



# Child care for children with special needs

*Fundamental facts from the Minnesota child care survey*

***Parents of children with special needs have fewer child care options and more work conflicts.***

**One in seven Minnesota children has a special need that affects their child care, as reported by their parents.**

- Needs requiring extra attention include health care needs, physical or developmental disabilities, emotional or behavioral problems, or learning disabilities.
- 7% of children have more than one of these special needs.

**These parents use child care in very similar ways compared to other parents. However, their social and economic options are more limited. For example:**

- 44% have incomes below 200% of federal poverty guidelines, compared with 27% of all other parents.
- 16% are parents of color, compared with 8% of all other parents.
- 34% report that they “had to take whatever child care arrangement they could get,” compared with 20% of all other parents.
- 44% have no relatives, friends, or neighbors available to help with child care on a regular basis, compared with 35% of all other parents.
- 27% have no spouse, partner, or other person who shares parenting responsibilities, compared with 19% of all other parents.

**Parents of children with special needs have more trouble balancing child care and work.**

- Child care problems interfered with accepting or keeping a job in the past year (16% vs. 9% of other parents).
- They lost work time in the last six months due to child care problems other than a sick child (31% vs. 21% of other parents).

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## **Parents of children with special needs have different priorities in choosing child care.**

They more commonly say it is “very important” to have:

- Reasonable cost (76% vs. 66% of other parents).
- A caregiver who is a relative or family member (41% vs. 32%).
- A caregiver who has special training in taking care of children (76% vs. 70% of other parents).
- A place close to home (69% vs. 64% of other parents).
- Availability of care for children when they are sick (65% vs. 60% of other parents).

In addition, they know about and use formal child care referral services more often than other parents.

## **One in five parents of children with special needs say their child's caregiver finds their child's needs too demanding (compared to about one in eight of other parents).**

- They are also more likely to say the caregiver needs more help with the children (28% vs. 15% of other parents).
- In other respects, their satisfaction with child care is very similar to that of other parents.

These results come from a survey of 2,450 parents throughout Minnesota, sponsored by the Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning and conducted by Wilder Research Center. “Child care” in this survey includes anything other than the direct care of a parent or the regular K-12 school day. The survey covers the arrangements for the youngest child in each family (infants through age 14). The survey was conducted from June 1999 through March 2000, so it includes both summer and school-year patterns of care. Any difference between groups that is mentioned here has been tested and found to be statistically significant, unless specifically noted otherwise. The overall margin of error is about plus or minus 2 percentage points.

Other fact sheets in this series, as well as the full research report *Child care use in Minnesota*, are available for free download at [www.wilder.org/research](http://www.wilder.org/research). Printed copies of the research report can be purchased from Minnesota's Bookstore, 800-657-3757, [www.commedia.state.mn.us/bookstore](http://www.commedia.state.mn.us/bookstore).

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