

# Child Care: Nurturing Growth



Centralina  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

## Strategic Recommendations for Economic Development and Local Government

Child care plays a crucial role in our economy, enabling parents to work, businesses to recruit and retain talent and the workforce to develop skills for success. It is an essential component to building an equitable and better future for our residents.

### Child Care in Our Region

In Centralina's nine-county region, a significant 69% of households with children under the age of six are characterized by the presence of working parents. There are nearly 70,000 employed mothers with children under six years old. Additionally, there are 1,103 licensed child care programs with more than 87,000 spaces available. Of these programs, 80% have received four or five-star high quality ratings. Similarly, 86% of the total spaces available in these programs meet high-quality standards.

### *The Burden of Cost*

Child care expenses can be a financial challenge for many young families, with annual costs ranging from \$5,051 for a school-age child in Stanly County to \$15,538 for an infant in Mecklenburg County. This is a significant barrier to employment, especially in North Carolina, which faces a severe worker shortage with 55 available workers for every 100 open jobs. In response to this issue, local government, economic development organizations, and workforce development agencies are increasingly acknowledging the critical role of child care in fostering vibrant and resilient communities. Recognizing child care as a key component of the community infrastructure is essential for sustainable growth.



# HOW TO DRIVE POSITIVE TRANSFORMATION IN YOUR COMMUNITY

## Local Governments & Municipalities

- **Support land use planning** for safe siting of early care facilities to promote health, equity and economic vitality.
- **Review land use policies** to allow child care facilities in commercial and residential zones to make it easier for developers to add this type of use.
- **Minimize regulatory constraints** to enable the expansion and operation of home-based child care providers.
- **Include child care needs in the development planning** process similar to public school concerns and allowances.
- Incorporate child care in the next **community needs assessment survey**.
- **Include child care facilities** with other community development projects.
- Become a **Family Forward NC Certified Employer** by the NC Early Childhood Foundation's Family Forward NC.

## Economic Development Organizations & Allies

- **Engage in discussions with potential stakeholders** to encourage on-site child care or employee child care benefits for a family-friendly workplace culture.
- **Utilize business engagement visits** to pinpoint community child care needs, analyze the data and shape policies and initiatives for informing local government officials.
- **Establish a child care task force** and commit to a strategic plan approach that identifies and addresses local barriers and promotes opportunities for change.
- **Develop a startup guide** for aspiring child care entrepreneurs, outlining key steps and strategies to navigate the opening process of their business.
- **Promote early childhood education** as a viable career pathway with portable, stackable credentials.
- **Launch an accelerator program** that supports a group of individuals starting a child care business, with accessible services, training and mentorships.

## WANT MORE INFORMATION?

Additional child care resources are available at:

[www.centralinaedd.org/childcare-2024/](http://www.centralinaedd.org/childcare-2024/)

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