

# Planners' role in expanding child care: the case of Tompkins County, NY

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# Child care and the COVID-19 pandemic

**3.6 million**

Jobs lost during the pandemic

*(National Women's Law Center, 2022)*

**59.2%**

of job losses are  
women's

*(National Women's Law Center, 2022)*

**26% of  
women**

who lost their job during the  
pandemic reported it was  
due to lack of child care

*(Modestino et al., 2021)*



# Child Care is Economic Development

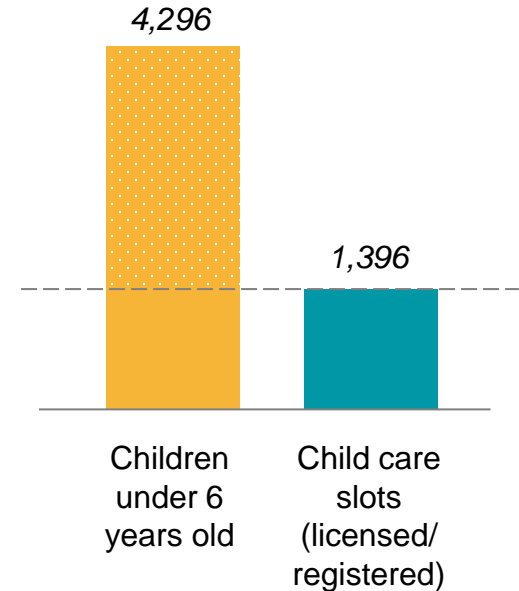
- One study finds, every dollar invested in quality early education results in a return of \$7.30 (Meloy et al., 2019; Morrissey and Warner 2007)
- Child care is critical social infrastructure that supports children, parents, and the regional economy (Warner, 2006; Ribeiro & Warner, 2004).
- “Child care is not just a family issue, it is a business issue” (Modestino et al., 2021)
- The nature of child care businesses make it difficult for them to use existing county business resources.



*(Ribeiro & Warner, 2004)*

# Tompkins County is a Child Care Desert

- There are more than three children for every available child care slot (licensed/ registered)
- 2021 Tompkins County Parent Survey
  - 18.9% of parents have clearly expressed their need for child care
  - 24.3% of parents have needs to change their current child care to better meet their needs
  - High demand for childcare from Monday to Friday, greater unmet demand in the late afternoon/early evening
  - Populations most in need: Babies, Preschool, and early After-School Care



# Supporting advocates articulating their needs

Tompkins County is using their General Fund, replenished through ARPA funds, to increase funding for Child Care expansion.

We worked with the **nonprofit Child Development Council** to research and write a proposal that equitably and sustainably increases supply.

Interviews with different stakeholders (providers, legislators, experts, local organizations)



# Types of Child Care Providers & Barriers to Expansion

## Family Day Care (FDC)

16 providers  
126 slots

Capacity: 6 young children plus  
2 school-age children

## Group Family Day Care (GFDC)

22 providers  
334 slots

Capacity: 12 young children plus  
4 school-age children

## Child Care Centers

20 providers  
1,356 slots

Capacity: depends on size  
and staff

### Barriers

- Capital Needs!
- Lack of qualified childcare workers
- Lack of technical assistance for FDC expansion



# A Proposal to Sustainably Expand Child Care in Tompkins County

1.8 million dollars over a 3-year period divided in four initiatives:

Expanding Family  
Day Care Providers

1

Expanding Child  
Care Centers

2

Hiring 2 Childcare  
Developers/Planners

3

Revolving Loan Fund

4



# A Proposal to Sustainably Expand Child Care in Tompkins County

## Expanding Family Day Care Providers

1

## Expanding Child Care Centers

2

## Hiring 2 Childcare Developers/Planners

3

## Revolving Loan Fund

4

Largely untapped potential with minimal upfront costs compared to building a new Center

Can double current slots

Focus on capital needs





# A Proposal to Sustainably Expand Child Care in Tompkins County

Expanding Family  
Day Care Providers

1

Expanding Child  
Care Centers

2

Centers in various stages of expansion with insufficient funds (some lost Regional Development grants)

One center in most advanced stage + another 5 projects

Hiring 2 Childcare  
Developers/Planners

3

Revolving Loan Fund

4



# A Proposal to Sustainably Expand Child Care in Tompkins County

Expanding Family  
Day Care Providers

1

Expanding Child  
Care Centers

2

Hiring 2 Childcare  
Developers/Planners

3

Revolving Loan Fund

4

Support providers  
navigating regulations,  
technical assistance,  
and strategic liaisons

Child Care Expansion  
Advisory Committee  
(six areas of expertise)



# A Proposal to Sustainably Expand Child Care in Tompkins County

Expanding Family  
Day Care Providers

1

Expanding Child  
Care Centers

2

Hiring 2 Childcare  
Developers/Planners

3

Revolving Loan Fund

4

Very difficult for providers  
to access financing from  
traditional sources

Provide low-cost  
financing through low  
interest loans alternative



**Child care is a critical social infrastructure to the economy in the short and long term.**

**Child care providers are small businesses; investing in them is economic development.**



# An Equity Perspective



## Redistributional

*What? Where?*

- More child care supply benefits parents, especially women.
- Government is focused on demand-side (subsidies for children) but rarely supply-side (support to providers).

## Procedural

*How?*

- Grants and subsidies are often difficult to access. Many childcare providers report having difficulty with the timing of child care subsidy payments. Funds for capital are limited.

## Conceptual

*Why?*

- Many childcare providers have difficulty imagining greater government support, since child care has historically been a private sector business.



# Thank you!

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More information: <https://labs.aap.cornell.edu/local-government-restructuring-lab/student-work>



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