learning Partners Action Team**, comprising Project Lift-Off, Seattle Public Schools, and out-of-school time providers, is breaking new ground in aligning standards for out-of-school activities with school-based learning. In return for providing rent-free leases, the Seattle Public Schools now requires community providers to

demonstrate their program's alignment with learning standards and acquisition of developmental assets.

Results of Quality Initiatives

It is still too early to fully measure the impact of many of the quality initiatives described above. Individual evaluations will provide definitive information about project outcomes over the next one to three years. The *Strengthening Early Learning in King County Communities* project will be evaluated by Public Health - Seattle and King County as part of the ELOA grant. Similarly, the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory is evaluating the *Community Learning Centers* as part of the federal Department of Education grant.

In the meantime, there are some very encouraging signs that quality initiatives are beginning to have their desired effect. Of particular note:

- *Increases in the number of accredited child care centers.* Over the past three years, the number of child care centers in King County that have achieved national accreditation has increased by one-third - from 42 centers to 55 centers. The total number of child care slots in those centers increased by 40 percent - from 3,480 slots to 4,887 slots.
- *Real increases in staff wages.* DSHS data show that average real wages for child care workers in the state - wages adjusted to account for changes in the consumer price index - were stagnant between 1992 and 1998. Since then they have risen faster than inflation. Between 1998 and 2000, average inflation adjusted wages in the state increased from \$6.70 to \$7.33 for aides, from \$8.17 to \$8.66 for teachers, and from \$10.02 to \$10.66 for supervisors.⁴⁰
- *Improvements in Employee benefits.* In King County 91 percent of child care centers now offer some kind of employee benefit package. Eighty-two percent offer paid sick leave, 83 percent offer paid vacation, and 75 percent offer medical insurance. This is a much higher percentage than elsewhere in the state.⁴¹
- *Higher incomes for Family Home Providers.* The income of family home providers increased dramatically from 1996 to 2000 - by an average of

⁴⁰ Licensed Child Care in Washington State, page 41

⁴¹ Licensed Child Care in Washington State, page 43

six percent a year (in inflation-adjusted dollars). This amounts to a real increase of 27 percent over the four-year period. However, even after these increases, the average gross income of family home providers in the state was still only \$23,885.

- *More trained staff.* In King County 83% of family home providers and 77% of center employees met STARS requirements in 2000.⁴² Many of the providers who had not met STARS requirements were new and had still to complete their in-service training.
- *Reduced turnover rates.* It is too early yet to measure the overall effect of the quality initiatives on staff turnover in child care centers in King County . However, early results of the Washington State Wage and Career Ladder are dramatic. Increases in staff wages that are tied to training and experience have enormous benefits for reducing turnover and improving staff morale.

In recent years we have come a long way in demonstrating what it takes to provide high quality, affordable and accessible child care. As noted in *The Washington State Child Care Experience Since 1996, Implications for Federal and State Policy*, "Washington's quality initiatives are widely viewed as very successful, innovative and encouraging signs of the ability to make progress on difficult and challenging issues within the child care system."

However, to ensure that all children in King County have access to stimulating, supportive, and age-appropriate care that meets their needs, we must continue to make strategic investments in early care and education. All of the quality initiative described above need sustained and stable funding. Unfortunately, the economic climate and State funding cuts are seriously jeopardizing the long-term survival of these innovative programs.

⁴² *Licensed Child Care in Washington State*, page 48

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to extend a special thanks to Kathryn Horsley and Ann Glusker, of Public Health - Seattle and King County. They helped interpret the data from the *Communities Count* survey, generously reviewed drafts of this report and made invaluable comments. Their help and support were invaluable and are greatly appreciated.

APPENDIX ONE

CHILD CARE PERCENTAGES BY REGION, COMMUNITIES COUNT SURVEY, 2002

<i>Child Care for Children Age 0 – 5, without kindergarteners (with 95% confidence interval)</i>			
<i>Region:</i>	Percent with Child Care	Lower bound	Upper bound
East King County	49.2	40.7	57.8
South King County	41.2	33.1	49.9
Seattle	59.4	50.8	67.4
North King County	44.4	35.5	53.6
Total	47.8	43	52.6

<i>Child Care for Children Age 6 – 12 , with kindergarteners (with 95% confidence interval)</i>			
<i>Region:</i>	Percent with School-Aged Care	Lower bound	Upper bound
East King County	39.5	32.4	47.2
South King County	40	32.9	47.6
Seattle	52.8	41.3	64
North King County	46.4	37.8	55.2
Total	43.2	38.7	47.9

Data Source: Communities Count Data, 2002

Prepared by: Epidemiology, Planning and Evaluation Unit, Public Health – Seattle and King County, 7/02