



Children and working parents

Fundamental facts from the
2004 Minnesota child care survey



Most parents who use child care report no problems that interfere with work.

- Child care problems have not kept most parents (80 percent) from taking or keeping a job in the past.
- 63 percent have not lost time or income in the past six months because of child care problems.

Some families lose work time or income because of child care problems.

- More than one in three (37 percent) families (with low incomes and high incomes alike) say they lost work time or income in the past six months because of a problem with a child care arrangement (not including when a child is sick).
- Parents using licensed family child care and center-based care most commonly lose work time due to scheduled closings (27 percent).
- Parents using informal arrangements (FFN) most commonly lose work time due to illness of the caregiver (17 percent).

Child care problems reduce participation in the workforce for some parents.

- 20 percent of parents say that child care problems in the past year kept them from taking or keeping a job.
- Child care problems that interfere with employment more commonly affect parents of color (35 percent), parents who have a child with a special need (34 percent), parents with low incomes (36 percent) and parents who receive child care subsidies (38 percent) than other parents by about 2 to 1.

Family schedules commonly require child care before and after standard work hours (7 a.m. to 6 p.m.) and on weekends.

- 48 percent of children are regularly in nonparental care during weekday evenings (6 p.m. to 10 p.m.) and on weekends 44 percent are regularly in nonparental care.
- 27 percent of working parents have work schedules that vary from week to week, up from 23 percent in 1999.
- Family, friend and neighbor (FFN) care is the most common type of nonstandard hour care.

continued

Child care problems reduce productivity and income of many working parents with low incomes.

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Cost of child care

Fundamental facts from the
2004 Minnesota child care survey



Seventy percent of families pay for child care.

- 70 percent of families with children age 12 or younger pay at least some out-of-pocket costs for child care during a typical week, up from 59 percent in 1999.
- The average weekly out-of-pocket cost for these families, for all their children, is \$111, or \$5,781 yearly.
- The average weekly cost of all child care per household is higher in the metro area than in Greater Minnesota (\$127 versus \$90).
- Over half (53 percent) of families with incomes below \$20,000 per year do not pay for child care.

Child care costs go down as the age of the child goes up.

The average weekly costs go down as the age of the child goes up:

- Age 2 and younger—\$110 per week, about \$5,700 per year.
- Ages 3 to 5—\$95 per week, about \$4,900 per year.
- Ages 6 to 9—\$68 per week, about \$3,600 per year.
- Ages 10 to 12—\$64 per week, about \$3,300 per year.
- For perspective, state college tuition is about \$3,400 per year, and state university tuition is about \$4,500 per year.

For those who pay for child care, child care expenses take a bigger share of gross income for families with low incomes.

By annual household income:

- Under \$20,000—28 percent of income goes for child care expenses.
- \$20,000 to under \$45,000—15 percent of income goes for child care expenses.
- \$45,000 to under \$75,000—8 percent of income goes for child care expenses.
- \$75,000 or more—7 percent of income goes for child care expenses.
- 10 percent of gross income going for child care expenses is considered affordable.

Reasonable cost is a “very important” factor in choosing child care.

- When considering the role of cost in choosing child care, almost all parents say that reasonable cost is “very important” (67 percent) or “somewhat important” (30 percent). Less than 4 percent say cost is “not important” in choosing child care.

continued

Out-of-pocket child care expenses take a bigger share of gross income for families with low incomes, although about half do not pay for child care.

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Stability of child care

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Two out of three children have two or more regular child care arrangements per week during the school year.

- 28 percent of children have three or more arrangements weekly during the school year.
- Children under age 3 and children age 6 to 9 are more likely to have three or more arrangements per week during the school year than during the summer.
- The percentage of children age 3 to 5 and children age 10 to 12 with three or more arrangements is about the same all year round (about 30 percent).

Most children are in child care part time.

- On average, children spend nearly 24 hours per week in child care (28 hours in summer and 22 hours during the school year).
- 28 percent of children are in child care full time (35 or more hours per week).
- Both during the summer and school year, on average, children are in licensed family child care and center-based care more hours than any other type of care.

On average, children have two different child care arrangements per week throughout the year.

Most children have not changed arrangements in the past year.

- 74 percent of children have not changed child care in the past 12 months.
- Only 7 percent have changed arrangements more than once in the past year.
- Changing child care arrangements in the past 12 months is not related to income level or use of child care assistance.
- Most commonly, changes are planned by parents who are using seasonal supervised activities as child care or temporarily using family, friend and neighbor (FFN) care.
- Closures, and providers who stop providing care, account for 12 percent of the changes overall and about a third of the changes among those using licensed family child care.

Some families lose work time or income because of child care problems.

- More than one in three (37 percent) families say they lost work time or income in the past six months because of a problem with a child care arrangement (not including when a child is sick).
- Parents using licensed family child care and center-based care most commonly lose work time due to scheduled closings (27 percent).
- Parents using informal arrangements (FFN) most commonly lose work time due to illness of the caregiver (17 percent).

continued

Most family, friend and neighbor caregivers provide reliable child care.

- 60 percent of FFN caregivers report missing no days and 28 percent were unable to provide care for one or two days in the three months prior to the survey.
- Two-thirds of FFN caregivers saw the child they care for at least a few times a week before they started providing child care.
- About three-quarters of relatives and half of nonrelatives have provided care to the same child for more than a year.

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Children in self care

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More children age 10 to 12 are in self care throughout the year than five years ago.

- 41 percent are in self care during the school year (as one of the types regularly used), up from 26 percent five years ago.
- 42 percent are in self care during the summer (as one of the types regularly used), up from 20 percent five years ago.
- On average, they care for themselves about 4.5 hours per week during the school year and 10 hours per week during the summer, primarily before and after school or on weekends.
- Children age 10 to 12 from households with higher incomes are more likely to be in self care (45 percent, compared with 31 percent for households with low incomes).

Few Minnesota children younger than age 10 are in self care.

- 16 percent of children age 6 to 9 care for themselves during the school year, typically for 2.5 hours per week.
- 2 percent of children age 2 or younger and 3 percent of children age 3 to 5 are cared for by siblings age 12 or younger on a regular basis.

Parents use self care as their primary arrangement for 10-12-year-olds due to cost and lack of choice.

- For about 15 percent of children age 10 to 12, self care is the primary arrangement.
- 44 percent of these children's parents say they chose self care as the primary arrangement due to cost.
- 42 percent say they felt they had to take whatever child care arrangement they could get, compared with 31 percent using licensed care and 30 percent using family, friend and neighbor care.

Most Minnesota parents feel children must be age 12 or older to be safely left on their own in their neighborhood on a regular basis.

- 28 percent feel that children under age 12 can be safely left alone on a regular basis.
- 38 percent consider children age 12 old enough to be in self care regularly.
- 34 percent feel that children must be older than age 12 to be safely left on their own.
- 41 percent of children age 12 and younger staying alone or watching their younger siblings have had babysitting or home safety training, such as that offered by the Red Cross or community education

continued

More preteens are regularly on their own than five years ago.

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Child care for children with special needs

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More than one in six Minnesota children age 12 and younger has a special need that affects their child care, as reported by their parents.

- Needs requiring extra attention include health care, physical or developmental disabilities, emotional or behavioral problems or learning disabilities.
- 8 percent of children have more than one of these special needs.
- Parents report that children age 3 to 12 are more likely than younger children to have special needs (21 percent versus 10 percent).
- Among all households, children age 6 to 12 are more likely than children under 5 to have special needs (9 percent versus 5 percent). Among households with low incomes, these proportions double (17 percent versus 10 percent).
- For all ages of children, households with low incomes are more likely than households with higher incomes to have a child with special needs requiring extra effort (13 percent versus 5 percent).

Parents of children with special needs have fewer child care options.

- 39 percent of parents who have a child with special needs report that they “had to take whatever child care arrangement they could get,” compared with 27 percent of parents whose children have no special needs.
- Parents of children with special needs are more likely to know about child care subsidies than other parents (71 percent versus 57 percent).

Family, friend and neighbor care is a vital resource for families who have children with special needs.

- Households with a child who has special needs are more likely to use family, friend and neighbor (FFN) caregivers *only* (38 percent versus 23 percent of households whose children have no special needs).

continued

Parents of children with special needs have fewer child care options and more child care related work problems.

- About 16 percent of FFN caregivers say that they care for a child whose special needs affect the way they take care of the child.
- FFN caregivers of school-age children are more likely to report problems meeting the special needs of the children in their care (16 percent, compared with 6 percent for those caring for children age 5 and younger).

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

- About a third of parents whose children have special needs report that child care problems interfered with accepting or keeping a job in the past year, double the percentage of parents whose children do not have special needs (17 percent).

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Child care for families with low incomes

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About one in five families with children using child care are families with low incomes.

- About 9 percent of families in this survey have annual incomes below \$20,000, and about 22 percent are considered low-income (defined in this survey as at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guideline for a household of their size or about \$40,000 for a family of four).
- Large families and single parent families are more likely than others to be low-income.

Families with low incomes have fewer child care choices than families with higher incomes.

- 37 percent report that they had to “take whatever child care arrangement they could get,” compared with 27 percent of parents with higher incomes.
- 32 percent of families with low incomes use family, friend and neighbor (FFN) care exclusively. (The overall rate is 24 percent.)
- Parents with low incomes are similar to parents of color and parents of children with special needs.

Families with low incomes have more child care challenges and problems than families with higher incomes.

- 13 percent of parents with low incomes have a child with special needs requiring extra effort, compared with 5 percent for families with higher incomes.
- 36 percent of parents with low incomes report that child care problems have prevented them from accepting or keeping the kind of job they wanted in the past 12 months, compared with 14 percent of other parents.
- 91 percent of parents with low incomes say that a quality rating system would be helpful, higher than for parents with higher incomes (85 percent).

Child care is unaffordable for families with low incomes.

- About half (47 percent) of families with incomes below \$20,000 per year have out-of-pocket child care expenses, and about half (53 percent) do not.
- 28 percent of income is spent on child care for the lowest income group (under \$20,000 per year) and 21 percent is spent for families with low incomes. Families with higher incomes average 10 percent, which is considered affordable.
- 19 percent of families with low incomes receive child care assistance.

continued

Families with low incomes have fewer choices and more challenges with child care than other families, but child care assistance nearly levels the playing field.

Child care assistance helps families with low incomes gain access to center-based and quality child care.

Families with low incomes with child care subsidies, compared with families with low incomes without child care subsidies:

- Choose child care due to quality considerations more than cost.
- Tend to rate the quality of their child care arrangements higher; for example, giving higher ratings to the creative activities, the knowledge of the caregiver about their children and their needs and not watching too much TV.
- Tend to use center-based care as their primary arrangement (57 percent versus 18 percent) and tend not to use FFN care as their primary arrangement (28 percent versus 65 percent).¹

¹ The subsample of households with low incomes with a child care subsidy has 94 households and a sampling error of plus or minus 10 percent. The sampling error does not diminish the statistical significance but should be taken into account when generalizing results or making population estimates.

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Parental choice

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Parents consider a number of factors in choosing child care, but location, quality and cost are the most common.

- Overall, parents choose their primary care arrangement based on the convenient location (24 percent), quality of care (21 percent) and cost (20 percent).
- Parents using family, friend and neighbor care prefer care by a family member or someone whom they trust and like the flexibility and more individualized attention their children receive.
- Parents use center-based care as their primary child care arrangement for the structure and activities.
- 78 percent of parents of preschoolers say “the special training of the caregiver” is a “very important” consideration in choosing child care, higher than cost (67 percent).

Some parents lack child care choices.

- 29 percent of parents report taking whatever child care arrangement they could get, up from 21 percent five years ago.
- Lack of choice is higher—about 40 percent—for parents with low incomes, parents of color, those with a child who has a special need, those whose primary language is not English and families using self care.

More families are choosing center-based care for their preschoolers.

- 60 percent of children age 3 to 5 use center-based care as their primary arrangement during the school year, the most common arrangement and up from 41 percent in 1999.

Most families are aware of child care resource and referral.

- 67 percent of parents with children age 12 and younger know about child care resource and referral services (CCR&R) that help parents identify and select child care in their communities.
- Awareness of CCR&R is higher among households with child care subsidies (86 percent) and in greater Minnesota (73 percent).
- Awareness of CCR&R is lower among households of color (56 percent) and households whose primary language is not English (22 percent).

Parents want information about quality child care.

- 87 percent say they would find it helpful if their community had a child care quality rating system that would give them information they could use for selecting the highest quality care.

continued

Child care choices have eroded over the past five years.

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Hours and types of child care

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Children average almost 24 hours per week in child care.

- On average, children are in child care just over 28 hours per week in the summer and 22 hours per week during the school year.
- Of all children regularly in child care, 28 percent attend child care full time (35 hours or more per week) and 72 percent attend child care part time.
- Children age 5 and younger, on average, spend about 27 hours per week in child care during the school year, compared with 18 hours for children age 6 to 9.

Friend, friend or neighbor (FFN) care is the most commonly used child care.

- Altogether, 70 percent of households that use child care select some form of FFN care on a regular basis: 24 percent use FFN exclusively and 22 percent use FFN as their primary arrangement but also use some other types of care.
- FFN care is the most common primary arrangement for children ages 0 to 2 (48 percent) and 6 to 12 (50 percent).

- FFN caregivers are mainly grandparents (52 percent), followed by friends (16 percent), other relatives (15 percent) and neighbors (9 percent).
- For children under age 6, the FFN care is more commonly provided by grandparents. For children ages 6 to 12, the FFN care is more often provided by older siblings.
- Families using FFN care prefer care by a family member or someone they trust. They like the flexibility and more individualized attention that their children receive.

Center-based child care is the next most frequent type of primary care arrangement.

- One-third of households use center-based care as their primary arrangement, including child care centers, preschools, Head Start and before-school and after-school programs.
- Compared to five years ago, more preschoolers are in center-based care (60 percent during the school year, up from 41 percent in 1999).
- Families using center-based care like the creative activities, the caregivers' knowledge and ability to meet children's needs.

continued

Three out of four Minnesota families with children under age 13 regularly use some type of child care.

Licensed family child care is the primary arrangement for one in 10 families who use child care.

- Licensed family child care is a more common primary arrangement for infants and toddlers than for older age groups.
- Families using family child care like the creative activities, the caregivers' knowledge and ability to meet children's needs.
- Licensed family child care homes have children for more hours per week during the school year (average of 25.5 hours) than any other type of child care.

During the school year, most children under age 2 are cared for by their parents or FFN; while most children age 3 to 5 are in licensed care during some part of the week.¹

- Of the estimated 203,251 children in Minnesota age 0-2²: 26 percent use no child care, 36 percent use FFN as their primary arrangement and 43 percent use center-based or licensed family child care as a primary or secondary arrangement.
- Of the estimated 191,258 children in Minnesota age 3-5²: 21 percent use no child care, 21 percent use FFN as their primary arrangement and 69 percent use center-based or licensed family child care as their primary or secondary arrangement.
- Children age 5 and younger in licensed care during the school year tend to be in care more hours per week on average than those in FFN care (about 23 hours versus about 12 hours).

¹ These data do not account for the time of day/night when care is provided or the amount of hours per week in child care. They add to more than 100 percent because individuals can use FFN as a primary arrangement and use some type of licensed child care as a secondary arrangement.

² Steven Ruggles, M. Sobek, T. Alexander, C. A. Fitch, R. Goeken, P. Kelly Hall, M. King, and C. Ronnander. Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 3.0 [Machine-readable database]. Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota Population Center [producer and distributor], 2004.

Self care is rising for children age 10 to 12.

- 41 percent of children age 10 to 12 are in self care on a regular basis during the school year, up from 26 percent five years ago, and 42 percent are in self care during the summer, up from 20 percent five years ago.

Family schedules require child care during nonstandard work hours.

- In addition to standard weekday hours during the school year, 48 percent of children are regularly in child care weekday evenings (6 p.m. to 10 p.m.), and 44 percent are regularly in child care on weekends. Family, friends and neighbors are the usual caregivers during these times.
- FFN care is available when families need it; 73 percent of FFN caregivers provide care in the evenings, 51 percent provide care after 10 p.m. and 75 percent provide care on weekends.

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Child care assistance and child care use

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Most households with low incomes do not receive child care assistance.

- 19 percent of households with low incomes report currently receiving a child care subsidy.
- Three-quarters of households with low incomes receiving a subsidy have some out-of-pocket child care expenses, compared with half of households with low incomes without a subsidy.

More households with low incomes are aware of child care assistance than five years ago.

- 72 percent of households with low incomes are aware of state subsidies to help pay for child care, up from 57 percent five years ago.
- However, 35 percent of households eligible but not receiving a child care subsidy say they are not aware of the subsidy.

Child care assistance supports use of center-based care.

- 57 percent of households with low incomes receiving a child care subsidy use center-based care as their primary arrangement.¹
- That compares with 18 percent for households with low incomes without a subsidy and 33 percent for households with incomes above 200 percent of poverty (about \$40,000 for family of four).
- Households with low incomes receiving child care subsidies choose child care due to quality more than cost considerations, compared with their counterparts without subsidies.

Child care assistance helps families with low incomes gain access to quality child care.

Families with low incomes with child care subsidies, compared with families with low incomes without child care subsidies:

- Choose child care due to quality considerations more than cost.
- Tend to rate the quality of their child care arrangements higher; for example, giving higher ratings to the creative activities, the knowledge of the caregiver about their children and their needs, and not watching too much TV.

continued

Child care assistance helps families with low incomes gain access to quality child care.

The Minnesota Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) makes payments to FFN caregivers for child care provided to participating MFIP and families with low incomes.

- License-exempt caregivers register with counties and undergo a background check. This is called legal, nonlicensed care and is often offered by family, friends and neighbors (FFN) who are not subject to Minnesota child care licensing and regulatory requirements.
- Caregivers are limited to caring for relatives or children from one other family, but without a limit to the number of children being cared for at the same time.
- Caregivers are paid 80 percent of the licensed family home provider hourly reimbursement rate.
- 4 percent of FFN caregivers receive payments from CCAP.
- Among families with low incomes surveyed, 28 percent of those participating in CCAP use FFN care as their primary child care arrangement, compared with 65 percent for those without a child care subsidy and 42 percent for families with higher incomes.
- Based on CCAP administrative data, 32 percent of CCAP children in Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) families used FFN care in fiscal year 2005 (recorded as the last provider they used during the year).

The number of children in subsidized FFN care fell sharply between 2003 and 2005.

- The number of children in FFN subsidized care grew from 9,244 in 1997 to about 30,000 in 2003.
- By 2005, the number dropped to about 16,800.
- Almost all (93 percent) of the CCAP caseload reduction of approximately 8,000 children in MFIP families between 2003 and 2005 were decreases in FFN use.

Child care assistance linked to child care resource and referral.

86 percent of those receiving child care assistance are aware of help from CCR&R to seek and select quality child care, higher than their counterparts without subsidies (61 percent) and households with higher incomes (67 percent).

¹ This center-based category includes all types of center-based care, including child care centers, Head Start and before- and after-school programs. When the analysis includes only the child care centers, the percentages drop to 43.6 percent for households with low incomes with child care assistance, 9.4 percent for those without a subsidy and 22.3 percent for households with higher incomes. The Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) encourages eligible families to apply to Head Start but does not reimburse any Head Start-only expenses. Families may use child care provided in partnership with Head Start, which may be subsidized through CCAP.

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Family, friend and neighbor care supply and demand

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Relatives supply most of the FFN care in their own homes.

- 52 percent of family, friend and neighbor (FFN) caregivers are the grandparents, 21 percent are other relatives, 16 percent friends of the family, 9 percent neighbors and 3 percent nannies.
- For children under age 6, the FFN care is more commonly provided by grandparents. For children ages 6 to 12, the FFN care is more often provided by older siblings.
- FFN caregivers are primarily female (86 percent), ranging in age from 18 to 87, with an average age of 49.
- 78 percent provide care in their own homes and 19 percent provide care in the children's homes.

Most FFN care is provided for free.

- Most relatives (85 percent) provide child care for free. About half of the nonrelatives do.
- Most FFN caregivers (72 percent) provide this care to help out family or friends and because they have close relationships with the children in their care.

- 20 percent of FFN caregivers are paid by parents and 4 percent are paid by the county or state.
- 20 percent of caregivers trade off caregiving with another family, 18 percent receive meals and 10 percent get the use of a car for caregiving.
- 60 percent of FFN caregivers have a paying job in addition to child care.

Most FFN care is provided part time.

- Over half (59 percent) of FFN caregivers provide child care for 10 hours or less per week.
- On average, FFN caregivers provide 19 hours of care in a typical week.
- In a typical week, on average, FFN caregivers provide care two to three days per week for six or seven hours per day.

FFN care is available when families need it.

- 78 percent of FFN caregivers provide care during standard weekday hours (7 a.m. to 6 p.m.).
- 73 percent provide care in the evenings, 51 percent late at night, 39 percent in the early morning and 75 percent on weekends.

continued

An estimated 150,000 households in Minnesota provide FFN care.

FFN care is the most common type of child care.

- Altogether, 70 percent of households that use child care use some form of FFN care on a regular basis.
- 46 percent of families use FFN care as their primary arrangement, up from about 40 percent in 1999.
- 24 percent use FFN exclusively and 22 percent use FFN as their primary arrangement but also use other types of care. FFN care is the secondary arrangement for an additional 25 percent.
- Use of FFN care is highest for children age 2 and younger (78 percent) and lowest for children age 3 to 5 (61 percent).
- FFN care is a positive choice for many families, especially those with children age 2 and younger, and who prefer care by a family member, a caregiver they know and trust and someone who shares and can transmit their family and cultural values.

FFN care meets the needs of families.

- FFN care is the most common type of nonstandard hour care and is frequently used while parents work evenings and weekends, when other options are not readily available.
- Exclusive use of FFN care is higher for families with low incomes (32 percent), families of color (36 percent), families whose children have special needs (38 percent) and families from immigrant and refugee groups (37 percent).
- Families choose FFN care for the familiarity, trust, flexibility and cost.
- Families wanting a more structured setting and more activities for their children or needing more hours of care per week are more likely to use child care centers or licensed family care settings than FFN care.
- During the school year, children age 5 and younger are in FFN care, on average, 12 to 13 hours per week, compared with 24 to 25 hours in centers or licensed family child care.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Download fact sheets and full research reports—*Child Care Use in Minnesota and Family, Friend and Neighbor Caregivers*—at www.wilderresearch.org. 2004 Minnesota statewide household child care survey funded by the Minnesota Department of Human Services and conducted by Wilder Research, Richard Chase study director.

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Profile of family, friends and neighbors caring for children through the Minnesota Child Care Assistance Program

Fundamental facts from the
2004 Minnesota child care survey



This fact sheet refers to informal and unlicensed family, friend and neighbor caregivers as FFN and refers to FFN serving children through payments from the Child Care Assistance Program as CCAP FFN.

Relatives supply most of the CCAP FFN care in their own homes.

- 51 percent of CCAP FFN are the grandparents, 20 percent are other relatives, 16 percent friends of the family and 12 percent neighbors, similar to FFN generally.
- CCAP FFN caregivers are primarily female (94 percent), with an average age of 49.
- 77 percent provide care in their own homes and 20 percent provide care in the children's homes, similar to FFN generally.
- 48 percent are renters, higher than FFN generally (21 percent).

Most CCAP FFN provide care full time.

- On average, CCAP FFN provide care 38 hours per week, double the average for FFN generally.
- 54 percent of CCAP FFN provide care 40 or more hours per week, while 59 percent of FFN generally provide care for 10 hours or less per week.
- CCAP FFN care for, on average, three children at a time, one more than FFN generally.
- 37 percent are employed in addition to providing child care, lower than FFN generally (60 percent).

CCAP FFN have child care experience and training similar to other FFN.

- 16 percent have early childhood teaching experience.
- 14 percent have been licensed family child care providers.
- 51 percent have had parenting education.
- 38 percent have had child care training.
- Compared with FFN overall, fewer CCAP FFN have had early childhood development college classes (23 percent versus 45 percent) or workshops (39 percent versus 49 percent).

continued

CCAP FFN have greater interest to participate in formal systems than do FFN overall.

CCAP FFN have greater interest to participate in formal systems than do FFN overall.

- 52 percent of CCAP FFN say they are “very interested” (31 percent) or “somewhat interested” (21 percent) in getting licensed as a child care provider, compared with 18 percent of FFN overall.
- 72 percent of CCAP FFN would find it “very helpful” to have access to “small grants to pay for books, educational toys and games and other materials needed to teach children the skills they need for school,” higher than the 38 percent of FFN overall.
- 66 percent of CCAP FFN would find it “very helpful” to have access to a government subsidized food program, higher than 30 percent of FFN overall.
- 55 percent of CCAP FFN and 31 percent of FFN would find it “very helpful” to have access to an organization or program to get safety equipment or supplies, higher than 31 percent of FFN overall.

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Quality of family, friend and neighbor care

Fundamental facts from the
2004 Minnesota child care survey



FFN caregivers express strong family bonds.

- 82 percent of family, friend and neighbor (FFN) caregivers say they frequently share information with parents regarding the children.
- 82 percent of FFN caregivers say they have a very close relationship with the children they care for.
- 87 percent of FFN caregivers feel that the match between their own childrearing values and those of the parents is “excellent” (47 percent) or “good” (40 percent).
- 85 percent of FFN caregivers report that they and the parents cooperate and work together “very well.”
- 91 percent of FFN caregivers strongly agree or agree that taking care of the children is the best part of their day.
- FFN caregivers of children age 5 and younger tend to have strong partnerships with the children’s parents, more often than do those caring for older children.
- Relatives most commonly report caring for the children to help out their family (61 percent), while friends and neighbors are more likely than relative caregivers to be motivated by their love of children (30 percent) and the income (9 percent).

FFN caregivers are trained and experienced.

- On average, FFN caregivers have provided FFN care for 11 years.
- 17 percent of FFN caregivers are or have been child care teachers or teacher aides in a licensed child care center or program. 12 percent are or have been licensed as family child care providers.
- More than half (56 percent) have participated in parent education, about the same as parents in general.
- 38 percent have participated in a child care training program.
- About 45 percent have taken college classes in child development, nutrition or health and safety.
- 49 percent say they have attended workshops on child development and 86 percent say they are self-taught by reading books or watching educational videos.

Most FFN caregivers report activities (daily or most days) that naturally teach and encourage children’s language, literacy, social, emotional and physical development.

- Children under age 2: Hugging and kissing (98 percent); talking or cooing, telling stories or singing to the child (98 percent) and playing games like peek-a-boo (96 percent).

continued

FFN caregivers are better prepared to provide quality child care than commonly presumed.

- Children age 2 to 5: Talking, telling stories or singing to the child (88 percent); practicing language or math with the child (76 percent); having the child sing or read along with them or teaching the child songs or stories (74 percent) and reading to the child (72 percent). Also, children play with toys or household items that promote hand-eye coordination (91 percent) and play “pretend” games by using toys and dolls, by dressing up or acting out roles or stories (75 percent).

The following findings are summarized from an observational study of FFN caregivers and a focus group study of immigrant and refugee FFN caregivers.

FFN caregivers demonstrate positive interactions with children.

- FFN caregivers’ interactions with children were warm and responsive, according to trained observers.
- Caregivers acknowledged children’s efforts and supervised them appropriately.
- Caregivers gave children opportunities to play and explore.
- Meals provided opportunities for conversation and development of self-help skills.
- Observers heard and saw no harsh words or actions.
- Care settings generally contained adequate age-specific toys and materials, but they did not consistently have enough age-appropriate books or art materials.

FFN care settings are generally safe and comfortable, but additional precautions are needed.

- The space for caregiving was ample and comfortable.
- A majority of homes had smoke detectors, and equipment and materials were in good repair.
- Children in some settings had access to hazardous items and spaces, such as unsecured indoor stairs and uncovered electrical outlets.
- Few immigrant and refugee FFN caregivers report having basic safety supplies such as first aid kits, smoke detectors, fire extinguishers or latches on cupboards with medicines and household chemicals.
- Many caregivers did not follow common sanitation practices, such as consistent hand washing for children and adults.

FFN caregivers miss opportunities to incorporate learning activities in their everyday interactions with children.

- Care settings generally contained adequate age-specific toys and materials, but they did not consistently have enough age-appropriate books or art materials.
- Caregivers missed natural learning opportunities to talk about feelings and foster social skills.
- Caregivers did not take advantage of “teachable moments” to work on specific language or math skills.
- Caregivers did not set appropriate limits on television use.

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Improving the quality of family, friend and neighbor care

Fundamental facts from the
2004 Minnesota child care survey



This fact sheet refers to family, friend and neighbor caregivers as FFN and refers to FFN serving children through payments from the Child Care Assistance Program as CCAP FFN. This fact sheet also includes findings summarized from an observational study of FFN and CCAP FFN and a focus group study of immigrant and refugee FFN.

FFN want to provide high-quality care.

- 81 percent of FFN caregivers are eager (43 percent) or open (38 percent) for support from child development specialists and interaction with other FFN to improve the quality of their caregiving.
- 19 percent can be considered to be independent or uninterested in support and interaction.
- Eager FFN tend to be paid, nonrelatives averaging 24 hours per week of care.
- Open FFN tend to be a mix of unpaid relatives and nonrelatives averaging 17 hours per week.
- Independent FFN tend to be unpaid relatives averaging 12 hours per week. No more than 5 percent would very likely attend a workshop or learning opportunity.

FFN caregivers are motivated to improve the quality of their caregiving because they want to promote the development of the children in their care.

FFN want more information about school readiness and child safety.

- FFN would find information about how to help children learn and do well in school (58 percent) and child safety (53 percent) “very helpful.”
- Two-thirds or more of CCAP FFN would find this information very helpful, along with information on how to help children with speech problems and learning disabilities.
- Over half of FFN caregivers say that when a problem comes up while taking care of a child, they get ideas or information from the child’s parent or guardian (55 percent), followed by family members (24 percent) or through their own experience or resources (15 percent), books or handouts (12 percent) and from friends or neighbors (10 percent).
- Immigrant and refugee FFN say they do not have adequate information, especially on nutrition, health and safety, and they would like to meet with other FFN providers to learn from one another.

FFN, especially CCAP FFN, want access to resources in the formal system.

- 66 percent of CCAP FFN would find it “very helpful” to have access to a government subsidized food program, higher than FFN generally (30 percent).

continued

- 72 percent of CCAP FFN and 38 percent of FFN would find it “very helpful” to have access to “small grants to pay for books, educational toys and games and other materials needed to teach children the skills they need for school.”
- 55 percent of CCAP FFN and 31 percent of FFN would find it “very helpful” to have access to an organization or program to get safety equipment or supplies.
- Recent immigrants and refugee caregivers would like toys, books and food.

CCAP FFN have greater interest in licensure than do FFN overall.

- 52 percent of CCAP FFN say they are “very interested” (31 percent) or “somewhat interested” (21 percent) in getting licensed as a child care provider, compared with 18 percent of FFN overall.
- Interest in licensure is higher among FFN in the Metro area and among nonrelatives.
- Recent immigrant and refugee caregivers have little interest in becoming licensed due to personal life situations (language; age; living in apartment complexes, trailer homes or homes in unhealthy conditions or lack of social security numbers).

Target FFN outreach that builds on natural connections.

- Recognize the diversity of FFN goals and motivations.
- Differentiate the F (family) from the FN (friend and neighbor) in outreach efforts.
- Frame FFN outreach around school readiness.
- Use relationships and personal methods rather than fliers and posters.

- Work with unconventional channels and culture-specific organizations and places, as well as natural networks and places where families visit and congregate such as grocery stores, parks and community centers.

Offer FFN localized, neighborhood-based learning opportunities.

- FFN are more likely to attend child care learning opportunities if they are held at a neighborhood school, a local library, a church or place of worship or a community or cultural center.
- Offer incentives to participate such as books, games, art supplies and safety supplies.
- Pay attention to language, culture, literacy and time of day. More than a quarter of FFN interested in attending learning opportunities say conflicts with work schedules are a possible barrier to participation.

Improve FFN quality of care by increasing intentionality of the care.

The observational study of FFN caregivers found that they could use resources and support to:

- Be more purposeful and planful in the care without rigidly structuring the learning environment.
- Take advantage of natural learning opportunities to teach language, math and social skills and to talk about feelings.
- Consistently foster cooperative playing, sharing, turn-taking and self-regulation.
- Increase the number of age-appropriate books, art materials and opportunities to use pre-math skills in everyday activities.
- Engage children in more reading, math, music, art and dance.
- Set limits on television use.
- Focus on consistent hand washing by children and adults.

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