



Child Care in Whatcom County

September 2008

Child Care Resource & Referral Across Washington State

Since established by state statute in 1989, the Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network (Network) has been a key component of the child care infrastructure. The Network is charged with helping parents find child care; educating parents, providers and the community about what quality child care looks like; supporting providers through training and technical assistance; strengthening the child care system at all levels; and collecting data about child care supply and demand in Washington State.

During 2007, the Network's member agencies:

- Handled 121,327 calls;
- Processed 33,247 public referral calls;
- Served 25,078 families and 35,289 children; and
- Assisted 21,954 low-income families find child care.

Child Care Resource & Referral Supports Communities by:

- Helping parents find child care and financing options;
- Improving the quality of child care, early learning and after school programs;
- Advocating for children, parents, and child care providers;
- Increasing the availability of child care;
- Bridging child care and K-12 education; and
- Supporting families to raise healthy children.

Child Care Resource & Referral In Whatcom County

The Opportunity Council hosts the child care resource and referral (R&R) program serving Whatcom County. In 2007, staff responded to 13,979 calls in the region from parents, providers and community members seeking information and assistance navigating the child care system. R&R staff and consultants are also out in the field: conducting training, collaborating with community partners, and reaching out to families across income levels, geographic barriers, and ethnic identities to provide them with vital child care consumer education.



Notable highlights of this report:

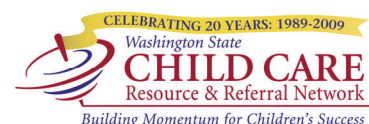
- Over the last five years, there has been an 11% decrease in the number of licensed facilities, for the most part due to a net decline of 20 family child care businesses.
- Nearly one in five licensed facilities report that one or more staff members speak Spanish.
- Infant care continues to be the most difficult care to find and the most expensive. For a family with an infant and a preschooler in full-time care, the annual median cost represents 28% to 32% of the county's median household income for 2007.

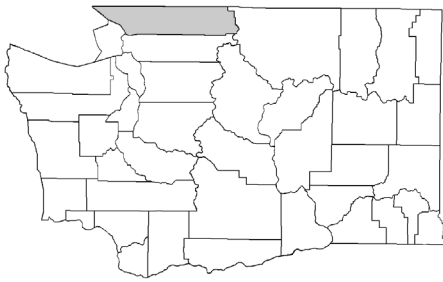
Local Resource & Referral Contact Information:

The Opportunity Council
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Bellingham, WA 98225
(360) 734-5121 (800) 649-5121
<http://www.opportunitycouncil.org/ccrr/>

Child Care and Family Resources strengthens the ability of families, caregivers and communities to nurture, support and educate their children, while building a supply of affordable, high quality child and youth care throughout Whatcom, Island, and San Juan Counties.

Proud Member of the:





People

Population	188,300
Change since 2003	13,800
Children under 5 years	11,045
Children under 13 years	29,656
% of Children under 13 living in poverty	15%
Ranking among WA Counties in rate of child poverty	32
K-12 enrollment	26,353
Children in Care Zone ¹	18,455
Average number children on child care subsidy	1,591/month
Head Start/ECEAP Slots	312

Economics

Living Wage ²	\$41,300/yr
Median Household Income	\$53,573/yr
Unemployment Rate	4.0%

Notes:

¹Care Zone is defined as the number of children who live in a single-parent or two-parent home where the parent or both parents are working.

²The living wage measure is based on a family of four and represents twice the federal poverty level income. Twice the federal poverty level is the income cut off for families receiving child care subsidies.

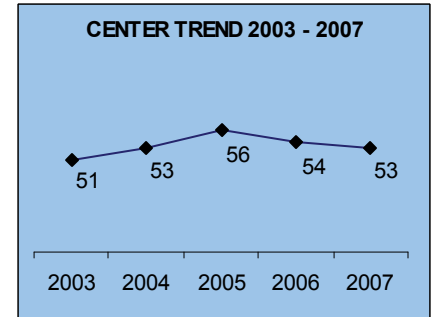
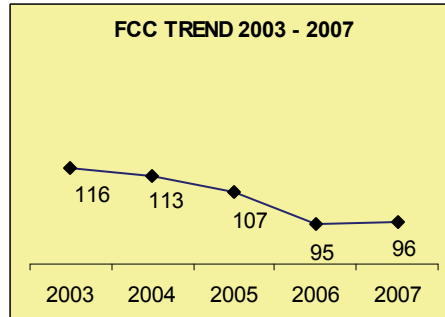
Data Sources for the Report:

American Federation of Teachers, Children's Defense Fund, WA Dept of Early Learning, WA Employment Security Dept, WA Head Start State Collaboration Office, WA Office of Financial Management, WA Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, US Census Bureau, US Dept of Health & Human Services, US Federal Registry and the Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network.

Licensed Child Care in Our Community

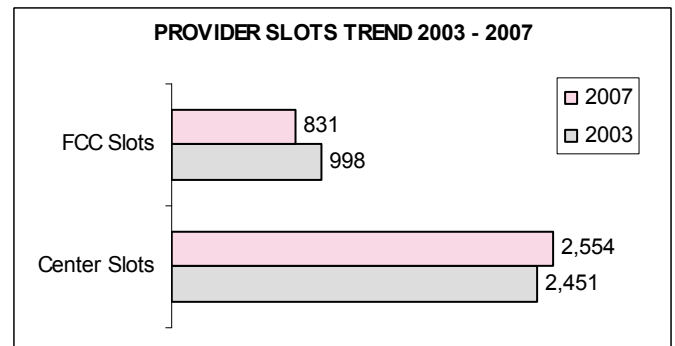
How many providers are there in my area by type?

Family child care (FCC) businesses account for nearly two-thirds (64%) of the 149 licensed facilities in Whatcom County. In the past five years, the overall number of licensed facilities has declined by a net of 18, or 11%.



The net loss of 20 family child care businesses (17%) accounts for most of the decline. Since 2003, the number of centers has fluctuated between 51 and 56, decreasing to 53 in 2007.

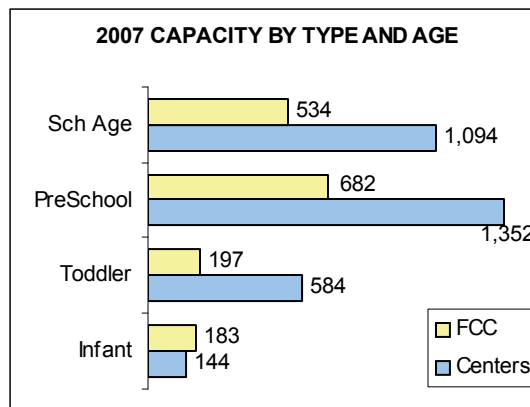
How has the number of child care slots changed over the last five years?



Over the past five years, the total number of potential licensed child care slots

has decreased 2%, by 64 slots. The county has lost 167 potential FCC slots with the closing of family child care businesses, or 17% of the FCC slots. This was offset by a 4% increase in the number of potential center-based slots, or 103 slots.

What is the distribution of slots by type of care and by age?



Because of a higher required ratio of adults to children under 2 years old in licensed care, there are fewer slots for infants and toddlers than for other age groups. In centers, the ratio is highest (1 adult to 4 infants) and the potential number of infants is the lowest, making family child care a critical option for working parents of our youngest children.

Note: This chart does not represent actual enrollment of children in care. The number of slots for all children is overstated in this comparison. It shows each age group filled as if there were no other children in the other age group. If a slot is filled for one age group it cancels out the potential slot for the other age group.

What languages are spoken?

Nearly all providers speak English, and 23% indicate they speak one or more additional languages. Nineteen percent (19%) indicate Spanish is spoken at their facilities. Other languages reported include Russian and Chinese.

Languages Spoken by Providers	
English	99%
Spanish	19%
Russian	3%
Chinese	1%

How much non-standard care is available in my community?

Most providers offer full- and part-time care during weekdays only. Fewer than 15% regularly offer non-standard hour care. Out of all providers, 7% offer weekend care; 6% offer evening care past 6:30 PM, and 3% offer overnight care.

Economics of Child Care Providers

What do child care providers earn compared to kindergarten teachers?

2006 Average Salary Comparisons: Kindergarten Teachers and Child Care Providers			
Public School Kindergarten Teacher (2005)	Director Child Care Center	Teacher Child Care Center	Family Child Care Provider Business Gross Income
\$45,722/yr \$3,810/mo	\$30,168/yr \$2,514/mo	\$21,444/yr \$1,787/mo	\$32,368/yr \$2,697/mo

Washington's Kindergarten teachers earn 52% more than center directors, more than double what child care teachers earn, and 43% more than family child care providers' gross earnings in the region. The substantial wage differential can be attributed to higher educational requirements for Kindergarten teachers and relatively low turnover in public schools. The lack of competitive wages makes it difficult to recruit and retain educated child care workers and can have a negative impact on the quality of care.

How does the child care subsidy reimbursement rate affect provider profitability?

Current state child care subsidy reimbursement rates are one constraint on wages, quality, and financial solvency for providers. To support the average salary of a teacher, aide and part of the cost of

2007 Ranges: Monthly Full-Time Subsidy Reimbursement Rates			
	Infant	Toddler	Preschool
Centers	\$802	\$669	\$578
Family Child Care Homes	\$716	\$617	\$543

the director for an infant classroom in a center, a program would need to enroll at least **4.9** of the licensed maximum of 8 subsidized full-time infants. Income generated from the other **3.1** infants would have to cover all other classroom costs including benefits, training, rent and supplies.

In a typical family child care home, one provider might have two infants and four preschoolers. A provider's gross earnings if all the children are on subsidy would be **\$3,604** per month. Out of these earnings, the provider must pay all expenses, including salaries, benefits, taxes, rent, meals, training, equipment and supplies.

Professional Development for the Child Care Workforce

Training and Scholarships

The Opportunity Council provides state-mandated training for providers. **In 2007, the R&R offered 20 trainings for the child care workforce in the region averaging 19 students each.**

Washington Scholarships for Child Care Professionals (formerly T.E.A.C.H.)

is a scholarship program that provides financial support for center and school-age staff and family child care providers to enroll in community and technical college degree programs. In Whatcom County, **6** scholarships were awarded in 2007.

National Standards for Quality

Training, education, experience and applied knowledge are important to child care quality. Accreditation recognizes facilities who have achieved national quality standards:

- Center-based Accredited Programs** **4**
National Association for the Education of Young Children
- School-Age Accredited Programs** **0**
National AfterSchool Association
- Accredited Family Child Care Homes** **0**
National Association for Family Child Care
- Accredited Montessori Programs** **0**
American Montessori Society

Professional Associations

Association for the Education of Young Children Chapter: Northwest AEYC

Family Child Care Association Chapter(s): Whatcom Family Child Care Association

Providers say R&Rs help:

- 1) Increase parent referrals to fill my openings**
- 2) Increase my quality of care**
- 3) Increase my ability to operate my child care business**

About the Families

Callers to the referral lines are regularly surveyed by the R&R Network in order to enhance our services and inform policymakers. Parents report that R&Rs significantly increase their knowledge of:

- 1) How to choose child care that fits their family's needs; and
- 2) How to identify a quality child care setting.

Families consider a variety of factors when seeking a child care, including practical considerations such as the accessibility of programs to their workplace or home, the cost of care and the hours of operation.

Parents seek child care where:

- 1) The center/home is clean and safe
- 2) The provider really likes children
- 3) Parents feel comfortable with the provider
- 4) Children's individual needs are met

Top three challenges parents identify when seeking child care:

- 1) Affordability
- 2) Inconvenient locations
- 3) Hours that match parents' needs



95% of families surveyed indicate that child care resource and referral staff responded helpfully to their individual questions and concerns.

Affordability for Families

How much does child care cost in my community?

Countywide, the annual median household income in 2007 was **\$53,573**. The tables below indicate the annual median price of full-time care for one child by age group and type of care. The median price indicates that half the providers in the area charge more and half charge less than the prices quoted here.

Centers	2007 Median Annual Cost for 1 Child	% of 2007 Med. Household Inc.
Infant	\$9,880	18%
Toddler	\$8,476	16%
Preschool	\$7,176	13%
School Age	\$3,744	7%

Family Child	2007 Median Annual Cost for 1 Child	% of 2007 Med. Household Inc.
Infant	\$8,320	16%
Toddler	\$7,800	15%
Preschool	\$6,760	13%
School Age	\$3,120	6%

While the median cost of family child care can be up to 20% less than the cost of care in a center, child care continues to represent a substantial expense for families. The cost of full-time care for an infant represents 16% to 18% of the median income. Care for an infant and preschool child would represent 28% to 32% of median income in the county.

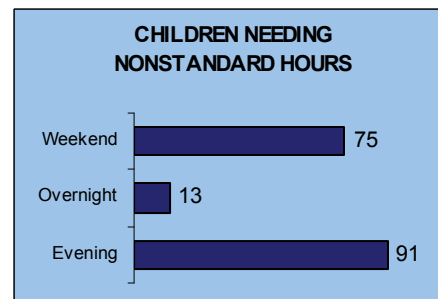
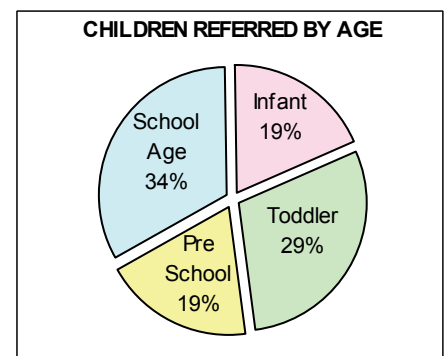
Families Using R&R Services

Who are families that call the R&R Line?

In 2007, **723** families received referrals. A majority (63%) of the families served were low-income. More than half (52%) of the families were headed by single parents.

What ages of children are referred?

There is a relatively even distribution of children served across age groups. However, even though the largest population of children *eligible* for licensed care are school-age (5-12 years old), 66% of the children *referred* are birth through four years old.



How many children need non-standard care?

There were **179** requests for referrals to licensed facilities offering non-standard hour care. Just over half (51%) were for evening care, and 462 were for weekend care.