

Commission on the Status of Women Child Care Impact Report 2024

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Executive Summary

Purpose and Scope

The "Child Care Impact Report 2024," prepared by the Commission on the Status of Women, delivers a critical evaluation of the lifetime impacts of child care and caregiving on families, educators, and the broader economic landscape of the county. This report is integral to understanding the intersection of child care with economic stability, gender equity, and child development, and aims to inform policy decisions to enhance the overall well-being of the community.

Methodology

To gather comprehensive data, the Commission utilized a multi-faceted research approach that encompassed a wide-ranging survey distributed across the county, detailed interviews with key stakeholders, analysis of existing research, and input from community forums such as the RISE Leadership Conference. This strategy enabled the collection of both quantitative data and qualitative insights, offering a well-rounded perspective on San Mateo County's child care landscape. The survey involved 389 participants, with 80% aged 30-50 and having children under 18; 20% have a child with special needs. Additionally, 83% rely on child care to maintain employment, 50% engage in unpaid work outside the home, and 44% identify as nonwhite.

Key Findings

We believe that access to affordable child care is a right and the foundation for lifelong financial security, economic power and overall well-being of women in San Mateo County. It is essential infrastructure and a vital safety net. When women thrive, entire communities flourish.

- *Drivers:* Racism and sexism are significant factors fueling the child care crisis, manifesting through economic injustice, inequitable infrastructure, and entrenched power imbalances. The historical undervaluation of caregiving in the United States, rooted in the systemic exploitation of women of color, persists today in the form of wage disparities and low pay, with BIPOC women disproportionately affected. Chronic underfunding of facilities and workforce development, along with inadequate systems, exacerbates gaps in care and hinders cross-sector collaboration. The child care workforce often faces poverty wages, and women and caregivers are subject to pay penalties. These issues are symptoms of deep-seated racism and sexism that persist due to unaddressed power imbalances.
- *Child Care is a Right:* Child care is recognized as a fundamental human right essential for empowering women and promoting gender equality. International laws mandate the U.S. to provide accessible and affordable child care, yet there are significant shortfalls, particularly affecting minority women. Civil rights leaders and advocacy groups argue for universal child care to ensure women can fully participate in society and fulfill international gender equality commitments.
- *Impact on Women:* According to the Commission survey, 88% of respondents report that child care issues significantly impact their lives, with 68% delaying or abandoning career opportunities due to child care needs. Additionally, 60-70% frequently need to leave work early or arrive late. Half of the respondents report losing income and experiencing increased stress or conflict with partners, and over 20% have reported illness related to these stresses. Our research also indicates that women who exit



the workforce for even short periods can face a reduction in annual earnings by 39%, a significant penalty that affects their financial stability and career trajectory. The often invisible and unpaid caregiving responsibilities at home combined with pay penalties at work cost women an average of \$17K per year, rising to \$38K for Latinas. Addressing these issues is crucial as advancing women's equality in the workplace could contribute up to \$12 trillion to global GDP by 2025, highlighting the economic necessity of supporting women throughout their careers.

- ***Impact on Children and Families:*** Quality child care is essential for the cognitive and social development of children, with 85% of brain growth occurring before age five. Studies consistently show that high-quality early childhood education enhances school readiness and long-term academic achievement. However, a survey in our county indicates that 66% of respondents face difficulties in accessing reliable child care, negatively impacting their employment and economic stability. In San Mateo County, there is a shortfall of 17,000 child care slots. Additionally, 73% of parents have declined work opportunities, and 33% have deferred personal healthcare due to the escalating costs of child care, which often exceed housing expenses. On a national level, investment in the child care sector is waning, despite temporary boosts such as those from the pandemic-related child tax credit. This lack of funding, combined with the high cost of living, poses significant challenges for families remaining in the Bay Area. Over the last decade, San Mateo and Santa Clara counties lost 10% of children from birth to age 5, even while the total population grew, a trend that has intensified since the onset of COVID-19. To counter these trends, there is an urgent need to refocus policies on prioritizing and financially supporting children and families through a comprehensive, multigenerational planning approach.
- ***Impact on Child Care Providers:*** Child care providers in the county are frequently underpaid and undervalued, despite the essential services they provide. Many of these providers, predominantly BIPOC women, earn wages below the area's cost of living, resulting in high turnover and a shortage of qualified professionals. Notably, child care educators earn less than 98% of all other professions and are eight times more likely to experience poverty compared to K-8 teachers. Furthermore, 98% of early childhood education (ECE) workers and 80% of adult caregivers are women, most of whom are non-white or immigrants, underscoring the need for equitable wage policies in this sector.
- ***Multisector Factors (including Housing):*** Child care significantly influences working parents' ability to maintain employment and manage household budgets, directly impacting economic circumstances and children's well-being. Child care costs substantially strain family finances, often consuming about half of the median mortgage payment and nearly 80% of the median rent. This financial burden hampers women's labor force participation and their ability to afford housing or save for homeownership. Investments in child care yield multiple community benefits, including enhancing property values. Research shows that for every dollar spent on child care, local property values increase by approximately \$13 annually, demonstrating the significant economic impact of accessible and high-quality child care on housing and community development. The 2023 Sustainable San Mateo County report identifies underfunding of child care as a primary cause of economic, housing, and food insecurity. Additionally, stable, affordable housing coupled with quality, affordable child care is crucial for parents' economic stability and children's healthy development, not only easing family budgets but also boosting local property values.
- ***Economic Impact:*** Access to affordable, high-quality child care significantly enhances workforce stability by boosting parental labor force participation and economic stability, leading to higher



employee retention and reduced absenteeism for employers. Despite these advantages, the U.S. economy loses approximately \$122 billion annually due to child care-related decreases in earnings, productivity, and revenue, with businesses alone losing \$23 billion, or \$1,640 per working parent. This economic strain extends to government losses of about \$21 billion in tax revenues annually. Internationally, the U.S. falls behind other OECD countries in female labor force participation, largely due to insufficient child care options, suggesting that reducing these barriers could boost GDP by about 5%. Investments in child care not only address immediate economic strains but also offer long-term benefits, including a potential 13% annual return on early childhood investments, and a significant economic multiplier effect, where every dollar spent on child care generates two dollars of short-term economic output, surpassing the typical multiplier of most industries. This underscores the strategic importance of enhancing child care infrastructure to foster economic growth and social mobility.

Recommendations

Board of Supervisors (**most recommendations have been modified for the final Fund the Future Report**)

- *Child Care is a Right:* Access to child care is crucial for empowering women and ensuring children's rights. San Mateo County could lead by declaring access to child care as a right, demonstrating a commitment to equality and dignity for all. This declaration would provide a foundation for building infrastructure and investing resources that expand access to high quality care for children and equitable pay for early educators. Strengthening the child care system means enhancing educational structures and addressing historical injustices affecting marginalized communities. Declaring access to child care a right affirms that every child deserves a nurturing environment and every family deserves supportive systems.
- *Creation of Office of Children & Families:* An Office of Children and Families, potentially integrated with a Department of Family Justice, can play a pivotal role in addressing a broad spectrum of issues that affect the wellbeing of children and families, including race or gender wealth/wage gaps, domestic violence, housing, health, and even climate change. Such an office can support multi-sector collaborations to comprehensively enhance the wellbeing of children and families, with significant benefits for women. The development and implementation of a Child Care Blueprint, akin to successful models in San Francisco and San Diego, could offer a systematic and strategic framework to address the complex challenges of child care comprehensively. This would include improving access, affordability, and quality, while ensuring that local resources, policies, and programs are well-coordinated across different departments and agencies. Such a blueprint would facilitate a unified and effective approach to enhancing child care services in the community.
- *Commitment to Dedicated Funding:* Budgets reflect values, and San Mateo County should align its financial resources with its commitment to children and families. With young children comprising 5.5% of the population, adopting a dedicated budget allocation of 10-15% that follows national best practices and benchmarks, would significantly benefit the community. Creating an Office of Children and Families would centralize and strategically distribute these funds, fill service gaps, and enhance stakeholder collaboration. This approach would address cost barriers, increase the number of slots, support child care providers, and foster a stable, well-supported child care system. Dedicated funding,



coupled with structural support, would ensure investments benefit the community's needs, including facilities, workforce development, wages, housing, and climate action.

General Recommendations

- *Paid Leave:* Seventy-five percent of respondents said that policies like expansions to paid leave would significantly improve their well-being and lower stress. San Mateo County leaders can advocate for expansions, drawing examples such as Pennsylvania's plan to increase paid leave up to 20 weeks projects a net annual benefit of \$379 million and an 18 to 1 return on investment. Supporting businesses through incentives and raising public awareness are key steps toward achieving these benefits. Paid leave expansions provide vital support not only for new parents but also for families dealing with various life challenges, from welcoming a new family member to managing serious illnesses.
- *Universal Child Care:* Universal child care is the policy extension of child care as a fundamental human right, essential for providing every child, regardless of background, an equitable start in life. This approach aims to dismantle systemic inequalities by offering all children access to high-quality early education, significantly supporting women and children most affected by current inadequacies in child care. Implementing universal, free child care would simplify the complex, underfunded system by eliminating stringent eligibility processes and reducing costs through standardized training and economies of scale. Such reforms would level the educational playing field, cut administrative costs, enhance parental workforce participation—especially among mothers—and boost economic growth. Ultimately, universal child care fosters a just and equitable community, empowers women in their professional and caregiving roles, and meets diverse family needs, aligning with broader community development goals.
- *Child Care Workforce Investments:* Investing in the child care workforce through initiatives to increase compensation and expand professional development has significant benefits for San Mateo County. The Child Care Needs Assessment shows that paying livable wages to early educators could generate an economic benefit of \$389 million annually and address the shortage of 2,829 workers, helping to fill over 17,000 child care spaces. Legislative efforts, such as Senator Becker's SB 1307, inspired by similar initiatives in Kentucky, aim to make ECE workers eligible for state-subsidized child care and exemplify the innovative approaches needed. Additionally, other creative employment benefit programs, like Shared Service Alliances, have been successfully implemented in other counties to support ECE workers. Partnerships with local organizations like the Child Care Partnership Council, 4C's, First5, and the Home Childcare Organization play a crucial role in supporting early educators. Career pathways programs like NannyUp/Teacher Up from Upwards Scholars and apprenticeships offer significant opportunities for professional growth, higher wages, and expanded employment prospects. These programs provide structured training and education, often with wraparound support, that help individuals advance in their careers within the childcare and education sectors. These efforts are essential for attracting and retaining skilled early educators and improving the quality of early childhood education in the county.
- *Mindset shifts to promote gender equity:* Promote Workplace Flexibility: Encourage local businesses to adopt more flexible work policies that support working parents, such as remote work options, flexible hours, and on-site child care facilities. Advocate for policy reforms at the county and state levels that



address the root causes of child care challenges, aiming to support economic growth, reduce gender disparities, and ensure equitable access to quality child care.

- *Strengthen Multi Sector Collaborations:* "Multi-sector collaborations are essential for achieving local goals in child care, economic development, housing, transportation, and the environment. These collaborations offer significant opportunities to boost family incomes, support healthy child development, and advance broader economic and climate objectives. For instance, placing child care facilities near housing, jobs, and transit can significantly reduce car trips and commuting times, which currently can extend by an extra 45+ minutes for many families seeking quality care. A notable example is the partnership between Greystar/Elco Yard and Build Up San Mateo County in Redwood City, which integrates community needs into development projects. This approach not only enhances access to childcare but also supports multi-sector initiatives like housing and environmental sustainability. Additionally, tools such as rent registries and tenant protection programs that support housing stability for families and educators are just a couple examples of policies that can be very impactful. These policy recommendations coupled with multi-sector collaborations benefit businesses by improving employee retention, productivity, and job satisfaction. At a recent SAMCEDA event, the importance of accessible childcare was underscored, with discussions on how businesses can foster family-friendly workplaces and improve access to quality childcare, thus enhancing community vitality and economic growth."

The "Child Care Impact Report 2024" underscores the crucial role that accessible, affordable, and high-quality child care plays in the economic and social health of San Mateo County. The findings point to a need for significant investment and reform in the child care sector to support not just children and families, but the economic vitality and future prosperity of the entire community. Implementing these recommendations requires a concerted effort from all sectors of society, including government, businesses, and the community at large, to foster a supportive environment where women and families thrive and children receive the foundational support they need during critical developmental years.



Introduction

Access to high-quality and affordable child care and early childhood education is crucial for family economic stability and overall countywide economic health, particularly benefiting women. This access enables new parents to return to and remain in the workforce. Caregiving extends beyond the initial period of welcoming a new family member, encompassing care for individuals of any age, including children, the elderly, and adults with disabilities or chronic illnesses who rely on others for support. This report focuses on child care, highlighting its significant and often lifelong impacts on women, from early years to managing after-school and summer schedules to caring for a partner, parent, or other loved ones. We aim to reframe child care as a public benefit, akin to public schools, emphasizing that investments in child care not only yield substantial returns to the economy but also lay the foundation for children's cognitive and socio-emotional development. Moreover, these investments are vital for advancing racial and gender equity, as well as economic empowerment and opportunity.

In San Mateo County, making child care affordable and accessible is one of the most impactful investments for the long-term well-being of families and the overall prosperity of the community. It also addresses a significant social equity issue, where high living costs and systemic barriers often push women into lower-paying jobs or out of the labor market entirely, exacerbating the lifetime earnings gap. Additionally, caregiving broadly encompasses a range of responsibilities that extend beyond child care, affecting the overall health and economic stability of families. We acknowledge that prioritizing these investments in child care is essential to addressing the legacies of white supremacy and misogyny which have disproportionately impacted low Socio-Economic Disadvantaged (SED) and BIPOC providers and families in San Mateo County.

San Mateo County is home to 737,888 residents, including 386,376 women and 41,000 children aged 0-12. With the high cost of living, 79,927 residents are rent-burdened. Child care expenses range from \$15,000 to \$25,000 annually, contributing to a shortage of over 2,829 child care workers and resulting in a deficit of 17,000 available child care slots. These dynamics highlight the pressing need to address child care challenges, which have significant and lasting impacts on women, children, and families in the county.

Goals

The goal of the Child Care and Early Childhood Education Work Group of the CSW is to support the success and development of both these critical services in San Mateo County. By analyzing existing data, collaborating with related partners, and soliciting feedback from the community on solutions, the work group's goal is to present local, evidence-based, recommendations to the Board of Supervisors to address the critical gap in childcare in San Mateo County.

We will know we have reached our goal when we see these **measurable outcomes**:

- A compelling report on how "access to childcare is a fundamental right."



- A report outlining indicators of success, stories describing the important work childcare providers do and the wage disparities they face.
- A report that describes effective systems that facilitate universal access to childcare with sound evidence that it is critical for success for women and families, and fuels the local economy.
- Presentation of these reports to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors and include specific recommendations for supporting childcare.

Methods & Timeline

Child Care Timeline					
2023	2023	2024	2024	2024	2024
Sept	Oct - Dec	Jan-Feb	March	April-July	Fall
Launch survey at Women's Equality Day Listening Session in SSF with Measure DD	Online survey (389 responses) Interviews Present preliminary data at CCPC & CSW	Data analysis gathering + editing of stories Preparation for RISE conference	RISE conference presentation w/CCPC & BuildUp Gather reactions/feedback from RISE participants	Review RISE conference feedback Draft report	Submit final draft of report to the Board of Supervisors

The Child Care Committee of the Commission for the Status of Women initiated an extensive study on the lifetime impacts of child care in San Mateo County with a comprehensive project plan outlined in June 2023. This plan included a variety of community engagement strategies and data collection methods. The project officially began in August 2023 during the Women’s Equality Day event hosted by the Commission. To ensure broad participation, the survey was made available in English, Spanish, and Mandarin across multiple channels. A key part of our outreach was a listening session held in South San Francisco in collaboration with Measure DD in September 2023.

By October 2023, we had collected 389 survey responses, providing a diverse array of perspectives crucial for our analysis. During this time, our commissioners also held in-depth discussions with key community partners such as Skyline College, Family Connections, Izzi Early Education, All Five, the Family Child Care Organization, and Kristen Anderson Consulting. These discussions provided valuable qualitative insights into the community's challenges and needs.

Throughout October and November 2023, we continued to engage with our initial partners and began conversations with new stakeholders, enriching our understanding with additional expert insights. This period also included conducting video interviews with local elected officials, child care providers, and early education leaders from organizations such as AllFive, BuildUp, and First5. Moreover, we collected more detailed written statements from community members who initially participated in our anonymous survey and wished to share more about their experiences.

In November 2023, we presented preliminary data to the Workforce, Quality, and Access Committees of the Child Care Partnership Council. This crucial feedback session helped us refine our findings and ensure our final recommendations were closely aligned with the needs identified by child care professionals.

Our efforts culminated in the “Women’s Economic Power: Surviving to Thriving to Driving Change” Conference on March 28, 2024. This event, which drew over 200 participants, not only spotlighted the economic challenges faced by women in San Mateo County but also served as a forum to explore strategic child care solutions. Keynote speeches and panel discussions, particularly a notable segment led by Commissioner Dayna Chung with Sarah Kinahan and Christine Padilla, focused on using the collected data to advocate for transformative child care policies.

Following the conference, we integrated the feedback collected through structured discussions and digital forms into our comprehensive report. Slated for submission in the fall of 2024, this report aims to influence child care policy at the county level by providing a detailed analysis backed by community-driven data and expert recommendations.

Definitions & Terms

Women and girls: refers to gender expansive adults and youth (cis, trans, non-binary, gender non-conforming, and gender queer).

Child Care¹: Child care involves the care and supervision of children, typically from infancy to age thirteen, across a variety of settings, activities, and cultural contexts, including family child care homes, nannies, preschools, child care centers, and after-school programs. Its primary goal is to provide a safe, nurturing environment where children can grow physically, emotionally, and socially while their parents are engaged in work, education, or other commitments. Effective child care settings not only ensure children's safety but also foster their educational and social development.²

¹ Many child care providers now prefer the terms “child care” or “early childhood education” over “daycare” to better represent the professionalism, structure, and educational focus of their services. This choice of terminology highlights the trained and deliberate approach taken by educators in supporting child development and assisting family support systems.

² Early Learning and Child Care: These terms are often used interchangeably because they reflect the dual focus of child care settings on providing safe care and promoting learning and development. High-quality child care programs integrate early learning into their daily routines, making education an inherent part of care.



Early childhood education: Early childhood education (ECE)—A term defined using the developmental definition of birth through approximately age 8, regardless of programmatic, regulatory, funding, or delivery sectors or mechanisms.³

Examples of Types of Child Care Settings:

There are many types of child care settings and programs offering a wide variety of services and support. These are just a few of the types that support children and families, infants through school age.

- **Family Child Care Homes:** This type of care is provided in the caregiver's home, often in a more intimate setting with fewer children than a center, allowing for more personalized care. Providers may care for children of various ages.
- **Preschools or Child Care Centers:** These facilities are often larger and staffed by multiple educators. Child care centers and preschools are typically licensed and regulated, providing structured programs for children ranging from infants to school-aged kids, though many preschools only offer programs for 2-5 year olds. Child care centers may offer care to a wider range of children's ages, from infants to school-aged children and may be designed to support working parents, offering longer hours to cover a full workday, and often provide care for children from a few months old up to twelve years.
- **Nannies:** A nanny provides child care within the family's home and may offer more flexible hours and duties that can include household chores related to child care. Nannies may live in or out of the family's home.
- **Before and After School Programs:** These programs cater to school-aged children needing care before and after school hours. They can be based in schools, centers, or provided by community organizations.
- **FFN (Family, Friend, and Neighbor) Care:** FFN care refers to informal child care provided by relatives, friends, or neighbors. This type of care is often chosen for its flexibility, trustworthiness, and often lower cost.

Caregiving: Caregiving refers to the act of providing care and assistance to another person who might need help due to various reasons such as age, illness, disability, or other conditions. This assistance can range from performing basic daily tasks to more complex medical responsibilities. Individuals requiring care can be of any age but are often elderly, children, or adults with disabilities or chronic illnesses that make them dependent on others for care and support. Effective caregiving often requires a network of support, including access to healthcare professionals, community resources, support groups, and sometimes professional caregiving services to share the load.

Caregivers: Caregivers can be professional health care providers such as nurses or aides, or they can be informal caregivers, typically family members or friends who provide care without pay. Informal caregiving is a significant and often undervalued service and support.

³ [Definition from the National Association for the Education of Young Children](#)



What we knew: state/national research

The Child Care Landscape

Child care stands as vital infrastructure for creating healthier, more equitable, and prosperous communities, with profound implications for the wealth and well-being of women worldwide. Despite this significance, child care has not received the prioritization it deserves. As one New York Times reporter recently said, *“If the United States treated other elements of infrastructure that are critical to the economy the way it does child care, you could imagine the chaos: Car owners would be left building bridges out of duct tape and scrap iron to get to the office, begging close relatives to come by each morning to hold a traffic light up at the corner.”*⁴ The U.S. currently holds the highest child care costs relative to average minimum wage among developed economies.⁵ Shockingly, UNICEF ranks the U.S. 40th out of 41 OECD and EU countries for its child care policies. This inadequacy stems from decades of underfunding compounded by challenges exacerbated during the pandemic. Nearly 2.8 million California workers have children under the age of 6⁶, and approximately one-third of them struggle to find suitable child care options.⁷

Access to Child Care in California

Access to child care in California is severely constrained by two primary factors: cost and availability of slots. Although several publicly funded early learning programs exist to provide working families with affordable and high-quality early childhood education (ECE) opportunities, the demand far exceeds the available supply due to funding constraints. Federal and state early learning initiatives serve over 463,278 children and families, representing only 16% of children from birth through age 5.⁸

Quality child care is not only scarce but also exorbitantly priced. The annual cost of center-based infant care in California averages \$18,201, while home-based infant care costs around \$12,268.23 annually. For a two-parent household, child care expenses can reach approximately \$10,000 per year, constituting 12-13% of their income—well above the 7% threshold defined by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as a financial burden.⁹

⁴ Emily Peck, in the [New York Times](#)

⁵ OECD 2020 data: net child care costs (% of household income for couples making minimum wage each country)

⁶ US Census Bureau

⁷ Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

⁸ First5 Years Fund California Fact Sheet; data from US Census Bureau.

⁹ [ACE, ECE State Profile Data, 2019](#) from US Department of Health and Human Services.



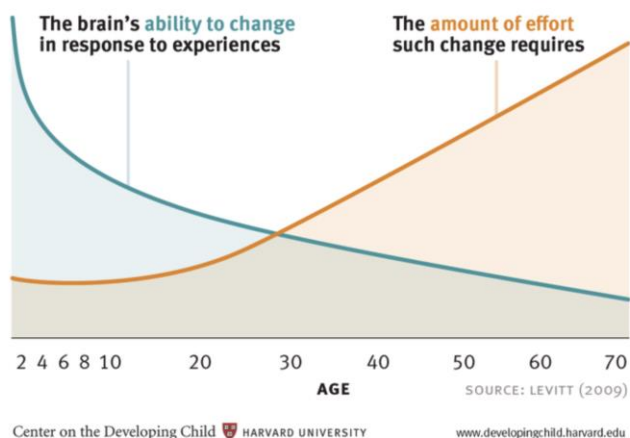
These costs disproportionately affect the financial well-being of women, single parents, low-income families, and families of color or immigrant backgrounds, exacerbating existing disparities in wealth and economic stability.¹⁰ Addressing these challenges is essential to advancing gender equity, economic prosperity, and wellbeing for not just women but for working families and communities at large.

Child Care Impact on Kids

Brain Growth and Development

Eighty-five percent of brain growth occurs during the first years of life. This period of early childhood developmental changes profoundly shapes a child's future. Research from the National Academy of Sciences and the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard highlights the critical importance of early childhood as a period of remarkable growth, ideal for investments that yield lifelong benefits.¹¹ High-quality child care

experiences significantly enhance children's cognitive abilities, school performance, and overall health and behavior.



Kinder-Readiness

The architecture of a child's brain is significantly shaped by early experiences, an essential foundation for future learning and development.¹² Research underscores the critical role of high-quality early childhood education, complemented by activities like early language development at home through reading, singing, and playing, and nurturing relationships, in building this strong

foundation. The readiness of a child upon entering kindergarten is closely linked to long-term academic success, higher earning potential, and improved health outcomes.

Superintendent Nancy Magee of the San Mateo County Office of Education emphasizes the urgent need to prioritize access to high-quality early learning to address equity disparities. Initiatives like The Big Lift, led by San Mateo County and its partners, are dedicated to enhancing third-grade reading proficiency (80% by the end of 3rd grade) by investing in high-quality preschools, teacher development, and evidence-based language and

¹⁰ [How the High Cost of Child Care Hurts Families, Workers and the Economy](#), June 24, 2023 by the Annie E Casey Foundation

¹¹ "InBrief: The Science of Early Childhood Development," Harvard University Center on the Developing Child.

¹² ["Why early childhood care and education matters"](#). UNESCO, updated April 2023



literacy practices. Their goal is to provide two years of high-quality preschool for San Mateo County children, recognizing the transformative impact of early education investments on long-term outcomes.

Many K-12 administrators, like Superintendent Magee, advocate strongly for early childhood education as a foundational pillar of academic success and equity. Angie Dillon-Shore of First5 Sonoma County highlights the critical link between addressing achievement gaps and dismantling systemic and structural racism through policies supporting family economic mobility, asset-building, and empowerment for marginalized communities, especially Black, Latinx, and Indigenous/Native American parents.

Investments in high-quality early learning and care not only enhance cognitive abilities and academic performance but also contribute to overall health and social-emotional development. Students who enter kindergarten prepared are more likely to thrive academically, fostering better educational and economic outcomes. Conversely, students with inadequate access to quality early learning opportunities are unlikely to catch up, thus perpetuating disparities and hindering children's developmental progress and future success.¹³ On the other hand, babies and young children supported with the resources they need to be ready for kindergarten and beyond have better educational and economic outcomes – they pass those advantages on to their children.

Children with Special Needs

High quality early childhood education is essential for all children. For children with disabilities or special needs, the benefits of early detection and/or treatment are significant. According to the Centers for Disease Control, intervention is likely to be more effective when it is provided earlier in life rather than later as it can change a child's developmental path and improve outcomes for children, families, and communities.¹⁴ According to First5, "Many children enter ECE programs with special needs that have not yet been diagnosed. An ECE provider may be the first person to become concerned about the child's behavior, development or health."¹⁵ Inclusive programs are beneficial for all children as it provides opportunities to celebrate the intersectionality of our communities, including diverse cultures, languages, ability status and more. As with so many aspects of early childhood, there are not only short and long-term benefits, but gains that extend beyond the child or family - reaching entire communities.

Child Care Impact on Women & Families

How Child Care Is Impacting Women in the Workplace

In regions like Silicon Valley, including San Mateo County, where significant resources are invested to encourage young women to pursue careers in STEM fields, the lack of robust support systems during early motherhood or primary caregiving periods is a glaring oversight. Despite substantial investments in education

¹³ www.choosechildren.org

¹⁴ [Why Act Early, Centers for Disease Control.](#)

¹⁵ First5 California, Sokal-Guiterrez, 2001.



and training, many women must pause or abandon their careers due to inadequate child care support. This not only deprives local companies of valuable expertise but also undermines workforce development investments, limiting the community's economic and innovative potential. According to the Center for American Progress, women who take time out of the workforce to care for children often see a reduction in their annual earnings by 39%, a penalty that significantly affects their long-term financial stability.¹⁶

This gap in support impacts not only individual women but also the broader economy. As noted by Lean In and McKinsey & Company's "Women in the Workplace" 2020 report¹⁷ systemic barriers prevent economies from benefiting fully from the potential contributions of highly skilled workers. Moreover, advancing women's equality in the workplace could add up to \$12 trillion to global GDP by 2025.

The financial toll on all working families, particularly women, is substantial. Women disproportionately bear the brunt of employment consequences related to caregiving, with 85% reducing work hours or productivity due to child-related challenges. This creates a significant gender disparity in workforce participation and imposes a dual burden of increased caregiving responsibilities and workplace penalties, leading to significant annual costs—up to \$17,000 on average, with even higher impacts on African American and Latina mothers.¹⁸

Expanding access to child care could yield profound benefits, particularly for all women, especially those who live in high cost areas such as San Mateo County. Studies by the Federal Reserve suggest that better child care access could increase women's labor force participation by 17%, and by 31% for those without a college degree, potentially adding an average of \$94,000 over a woman's lifetime, including \$20,000 in savings and \$10,000 in additional Social Security benefits.¹⁹

While the lack of supportive child care systems affects women across various socioeconomic backgrounds, low-income, BIPOC women often face the most severe consequences. They encounter significant hurdles in balancing demanding, lower-paying jobs with the struggle to secure reliable and affordable child care, making it exceedingly difficult to provide for their families or advance economically. The impacts on these women often extend to their entire families, highlighting the need for enhanced child care support to promote gender equity and economic prosperity.

How Child Care Challenges are Impacting Families

Investments in child care hold the potential to benefit everyone involved, including children, families, educators, and the economy as a whole. However, the persistent underinvestment in child care has disproportionately impacted families, particularly women. "A robust child care system is essential for children

¹⁶ [Center for American Progress](#), Cited by CAP, Taking even a short time away from work is consequential: An analysis from the Institute for Women's Policy Research found that over a 15-year period, women who took just one year off work had earnings that were 40 percent lower than women who did not take time off.

¹⁷ Lean In and McKinsey & Company, "Women in the Workplace" 2020 report.

¹⁸ [America's Moms Are Still Suffering. We've Just Stopped Talking About It](#), National Women's Law Center.

¹⁹ [How Child Care Impacts Parents' Labor Force Participation](#), July 10, 2023 by Alexander Bick, Victoria Gregory, Oksana Leukhina, Federal Reserve Bank of St Louis.



to thrive and our economy to prosper. Yet our current approach fails children, parents, and child care workers by every measure," says Lisa Hamilton, President, and CEO of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. "Without accessible and affordable child care, working parents face impossible choices, impacting not only their families but also their employers."²⁰

Child care plays a crucial role in supporting California's workforce. According to the [Federal Reserve](#), over 51% of California's workforce are parents, and 35% of them have young children. It is imperative to retain families with young children as they contribute significantly to economic growth. Research by Mildred Warner and Rebecca Baran-Rees from Cornell University shows that families are the largest spenders in local economies, contributing not only to goods but also to services that support local and regional economic activities. Moreover, today's children represent tomorrow's workforce and are fundamental to sustained economic prosperity.²¹

Despite the rhetoric surrounding the importance of families, budget allocations often do not align with these values.²² National data indicates a lack of prioritization for children and families, with overall investments projected to decline despite recent increases during the pandemic, such as the child tax credit.²³ Families, along with early educators, often bear the burden of underinvestment and effectively subsidize the child care sector. Under-investment combined with high costs of living, particularly those that impact families, are making it difficult for young families to stay in the Bay Area. San Mateo and Santa Clara counties lost 10% of children from birth to age 5 over the last decade, even while the total population grew. And, this trend has only worsened since COVID19.²⁴ Reversing these trends isn't about choosing one generation or group over another but rather demonstrating through dollars the importance of children and families and making them part of multigenerational planning. We must move beyond the silos of age segregated services and begin to think about how to integrate and share services across agencies and across the life cycle."²⁵

Invisible Work

This report seeks to look at the lifelong impacts of child care on women. And, it is imperative that this analysis acknowledges the "invisible work" that women do inside and outside of the home - providing care and support to their families and communities. Child care and the often unpaid labor performed by women not only encompass household tasks and caregiving but also extend into community service and volunteering, which significantly contribute to societal well-being yet remain largely unrecognized in traditional economic assessments. This broader spectrum of unpaid work has deep social, economic, and cultural implications.

Economic Impact

²⁰ [How the High Cost of Child Care Hurts Families, Workers and the Economy](#), June 24, 2023 by the Annie E Casey Foundation

²¹ [The Economic Importance of Children with Families, Cornell University](#).

²² Spending on Children and the Elderly, Julia B. Isaacs, November 5, 2009, Center for Economic Security and Opportunity, Brookings Institution, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/spending-on-children-and-the-elderly/>

²³ [HOW MUCH GOVERNMENT SPENDING GOES TO CHILDREN? DECEMBER 18, 2023](#)

²⁴ <https://choosechildren.org>

²⁵ [The Economic Importance of Families with Children](#) By Mildred Warner and Rebecca Baran-Rees, Cornell University



The economic contribution of women’s unpaid labor, including child care and community service, is substantial but rarely acknowledged in official economic metrics like GDP. According to the [OECD](#), if monetized, unpaid care work could account for approximately 13% to 50% of GDP, depending on the country (OECD, 2019). Beyond child care, women are disproportionately represented in unpaid community work. [The Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) reports that 27.8% of women engage in volunteer work compared to 21.8% of men, often extending their unpaid labor beyond the home into broader community settings,²⁶ exacerbating the invisible work done at home. Studies by the the IMF²⁷ and United Nations²⁸ substantiate the significant cost of devaluing women’s labor and a vital missing link in the analysis of gender gaps in labor outcomes understanding economic gender outcomes.

Societal and Personal Consequences

The extensive involvement of women in unpaid care and community volunteering comes with significant personal and professional consequences:

- Professional & Financial Impacts and the Double (or Triple) Shift: In addition to childcare/eldercare and household responsibilities, women who engage in a “third shift” such as community service or other type of unpaid volunteer work, reducing the available hours to invest in activities that are wage or wealth building.
- Health and Well-being: Balancing multiple forms of unpaid labor can exacerbate stress and physical exhaustion. The American Psychological Association notes that women report significantly higher stress levels than men, largely due to the multiplicity of their unpaid roles.²⁹

Advocacy and Policy Changes

Recognizing and supporting unpaid caregivers and community volunteers involves:

- Valuation of Unpaid Labor: Economic valuation of all forms of unpaid work, including community volunteering, should be recognized for its substantial contribution to society.
- Supportive Policies: Policies such as paid family leave, child care subsidies, and community support grants can help mitigate the burden on those who contribute significantly to community welfare. [The International Labour Organization](#)³⁰ highlights the need for policies that recognize and support unpaid community and care work to promote gender equality.
- Enhanced Community Support: Encouraging men’s participation in community and volunteer services can help balance the gender distribution in unpaid work, reducing the overall burden on women.
- Cultural Shifts: Shifting cultural perceptions about caregiving and community service being predominantly women’s responsibilities is crucial for advancing gender equality. Promoting shared responsibilities within families and communities, and recognizing all forms of caregiving and volunteer work as skilled and valuable, are vital steps.

²⁶ [Bureau of Labor Statistics 2019 report.](#)

²⁷ [IMF report](#)

²⁸ [United Nations report](#) from OECD Development Centre and from [United Nations Sustainable Goals](#)

²⁹ [American Psychological Association 2018 Report, “Stress in America”.](#)

³⁰ [International Labour Organization](#), 2019 report.



The Commission for the Status of Women found in its survey that 50% of respondents engage in unpaid work outside the home - 65% report doing more than 8 hours per week inside the home. Addressing the broad spectrum of unpaid labor by women in child care and community service requires comprehensive societal acknowledgment, economic recognition, and supportive public policies. Accurately recognizing and compensating this work supports not only individual caregivers and volunteers but also contributes to broader economic stability and advances gender equality. This holistic approach underscores the essential roles that women play across various sectors of society, advocating for systemic changes to support and value these contributions appropriately.

Domestic Violence and Family Justice

One of the most significant challenges faced by survivors of domestic violence is the financial barrier to leaving abusive partners and establishing independence. Survivors often express a critical need for affordable, flexible, and reliable child care, along with other essential supports like housing and transportation, to create a path to safety and stability for themselves and their children. Research indicates that survivors encounter unique challenges when trying to arrange and access child care services, which can impact their ability to leave abusive situations.³¹

Financial constraints play a central role in survivors' decisions to stay with or return to abusive partners. According to a survey, 83 percent of respondents identified their inability to support themselves or their children on their income as a key factor in remaining in an abusive relationship. Additionally, 50 percent of respondents reported difficulties affording child care, highlighting the critical need for accessible and affordable child care services for survivors seeking independence.³²

Child care not only supports parents in gaining financial stability but also contributes to children's safety, well-being, and recovery from trauma associated with domestic violence. Access to high-quality child care programs, such as Head Start, can provide a nurturing and supportive environment that promotes children's healing and development.³³

Research suggests that providing concrete support, including affordable child care, reduces parental stress associated with financial insecurity, which in turn decreases the risk of child maltreatment within families affected by domestic violence. Supporting survivors with comprehensive services that address their child care needs is essential in empowering them to break free from abusive relationships and create safer environments for themselves and their children.

³¹ [Futures without Violence, 2022.](#)

³² [Futures without Violence, 2022.](#)

³³ [Responding to Domestic Violence](#), Health and Human Services.



Child Care Impact on Educators

Early learning educators steward children’s development. With 85% of brain growth occurring by the age of five, educators lay the foundation for social-emotional, cognitive and physical growth and enable lifelong learning and well-being. Yet, early childhood educators have some of the lowest paying jobs in the United States, earning poverty-level wages. Women and people of color, who make up the majority of the early learning workforce, effectively subsidize child care in America through their low-wages. They experience poverty at 8 times the rate as K-8 teachers (and make less than half of a kindergarten teacher’s salary); 58% of early educators rely on public income support.³⁴ More than 60% of child care workers report having difficulty paying for their own food and utility bills in the last month.³⁵ The remedy isn’t in professional development alone. In fact, the majority of center based educators already have a degree. According to the [Center for the Study of Child Care Employment](#) at UC Berkeley, graduates with a B.A. in Early Childhood Education have the lowest projected lifetime earnings among college majors. They advocate for increased compensation. Nationwide, the average child care worker salary is \$37,430 or \$18/hour. Low wages due to insufficient public funding are and will remain the primary driver of the early educator shortage. It is no surprise that here in California, the child care workforce has decreased 13% since the start of the pandemic, adding another 9,300 to an already alarming shortage of early educators.

Housing & Child Care

According to the [Center for Budget and Policy Priorities](#), stable and affordable housing, along with high-quality, affordable child care, are essential for economic stability and children's development. However, inadequate funding means only 1 in 6 eligible children receive child care assistance, and 1 in 5 eligible families receive housing assistance. This lack of support leads to challenges for low-income families, forcing them into overcrowded or substandard housing and lower-quality child care arrangements.

Child care plays a critical role in supporting working parents, reducing absences or disruptions at work, and improving economic circumstances and children's well-being.³⁶ Many low-income families allocate a significant portion of their budget to child care, which impacts their ability to afford safe, quality care. [Freddie Mac's](#) Chief Economist, Sam Khater, highlights the financial strain caused by child care costs, leaving families with less money for housing. On average, families paying for child care spend about half of the median mortgage payment and nearly 80% of the median rent.³⁷

The link between child care, housing, and women's economic well-being is evident, with rising child care costs impacting women's labor force participation. Access to affordable child care remains a challenge, hindering

³⁴ Pay Inequity: “Pay Inequity in Early Childhood,” Early Childhood Workforce Index 2018, and The Early Childhood Workforce Index 2020, Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley.

³⁵ [How the High Cost of Child Care Hurts Families, Workers and the Economy](#), June 24, 2023 by the Annie E Casey Foundation

³⁶ Child Care and Housing: Big Expenses With Too Little Help Available APRIL 26, 2019 BY DOUGLAS RICE, STEPHANIE SCHMIT, AND HANNAH MATTHEWS at the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities.

³⁷ <https://themreport.com/news/data/01-13-2020/child-care-costs-impact-on-housing-and-income>



women's ability to work and affecting family budgets for housing expenses or saving for homeownership.³⁸ Investments in child care not only benefit families but also contribute to increased property values in communities. Research indicates that for each dollar spent on child care, local property values increase by about \$13 per year, underscoring the broader economic impact of accessible and quality child care on housing and community development.³⁹

The Economics of Child Care

Financial Impacts on Businesses & Economies

Access to affordable, high-quality child care is crucial for increasing parental labor force participation and improving family economic stability. Employers that provide child care services experience higher employee retention rates and lower absenteeism. Additionally, employers offering child care support often see boosts in employee morale and productivity. According to McKinsey & Company, gender-diverse companies are 15% more likely to outperform their peers.⁴⁰

Despite these benefits, widespread challenges in accessing affordable child care significantly impact both state and national economies. [The Council for Strong America](#) reports that the U.S. economy suffers a loss of \$122 billion annually due to decreased earnings, productivity, and revenue stemming from child care issues. Businesses face a collective loss of \$23 billion, or \$1,640 per working parent, due to factors including lost revenue and additional hiring costs. Furthermore, governments lose about \$21 billion in income and sales tax revenues, equating to \$1,470 per working parent affected by insufficient child care.⁴¹ Specifically in California, the economic impact of the infant-toddler child care crisis is estimated at \$17 billion annually.

Internationally, the U.S. lags behind other OECD countries in female labor force participation, a disparity largely attributed to inadequate child care options. [The Council of Economic Advisors](#) suggests that reducing employment barriers for women could increase GDP by approximately 5%.⁴² Nobel laureate economist James Heckman research (highlighted in next section) demonstrates that investments in early childhood development yield an annual return on investment 13% annual return through improved educational, health, and social outcomes, alongside increased economic productivity and reduced crime rates - a rate that is higher than the average return of the S&P 500 over the last 30 years.

³⁸ [Family Budget Burdens Squeezing Housing: Child Care Costs](#), January 7, 2020, Freddie Mac.

³⁹ "Economic Impact." First Five Years Fund, 27 May 2020.

⁴⁰ [McKinsey & Company](#), "Diversity Matters"

⁴¹ [Ready Nation, Council for Strong America](#), "\$122 Billion: The Growing, Annual Cost of the Infant-Toddler Child Care Crisis Impact on families, businesses, and taxpayers has more than doubled since 2018"

⁴² [Brookings Institution Report citing Council of Economic Advisors](#).



Opportunity - Economic Multiplier Effect⁴³

Investing in child care carries a significant economic multiplier effect, generating two dollars of short-term economic output for every dollar spent—surpassing the typical multiplier of most industries.⁴⁴ These positive effects stem from the purchases made by child care providers and employees within various sectors. Early education and care can not only serve as vital public infrastructure but also represent an effective investment strategy.

As a matter of economic policy, the return on public investments in child care is substantial and immediate. When combined with the long-term benefits, the economic case becomes compelling. The failure to increase investments promptly is not due to the sector's lack of merit or worthiness but rather reflects systemic issues such as white supremacy, gender biases, and prioritization of profits over societal well-being.

Lifelong Benefits of Investments in Early Learning

Nobel Laureate and University of Chicago Economics Professor James Heckman's research⁴⁵ unequivocally demonstrates the extensive benefits of investing in quality early childhood education (ECE). Such investments pave the way for improved economic prospects for children and their parents, enabling increased workforce participation and earnings while equipping children with foundational skills for future success. Investing comprehensively in birth-to-five ECE proves to be a cost-effective method for mitigating the adverse effects of poverty on child development and adult opportunity, enhancing skills and productivity, strengthening families, and reducing reliance on costly social services.

Maternal employment is particularly pivotal for upward mobility, yielding gains in maternal education, workforce participation, and parental income. Heckman's longitudinal studies, such as the Perry Preschool Project, underscore the extensive benefits not only in education, health, and employment but also in second-generation outcomes. Investing in quality early childhood programs emerges as an effective strategy for improving the economy while combating intergenerational poverty.⁴⁶ Heckman's findings suggest that every dollar spent on high-quality birth-to-five programs for disadvantaged children can yield 13% per annum return on investment through enhanced education and health outcomes, parental employment gains, increased economic productivity, and reduced spending on healthcare and crime.

Further studies, such as those by researchers at Cornell University, reinforce the multifaceted benefits of investing in early childhood. These investments promote the social, emotional, and intellectual development of

⁴³ Multiplier effect: [“Economic Impacts of Early Care and Education in California”](#) by Jenifer MacGillvary and Laurel Lucia, August 2011, UC Berkeley Labor Center.

⁴⁴ Dr. Mildred Warner, City and Regional Planning, Cornell University

⁴⁵ [The Heckman Equation](#)

⁴⁶ Heckman and his co-author found substantial second-generation effects on education, employment, crime, school suspensions and health. The children of participants were less likely to be suspended from school, and more likely to complete regular or any other form of high school and to be employed full-time with some college experience. While present for both male and female children of participants, the wide range of beneficial effects are particularly strong for the male children of participants, especially those of male participants. [Perry Preschool: Intergenerational Effects Research Summary](#)



young children, enhance parental career opportunities and job retention for employers, and bolster the economy as a significant sector in its own right.

The "Heckman Curve" underscores the importance of early investments in children, starting even before birth with prenatal care. Society often invests insufficiently in later development stages when the potential for value creation is limited. Investing early and progressively building skills yield greater success for children and increased productivity while reducing societal expenditures on social services.

COVID19

A critical lesson from the COVID-19 pandemic is the dual role public schools play—not only as centers for academic learning but also as vital child care providers. This became evident when schools closed, and parents struggled to manage their children's education from home while fulfilling work responsibilities. The disruption highlighted how integrated schools are within the childcare infrastructure, serving as safe, structured environments where children can learn and grow while their parents work.

The pandemic called for a broader understanding of the intersection between care and education across all childhood stages. Early childhood education, often seen primarily as care, is fundamentally educational, laying the groundwork for lifelong learning. Similarly, while K-12 education is viewed mainly as academic, schools also provide essential care and support, contributing to the social, emotional, and physical well-being of students.

The need to treat early care with the same attention as K-12 education was underscored, emphasizing that schools do more than teach academic subjects; they are crucial for the overall care and development of children. This realization should guide policy enhancements to support children and families better, ensuring that care and education are accessible, high quality, and responsive to all children's needs. This approach advocates for integrating educational and care services into a seamless continuum that supports the holistic needs of children from early childhood through adolescence.

Another key lesson from the pandemic is the mismatch between school schedules and parental work schedules, highlighting the need to expand after-school and summer opportunities. This misalignment became clear as parents navigated remote schooling and work, revealing the inadequacy of existing programs to meet working families' needs. Therefore, enhancing these programs is crucial, not just for supervision but for enriching children's learning and development outside regular school hours. These programs are essential for providing continuity and stability for children, thus easing the burden on parents.

Increased investment in not only early childhood education but also after-school and summer programs as critical components of community infrastructure is vital. Such investment ensures all children, regardless of socio-economic status, access to safe, engaging, and educational environments year-round, supporting their development and aligning with the needs of modern workforce families, thereby enhancing societal stability and economic productivity.



COVID-19 National & State Impacts

The COVID-19 pandemic not only revealed the critical importance of child care in supporting families but also served to expose and exacerbate decades of chronic underfunding in the child care sector, affecting children, families, and providers profoundly. It was predicted early on that as many as half of California's child care programs could permanently close, with potential losses of 19,764 child care spaces in San Mateo County alone. Even before the pandemic, the child care industry operated on narrow margins, with staff earning poverty wages. During the pandemic, declining revenue, increased costs, and a higher risk of closure were exacerbated by factors such as reduced enrollment, physical distancing requirements, and additional safety measures.

Fortunately, bipartisan support for federal relief funding during the pandemic was a lifeline for many child care providers, sustaining this fragile sector. In California, this support reached 50,115 child care programs, benefiting up to 311,500 children.⁴⁷ These funds were vital in stabilizing the workforce, with wage bonuses and increased reimbursement rates allowing providers to keep up with costs and continue offering invaluable care to children and families.⁴⁸

Moreover, the expanded Child Tax Credit played a pivotal role in keeping 5.3 million individuals above the annual poverty line, significantly reducing child poverty to record lows.⁴⁹ These federal assistance measures, combined with strengthened economic and health security policies, contributed to historic declines in poverty and increased health coverage despite the pandemic's economic and health crises.

San Mateo County - Local Impacts⁵⁰

San Mateo County experienced severe challenges due to COVID-19, with potential closures of child care programs threatening a significant loss of child care spaces. The deficit of 23,591 child care spaces prior to the pandemic was compounded by the crisis, creating a potential shortfall of 43,355 spaces. Even during the pandemic, child care providers in San Mateo County faced numerous obstacles, including lost income from reduced utilization by families, physical distancing requirements that limited enrollment, and increased costs for training and safety measures.

Recognizing the critical role of child care in the local economy, community leaders advocated for and established the Child Care Relief Fund. With an initial allocation of \$4.45 million from CARES Act funds and subsequent private fundraising efforts totaling over \$850,000, this fund provided essential financial support to child care providers. The fund supported 208 family child care homes and 79 child care centers, serving a total

⁴⁷ ACF, "[Child Care Stabilization Funding State Fact Sheets](#)" As of December 31, 2022

⁴⁸ California Budget and Policy Center, [California's Child Care Providers Need a Substantial Pay Raise](#).

⁴⁹ [Center for Budget and Policy Priorities](#), "In Pandemic's Second Year, Government Policies Helped Drive Child Poverty Rate to a Record Low, Cut Uninsured Rate, New Census Data Show," Statement of Sharon Parrott, President, on 2021 Census Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Data

⁵⁰ [Child Care Relief Fund Information and Report by Community Equity Collaborative](#)



of 8,000 of San Mateo County's most vulnerable children. Grantees expressed gratitude for the support, highlighting the impact on staffing, operations, and the ability to serve essential workers' families.

In addition to supporting child care providers, efforts were made to address the widening opportunity gap in education, with initiatives such as learning hubs aimed at supporting socioeconomically disadvantaged students during distance learning. The County of San Mateo established the Learning Hubs Expansion⁵¹ Fund in January 2021 to increase access for SED (socioeconomically disadvantaged) students. This \$1.98 million fund added 730 learning hub spaces for the remainder of the school year, benefiting students who lacked access to essential resources for remote learning.

Despite these efforts, challenges persist, emphasizing the ongoing need for sustained investment and systemic changes to support children, families, and child care providers in San Mateo County. Efforts like the Child Care Relief Fund and Learning Hubs Expansion Fund demonstrate the importance of collaborative community initiatives and sustained financial support to address the profound impacts of the pandemic on child care and education.

Lessons Learned and Future Efforts

The challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic underscored the critical importance of robust support systems for child care providers and families. The experiences and lessons learned from this crisis can serve as valuable insights for shaping future efforts to strengthen the child care sector and address broader societal challenges:

Sustained Investment in Child Care Infrastructure: The pandemic highlighted the vulnerability of the child care sector due to chronic underfunding. Moving forward, San Mateo County and local partners in collaboration with government agencies and partners at all levels must prioritize sustained investment in child care infrastructure, including increased funding for provider support, workforce development, and access to affordable, high-quality care for families - including programs that support school-aged children.

Equitable Access to Child Care: The disparities exacerbated by the pandemic underscored the need for equitable access to child care services. Even in San Mateo County, many children, families and child care providers are still struggling. Future efforts should focus on addressing barriers to access, especially for low-income families and communities of color, through targeted investments, subsidies, and expanded eligibility criteria for financial assistance programs. Additionally, investing in programs that support the wide range of family needs, from care during non-traditional hours to after school or summer programs for school-aged children is vital.

Workforce Support and Compensation: The pandemic emphasized the essential role of child care providers and educators. Future efforts should prioritize workforce support, including fair compensation, professional

⁵¹ [Learning Hubs Information and Report by Community Equity Collaborative](#)



development opportunities, and access to benefits. Strengthening the child care workforce is crucial for ensuring high-quality care and retention of skilled professionals.

Community Collaboration and Partnerships: The success of initiatives like the Child Care Relief Fund and Learning Hubs Expansion Fund, administered by Community Equity Collaborative in partnership with key stakeholders including county leaders, the Child Care Partnership Council, 4C's, BuildUp, First5 among others, demonstrated the power of community collaboration and partnerships. Future efforts should leverage collective action, bringing together government agencies, philanthropic organizations, businesses, and community leaders to develop comprehensive solutions that address the diverse needs of children, families, and providers.

Resilience and Preparedness: The pandemic highlighted the importance of safety nets for families and child care providers. Future efforts should prioritize building resilient child care systems capable of adapting to emergencies while maintaining continuity of care and support for families.

Intersectional Approach to Social Challenges: The pandemic revealed the interconnected nature of social challenges, such as child care, housing education, poverty, and workforce participation. Future efforts should adopt an intersectional approach that considers the broader social determinants of well-being, addressing systemic inequities and promoting holistic solutions that support families comprehensively.

Ending Child Poverty

In August of 2023, Jackie Speier hosted *The San Mateo Rising: Ending Child Poverty Summit*, a full day dedicated towards addressing the most profound crises in San Mateo County—child poverty. The keynote address was delivered by Dr. Matthew Desmond, Professor of Sociology at Princeton University and author of Pulitzer Prize winning best-seller, *Evicted*, and best-seller, *Poverty, by America*. His message to the leaders of San Mateo County was clear - that we CAN end child poverty if we are willing to change the way we think about it. For example, when the Child Tax Credit was expanded as part of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, child poverty in the United States had the greatest reduction ever recorded, falling nearly in half (9.7% to 5.2%). These lessons provide a roadmap for future efforts to strengthen child care systems, promote equity, and address societal challenges. By prioritizing sustained investment, equitable access, workforce support, community collaboration, resilience, and an intersectional approach, stakeholders can work towards building more resilient, inclusive, and supportive communities for children and families.



Relationship between Wealth, Wages & Caregiving

The CSW had two committees focused on women’s economic power, women’s wealth gap and child care. There is a profound link between caregiving responsibilities, such as child care, and the economic power and well-being of women, underscoring their deep interconnection. This necessitates the adoption of holistic frameworks to address these issues comprehensively. While the primary focus of this report is on child care, it forms part of the CSW’s broader initiative to enhance women’s economic power by addressing the interrelated factors that significantly influence it. Below are a few ways in which we see this interconnectedness.

Economic Participation: In San Mateo County, where living expenses exceed the national average, reliable and affordable caregiving services are crucial for enabling women, particularly mothers, to enter and remain in the workforce. Without access to affordable caregiving, women often cannot work or must reduce their working hours, impacting their earnings, career progression, and future pension benefits. In fact, women who take time off work or opt for part-time positions to manage child care responsibilities often face immediate reductions in their income. Over a career, this can add up significantly. A Center for American Progress study indicates that a woman who takes a five-year break from a career could miss out on about \$467,000 in income, Social Security benefits, and retirement assets over her lifetime.⁵²

Wage Gap: Women in California, especially those with caregiving responsibilities, are more likely to opt for part-time work or lower-paying but more flexible jobs to manage their caregiving duties. This choice significantly contributes to the gender wage gap, which is particularly acute in high-cost areas.

Career Advancement: The 'motherhood penalty'—career interruptions for child-rearing or other caregiving duties—can lead to significant professional setbacks, particularly for the 'sandwich generation' who care for both children and aging parents. In California’s competitive job markets, prolonged absences can severely impact long-term career trajectories and earnings, compounding the challenges faced by women balancing multiple caregiving responsibilities.

Economic Growth and Community Health: The limitation on women’s workforce participation due to inadequate caregiving options represents a missed opportunity for economic expansion. Improving access to quality, affordable caregiving could notably boost California’s GDP by increasing women’s labor participation. Moreover, caregiving support benefits the entire community by maintaining family stability and cohesion, which in turn nurtures a healthier, more productive society.

Social Inequality: The scarcity of affordable caregiving is particularly burdensome for low-income families in California, perpetuating poverty cycles, especially among single mothers. Communities suffer when families, unable to afford living expenses or caregiving, relocate in search of more sustainable lifestyles. This migration can erode local economies, reduce the diversity of communities, and strain social and educational systems by decreasing enrollment and community engagement.

⁵² [Center for American Progress Hidden Cost of Child Care Calculator](#)



What we knew: local data

The local data reaffirms statewide and national trends regarding challenges within the child care sector and their impact on working families, particularly women. This report draws from multiple sources, including the Child Care Partnership Council 2022 Needs Assessment, the 2023 Sustainable San Mateo County Report, and the 2022 San Mateo County Nanny Survey.

Child Care Partnership Council 2022 Needs Assessment⁵³

The Needs Assessment provides a detailed view of the child care scenario for children aged 0-12 in San Mateo County. Despite having 41,350 child care slots available, there is a demand for 58,500, creating a shortfall of over 17,000 slots. This shortage is most pronounced in infant/toddler and school-age care. Of the available spaces, 14% (approximately 5,800) are in Family Child Care Homes (FCCHs), while the remaining 86% (about 35,600) are in child care centers, both licensed and license-exempt. By age group, 7% of FCCHs and center spaces combined are serving Infants, 45% provide care to Preschool Age children, and 48% provide care to School Age children. Additionally, 47% of subsidized programs report approximately 455 unused spaces due to staff shortages.

The child care workforce in our county comprises approximately 5,300 individuals, with wages ranging from \$20 per hour for aides/support staff to \$31 per hour for directors. To meet a livable wage standard, these wages should ideally range from \$36 to \$52 per hour, reflecting the high cost of living in the Bay Area. Notably, individuals aged 18-39 are most likely to leave the child care sector, necessitating a wage increase of 65-127%, adjusted for education and experience, to attract and retain qualified educators.

The impact of these shortages is profound, with 73% of survey respondents having turned down work due to inadequate child care availability. Addressing these challenges, such as raising wages to a livable level, would require an annual investment of \$207 million, with an estimated economic benefit of \$389 million annually to San Mateo County.

2022 San Mateo County Nanny Survey

Nannies play a crucial role within the child care workforce, particularly in meeting the unique needs of working families. As part of the license-exempt child care sector, nannies provide personalized and individualized care within the familiar setting of a family's home. This setting often allows for more flexibility in terms of scheduling and care arrangements, making it a preferred option for many working parents, particularly those with multiple children or complex scheduling needs including non-traditional hours. Some nannies also reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of the families they serve.

⁵³ [Link to Child Care Needs Assessment from the Child Care Partnership Council](#)



The 2022 survey conducted by The Institute for Families and Nannies (TIFFAN) in collaboration with the Child Care Partnership Council reveals valuable insights. Nannies in San Mateo County are dedicated professionals, with twice the likelihood of being foreign-born and holding less than an associate degree. Many express a desire for professional development pathways leading to certificates or credentials in child care or early childhood education. Contrary to stereotypes, nearly half of San Mateo County nannies work in cities where family incomes are below the county average. The survey report includes recommendations, such as developing bilingual professional development opportunities, to support this vital segment of the child care workforce.

Family Child Care Brief

The Family Child Care Brief is a subset of the 2022 Child Care Needs Assessment. Family child care home (FCCH) providers⁵⁴ are a vital yet often overlooked part of the child care sector. Similar to nannies, they offer smaller, home-based settings for early learning and care and often reflect the demographics of the families they serve in terms of language, ethnicity, and culture. Some of the advantages that families find with FCCH's include flexibility with nontraditional schedules and care for mixed ages. Additionally, they meet a significant portion (43%) of the infant toddler care needs of families in our county. The number of FCCH spaces in 2022 was 5,766, down 897 spaces, or 13 percent, from 2017, likely due to the impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic, which started in early 2020, as well as the high cost of living in San Mateo County. The current shortage of infant care is about 5,800, with only 34 percent of demand currently met.

Sustainable San Mateo County

The Well-Being of Children, Youth & Families in San Mateo County 2023 Indicators Report⁵⁵

The "Indicators Report 2023" by Sustainable San Mateo County delves deeply into the systemic challenges facing children, youth, and families in the region, with a particular focus on the pivotal role of child care in community stability and development. Despite San Mateo County's relatively higher median household income and lower unemployment rates compared to the state average, the report reveals that one-third of households still struggle to meet basic needs. The issue is particularly stark in the context of child care, where there is a significant shortfall in available care spaces. In 2022, the demand for child care was for 58,505 spaces, but 30% of this need went unmet (17,157 slots) due to insufficient supply, impacting economic and educational opportunities for families.

The report identifies the child care workforce as underpaid, with the average child care worker earning significantly below the necessary living wage in the region. This economic challenge is a barrier to expanding

⁵⁴ Family child care homes are licensed by the State's Community Care Licensing Division to provide care in the caregiver's residence for periods of less than 24 hours per day while parents are away. Family child care homes are allowed by right in any residence. Family child care providers with a "small" license can care for up to 8 children, and those with a "large license" can care for up to 14 children with an assistant.

⁵⁵ [Link to report by Sustainable San Mateo County](#)



child care services, which are crucial for supporting working parents and fostering economic growth. Additionally, the lack of affordable child care exacerbates housing instability, which negatively affects educational outcomes for children, particularly among Latinx students and English learners.

Housing instability further impacts children's educational outcomes and future opportunities. Students facing housing insecurity are more likely to experience chronic absenteeism and have lower graduation rates. The report highlights that over 2,600 children have faced housing insecurity during a specified period, with a substantial number living in overcrowded conditions. This instability disproportionately affects Latinx students and English learners, exacerbating educational challenges.

To address these interconnected challenges, Sustainable San Mateo County recommends several strategic actions focused on enhancing child care infrastructure and support systems. These include increasing state and county funding for child care subsidies to help more working parents afford quality care and to support child care providers financially. The report also suggests expanding the guaranteed income program to provide more financial support to families, thereby enabling more parents to return to the workforce. Additionally, efforts to make child care more affordable and accessible could significantly relieve the economic pressures on families, contributing to broader community stability and growth.

Moreover, the report advocates for the creation of a new San Mateo County department, similar to Santa Clara County's Department of Family and Children's Service. This department would evaluate and improve services that support children and families, especially those with limited incomes. It would facilitate coordination across entities that serve this population to address overarching issues such as policy analysis, collaboration, and strategic initiatives, ensuring a more integrated approach to supporting family and child welfare in the county.

This report underscores that broad and growing consensus on the need to prioritize children and families in San Mateo County, ensuring that every child has access to the resources needed to thrive in a nurturing environment.

Santa Clara County Office of Children and Family Policy

2022-2023 Annual Report⁵⁶

The inaugural annual report from the Office of Children and Families Policy (OCFP) in Santa Clara County provides an in-depth look at the department's commitment to improving the lives of children and families. Under the leadership of Chief Children's Officer Sarah Duffy, the OCFP focuses on a holistic approach to service provision and creating sustainable support systems within the community. A key part of their strategy includes the "Children's Roadmap to Recovery" plan, which targets the lingering impacts of COVID-19 by

⁵⁶ [Link to inaugural report from the Santa Clara County Office of Children and Family Policy](#)



enhancing behavioral health services in schools, offering support to children who lost caregivers during the pandemic, and strengthening the early childcare and education workforce.

The report emphasizes the critical need to expand child care infrastructure in response to a 30% unmet demand for child care spaces in 2022, highlighting the financial difficulties faced by childcare workers who earn below a living wage. The OCFP has initiated the \$15 million Childcare Infrastructure Grant Program, funded by the Federal American Rescue Plan Act, to increase classroom spaces and improve facilities for childcare providers. Furthermore, the office has developed several workforce development programs, including apprenticeships and a Shared Services Alliance, to support family childcare home providers.

The OCFP's strategic recommendations include increasing state and county funding to provide more subsidies for child care, thereby alleviating the financial burden on working parents and providers. The report also advocates for enhancing housing options to ensure more affordable living conditions for low-income residents, teachers, and childcare providers, and strengthening income support by expanding programs like the guaranteed basic income for specific vulnerable groups.

Overall, the efforts of the OCFP as documented in this report demonstrate Santa Clara's utilization through this office of comprehensive approach to meeting the diverse needs of its children and families, emphasizing the importance of integrated services and community partnerships in fostering a supportive and thriving environment.



What we learned: Commission survey + local interviews & RISE Conference feedback

CSW Child Care Impact Survey Data

This comprehensive effort was initiated at the Women’s Equality Day event hosted by the Commission in August 2023. Subsequent outreach was conducted through local community partners and online platforms, leveraging social media to invite residents and workers of San Mateo County to participate in an anonymous online survey. To enhance accessibility, survey prompts were translated into English, Spanish, and Chinese. The objective of the surveys and interviews conducted by the Commission on the Status of Women was multifaceted, aimed at achieving the following:

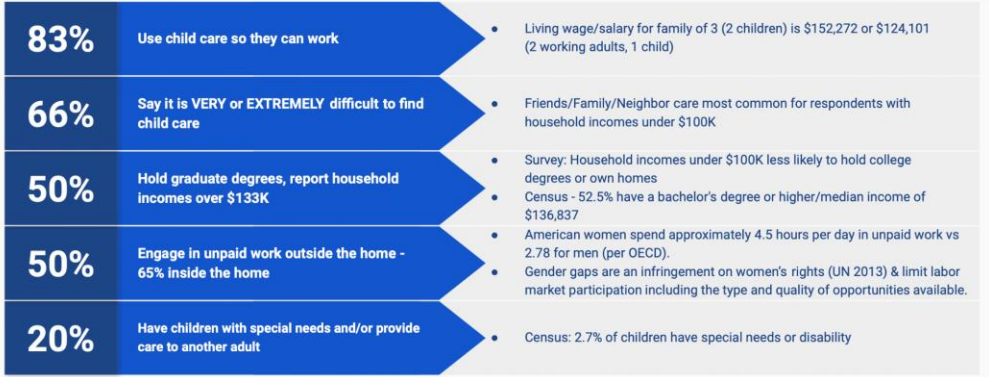
- **Comparison with State and National Trends:** The primary aim was to juxtapose local data from San Mateo County with broader state and national trends to identify unique challenges and opportunities specific to our community.
- **Expanded Analysis on Lifelong Impacts of Child Care Trends:** In addition to addressing acute impacts on mothers and caregivers of young children, the study sought to delve into the long-term financial and non-financial implications of child care arrangements on women in San Mateo County.
- **Exploration of Ripple Effects on Family Members:** Understanding how child care challenges reverberate through families was a key focus, shedding light on the broader impact beyond primary caregivers.
- **Collection of Individual Stories and Lived Experiences:** The initiative aimed to gather personal narratives and lived experiences of women in San Mateo County to provide qualitative insights that complement quantitative data.

By the survey’s closure at the end of October 2023, a total of 389 responses had been received, providing a diverse range of perspectives from our community.

Concurrently, commissioners conducted in-depth interviews and conversations with community members and local stakeholders from October to December 2023. These engagements were instrumental in enriching our understanding of the data, adding layers of personal stories and stakeholder insights to inform policy recommendations and community initiatives.

Demographic data on child care impact survey respondents

Questions were written to offer deeper insights, not just on the whole person but also on child care experiences/impacts over a lifetime. Demographic data from the 389 child care impact survey respondents provides a comprehensive view of the diverse experiences and challenges faced by women in our community.



- **Gender and Sexual Orientation:** 90% of respondents identified as female, and 78% as heterosexual.
- **Ethnicity/Race:** The breakdown of respondents by ethnicity is 56% White, 22% Latinx, 24% Asian, and 3% African American.
- **Household Characteristics:** Over 80% of respondents have children under the age of 18, and 20% have children with special needs or provide care to another adult. Half of the respondents hold graduate degrees, and most (3-4 people) report household incomes exceeding \$133,000, with over half owning homes.
- **Occupational Distribution:** Nearly a quarter of respondents work in education-related fields.
- **Unpaid Work:** Half of the respondents engage in unpaid work outside the home, and over 65% report spending 8 or more hours on unpaid work inside the home each week. When combining unpaid work hours both inside and outside the home, a majority of women are dedicating at least a day's worth of unpaid work every week.
- **Child Care Use and Challenges:** 83% of respondents use child care to facilitate their work, and 66% find it very or extremely difficult to secure child care.

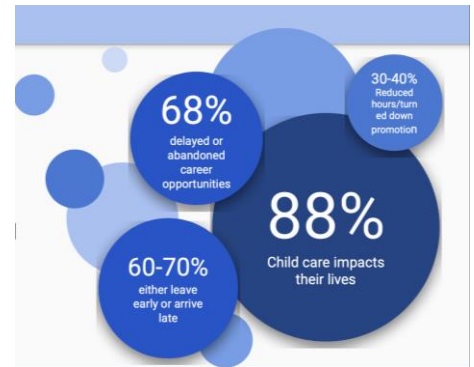


To highlight the experiences of traditionally underrepresented or low-income communities, we analyzed data for families with household incomes below \$100,000. Most of these families reside in Half Moon Bay, South San Francisco, Menlo Park, or East Palo Alto, identify as Latinx, rent their homes, and hold a GED or high school diploma. The predominant type of child care among this group is Friends, Family, and Neighbor (FFN) care.

The Commission prioritized gathering personal stories and insights from community partners to further underscore these experiences and advocate for targeted child care solutions that address the specific needs of our diverse population.

Impact of Child Care Challenges

A staggering 88% of survey respondents affirmed that child care significantly impacts their lives. The impact of child care challenges for women in San Mateo County is profound and long lasting, irrespective of age, income, or other demographic factors. The survey data underscores the magnitude of these impacts, which align with trends observed at the state and national levels. Key findings reveal:



- **Career Opportunities:** Nearly 70% of women have delayed or forgone career opportunities due to child care challenges.
- **Work Schedule:** Approximately two-thirds have needed to leave early or arrive late at work.
- **Career Advancement:** 30-40% of respondents have had to reduce hours or decline promotions because of child care constraints.

In addition to the economic impact, survey respondents highlighted various consequences linked to child care challenges:

- **Financial, Mental Health, and Relational Impacts:** Roughly half of respondents reported experiencing these effects, which extend beyond the individual to impact their families.
- **Health Impacts:** Over 1 in 5 respondents attribute health issues to child care challenges.
- **Housing Instability:** 15% of respondents reported housing instability resulting from child care impacts.



While the survey respondents' income distribution mirrors county medians, it's reasonable to anticipate higher levels of housing instability among lower-income communities. This instability can be attributed to difficulties in finding or affording child care, managing schedule conflicts, or coping with financial strains resulting from lost income or employment. Addressing these challenges is essential to support the economic security, well-being, and stability of women and families in San Mateo County.



Solutions and Recommendations

The survey identified solutions from respondents that could alleviate child care challenges, improve financial security and increase well-being. These recommendations are actionable strategies that local leaders and employers can consider to support women and families in San Mateo County:

1. **Time and Flexibility:** Respondents emphasized the importance of time and flexibility to care for themselves and their families when needed. Policies in this area could include:
 - Implementing paid sick and family leave policies.
 - Exploring options like a four-day work week or flexible work arrangements to accommodate family responsibilities.
2. **Access to Affordable Child Care:** The high cost and limited availability of quality child care were significant concerns for respondents. Proposed solutions include:
 - Advocating for universal child care to ensure access for all families.
 - Encouraging employers to offer onsite child care or expanded child care benefits as part of employment packages.
3. **Ending Discriminatory Policies and Promoting Equity:** Respondents highlighted the persistent gender wage gap and disparities faced by women of color. Policy initiatives could focus on:
 - Promoting pay transparency to address wage disparities.
 - Expanding paid family and medical leave to support working families.
 - Investing in child care programs and policies that promote work-life balance and support women's economic empowerment.

Respondents also discussed the potential financial and non-financial benefits of implementing these policies. Financially, they anticipated saving or investing more, spending locally, paying off debt, and addressing housing and basic needs. Among respondents with household incomes under \$100,000, covering basic needs, housing, and transportation ranked as top priorities. Beyond financial benefits, respondents emphasized the importance of reducing stress, spending quality time with family, especially with infants and children, prioritizing personal health and well-being, and accessing opportunities for professional development.

These recommendations underscore the critical role of policy interventions in supporting women's economic empowerment, enhancing family well-being, and fostering a more equitable and inclusive community. By prioritizing these policy areas, local leaders have the opportunity to make meaningful changes that positively impact the lives of women and families in San Mateo County, promoting economic security, work-life balance, and overall quality of life.

Respondents Free Response

Respondents at the end of the survey could answer free response questions. A significant number took advantage of this opportunity to expand on the importance of these issues, the challenges and the changes they would like to see. (Refer to Appendices for full text of responses.)



Respondents' Suggestions for Business Support:

- **Normalization of Family and Children:** Encourage workplaces to embrace family-friendly policies and respect the needs of employees with families.
- **Flexibility for Parental Needs:** Advocate for understanding and flexibility from employers when parents need to manage childcare responsibilities, especially during illness.
- **Listening to Employee Needs:** Stress the importance of employers listening to the needs of employees, particularly those managing multiple jobs while caregiving.
- **Promotion of Work-Life Balance:** Emphasize the need for true work-life balance, focusing on outcomes over hours worked, flexible scheduling, and on-site childcare options.
- **Integration of Childcare into Benefits:** Call for childcare to be a core part of employee benefits, with active engagement from employers in finding effective solutions.

Respondents' Recommendations to Local Leaders:

- **Support for Remote Work and Flexible Schedules:** Encourage policies that enable remote work and flexible schedules to enhance childcare accessibility.
- **Expansion of Sick Leave Policies:** Advocate for expanded sick leave to accommodate childcare needs, ensuring parents can care for sick children without penalty.
- **Advocacy for Universal Childcare:** Push for universal, safe, and affordable childcare options to empower women and support workforce participation.

Additional Comments and Insights:

- **Exemption for Childcare Providers:** Highlight the financial challenges faced by childcare providers and advocate for income tax exemptions to sustain this essential workforce.
- **Societal Embrace of Childcare Prioritization:** Stress the importance of society valuing childcare and supporting mothers who face challenges balancing work and family.

These responses underscore the urgent need for comprehensive policies and initiatives to support working parents and caregivers, with a focus on child care accessibility, flexibility, and overall well-being.

Individual Stories

Individuals who completed the original anonymous survey were invited to indicate via the google form if they would be willing to share more about their personal stories and the impacts of child care and caregiving in their lives. Here are highlights from 5 women who replied. Additional responses were received but not all granted permission to share.



- Janet from South San Francisco: As an immigrant and single mother, Janet faced daunting challenges when she suddenly became the sole caregiver for her two young children. "When my daughter was only two weeks old, her father went to prison, and I was left alone with them. I have no other family, so I started to navigate the support system and I began to study and educate myself," Janet recounts. She highlights the bureaucratic challenges involved in securing child care, "Applications for child care take too long... It should be simplified. I would like there to be more emergency support for people who are victims of domestic violence and their children."
- Megan from Half Moon Bay: Megan's story illustrates the financial pressures that many middle-class families face in balancing child care costs with other life goals. "We were able to purchase a condo thanks to a dip in the market at the start of the Pandemic... We both carry student-loan debt as well. We postponed having children because our income could not support a mortgage and childcare," she explains. The difficulty in finding available child care added to their challenges, "Once my son was born, I spent weeks trying to find daycare so that I could go back to work as we depend on both incomes." Megan suggests, "Our county should provide [paid leave] as well. We need to prioritize opening new childcare facilities," and mentions the potential benefits of child-tax credits for childcare.
- Rosali from Menlo Park: Rosali manages her academic and professional commitments while caring for her husband with a serious health condition, all without local family support. "After COVID-19, his kidney disease progressed to level 3. Since then, I haven't been able to work full-time. So I work part-time for the county because I want to make sure he is well taken care of," she describes. The cost and availability of health insurance are significant concerns for her, "The county is a great place to work, but health insurance for permanent part-time employees is very expensive... My husband is currently under a Medical plan, but I would like him to have better healthcare due to his special circumstance." She emphasizes the need for better insurance options for part-time employees and suggests, "Expanding CalFresh for county employees would be a great help as well... opening more remote or hybrid jobs would be a great help for some of us who want to work more, but can't due to lack of help with caregiving services."
- Dawn from Montara: Dawn shares the severe financial strain that child care costs have placed on her family, "Childcare tuition is more than our mortgage. We scraped by for the year until I was able to find something, but there were a few times that I almost decided to not re-enter the workforce due to the cost." The logistical challenges of child care also compound the difficulty, "Service hours usually make it really difficult for parents who work far from home and arrangements for pick up and drop off have to be made." She highlights the scarcity of options and the logistical hurdles, suggesting the need for more infant care facilities and flexible service hours to accommodate working parents.
- Ana from San Mateo: Ana discusses the constant financial and emotional pressure of being a single working parent. "I work in the nonprofit sector where I make too much to qualify for publicly subsidized resources like housing and childcare, yet I live paycheck-to-paycheck. I have no family in the area, so I rely on paid childcare when I work," Ana shares. She also describes the emotional toll of single parenting, "Single working parents - particularly women - face layers of burden. The financial, emotional, and physical labor of childrearing falls on us." Ana calls for more affordable childcare programs and suggests, "This means more tax dollars for childcare, yes, but it also means normalizing the act of co-parenting across families, sharing resources in the community."



These stories provide a deeper insight into the personal stories of hardship and resilience, emphasizing the critical need for comprehensive support and policy changes to address the challenges faced by families in San Mateo County.

Community Partner Feedback & Interviews

Our research into the local impact of child care involved engaging community partners through a structured feedback process. This included a listening session organized with Measure DD and United Way in September 2023, where we gathered insights. Additionally, we collected data through online feedback forms in October 2023, receiving six detailed responses from key stakeholders such as Tina Watts from Skyline College and Melissa Guariglia from Family Connections. Public presentations were made to the Child Care Partnership Council in late 2023 and early 2024, complemented by video interviews with CCPC Coordinator, Sarah Kinahan, Mayor of Menlo Park, Jen Wolosin, AllFive Preschool Director Carol Thompsen and BuildUp Directors Christine Padilla and Esmeralda Martin-Singh at the community site AllFive and one-on-one interviews with key figures like Liz Scully from the San Mateo County Family Child Care Organization. This multifaceted approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of the community's child care needs. Here is a summary of their feedback.

Community Partner Summary Responses

Kristen Anderson, Child Care Consultant

Kristen, a Child Care Planning & Policy Consultant, highlighted the need for comprehensive support to address the barriers preventing mothers, especially from low-income families, from maintaining employment due to child care challenges. She called for better support systems for child care providers and more accessible housing solutions for female-headed households.

Irma Zoepf, Z-Bridge

Irma, from The Z Bridge, discussed the prohibitive cost of childcare in the U.S., which forces many families, particularly in vulnerable communities, to make difficult decisions about employment to afford childcare. She stressed the importance of community support systems in caregiving, especially for those without nearby family help. "Caregiving challenges have a big impact on women with children, often when they are still young (in their 20's and 30's) and starting their careers. These impacts are felt most severely in low income communities. The underrepresented. Single parents, particularly mothers. Child care in America is expensive, too expensive for many. It is often a decision that the family has to make whether they work to pay daycare (if they earn enough to pay for daycare) or if it is better to not work to not pay daycare. On a personal experience, I worked for several months, where my full time job-salary didn't even cover the cost of two young children in child care. It changed when my oldest moved to the next age-group (less expensive). Regardless, we decided it was worth it to invest in my career. It is a difficult decision that not many people can afford. The time women take to raise their children is punished exponentially. When women want to come back to work it is hard to explain the gap, the lack of continued promotion and growth in the career. Policies like universal child care and paid leave are crucial. Women could continue working, therefore making money,



therefore have more power and decision making. Our leaders need to know that these investments and efforts to promote gender inclusion BENEFIT ALL.”

Family Connections, Non Profit

Family Connections noted the organization's efforts in providing comprehensive support through early learning programs, home visits, and mental health services. They highlighted the increased need for quality care for children with special needs and the challenges faced by caregivers due to high caregiving costs and insufficient support. “The impacts of child care challenges on families include financial, such as lost income, housing instability as well as anxiety/stress, conflict with partners, etc. Low income families struggle to access basic needs like diapers, food, hygiene products, clothing). People cannot afford to live in the area, but they also can't afford to go to work because most child care and early learning programs are so costly that they are unable to afford the care. It's a really challenging situation that perpetuates itself. Policies that support families like universal child care and family leave would reduce stress, anxiety and depression. We need to fund early childhood programs more fully because the need is unending and far-reaching. It's concerning to anticipate the future outcomes of this crisis, but it is clear that unless we invest in families with young children, we are setting our communities up for failure. We are also missing out on huge portions of the population with a voice that needs to be heard/uplifted and contribute directly to this conversation.”

Tina Watts, Community College Faculty

Tina, an ECE faculty member at Skyline College, addressed the dire need for accessible and quality child care options, which many families often piece together through multiple programs. She emphasized the economic diversity of the families served, ranging from CalWORKs recipients to those earning significantly higher incomes, and the lack of affordable housing that impacts these families' stability. “Everyone is stressed about child care. It adds additional tension between the heads of the household and requires significant coordination with extended family and friends. Without affordable and consistent child care, women often have to choose jobs that align with hours of operation and/or locations for ease of commute, access and time in managing family obligations. Universal free child care would have the biggest impact on families - regardless of employment status, all families could utilize child care based on their individual needs/wants and families would not have to consider the cost of childcare as part of their household budget. Invest in the folks who make child care for families possible - maintain or improve teacher requirements and pay them ample wages to remain in San Mateo County. Child care is early education! Invest in our children and invest in the folks who care for our children.”

Izzi (Head Start)

Angel Barrios shared insights on the impact of high-quality early care and education services offered to low-income families. He discussed the program's role in providing crucial support to pregnant mothers, children aged 0-3, and their families, and the ongoing challenge of securing enough spaces and resources to meet the needs of the community. “Child care and housing are the number one needs of families. Living in a high cost county causes a lot of stress on women with young children. We have also seen many moms who had to curtail their professional goals due to child care constraints. There is a lack of affordable and subsidized child care, especially for Infants and Toddlers. In addition to policies like universal child care, we should also consider extended leave. There are benefits to women that have young infants who would not be not forced to



return to work so quickly and have that time for family bonding. When families experience child care related challenges, it affects the entire family including the child and their development.

All Five Preschool

AllFive Preschool emphasized the role of quality child care in supporting not only child development but also parental employment. They noted the challenges of high turnover rates among staff due to the high costs and stress associated with the profession, advocating for better support and recognition of early childhood educators. "The hoops that a low income family has to jump through in order to apply, justify, and then access early care and education are demeaning, disrespectful and unnecessarily time consuming. NOT having child care affects everyone, especially the children. The financial and societal benefits (of programs like universal child care or paid leave) would be enormous. The world would be a better place. Additionally, we need more anti-discrimination support such as doing away with qualifying paperwork for families applying for child care assistance. Paid family leave and/or paid sick leave would be great as long as it is funded fully so employers don't bear the brunt. Swap money for paperwork. More money for early care and education teachers, LESS paperwork for families."

Family Child Care Organization San Mateo County

Liz Scully from San Mateo County's Family Child Care Organization highlights the essential role family child care (FCC) providers play in delivering stable, home-like child care that supports whole families, particularly those working non-standard hours. These providers, who offer 46% of infant/toddler care spaces in the county, have proven crucial during crises like COVID-19, often keeping their doors open when other programs shut down. The unique home-based model of FCC presents both opportunities and challenges, notably in how essential housing stability is to their operations. Investing in supportive policies such as housing and rate reform is vital to sustain these providers, enabling them to continue benefiting families and boosting the local economy. Liz Scully also referenced an EdSurge⁵⁷ article detailing the housing struggles of home-based child care providers like Destinee Hodges and Markesha West in San Mateo County. These providers face high costs and restrictive housing policies that complicate their ability to run their businesses. The article underscores the need for integrated housing and child care solutions to ensure providers can maintain stable operations and support community needs effectively.

Community Priorities & Voter Attitudes

The "State of Kids and Families in America 2024" report by Common Sense Media⁵⁸ and the San Mateo County "Voter Attitudes Toward Early Childhood Policies"⁵⁹ survey conducted by Choose Children each provide comprehensive insights into the national and local priorities of community members, including voters, emphasizing the growing challenges faced by families today. These studies reveal significant concerns among parents and voters regarding financial instability, educational disparities, and insufficient health services, all of

⁵⁷ [EdSurge article on FCCs in San Mateo County](#)

⁵⁸ [Link to Report from Common Sense Media](#)

⁵⁹ [Voter Survey from Choose Children and Silicon Valley Community Foundation \(note: go to page 10 for San Mateo County\)](#)



which require immediate action from policymakers and community leaders to ensure the well-being of children and families in the current economic and social landscape.

Families in San Mateo County face significant hurdles in securing affordable child care, with 72% of families struggling to find cost-effective solutions. This economic burden is compounded by educational challenges; for instance, only half of the third graders in these counties are reading at grade level, pointing to a dire need for early educational interventions.

Nutritional and mental health concerns are also prevalent, with 65% of parents worried about their children's access to nutritious meals, which directly impacts their physical and cognitive development. Thirty-three percent of parents report Parents delay personal health care to pay for child care. Mental health support is recognized as a critical need, with widespread bipartisan support for expanding services in schools and community settings to address this growing crisis.

Amid these challenges, there is a strong call for comprehensive policy reform. Reports from both campaigns show over 70% of voters support expanding access to child care and enhancing child tax benefits, reflecting a strong public mandate for policies that bolster family support systems. It is not just those who are in the throes of childrearing or a caregiving challenge who are asking for more resources and support - it is a growing consensus across political parties, age groups and demographics.

These insights from community partners, child care providers, advocates, and polling of likely voters in San Mateo County collectively underscore the complexity of the child care landscape, highlighting the urgent need for targeted policies and robust support systems for families and educators. In fact, 73% of the Choose Children survey respondents believe county and state governments both bear responsibility for ensuring access to childcare. The findings presented in this report by the Commission on the Status of Women not only reveal the challenges but also demonstrate strong public support for strategic actions to assist children and families. They emphasize the critical importance of government and community collaboration in developing solutions that offer financial, educational, and health-related support. This comprehensive and integrated approach is essential for addressing the broad spectrum of needs facing today's families, promising not only to alleviate immediate hardships but also to lay the groundwork for long-term prosperity and well-being within the community.



What we believe

Racism and sexism are key drivers of the child care crisis

The undervaluation of caregiving and child care in the United States has profound historical roots linked to the exploitation of women of color, dating back to the slavery era. Historian Stephanie E. Jones-Rogers notes that Black women were coerced into performing domestic duties for their enslavers' families, a role that was neither compensated nor recognized as legitimate labor.⁶⁰ Post-emancipation, these roles transitioned into similarly undervalued domestic jobs under the persistent racial hierarchies of Jim Crow.

The exploitation was not limited to Black women. As Princeton Professor Mae Ngai points out, during the Bracero Program (1942-1964), Latina women were often relegated to domestic roles, facing racial discrimination and legal vulnerabilities as immigrants, which entrenched the low valuation of their labor.⁶¹ Additionally, Asian and Pacific Islander women have historically been steered into caregiving roles, particularly in post-war periods, a reflection of broader racial and gender biases that devalued their labor, as Sucheng Chan, details in her book, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History*.⁶²

Today, the caregiving and child care sectors, predominantly staffed by women of color, continue to grapple with low wages and poor working conditions. According to the [Center for the Study of Child Care Employment](#), the workforce is 98% female with 27% Latina, 29% Asian, 10% Black, and 25% White. Studies consistently show that BIPOC staff dominate the lowest paid positions, while higher-level staff positions are typically held by white employees. Data further reveals that early educators in California endure poverty rates eight times that of K-8 teachers and earn less than half of a kindergarten teacher's salary; 58% of these educators rely on public income support. Despite being critical 'brain architects' during key developmental years, these educators earn poverty-level wages, effectively subsidizing child care in America through their low wages.

Beyond caregiving, according to the [National Women's Law Center](#)⁶³ the wage gap is stark, with women earning roughly 82 cents for every dollar earned by men. This gap is even more pronounced for women of color: Black women earn 63 cents, Native American women earn 60 cents, and Latina women earn only 55 cents for every dollar earned by white men. According to the Center for American Progress, "there has never been a time in this country when there has not been a wage gap that exists along intersecting gender and racial lines⁶⁴." [The Economic Policy Institute](#) highlights that these disparities extend deeply into the caregiving sector, where women of color earn less than their white counterparts in similar roles.

Access to quality child care also varies significantly by race, with the [Center for American Progress](#) reporting that neighborhoods predominantly populated by non-white families are more likely to be "child care deserts."

⁶⁰ Stephanie E. Jones-Rogers, [They Were Her Property](#)

⁶¹ Mae Ngai, [Impossible Subjects](#).

⁶² Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History*.

⁶³ [National Women's Law Center](#)

⁶⁴ [Center for American Progress](#)



This term describes areas with a significant shortage of licensed child care slots, affecting over 60% of Latino and Black families, compared to less than 50% of white families. The high cost of child care can consume up to 35% of a low-income family's earnings, disproportionately impacting families of color due to systemic income inequalities.

The representation gap in decision-making roles exacerbates these issues, with data from [LeanIn.Org](#) showing that women, particularly women of color, are significantly underrepresented in leadership positions across all sectors, including those influencing family and child care policies. Politically, women of color hold less than 9% of seats in Congress, despite constituting a much larger segment of the population. This lack of representation severely limits their ability to influence policies directly affecting child care and caregiving.

Addressing these entrenched disparities is crucial for systemic change. As noted by a senior analyst at the Center for American Progress, "Racism and sexism are not just problems of prejudice and exclusion; they manifest in everyday economic and policy decisions that affect all of us, particularly in the caregiving sector." Effective interventions must tackle these racial and gender inequalities to significantly improve the caregiving landscape.

It is not only those who care for children who are struggling. Caregivers of all types face racism and sexism. By 2030, nearly 1 in 5 Californians will be age 65 or older, according to the nonprofit [Public Policy Institute of California](#). The state will be facing a shortage of as many as 3.2 million care workers by then, according to Susan DeMarois, director of the California Department of Aging. Workforce shortages across caregiving sectors are driven by low pay. In California 80% of care workers are women, 74% are people of color and 47% are immigrants.

Representation in decision-making roles further compounds these issues. Data from [LeanIn.Org](#) shows that women, particularly women of color, are significantly underrepresented in leadership positions across all sectors, including those influencing family and child care policies. They hold less than 10% of managerial positions in relevant industries. Politically, the underrepresentation is stark as well; the Center for American Progress notes that women of color hold less than 9% of seats in Congress, despite constituting a much larger segment of the population. This lack of representation severely limits their influence over policies that directly affect child care and caregiving.

To identify effective remedies, we must confront historical injustices and candidly recognize how they continue to influence our systems, as well as our attitudes and perceptions about child care and caregiving. Central to this effort is the reaffirmation of basic human rights, including the recognition of child care as a fundamental human right. This approach is essential to addressing the deep-rooted issues within our caregiving systems and ensuring equitable treatment for all.



Equitable Access to Comprehensive Child Development

The Rights of Women

Access to child care is more than a personal obligation or even a societal necessity; it is fundamentally a human right essential for empowering women globally. The Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights underscored this in a 2013 report⁶⁵, highlighting how the unequal distribution of unpaid care work is a clear infringement on women's rights. This imbalance severely restricts women's participation in both the workforce and in public life, curbing their opportunities and perpetuating gender inequality.

International laws such as the American Declaration, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) compel the United States to implement policies ensuring child care is both accessible and affordable. These legal obligations affirm the right of women to engage fully in society without being disproportionately encumbered by unpaid child care duties.

Despite its wealth, the United States falls short of these international mandates, thereby sustaining and exacerbating disparities, especially among minority women who face compounded barriers due to the intersection of race and gender. These groups often find themselves marginalized from significant economic, educational, and political engagement due to inadequate child care solutions.

Civil rights organizations, including the [National Organization for Women \(NOW\)](#), argue fervently that child care should be recognized as a fundamental public resource, as essential and universally available as public education. Accessible child care, irrespective of family income, is not only a matter of fulfilling a human right but also a prerequisite for leveling the socio-economic playing field. By enabling all women, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to pursue employment, education, and active roles in governance, society acknowledges and begins to rectify long-standing inequalities.

Child care is a prerequisite for allowing women to fully realize their rights and participate on an equal footing in society. The establishment of comprehensive child care policies is not just a domestic preference but a crucial step towards fulfilling international legal obligations and advancing toward true gender equality. A shift would signify a profound commitment to upholding the dignity and rights of all women, paving the way for a more inclusive and equitable society.

The Rights of Children

Access to child care is a human right due to women and children, a principle firmly rooted in international human rights law and reflects crucial aspects of civil rights principles. The [1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child \(CRC\)](#), the most extensively ratified international human rights treaty, establishes comprehensive rights for all children under 18. Article 24 of the CRC emphasizes the rights of children to receive education

⁶⁵ Available at SSRN 2437791. (UN, 2013)



and care, underscoring the global commitment to ensuring these fundamental services are accessible to all children, regardless of their circumstances.

The importance of child care extends beyond access to basic education; it is pivotal for the holistic development of children. Ensuring that every child has access to quality child care is not just about providing safety and learning opportunities; it's about upholding their rights to develop to their fullest potential. This issue intersects with several key areas of civil rights, particularly racial justice, gender equity, and disability rights. The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights highlights that many children from low-income families, particularly those from BIPOC communities, do not have access to high-quality care. This disparity not only hinders their immediate educational opportunities but also their long-term life outcomes.

The creation of programs like Head Start, born out of the civil rights movement, was a step toward addressing these issues. However, while these programs are vital, they are insufficient to meet the needs of all families. There remains a significant gap in care that needs to be addressed to ensure equitable access for every child.

To build a more affordable, accessible, and high-quality system of early learning, there needs to be a concerted effort that is inherently tied to advancing racial justice, gender equity, and the rights of the disabled. Strengthening the child care system is not only about enhancing educational structures but also about rectifying historical injustices and removing barriers that disproportionately affect marginalized communities.

By framing child care within the context of a civil right, we recognize that every child deserves the opportunity to grow in an environment that nurtures their educational and personal development. The legal frameworks provided by international law such as the CRC should guide national policies to ensure that child care is not just seen as a service but as a fundamental right that supports the broader principles of equality and justice. This approach would reinforce the commitment to creating a society where the rights and dignity of every child are respected and protected, leading to a more equitable and inclusive future for all.

Universal Child Care is Essential

We advocate for universal child care as the most natural extension of our belief in child care as a fundamental human right, deeply rooted in the principles of equality and non-discrimination. As previously articulated, every child, regardless of socio-economic background, race, or geographic location, deserves an equitable start in life. By ensuring that all children have access to high-quality care and education from their earliest years, we actively contribute to diminishing systemic inequalities that especially impact women and children, who disproportionately bear the consequences of inadequate child care solutions.

Universal child care is essential for enabling women to fully participate in the workforce and public spheres. Historically, the burden of unpaid care work has fallen predominantly on women, significantly curtailing their professional and economic opportunities. By guaranteeing accessible and reliable child care, we support women's rights to employment and education, thus advancing gender equality and promoting broader economic progress. This perspective is bolstered by research, such as that from the International Labour



Organization, which indicates that child care support notably enhances women's participation in the labor market and their economic autonomy.

Child care extends beyond mere supervision; it is a vital foundation for early learning. The early years are crucial for the development of cognitive, emotional, and social skills. Recognized internationally as a right by agreements such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, access to early educational opportunities supports each child's right to realize their full potential and establishes a benchmark for universal education rights. Furthermore, universal child care serves as a powerful tool for social leveling, providing every child with a similar start and addressing the systemic obstacles encountered by children from disadvantaged backgrounds. This effort aligns with broader objectives of social justice, seeking equitable outcomes across racial, economic, and gender divides.

The economic argument for universal child care is compelling, as it enables parents to work or pursue education, boosting family incomes and driving economic growth. Early childhood education is also linked to long-term societal benefits such as decreased crime rates and reduced reliance on social services. Derrika Richard⁶⁶, a hairstylist and mother of three in New Orleans, faced significant challenges last summer due to unaffordable child care. This created a cycle where lack of child care prevented her from working, and insufficient work hours made her ineligible for assistance. Her situation improved dramatically in the fall when she accessed City Seats, a city-funded program that helped her enroll her children in a local child care center, allowing her to work and study, which she said “changed my life.” Her story is part of a broader initiative in New Orleans where over 1,000 child care seats were added for low-income families following a voter-approved property tax increase, raising the program’s budget from \$3 million to \$21 million annually for 20 years. This funding, matched by Louisiana’s early childhood fund, effectively doubles the investment, showcasing how removing cost barriers can expand access. Parents in San Mateo County echoed the need for affordable, accessible child care in the Commission survey, with 75% stating that such policies would significantly change their wellbeing. One parent stated, “If I had access to affordable childcare I would have some savings built up so I didn't have to decide if I was going to buy food or go to the laundromat and do laundry.” Another emphasized the importance of universal child care options being available and affordable to all incomes “so that we don't have to sacrifice our children for our jobs or our jobs for our children” These stories highlight the necessity of exploring pathways to universal access and making strategic investments to unlock such opportunities, with many economists and public policy experts affirming the significant returns on early childhood education.

Additionally, advocating for universal child care aligns with international obligations, such as those outlined in the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women \(CEDAW\)](#), which advocates for women's full participation in society. Countries that implement universal child care policies not only meet these global standards but also enhance their international reputation and adherence to human rights commitments. Here in the US, there is broad support amongst economists, civil rights leaders, education as well as law and public policy experts. For example, Nobel Laureates James Heckman and Joseph Stiglitz, both economists, have advocated for greater investments in high quality child care and have touted the economic

⁶⁶ These cities raised taxes – for child care. Parents say the free day care ‘changed my life’ Link to [Article](#)



and social benefits of universal child care. Olivia Golden, the Executive director of the [Center for Law and Social Policy \(CLASP\)](#), has advocated for robust public investments in child care to ensure that all families have access to affordable, high-quality early childhood education. Elliot Haspel, an education policy expert, advocates for a universal child care model where child care is public good that is free and available to all, similar to K12 public schools.

Free, universal child care, is both a human right and a sound public policy. That said, the complexity of our current system, mired by underfunding and fragmented efforts, necessitates this streamlined approach. Free, universal child care would eliminate complex eligibility processes, making it accessible to all families and reducing costs through centralized economies of scale, standardized training, and quality control. This system would level the educational playing field, reduce administrative overhead, and enable more parents—particularly mothers — to participate in the workforce, thereby boosting economic growth and tax revenues. It would also accommodate diverse family and work situations more effectively.

We are committed to the vision of universal, high-quality child care but recognize that achieving this will take significant time and resources. Declaring child care a human right doesn't compel immediate legal enforcement but sets a policy standard, guiding future actions without demanding compliance. Local leaders can support this vision through policies that incentivize child care provision, public-private partnerships, zoning adjustments, and investments in public child care services. Gradual implementation and legislative advocacy can support the integration of child care as a human right, creating a practical framework for its eventual realization.

By advocating for universal child care, we assert that it is essential for fostering a just and equitable community, supporting every child and empowering women in their roles as caregivers and professionals. This approach not only promotes social equity but also positions us to meet our long-term community development goals effectively.

RISE Women's Leadership Conference

At the RISE Women's Leadership conference on March 28, 2024, Commission President Susan Kokores and Supervisor Corzo highlighted the Board of Supervisors' commitment to closing gender pay gaps, celebrated through their unanimous approval of the Equal Pay Pledge on March 12th. This resolution leads the County to develop an interactive pay equity dashboard and implement best practices in pay equity. These practices include pay transparency, gender pay analysis, and internal training on unconscious bias and hiring/promotion strategies that influence gender equity in pay. This initiative is a prime example of impactful change, demonstrating how local governments can set a precedent and provide frameworks for the community to enhance gender equity, complementing child care initiatives. This report aims to inspire further actions based on the Equal Pay Pledge, underscoring the significant role local governments play in leading by example and fostering community-wide improvements.



Panel Discussion & Participant Feedback

Panel Discussion

At the RISE Leadership Conference, Commissioner Dayna Chung moderated a panel discussion spotlighting the indispensable ingredient in women's economic power, the central theme of the conference. Alongside Christine Padilla, Director of Build Up San Mateo County, and Sarah Kinahan, Coordinator of the San Mateo County Child Care Partnership Council, the panel delved into the profound lifetime impacts of child care challenges on working families, particularly women, while exploring viable solutions.

Dayna opened the discussion by underscoring pivotal insights gleaned from a Commission on the Status of Women survey, which garnered responses from nearly 400 San Mateo County residents. Key findings from the survey included:

- 88% of respondents citing significant impacts of child care and caregiving on their lives.
- 68% reporting deferred or forsaken career opportunities due to caregiving responsibilities.
- 50% indicating income loss and heightened stress or partner conflicts, with an additional 20% reporting illness related to caregiving stress.
- 75% expressing belief that implementing policies such as paid leave and universal child care would enhance their well-being.

Sarah and Christine offered poignant reflections on the survey data, sharing anecdotes like Ana's, who, despite living paycheck-to-paycheck, earns too much to qualify for subsidized child care. Sarah emphasized the urgent need for increased access to affordable care to alleviate the immense financial and emotional burden on families like Ana's. Sarah further elucidated the economic repercussions of inadequate child care, citing research from ReadyNation and the National Women's Law Center. ReadyNation's study estimated the annual cost to the U.S. economy at \$122 billion due to the absence of infant and toddler care, while the National Women's Law Center projected potential lifetime earnings of an additional \$97,000 per mother with universal child care availability, aligning with the Commission's findings.

Christine stressed the pivotal role of infrastructure in child care, highlighting successful models such as All Five Preschool in East Menlo Park, which expanded its services with public funds to demonstrate the tangible benefits of investing in child care infrastructure. The panelists also emphasized the necessity of multi-sector collaboration to foster sustainable and accessible child care systems, citing examples like the Elco Yards development in Redwood City, which integrates affordable housing, child care, and transportation solutions through partnership with various stakeholders.

Both panelists addressed the compensation challenges plaguing the predominantly low-income BIPOC women in the child care workforce, emphasizing the need for increased wages to mitigate poverty rates and alleviate the chronic shortage of qualified providers.



The presentation concluded with Christine and Sarah urging conference attendees to view child care not merely as an individual concern, but as foundational infrastructure and a fundamental human right essential for driving women's economic empowerment and personal freedom of choice. They emphasized the need for increased public funding, innovative multi sector collaborations and robust community engagement to reshape child care into a universally accessible and equitable service, thus strengthening the economic and social fabric of San Mateo County, particularly for women and children. Policy recommendations encompassed the establishment of a county coordinating hub or a dedicated children and families office to complement initiatives to expand access, build facilities and invest in workforce development. Special emphasis was placed on the collective impact of supporting women and children through initiatives such as expanded paid leave, with acknowledgment of the significant role local businesses can play in this endeavor. Advocacy efforts were highlighted, urging individuals to prioritize women and children in upcoming elections.

Moreover, they underscored the importance of shifting public mindsets to prioritize the needs of women and children, calling for advocacy and support in both electoral and non-electoral realms. They stressed the ripple effects of collective action on behalf of women and children, emphasizing the profound impact such solidarity can have on shaping a more equitable and inclusive society.

Participant Feedback

Following the panel discussion, RISE conference attendees were invited to reflect on what they learned and discuss their reactions or ideas with other participants at their tables. Discussion questions provided with conference handouts included:

Nearly 80 pages of feedback forms were collected and reviewed to understand both reactions to the presentation as well as validation of what we learned from the original survey, regarding the impact of child care challenges as well as support for potential solutions.

What stood out to you?:

The responses to the question "What stood out to you?" reveal significant insights into the perceived impact and value of child care investment. Here's a summary incorporating the quotes from respondents:

Community Impact: Respondents emphasized the profound effect that investing in child care would have not only on individual women and their families but on the entire community. One respondent noted, "The dramatic difference it would make not just in the lives of individual women and their families but in the entire community to invest in child care."

Child Care as Infrastructure: Another key observation was the recognition of child care as essential infrastructure, often overlooked in discussions about community development. As one participant put it, "The hidden importance of child care as infrastructure."

Family Dynamics: The emotional and social benefits of child care were highlighted, with respondents pointing out that "Happy moms lead to happy households."



Caregiver Burden: The responses also touched on the specific burdens placed on certain family members, such as eldest daughters who often take on significant caregiving roles within the family. One respondent shared, "Caregiver penalty - being an eldest daughter, you are the one who takes care of other family members."

Inclusivity in Child Care: The need for comprehensive child care that includes all children, from infants to teenagers, was emphasized, suggesting a holistic approach to child development and support: "We need to invest in all children, 0-18."

Economic Implications: The economic dimensions of child care were also highlighted, with a focus on how it intersects with broader issues of economic justice: "Economic power is economic justice."

Wage Discrepancies: Lastly, the low wages paid to child care workers, despite their critical role in society, were a point of contention and amazement for respondents: "It continues to amaze me that the people trusted with caring for the future of our nation are paid such low wages."

These insights reflect a broad understanding of the multifaceted benefits of child care, recognizing its role in promoting economic justice, supporting family wellbeing, and contributing to community health.

How child care drives choice and power in the lives of women:

The responses to "How child care drives choice and power in the lives of women" highlight the profound impact that accessible and affordable child care has on women's ability to work, pursue education, and achieve economic independence. Here is a summary of these responses, including direct quotes:

Workforce Participation: Child care is crucial for women's ability to join and remain in the workforce. One respondent noted, "Immensely. Child care is vital for families to join the workforce. If you have no one to care for your child, you can't physically work or like most take your mind to work because your mind is wondering if your child is SAFE."

Economic Opportunities: Child care enables women to seek better job opportunities and higher income. As one participant explained, "We can work as long as we are assisted with child care. We sometimes have to drop our good-paying jobs for another with less pay because we have to work around our kids' schedules."

Autonomy and Decision-Making: Child care impacts women's autonomy, allowing them to make significant life and career decisions. "Child care directly affects the autonomy and decision-making power of women, enabling them to pursue careers and education while ensuring their children are cared for."

Emotional Well-Being: The availability of child care reduces the emotional burden and guilt often felt by working mothers, allowing them to balance professional and personal roles more effectively. "The guilt women feel leads them to feel like they have to choose being a professional over being a mom."

Career Progression: Reliable child care supports women in progressing in their careers without sacrificing their roles as mothers. "Allows women to progress in their careers. They don't have to choose between paying a portion of their income on child care, finding cheaper, lower quality care or leaving the workforce."



Educational Impact: Affordable child care is seen as beneficial not only for children's education but also for enabling mothers to pursue further education or maintain their professional careers. "Having affordable child care could benefit overall education."

Support for Non-Traditional Needs: The need for child care extends beyond traditional settings, with calls for support infrastructure for elder care and child care beyond early childhood. "Need child care beyond 5 years - not many resources especially for single parents."

Economic Constraints: The high cost of child care is compared to college tuition, highlighting a significant financial burden that lacks the supportive infrastructure of other educational stages. "It can be all consuming when child care costs as much or more than college tuition and there is federal financial aid/scholarships for college but not the same for infrastructure for childcare."

These responses collectively emphasize that child care is a pivotal factor in empowering women, providing them with the freedom to pursue their careers and personal goals, and ensuring their children's safety and development.

What mindsets need to shift in order to prioritize children/family and give more power to women?

The responses to "What mindsets need to shift in order to prioritize children/family and give more power to women?" underscore the need for a fundamental change in how society views child care, women, and family support. Here is a summary of these responses, including direct quotes:

Valuing Women and Children: Respondents emphasized the need to recognize the importance of women and children genuinely, rather than treating them as secondary concerns. One respondent stated, "We need to see children and women as actually important and essential instead of just an afterthought." Another woman wrote, "Women will always be there to pick up the pieces of a broken culture. Enough is enough."

Economic Support and Company Policies: There is a call for companies to integrate child care into their structures to enhance employee productivity and satisfaction. "All companies need to have child care available to ensure success in their companies. Employees who have somewhere to leave their children will show up for work and produce for companies."

Cultural Shift in Perception: Shifting the perception that child care is not an integral part of our society's infrastructure is critical. "The belief that child care is not part of our society's infrastructure" needs changing, along with "an entire culture shift in the community and workforce."

Resource Allocation: Advocates for reallocating government funds highlight the need to support child care more robustly: "We need to shift government mindsets - allocating funds from policing to investing in child care for the community."



Removing Stigma: Challenging the stigma around who should bear the responsibility of child care is essential. "It is not just the mother's responsibility," and the mindset of "I don't have kids, this doesn't affect me" must evolve since "Kids are our FUTURE even if you don't have kids!"

Viewing Child Care as an Investment: Recognizing child care as a critical investment rather than a mere expense is vital for societal progress. "As an investment, not an expense. It is not just babysitting. It is early childhood education, even when they are infants."

Policy and Work Environment Changes: Respondents suggest policies need to be more family-focused, advocating for "Making children and families a priority in our policies, laws, and regulations." This includes increasing remote work opportunities, shared jobs, and flexible schedules.

Inclusive Support Systems: Including diverse types of child care and ensuring that child care is accessible to all, regardless of economic status, is crucial. "Include family child care. Parents should have a choice," and challenging the notion that "a family shouldn't be a privilege afforded only to the well-off."

These responses paint a clear picture: for society to truly empower women and prioritize families, a comprehensive shift in attitudes, policies, and cultural norms is required. This involves recognizing the foundational role of child care in societal infrastructure and ensuring it is integrated into all facets of community and workplace environments.

What policies would make the biggest impact on your life or women and families in your life?

Responses to the question "What policies would make the biggest impact on your life or women and families in your life?" highlight a strong consensus around the need for comprehensive support for child care and family welfare through various policy changes. Here's a summary of these responses with included quotes:

Universal Child Care: This was the most frequently mentioned policy, seen as a foundation for supporting families. Respondents expressed strong support: "Universal child care," and "Universal child care. Higher pay for child care workers."

Paid Leave and Flexible Work Options: Many respondents advocated for more generous leave policies and flexible work arrangements. "One year paid leave, flexible work from home/hours," and "More paid leave and job protection while on leave."

Financial Support for Caregivers: Ensuring caregivers receive adequate compensation was a common theme. "Paying early child care educators a living wage so that centers may be staffed adequately," and "REAL living wages for caregivers would change our world for the better."

Legislative and Funding Changes: Suggestions included targeted funding and legislative efforts to support child care. "Legislating that a certain percentage of each county dollar be spent on child welfare," and "Direct funding streams to help sustain FCC's (Family Child Care)."



Workplace Reforms: Proposals for a shorter workweek and workplace child care resources were popular. "4 day work week," and "Jobs offering resources for child care (onsite child care, flexible hours, etc.)."

Healthcare and Education: Free or affordable healthcare and education were also seen as impactful. "Free health care, child care, and education," illustrating a desire for a holistic approach to family support.

Tax and Economic Policies: Some respondents suggested economic strategies to fund these initiatives. "Tax private corporations more," and "Tax corporations and give that tax (money) to raise wages of educators."

Infrastructure and Accessibility: Making child care more integrated with other community services was also noted. "Co-locating child care with housing - make this mandatory," and "Access to affordable child care. Not having to jump through hoops to get funding."

Representation and Rights: Enhancing women's representation in decision-making and recognizing child care as a fundamental right were highlighted. "Women as elected officials," and "Child care as a right, universally provided or at least subsidized."

These responses underline a strong community drive for substantial policy reforms that recognize the essential role of child care in economic and social development, advocating for systemic changes to better support women and families across various aspects of life.

Conference Programs & Online Resources

At the RISE Leadership Conference, attendees received printed programs containing highlighting data from the Commission for the Status of Women survey, along with its impact, and potential solutions. Additionally, QR codes afforded easy access to Commission's website, where attendees could explore additional one-pagers featuring individual stories and showcasing community partners. Here are brief summaries of the handouts.

Child Care Data & Resources

A comprehensive overview of the state and challenges of child care, particularly focusing on San Mateo County. Child Care underlines the necessity of treating child care as a critical component of societal infrastructure to support economic and community health. Key points include:

- **Economic Impact:** The annual cost of the child care crisis is significant, with an estimated \$122 billion impact nationwide. Investing in child care, particularly early childhood education (ECE), has a strong economic return, yielding \$2 in economic output for every \$1 spent.
- **Workforce Challenges:** There's a noted shortage in the ECE workforce, contributing to a deficit of about 17,000 child care spaces in San Mateo County alone. Early educators, predominantly non-white immigrant women, face economic hardships, with rates of poverty eight times that of K-8 teachers.
- **Well-being and Policy:** 75% of surveyed individuals believe that paid leave and universal child care policies would improve well-being. Many parents report neglecting personal health care or declining work opportunities due to child care challenges.



- **Advocacy and Resources:** The document links to various resources and campaigns aimed at supporting child care initiatives and improving conditions for children, families, and educators. It highlights the importance of local engagement and policy advocacy to address these issues.

[Link to handout](#)

Child Care Informational Handout: Survey & Solutions

This informational handout provides an overview of the specific impact of child care challenges on the community of San Mateo County, including highlights from the Commission for the Status of Women survey.

- **Child care as a fundamental right and essential infrastructure:** supports economic stability and community health, urging action to address the root causes of inequity in child care provision.
- **Survey Insights:** The survey conducted among women in the county reveals that 88% report that child care issues significantly affect their lives, including causing delays in career progression and financial instability due to high child care costs.
- **Community Impact:** San Mateo County faces significant child care issues with over 17,000 child care slots missing due to a workforce shortage of about 2,829 workers. This shortage is linked to the low wages paid to child care workers, mostly BIPOC women, who earn less than 98% of all other professions and experience poverty at a rate eight times higher than K-12 teachers.
- **Economic and Social Costs:** The document highlights the severe economic injustice stemming from the chronic underfunding of child care, which leads to wider gaps in care and blocks effective cross-sector collaboration. This underfunding results in lost earnings, productivity, and revenue, impacting particularly women and families in the region.
- **Proposed Solutions:** To address these challenges, recommendations include creating a county office dedicated to children's well-being, establishing dedicated funding to ensure livable wages for child care workers, and forming multi-sector coalitions to support policies that benefit child care, including paid family and sick leave.

[Link to handout](#)

Community Partner Handout

Local community partners featured in handouts prepared for the RISE conference include Skyline College, Izzi (Head Start), AllFive, The Family Child Care Organization, Z-Bridge, and Family Connections.

- **Impacts highlighted:** These partners highlight several pressing issues, such as the severe shortage of high-quality, affordable child care which leads to significant stress for parents and adverse effects on children. Families often have to settle for less ideal options due to financial constraints, which leads to lost income, housing instability, and extensive mental health challenges including anxiety, stress, and relational conflicts. Particularly impacted are women from low-income families who face drastic setbacks in career advancement and financial security due to the high cost of living and child care expenses, often resorting to less costly care provided by friends, families, and neighbors (FFN).
- **Recommendations:** The handout also highlights some of their recommendations such as comprehensive policy changes, including the implementation of universal child care, equitable wages



for early educators, and expanded access to affordable and subsidized care for infants and toddlers. They also recommend enhancing leave benefits and providing child care resources to undocumented women and children. To reduce the bureaucratic burden, they suggest minimizing discriminatory paperwork for families and increasing compensation for early care and education teachers. Furthermore, one pager references their advocacy for policies like paid family and sick leave that accommodate both families and employers, parental leave for both parents, increased flexibility in work arrangements, normalizing male parental leave, and closing gender pay gaps. Additionally, partners call for mental health investments, guaranteed basic income for Medicaid families, free adult education, professional development, and increased investments in early childhood education.

[Link to handout](#)

Individual Stories Handout

One of the handouts prepared for the RISE conference featured some of the individuals who shared their individual stories with the Commission.

- Janet from South San Francisco - Janet, an immigrant and single parent, faced significant challenges when her daughter's father was incarcerated two weeks after her birth. With no family support, she navigated the child care system while educating herself and eventually became a parent leader at Parent Voices, a certified doula, and caregiver. Janet highlights the long wait times for child care applications and the exhaustive recertification processes. She advocates for more emergency support for victims of domestic violence and enhanced mental health services.
- Megan from Half Moon Bay - Megan, a middle school teacher, and her husband, also a teacher, delayed having children due to the high costs of child care and housing. Even after their son was born, finding affordable child care was challenging, prompting them to drive extra miles for a suitable facility. They plan to delay having a second child until their first is in transitional kindergarten due to the financial burden of child care for two children.
- Rosali from Menlo Park - Rosali, a library worker and graduate student, cares for her husband who has stage 3 kidney disease. The responsibility affects her ability to work full-time, limiting her to part-time work and impacting her financial stability and mental health. She advocates for full health insurance for permanent part-time employees and expanded CalFresh eligibility to better support caregivers like herself.
- Dawn from Montara - Dawn left her job due to pregnancy discrimination and struggled with the high cost of child care, which cost more than her mortgage. The scarcity of infant care options and the challenging service hours further complicated her situation. Despite being relatively fortunate with her current child care arrangement, Dawn still finds managing costs and logistics challenging.
- Ana from San Mateo - Ana, a single parent working for a nonprofit, earns too much to qualify for public subsidies but still lives paycheck to paycheck due to high child care costs. She handles all caregiving responsibilities outside of work hours, which has severely impacted her mental health. Ana calls for more affordable child care programs and community support to alleviate the burdens on single working parents.

Their stories underscore the critical need for comprehensive support systems and targeted policies to improve the affordability and accessibility of child care, which is essential for the economic security and well-being of families in San Mateo County.



What We Can Do - Recommendations for Board of Supervisors

Access to high-quality and affordable child care and early childhood education is a fundamental human right essential for family economic stability and countywide economic health. This report has highlighted the significant impact of child care on women and children, supported by extensive research from local, state, and national sources. Additionally, we have gathered data and analyzed the Commission's survey responses on the lifelong impact of child care on women along with feedback from the RISE leadership conference. All of these sources reinforce that child care is both a right and a public benefit, akin to public schools. Investing in child care yields economic returns, fosters cognitive and socio-emotional development in children, and promotes racial and gender equity.

In this next section, we propose three primary policy recommendations: **(initial proposals that have since been revised)**

- Declare Child Care as a Human Right
- Create an Office of Women & Children
- Dedicate General Operating Funding to Children and Families

Additional policy proposals are outlined in the subsequent section, building upon these three foundational recommendations. These core proposals establish:

- WHY child care is a fundamental right.
- WHAT can be done from a systems or infrastructure perspective to implement policies rooted in that right.
- HOW to bring these ideas to fruition through necessary funding.

The following sections will outline each of the policy recommendations, providing additional details, case studies and potential local partners. These local partners would not only be essential collaborators in this work but the subject matter experts for designing policy, building systems and implementing programs.

Declare Child Care as a Human Right

Child care is more than a personal obligation or societal necessity; it is fundamentally a human right essential for empowering women globally and ensuring the rights of children. San Mateo County could lead by example in declaring child care as a human right. This declaration would signal a profound commitment to upholding the dignity and rights of all women and children, paving the way for a more inclusive and equitable society.

This declaration could also serve as a powerful foundation to build the infrastructure and commit the necessary resources, making it a lived reality, similar to other declarations of rights such as the right to equal pay, environmental rights, civil rights, and workers' rights. These declarations act as a moral north star, guiding future policy and local action.



Strengthening the child care system is not only about enhancing educational structures but also about rectifying historical injustices and removing barriers that disproportionately affect marginalized communities. By framing child care within the context of a civil right, we affirm that every child deserves the opportunity to grow in an environment that nurtures their educational and personal development and every family is worthy of systems and support that facilitate wellbeing.

Create Office of Women & Children

An Office of Women & Children could serve as an effective hub for addressing a broad spectrum of issues affecting the well-being of children and families. These issues include wealth and wage gaps based on race or gender, domestic violence, housing, child care, health, and even climate change. Such an office can support multi-sector collaborations to comprehensively enhance the well-being of children and families, yielding significant benefits for women.

Many cities and counties across the country have elevated the issues of women, children, and families by establishing departments such as Offices of Children & Families, Family Justice Centers, and Offices for Women & Girls. Several examples, including some in California, could serve as models for San Mateo County, and will be outlined here. As this report demonstrates, child care is indeed infrastructure. While San Mateo County has many strong programs and vital ingredients, it lacks a coordinating hub to increase slots, raise wages, and advance issues that impact women and children, without the systems in place to facilitate such changes effectively.

Proposed Mission & Mandate

At the county level, the role of an Office of Women & Children encompasses a wide range of focus areas aimed at promoting the safety, empowerment, well-being and development of women, children and families.

These focus areas could include:

Child Care

Support for early childhood programs and development is a primary responsibility, addressing acute sector needs due to chronic underfunding. This office could expand access to meet local child care demands and coordinate investments in educators and facilities. Enhancing the infrastructure that supports and connects providers, agencies, and local partners could optimize these investments and facilitate multi-sector initiatives related to livable wages and benefits (including Shared Service Alliance programs), housing, health, climate, facilities, and more. Additionally, this office could spearhead special projects, such as supporting the continued rollout of Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) and finding solutions to address the shortage of infant and toddler care.

Domestic Violence

A centralized location for comprehensive services addressing domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault, and related issues. It could integrate support systems, including legal assistance, counseling, and emergency housing, ensuring coordinated and effective aid for affected families, especially women.



Health & Wellness

Efforts may include providing healthcare services, immunizations, nutrition programs, and mental health support, or coordinating such care through local healthcare agencies and partners to increase access and utilization. Initiating and supporting programs that offer health screenings, mental health services, and nutritional counseling for children and families can significantly enhance their well-being. Additionally, facilitating partnerships with healthcare providers to ensure access to preventive care, vaccinations, and routine health checks can improve health outcomes for children and families. Creating a central hub can be particularly beneficial in identifying gaps and expanding targeted access, especially for vulnerable populations.

Family Housing Stability

This office could work with local housing departments and the county to increase affordable housing, helping families secure stable, long-term accommodations. It would ensure housing policies address children's needs, including educational continuity and access to healthcare. A dedicated officer could streamline services across education, health, and social services, creating a holistic approach to family homelessness. Integrating children's perspectives into housing policies could benefit all demographics. Collaborating with social services and nonprofits could establish support systems to prevent family homelessness, including rent assistance programs, temporary shelters, a rent registry, and tenant protections.

Child Welfare

Child welfare and protection, which involves programs to prevent, identify, and address child abuse and neglect, as well as managing foster care and adoption services, is also a critical factor.

Educational Support

Educational and academic support can play a significant role, with initiatives to ensure school readiness and success, along with providing safe and enriching after-school activities—building upon existing programs, like the Big Lift.

Family Support

Family support services can be enriched, ensuring caregivers/parents have access to parent education and support, economic assistance, and resources to help families achieve stability.

Juvenile & Family Justice

The office can also focus on juvenile justice and delinquency prevention by offering programs to prevent juvenile delinquency and support youth involved in the justice system.

Policy & Advocacy

Community engagement and advocacy involve working with local organizations, schools, and stakeholders to create a supportive environment while also advocating for beneficial policies and legislation.

Data & Research



The office can be a hub for data collection and research, monitoring the effectiveness of programs, and implementing best practices based on research findings.

Multi-Sector Collaboration

Initiatives that integrate resources and partners on issues such as climate or housing can benefit from having a department with access to other county data, resources, or systems.

These focus areas ensure a holistic approach to addressing the diverse needs of children and families, promoting their overall health, safety, education, and well-being. Consolidating the various roles and responsibilities of a Chief Children's Office or Office of Children and Families under one umbrella ensures a coordinated and integrated approach to addressing the complex needs of children and families. This enhances service delivery and outcomes for children by streamlining resources, improving efficiency, and fostering collaboration among different agencies and community partners. This consolidation leads to more effective and comprehensive support systems. Additional details for proposed focus areas, including climate and housing, are expanded upon later in this report.

Examples of Offices of Championing Women and/or Children

Examples of cities and counties with Offices of Children and Families include New York City's Administration for Children's Services, which provides child welfare, juvenile justice, early care and education, and family support services. Los Angeles County's Office of Child Protection focuses on improving the child welfare system by promoting the safety, health, and well-being of children. Philadelphia's Office of Children and Families ensures access to high-quality education, health care, and supportive services, overseeing early childhood education, out-of-school time programs, and family engagement initiatives. San Francisco's Department of Children, Youth, and Their Families provides funding and support for programs promoting healthy development, focusing on early childhood education, youth empowerment, and family support services. King County's Department of Community and Human Services includes a division for Children, Youth, and Young Adults, supporting early childhood development, youth services, and family support initiatives. Miami-Dade County's Community Action and Human Services Department offers services such as Head Start programs, youth development initiatives, and family support services.

In the Bay Area, Santa Clara County currently has an Office of Women's Policy and recently launched an Office of Children and Family Policy, with a mandate to improve the lives of children and families through a holistic approach to service provision and creating sustainable support systems within the community. The Office of Children and Family Policy has been successful in soliciting additional state and federal funding to support programs that increase classroom spaces and improve facilities for childcare providers. Furthermore, the office has developed several workforce development programs, including apprenticeships and a Shared Services Alliance, to support family childcare home providers. They are also advocating for increased state and county funding to provide more subsidies for child care, thereby alleviating the financial burden on working parents and providers. Additionally, they have spearheaded efforts to enhance housing options to ensure more affordable living conditions for low-income residents, teachers, and childcare providers, and strengthen income support by expanding programs like the guaranteed basic income for specific vulnerable groups.



The San Francisco Department on the Status of Women (DOSW) aims to ensure the equitable treatment and advancement of women and girls in San Francisco. The department develops policies that address gender equality across sectors like employment, healthcare, and education. It also manages initiatives to prevent domestic violence and support survivors through funding shelters and services. Additionally, DOSW promotes women's economic empowerment by working to close the gender pay gap, increasing women's participation in high-paying industries, and advocating for affordable, high-quality child care as essential for women's workforce participation. The department conducts research to identify issues affecting women and girls and advocates for solutions at both local and state levels.

Similar to the Santa Clara County Office of Women's Policy, the Office on Women's Policy and Initiatives (OWPI) in Washington D.C. is dedicated to improving the quality of life for women and girls in the District. OWPI offers leadership development programs to empower women and girls to take on leadership roles in various sectors. It promotes initiatives to improve women's health, including reproductive health services, mental health support, and wellness programs. The office also focuses on enhancing economic opportunities for women through job training, entrepreneurship support, and advocating for affordable child care. Additionally, OWPI collaborates with other agencies to address domestic violence and provide comprehensive services and advocacy for survivors.

Organizational Structure

The design and implementation of Departments of Children and Family, Chief Children's Offices or Offices of Women's Policy are typically dictated by the needs of local agencies or government bodies.

At the county level, Chief Children's Officers generally report to high-ranking officials or bodies within the county government. In many counties, including Santa Clara County, they report directly to the County Executive, who oversees all county departments and services. In other counties, the Chief Officer may report to the Board of County Commissioners, an elected body responsible for legislative and executive functions, including setting policies and budgets for county services. The head of the Office of Children and Families in San Francisco, which operates as the Department of Children, Youth, and Their Families (DCYF), reports directly to the Mayor's Office. In counties where the Office of Children and Families is part of a larger Health and Human Services department, the Chief Children's Officer might report to the Director of Health and Human Services. Alternatively, in some county governments, they may report to the Chief Administrative Officer, who oversees the administration of county services and implements policies set by the County Executive or Board of Commissioners. In certain cases, the Chief Officer might also work closely with or report to specialized advisory committees or councils focused on children and family services, which provide guidance and oversight. The specific reporting structure varies depending on the organizational framework of the county government and the integration of the Office of Children and Families within that framework.

The Washington D.C. Office on Women's Policy and Initiatives (OWPI) operates under the executive branch within the Office of the Mayor, led by an Executive Director who reports directly to the Mayor. OWPI advises the Mayor on women's issues, coordinates with government agencies and community organizations, and focuses on policy development, program implementation, and community engagement. In contrast, the San Francisco Department on the Status of Women (DOSW) functions as a city department, overseen by a Director who



reports to the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors, and is supported by the Commission on the Status of Women. DOSW focuses on policy advocacy, program management, research, and community outreach to promote gender equality and the well-being of women and girls. Both offices typically collaborate with Offices of Children and Families, which often operate within similar or parallel government frameworks, to address overlapping issues such as child care, domestic violence, and economic empowerment. These collaborations allow for integrated approaches to policy and program development, leveraging their combined authority and resources to enhance the overall impact on women, children, and families.

An Office or Department of Women and Children could look to examples such as the Washington D.C. Office on Women's Policy and Initiatives and the San Francisco Department on the Status of Women and/or Department of Children, Youth, and Their Families to understand effective operational and reporting structures. These examples demonstrate how integrating issues like child care, domestic violence, and women's wages under a singular umbrella can facilitate a cohesive approach, leveraging combined authority and resources to enhance support for women and children.

Case Studies & Best Practices

Several Offices of Children, Family, and Youth have been recognized for their successful designs and implementations within local government structures, offering San Mateo County multiple models to consider or replicate.

- New York City's Administration for Children's Services (ACS) integrates child welfare, juvenile justice, early care and education, and family support services under one umbrella, which allows for a coordinated approach to addressing the complex needs of children and families. ACS collaborates extensively with community organizations, enhancing its reach and effectiveness (DCYF).
- Los Angeles County's Office of Child Protection (OCP) coordinates efforts among various county departments and community partners, focusing on prevention, early intervention, and cross-departmental collaboration. This collaborative approach has led to more effective service delivery and improved outcomes for children and families. OCP's comprehensive strategic plans and regular progress monitoring are key elements of its success (DCYF).
- San Francisco's Department of Children, Youth, and Their Families (DCYF) supports a wide range of programs focusing on early childhood education, youth development, family support, and community engagement through a robust grant-making process that funds community-based organizations. DCYF's strong community partnerships, data-driven decision-making, and continuous program evaluation contribute to its success. The department's ability to adapt to emerging needs, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlights its resilience and effectiveness (DCYF).
- Miami-Dade County's Community Action and Human Services Department (CAHSD) provides comprehensive services through its Office of Children and Families, including Head Start programs, youth development initiatives, and family support services. By integrating these services with other community resources, CAHSD ensures families receive holistic support. The department's focus on early childhood education and economic stability for families has led to significant improvements in child outcomes and family well-being (DCYF).



- The San Francisco Department on the Status of Women exemplifies best practices through its integrated approach to policy advocacy, program management, and community engagement, addressing issues such as gender equality, economic empowerment, and domestic violence prevention. The department's collaboration with local agencies and community organizations, combined with its data-driven decision-making and continuous program evaluation, ensures effective and responsive interventions.
- The Washington D.C. Office on Women's Policy and Initiatives coordinates leadership development programs, health and wellness initiatives, and economic empowerment efforts, all while advising the Mayor and collaborating with various government agencies and community partners. This holistic coordination ensures comprehensive support for women and serves as a model for impactful and adaptive governance.

These examples demonstrate that successful offices of children and families are characterized by integrated service delivery, strong community partnerships, data-driven strategies, and a focus on prevention and early intervention. These elements enable local governments to effectively support the well-being and development of children and families in their communities.

Blueprints for Women & Children

There are numerous examples worldwide and locally of strategic plans designed to advance the well-being of women and children. San Diego and San Francisco, two major cities in California, have developed comprehensive Child Care Blueprints to address critical needs in their communities. Similar efforts have been made at various levels—global, national, state, and city/county—to create blueprints for advancing women's rights and gender equality. These blueprints serve as detailed strategic frameworks, outlining the goals, policies, and actions necessary to improve the status and well-being of women. For instance, in San Mateo County, a blueprint could be commissioned as part of a broader roadmap that includes the creation of an Office of Women & Children. Alternatively, it could be one of the initial initiatives undertaken by such an office.

San Diego: San Diego's Child Care Blueprint focuses on expanding access to quality child care, enhancing safety and quality standards, and promoting affordability and sustainability. These initiatives aim to increase the number of available child care slots, improve professional development for child care providers, and develop funding strategies to reduce costs for families. The blueprint was shaped by insights from local and national experts during a Child Care Conference held by the County Board of Supervisors in 2022, reflecting a community-driven approach to tackling the child care crisis.

San Francisco: San Francisco's Child Care Blueprint involves the San Francisco Department of Early Childhood, which merged with First 5 San Francisco to form a new department focused on early childhood care. This blueprint offers over 400 high-quality, mostly free child care and preschool programs, emphasizing accessibility regardless of income. Key services include resource and referral provided by organizations like Wu Yee Children's Services and the Children's Council of San Francisco, comprehensive family support programs, and strategic policy advocacy through the San Francisco Child Care Planning and Advisory Council (CPAC).



Blueprint for Women’s Economic Security: [The National Partnership for Women & Families](#) released a detailed blueprint focusing on women’s economic security. This blueprint outlines policies and actions to achieve pay equity, expand access to paid family and medical leave, increase the minimum wage, and ensure affordable child care. It emphasizes the intersectionality of economic policies with health care, education, and workforce participation. [The Gates Foundation](#) (and also [Pivotal Ventures](#), founded by Melinda French Gates) has also been a leader in advancing women’s economic empowerment globally and has published [reports](#) with recommendations and frameworks.

United Nations Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs): [The UN Women and the UN Global Compact](#) developed the Women’s Empowerment Principles, which serve as a global blueprint for businesses and organizations to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment in the workplace, marketplace, and community. The WEPs provide a set of principles offering guidance on how to empower women and promote gender equality.

California Blueprint for Women’s Pandemic Economic Recovery: This [plan](#), crafted during the pandemic, is an example, offering strategies to address economic challenges faced by women, such as wage inequality, lack of affordable child care, and access to health care.

Blueprints and strategic plans for advancing the rights of women and children, though varied in their scope and focus, share a common goal: creating systematic and sustainable changes to support gender equality, economic security, safety and child well-being. These plans serve as valuable models that can be adapted and implemented at various levels of government and within organizations to drive progress toward gender equity. By adopting an integrated approach, these blueprints can simultaneously address the needs of both women and children, creating comprehensive strategies that benefit entire families and communities.

San Mateo County can create an integrated blueprint that addresses both women and children. This would provide a comprehensive and strategic framework to systematically tackle the multifaceted challenges of child care, gender equality, domestic violence and overall family support, including access, affordability, and quality. Such a blueprint is particularly useful for county leaders as it allows for the alignment of local resources, policies, and programs across various departments and agencies to ensure a coordinated and effective approach. It could also guide efforts to integrate child care with other important issues like climate, housing, and family justice.

Aligning the creation of this integrated blueprint with the establishment of an Office of Women and Children can optimize the impact of both efforts. This office can act as a central hub for executing the blueprint, ensuring that all initiatives are unified under a single strategic vision. It would coordinate between different governmental and non-governmental entities, streamline efforts, manage funding, and oversee the implementation of policies and programs.

In San Mateo County, establishing such an office could significantly bolster the efforts of existing organizations and child care champions such as 4C’s, BuildUp, First5, and the Child Care Partnership Council. These entities already play critical roles in supporting child care providers and families but could achieve even



greater impact through enhanced coordination and resource sharing facilitated by an Office of Women and Children. By linking their activities directly to the broader objectives of a county-wide integrated blueprint, these organizations could more effectively advocate for policy changes, optimize the distribution of resources, and expand access to quality child care and support services. This unified approach not only strengthens the child care system but also maximizes the reach and effectiveness of each organization's individual efforts, leading to more cohesive community support and improved outcomes for women, children, and families across San Mateo County.

Climate Change Impacts on Children & Families

Addressing the impacts of climate change, particularly for vulnerable communities, necessitates a strategic and focused approach that could be optimally managed through a dedicated Office of Children and Families. This office would be essential in guiding county governments that have unique access to resources and regulatory control over zoning and building codes—critical elements for implementing substantial environmental changes.

Infrastructure: The Office of Children and Families could spearhead initiatives in child care infrastructure enhancement by collaborating with local organizations such as BuildUp. This partnership would promote the enforcement of green building standards for child care facilities. By influencing building regulations and permits, these county governments could ensure that these facilities not only comply with current safety standards but also incorporate sustainable building practices. This initiative would reduce environmental footprints and create safer, healthier environments for children.

Green Spaces: Additionally, this office could lead the development of outdoor learning environments by utilizing control over public land use and community planning. It could effectively integrate these green spaces into urban landscapes, which would help mitigate urban heat islands and improve the accessibility and quality of child-focused outdoor areas.

Policy: The Office of Children and Families would advocate for climate policies that specifically address the needs of children. Leveraging the unique resources, regulatory powers, and planning capabilities of county governments, the office could influence climate policy at various government levels. This strategic involvement would allow the office to lead substantial and sustainable environmental initiatives, making climate adaptation and education a central component of broader governmental strategies and ensuring a resilient future for all children.

Momentum for these types of initiatives is building in San Mateo County, demonstrated by a workshop held on April 5, 2024. This event, hosted by the San Mateo County Office of Education in collaboration with the Child Care Partnership Council, BuildUp for San Mateo County, and Silicon Valley Community Foundation, featured Elliot Haspel, a Senior Fellow at Capita. Haspel, who co-convened the U.S. Early Years Climate Action Task Force, provided an in-depth overview of the U.S. Early Years Climate Action Plan. Alongside him was Angie Garling, Senior Vice President of Early Care & Education at the Low Income Investment Fund and a fellow Task



Force member. They underscored San Mateo County's proactive role in engaging with the plan and stressed that climate change should be a central consideration in all local planning efforts, particularly those affecting young children.

Discussions during the event highlighted the crucial need to integrate early childhood considerations into broader climate planning, enhance collaboration between climate-focused initiatives and child care facilities, and expand access to climate resilience hubs to support young children and families. Specific actions discussed included upgrading child care facilities to improve climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience, conducting climate risk screenings, and sharing pertinent information with families.

These robust discussions emphasized the potential for multi-sector collaborations involving child care, local government, businesses, philanthropy, and climate organizations. They showcased the proactive role that county governments and local agencies can play in blending child care and climate change mitigation efforts. San Mateo County could lead the nation by creating the first county Early Childhood Climate Action Plan. However, the complexity of implementing early years climate policies underscore the necessity not only for increased funding but also for the leadership and coordination provided by an office such as the Office of Children and Families to securing a sustainable and inclusive future for the community.

Family Justice

The integration of family justice within the framework of an Office of Women and Children or Children and Families can significantly enhance the support provided to families affected by domestic violence. This collaboration ensures that efforts are not isolated but are part of a comprehensive approach to family wellbeing.

Safety and Advocacy: The office can facilitate the creation of safe environments and provide robust legal advocacy for victims of domestic violence. By streamlining access to protective services and legal recourse, the office ensures that families receive timely and effective support.

Educational Campaigns: In partnership with family justice sectors, the office can launch educational campaigns aimed at raising awareness about domestic violence. These campaigns can educate the community on recognizing signs of abuse, understanding available resources, and promoting preventive measures. This educational outreach is crucial in changing societal attitudes and reducing the incidence of domestic violence.

By embedding domestic violence or family justice initiatives within a broader office dedicated to children and families, responses become more coordinated with county systems and resources, addressing the needs of all family members, especially women and children. This integrated approach fosters a safer community environment and a deeper commitment to preventative resources and overall well-being beyond moments of crisis. The Commission's survey and research indicates that women face a broad array of challenges related to child care and economic security that do include for some but are not limited to family justice or domestic violence. Effective solutions must combine short-term safety nets with long-term support, similar to housing



policies that include both shelters and affordable housing. A narrow focus on domestic violence may miss other critical issues affecting women, leading to gaps in addressing broader child care challenges and issues related to gender inequality highlighted in this report. Additionally, limited integration with essential services related to women's health, economic empowerment, and education can undermine efforts to provide holistic support. Thus, a broader scope ensures more effective and inclusive support systems for women and children, promoting overall community well-being and gender equality.

The Essential Role of County Government

The effectiveness of the Office of Children and Families (or Women and Children) in tackling essential issues like child care and housing largely depends on the strong backing of county governments. Unlike local child care entities that often face underfunding and resource shortages, county governments have the financial capabilities and systemic reach needed to enact substantial changes. Local entities alone lack the capacity to implement such broad systemic reforms. County governments play a crucial role in mobilizing their resources to orchestrate comprehensive initiatives that address the multifaceted needs of families and children, ensuring a fair approach to improving community wellbeing. Community sentiment, as reflected in the Choose Children Voter Survey, shows that residents expect state and county leaders to prioritize these issues. Highlighting this expectation, a respondent from the Commission's survey expressed frustration with local leaders: "Stop pretending that the welfare of children doesn't matter to society. Everyone was a child once, and virtually all mothers work, so it's incomprehensible that people act like providing adequate child care is an onerous burden on society. What's an onerous burden on society is a generation of children who grow up in poverty with exhausted and overextended mothers who live miserable lives trying to adequately provide for their children." This response underscores the community's call for meaningful action, investment and support.

An investment in infrastructure like an Office of Children and Families (or Women and Children) not only promotes financial stability and well-being but also signals a strong commitment to fostering a supportive environment for all residents, particularly women and children. By facilitating access to essential services like child care and housing, which are key barriers to employment and consistent income, the office helps enhance women's financial stability. It supports fair wage attainment and wealth accumulation for women, while also integrating health services, including mental health, and bolstering safety through family justice measures. These efforts collectively address the economic disparities and systemic barriers that often undermine women's financial independence and security. Additionally, by providing mental health support and advocating for safe family environments, the office crucially uplifts the emotional and physical wellbeing of women, promoting a healthier, more equitable society. This comprehensive framework ensures responsiveness to the nuanced needs of women, further fostering a supportive community environment.

Dedicate funding for children and families

Budgets are a reflection of values. San Mateo County should align its dollars with its expressed commitment to the children and families in our county. Recommended benchmarks set investment targets of at least 10-

15% of the total budget towards children and youth services.⁶⁷ This allocation could cover essential services such as education, healthcare, and welfare. Organizations ranging from UNICEF⁶⁸ to the US Department of Health and Human Services to First5 California suggest that within this children and youth budget, 10-15% should be allocated for child care and early childhood development.

Of the 754,250 people in San Mateo County⁶⁹, approximately 5% are young children under 5, and nearly 193,000, or 26%, make up the total number of children and youth ages 0-24. San Mateo County can leverage successful models from other counties, such as Multnomah County (OR), San Francisco (CA), and Miami-Dade County (FL), which have committed funding to support robust systems of care and education for young children and their families. New York's "Pre-K for All " program is another example of a city that has made significant investments in universal pre-kindergarten, with \$2.1 billion is dedicated to early childhood services, including programs like Pre-K for All, reflecting both a broad commitment to youth as well as a prioritization to early childhood.⁷⁰ Closer to home in Santa Clara County, where they recently launched the Office of Children & Family Policy, the FY 2023-24 Adopted Budget allocates approximately \$1.18 billion to Children, Youth, and Family Programs. With the total authorized spending at \$10.67 billion, this represents about 11% of the county's budget directed towards these programs. This figure does not fully capture all spending on children and youth, as it excludes programs benefiting the general public and capital projects.⁷¹

Dedicated funding for children and families can be significantly amplified by establishing an Office of Children and Families or Department for Women and Families. This office would oversee multiple funding streams, fill service gaps, and integrate services, strategically distributing funds to maximize community benefits for child care needs. Such an office would also identify priority areas where funding is most needed, like underserved neighborhoods or age groups lacking sufficient child care options. It would target funding to bridge service gaps, address cost barriers, and enhance the overall quality of child care. This could include subsidizing child care costs for low-income families and investing in training and resources for child care providers.

A strong commitment to funding and a robust infrastructure are essential to adding child care slots and increasing child care worker wages. The Office of Women and Children or Children and Families would ensure funds are used efficiently and transparently, fostering a stable and well-supported child care system. Additionally, the Office would facilitate collaboration among various stakeholders in the child care ecosystem, including providers, parents, educational institutions, and governmental agencies. This coordination would help avoid duplication of efforts and ensure resources are pooled effectively to create comprehensive support systems for families. Many agencies and organizations within the county are overstretched, with limited resources and small teams. By enhancing collaboration, the Office can streamline activities, maximize impact, and better support these critical services.

⁶⁷ [First Focus](#)

⁶⁸ [UNICEF](#)

⁶⁹ <https://www.smcgov.org/ceo/san-mateo-county-demographics-0>

⁷⁰ [NY PreK Budget Information](#)

⁷¹ [Santa Clara County Children's Budget](#)



This section emphasizes the importance of dedicated funding for children and youth and does not account for the costs of previously cited examples, such as the Department on the Status of Women in San Francisco.⁷² If an office or department were to broaden its scope to include both women and children, family justice centers, or other priorities, the financial commitment must also expand to support this wider mandate. Comprehensive support for women and children requires an integrated approach that combines short-term safety nets with long-term programs, systems, and resources. This ensures investments align with the community's commitment to gender equality and family well-being while enhancing the reach and quality of child care services. Such an approach underscores a community-wide commitment to supporting its youngest members and their families.

Universal Transitional Kindergarten (Mixed Delivery)

California is currently in the second year of a four-year rollout of universal transitional kindergarten, a significant multi-billion dollar initiative aimed at providing high-quality education to every 4-year-old in the state, benefiting an estimated 400,000 children.

The combination of infrastructure (like a Department of Women and Children or Children & Families) with dedicated funding would allow the county could address the needs of the 'missing middle'—middle-class families struggling with the high cost of living in areas like San Mateo County, yet ineligible for vouchers or other child care benefits due to outdated eligibility criteria.

Local leaders could collaborate with the child care sector to optimize existing funding streams for universal transitional kindergarten with mixed delivery (UPKMD). This approach would expand resources to ensure every 4-year-old has access to free or affordable programs. Additionally, extending this hybrid system to include Universal PreKindergarten (UPK) for 3-year-olds—offering part-day or full-day programs through various providers like Head Start, public and private centers, preschools, and family child care homes—would enhance choices and support developmentally appropriate practices.

While leveraging current funding streams, this initiative would require additional local public funding to subsidize UPKMD programs. With county support, programs could integrate both family child care and center-based care, making UPK more accessible for middle-income families. This step could realistically advance universal child care in San Mateo County.

Basic Income

Basic income initiatives like the Stockton Economic Empowerment Demonstration (SEED) have demonstrated significant benefits for families with young children. Launched in February 2019 by former Mayor Michael Tubbs, SEED provided 125 Stockton residents with \$500 monthly for two years without any conditions. This pilot showed that such financial support helps recipients manage unexpected costs and reduce debt, significantly improving their life quality. For many, this flexibility meant being able to afford essential services like childcare and healthcare, which in turn alleviated financial stress and allowed parents to focus more on

⁷² The San Francisco Commission on the Status of Women, overseeing the Department on the Status of Women (DOSW), operates with an annual budget of approximately \$10 million. This budget supports various initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality and advancing the status of women and girls in San Francisco through policies, programs, and legislation.



their families. Notably, the program also led to better job prospects and educational opportunities for participants.

In San Mateo County, a similar initiative known as the "Baby Bonus" program, championed by Jackie Speier, offers Medicaid-eligible newborns and their families \$300 monthly during the crucial first three years of a child's development. This program is designed to enhance child development and family stability, recognizing the developmental benefits reflected in higher brain activity in children who receive such financial support.

However, basic income programs, while beneficial, are not comprehensive solutions to all family needs. They do not directly provide essential services like quality childcare, healthcare, education, or stable housing—areas critical for the holistic development of children and the stability of families. These needs require targeted services and interventions designed to address the complexities of community needs.

Moreover, the impact of basic income on sustainable economic independence is constrained unless it is part of a broader strategy that includes education and employment opportunities. This is why supporting structures like robust public healthcare, child education programs, and affordable housing are vital. They address the underlying causes of inequality and contribute to improved life outcomes.

To ensure that basic income programs are part of sustainable, comprehensive community development, it is beneficial to integrate them into a larger framework managed by entities like an Office of Children and Families. This office can oversee the implementation of strategic initiatives, such as a child care blueprint, ensuring that financial assistance is linked with broader child care and family support goals. This approach not only supports immediate financial needs but also fosters long-term solutions that enhance the overall well-being of children and families.

San Mateo County Priorities and Strategic Plan

In a recent presentation on May 29, 2024, Supervisor Noelia Corzo of District 2 outlined strategic goals to enhance community well-being in San Mateo County. These goals included improving access to affordable housing and child care, promoting community safety and expanding mental health resources to meet growing needs.

As the Supervisor Corzo's Strategic Plan outlines, affordable childcare is essential for allowing parents, particularly mothers, to participate in the workforce. It also supports family stability by reducing the stress of balancing work and family life but also helps in averting financial crises that can lead to housing instability. According to the strategic plan, a substantial number of families in the district struggle with housing costs, and many mothers report childcare as a primary barrier to sustained employment. The plan proposes several actions to address these issues, such as forming partnerships with local organizations and securing federal and state grants to fund initiatives for housing and childcare. It also recommends enhancing communication systems for better emergency response and rolling out community programs to boost mental health awareness and support.

Implementing these strategies will require investments in systems and resources, which is why the Commission on the Status of Women recommends appointing a Chief Children's Officer and setting aside specific funding for childcare. Such an office would ensure that children's unique needs are considered in public safety planning and would oversee the integration of childcare with early childhood mental health services to support comprehensive child development. Furthermore, the projected increase in demand for community health services over the next five years highlighted in the Strategic Plan underscores the need for a coordinated approach to address the interlinked needs of children and families. This framework would not only streamline services across health, education, and social services but also enhance community development in a holistic, sustainable, and inclusive manner, benefiting those most in need. Additionally, we recommend integrating strategic plans with a potential child care blueprint to ensure that local resources, policies, and programs across various departments and agencies are aligned and coordinated effectively, improving the delivery of child care services. Finally, prioritizing child care is critical for advancing racial equity and increasing representation. Quality child care serves as a foundational platform that allows children from diverse backgrounds to flourish from an early age, supporting their parents—especially women and underrepresented communities—in pursuing educational and career aspirations. By enabling parents to engage more fully in the workforce and in higher education, access to reliable child care facilitates broader economic stability and opens pathways to leadership roles in business, local governance, and other areas of influence. This strategic investment not only promotes better economic outcomes but also enhances representation in places of power, reflecting the county's dedication to fostering a fair and equitable society. This is crucial for breaking down barriers that disproportionately impact communities of color and ensuring that our leadership and decision-making bodies truly represent the diversity of our community.

What We Can Do - Other Initiatives

These are policies and programs that have been lifted up by community members, local partners and through research as policies that could dramatically improve the wellbeing of women and children. While some of them may be less actionable by the board of supervisors, it is important for local leaders to understand all options and the broader framework that supports women and children and to look for opportunities to engage or support such efforts.

Paid Leave

Paid family and medical leave (PFML) refers to policies that provide workers with a portion of their wages during times they need to be away from work to handle family or medical issues. According to the Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center⁷³, such policies have demonstrated significant benefits. Key benefits include a 12% reduction in postneonatal mortality, a 7 percentage point increase in timely vaccinations among low-income families, and a 2 percentage point reduction in both poverty and family food insecurity rates. Furthermore, the

⁷³ [Prenatal to 3 Policy Impact Center](#)



labor force participation of mothers increased by up to 8 percentage points around the time of childbirth, and the likelihood of mothers returning to their pre-birth employers increased by 13 percentage points within a year of giving birth.

Currently, California offers paid leave through the Paid Family Leave (PFL) program, part of the State Disability Insurance system. This program provides partial wage replacement to employees taking time off to care for a seriously ill family member or to bond with a new child. Employees are eligible for up to eight weeks of benefits within a 12-month period, based on a percentage of their earnings. The New Parent Leave Act also mandates up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave for bonding with a new child for employees in larger companies, while the state's Paid Sick Leave law mandates paid sick days for personal or family member care. Local ordinances in some cities and counties offer additional benefits.

Efforts to enhance the PFL program include legislative proposals such as Assembly Bill (AB) 518, which seeks to expand coverage to include chosen and extended family members, a change significant for LGBTQ+ communities and multigenerational households. Other bills aim to reduce the stress of applying for benefits and to prevent the necessity of using vacation time before receiving PFL benefits, alongside enhancing support for domestic violence survivors and establishing specific pregnancy leave policies for school employees.

Considering extending the duration of paid leave from 8 to 20 weeks, as illustrated by the Pennsylvania case study, could offer substantial benefits. Extending leave provides mothers more recovery time post-childbirth, reduces healthcare complications, and enhances child-mother bonding, which may lower long-term healthcare costs. For employers, paid leave can increase employee retention and improve workplace morale, while also enabling broader labor participation, especially among mothers, aligning with broader public health goals. The primary costs of expanding paid leave are the wages paid to employees while on leave. These costs can be shared among employers, employees, and potentially state-funded programs, with administrative costs remaining relatively low compared to the infrastructure investments required for expanding infant care facilities.

Expanding infant care involves capital investments and ongoing operational costs, which can be higher than the costs associated with a paid leave program. Investing in infant and toddler care should still be a local priority but the costs can be mitigated when combined with extended leave, allowing for extended baby bonding and recovery for new parents. Expanding paid leave, as was one of the most popular policies surveyed by the Commission Survey, reflecting a strong public desire for supportive family policies during critical times and could significantly benefit maternal and child health as well as provide economic advantages to families and employers. Seventy-five percent of respondents said that it would significantly improve their well-being and lower stress.

In San Mateo County, supporting paid leave initiatives could involve advocating for state-level legislative changes, enacting local policies, conducting outreach to raise awareness, supporting small businesses in implementing paid leave, and funding paid leave programs. These actions would help improve economic security and health outcomes, enhancing the well-being of all county residents. County governments can also



play a crucial role in encouraging and incentivizing local businesses to enhance their paid leave offerings. Since publicly funded leave typically provides less than what is needed to cover living expenses, especially in high-cost areas like the Bay Area, it's vital for local businesses to step up and augment these benefits. This can be done through tax incentives, subsidies, or public recognition programs that highlight businesses supporting substantial paid leave policies. This strategic approach not only addresses immediate family needs but also serves broader economic and social goals, promoting a healthier, more stable community. It's an important opportunity for local leaders to advocate for expanded paid leave, as this can prove more cost-effective than significant expansions to infant care facilities, which are considerably more expensive.

Pennsylvania Case Study

In 2023, Pennsylvania lawmakers introduced H.B. 181, a bipartisan bill aimed at establishing a Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) program, offering up to 20 weeks of paid bonding leave after the birth of a new child. The bill garnered support from 54 House lawmakers and is expected to be introduced in the Pennsylvania Senate. On March 12, 2024, the state released a benefit-cost analysis of H.B. 181, providing insights into its potential impact on beneficiaries, employers, and the Commonwealth.

Key Findings from the Benefit-Cost Analysis⁷⁴:

- Enacting H.B. 181 would be budget neutral.
- Bonding leave would result in a net benefit of \$379 million annually to families, employers, and the Commonwealth, surpassing costs by an 18 to 1 ratio.
- Employees would receive a substantial return on their investment through contributions to the PFML program.
- Adoption of H.B. 181 would elevate Pennsylvania's ranking from 49th to 37th in the Policy Impact Calculator by augmenting resources available to working families.

Dr. Cynthia Osborne, Executive Director of the Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center and Professor of Early Childhood Education and Policy at Vanderbilt University, emphasized the positive impact of paid family and medical leave on low-income families, facilitating timely preventive healthcare for babies and sustaining parental workforce participation. "Paid family and medical leave is one of the most cost-effective policies for states to help ensure that all children thrive," said Dr. Cynthia Osborne. Donna Cooper, Executive Director of Children First, emphasized the transformative benefits of a statewide paid leave program, highlighting its crucial role in supporting early childhood development, enhancing parental fiscal stability, and strengthening Pennsylvania's economy.

"The research is clear. A statewide paid leave program would be a gamechanger for Pennsylvania's working families," said Donna Cooper, Executive Director of Children First. "No family should have to choose between

⁷⁴ [Benefit-Cost Analysis of Pennsylvania H.B. 181, Research Brief.](#)



financial stability and bonding with their newborn at the most critical time. The benefits of a statewide paid leave program in Pennsylvania would immensely impact early childhood development, the fiscal stability of parents and our Commonwealth's economy.⁷⁵ Analysis suggests that implementing paid bonding leave would generate significant returns as families with infants would have reduced healthcare and child care expenses, enhanced employment and household income, and direct benefit payments from the bonding leave program. Pennsylvania would see advantages such as heightened sales and income tax revenue and reduced expenditures on state-sponsored health care and non-parental infant care, among other benefits.⁷⁶

Care-Worker Registry & Respite Subsidy

The Child Care Impact Survey conducted by the Commission confirmed that families, particularly women, experience lifelong caregiving impacts. San Mateo County could consider implementing caregiver support programs similar to those in Santa Clara County, set to launch in April 2025. These programs include creating a Direct Care-Worker Registry and a Respite Subsidy Program to provide essential support for family caregivers. The new program in Santa Clara County aims to establish a centralized database of vetted care providers, making it easier for families to find reliable caregiving assistance. The Respite Subsidy Program could provide financial assistance to family caregivers, helping to cover the costs of short-term respite care and giving caregivers much-needed breaks from their responsibilities. In Santa Clara County, the program will provide subsidies ranging from \$500 to \$1,250 per month, based on the level of care required and household income. Building caregiving safety nets that support families through all ages and stages is crucial. There are programs and models in nearby counties that can be studied and integrated into the services and resources offered in San Mateo County. Ideally, a Chief Children's Office could evaluate gaps in safety nets and integrate resources to ensure comprehensive support for all families throughout their different stages of life.

Investments in Early Childhood Workforce

The 2022 Child Care Partnership Council Needs Assessment provides crucial insights into the child care workforce in San Mateo County (5,300), revealing both the current state and the investment needs of this sector. Like many regions in California, San Mateo County faces a significant child care workforce shortage (2,800), largely due to low wages that are uncompetitive compared to other industries. This shortage is critical as it directly impacts the availability of child care spaces across all age groups (17,000 total), highlighting an urgent need to increase wages for teachers' aides, lead teachers, and administrators to expand service capacity.

From March to July 2022, the Seed Collaborative, in partnership with Brion Economics, Inc. and the Child Care Partnership Council, conducted a comprehensive study to assess trends in the San Mateo County child care workforce. This study included interviews, focus groups, and a county-wide online survey. Survey respondents highlighted the need for improved employee benefits such as increased vacation days, wellness benefits, competitive salaries, and mental health support. (more information on professional development and wages in next sections) They also called for larger budgets for child care materials and more spacious facilities.

⁷⁵ [Benefit-Cost Analysis of Pennsylvania H.B. 181, Research Brief.](#)

⁷⁶ [Benefit-Cost Analysis of Pennsylvania H.B. 181, Research Brief](#)



Additionally, the workforce expressed a need for enhanced financial and educational support. Respondents also advocated for maintaining smaller classroom sizes and establishing a network of child care workers to ensure backup support is available when regular staff are unavailable.

One critical issue is the mismatch between public funding and the actual cost of providing quality care, particularly in high-cost areas like San Mateo County. Most providers, relying on tuition and state subsidies, struggle to cover costs that would ensure quality care, as current state reimbursement rates do not meet the "true cost of care." This situation underscores the necessity for local leaders to invest more robustly in the child care workforce to reflect the true costs and ensure sustainable, quality child care services in the community.

Wages

According to the National Academy for Sciences⁷⁷, educating young children demands a high level of sophisticated knowledge and competencies in child development, content knowledge, and educational practices, comparable to that required for teaching older children. Despite this, the common perception that educating young children requires less expertise than teaching older students perpetuates policies like lower compensation, reduced program funding, and limited professional supports. These policies hinder the ability of early learning programs and educators to effectively serve young children.

In San Mateo County, data from the Child Care Needs Assessment shows average wages ranging from \$20 to \$31 per hour for directors, with a required increase to \$36 to \$52 per hour to achieve a living wage—representing a 65-127% increase. Addressing this wage gap would cost approximately \$207 million annually, totaling \$461 million per year when combined with the cost of meeting staff shortfalls at a living wage, which is around \$240 million. A significant element in enhancing both care quality and wages is professional development. The Child Care Needs Assessment by Brion Economics reveals that the cost of providing BA/BS degrees for center-based child care workers for ages 0 to 5 is approximately \$6.86 million (\$20,900 per student), with a net cost of \$2.4 million (\$7,300 per student) after potential financial aid. While these figures are substantial, the return on this investment is notable; current wages of early childhood education (ECE) workers generate \$476 million annually in economic activity, which could increase to \$866 million if workers were paid a living wage. Additionally, the sector faces high costs due to disruptions in care or lack of care, with 50% of community-based preschools needing additional staff and experiencing limited capacity due to staff shortages. It is also worth remembering that for every dollar spent in the industry, \$1.88 is generated in the County, underscoring the economic impact of investing in early childhood education.

Professional Development

The Teacher Pipeline Project, launched in 2018 by the Community Equity Collaborative, sought to address the severe shortage of early childhood educators in San Mateo County by bundling early childhood education

⁷⁷ [National Academy of Sciences webpage](#), "Does quality early childhood education lead to more successful lives as adults?"



courses from community colleges with wraparound support, such as free tuition, meals, childcare, laptops and more. This pilot program (now referred to as TeacherUp) is currently run by Upward Scholars, a Latina led nonprofit. TeacherUp advances the goals of the Teacher Pipeline Project by assisting residents with college enrollment, connecting them to employment opportunities, and providing comprehensive wraparound support, including stipends, tutoring, scholarships, and practical resources like laptops and transportation. Initiatives such as these provide insights into creative solutions for supporting professional development for the early childhood workforce.

Additionally, community colleges in San Mateo County, such as Skyline and Cañada, have launched Early Childhood Education Apprenticeship programs. These programs offer students paid work experience alongside academic coursework, enabling them to earn an Associate's Degree for Transfer and a Master Teacher permit within three years.

Local organizations like The Institute for Families and Nannies (TIFFAN), 4C's, and the Family Childcare Organization also contribute to workforce and career development, specifically targeting those who provide care as nannies or home-based child care providers.

To further support career development in various care settings, the San Mateo County Office of Education introduced the Early Learning Career Pathways Specialist position in 2023, filled by Sara Gassner-Wollwage. This role focuses on curating and sharing information about career pathways online, building local partnerships, and supporting educators with stipends, permit navigation, and career training, significantly enhancing the infrastructure for early childhood education in the county.

Child Care Employment Benefits for Early Educators

Raising early educator wages is one of the most effective ways to increase worker retention and attract new educators to the workforce. This approach not only addresses pay equity but also mitigates workforce shortages, facilitating an increase in the number of available slots and the expansion of care services. While fair and equitable wages should be a top priority, there are many other resources, supports and employment benefits that can significantly impact the lives of early educators, such as Shared Service Alliances and expanded Child Care Employment Benefits.

Shared Service Alliances (SSAs)

The establishment of Shared Service Alliances for child care providers could enhance efficiency, improve quality, and ensure the sustainability of child care services within the county. By pooling resources and centralizing administrative functions, SSAs can deliver significant benefits to providers, families, and the community. Shared Service Alliances enable child care providers to share resources, access centralized services, and benefit from economies of scale. This collaborative approach reduces operational costs, enhances the quality of care, and improves the financial stability of child care businesses. By leveraging these alliances, providers can reduce their administrative burdens, access professional development opportunities, and achieve cost savings through bulk purchasing. Additionally, the collaborative networks fostered by SSAs allow providers to share best practices and innovative approaches, further enhancing the quality of care.



The benefits of SSAs for providers include reduced operational costs through shared services and bulk purchasing, improved care and education through shared professional development, and greater operational efficiency by freeing up time to focus on child care rather than administrative tasks. Financial stability is another critical advantage, as the pooling of resources and shared services can reduce the risk of closure for individual providers. Families and children benefit from the consistent and higher quality of care, access to a wider range of services and programs, and more affordable child care options due to cost savings. Furthermore, SSAs provide reliable and continuous care options, which are essential for working parents. For the community, SSAs help build a stronger, more resilient child care sector, increase workforce participation and productivity by ensuring reliable child care, and improve long-term outcomes for children, contributing to a more capable future workforce.

There are several examples of cities and counties that have implemented a Shared Service Alliance program. In Coos and Curry Counties, Oregon, the Shared Services Alliance⁷⁸ supported by the Oregon Community Foundation and other partners has helped providers stabilize their businesses since 2019. This initiative provides shared resources such as administrative support and professional development, leading to cost savings, expanded capacity, and a supportive network for sharing best practices and solving common challenges. Similarly, the Community Coordinated Child Care of Union County, New Jersey⁷⁹, has been developing a Shared Services Alliance since 2022. This initiative focuses on reducing costs and improving service quality through shared resources, addressing issues such as staff recruitment, cost management, and enrollment, thus enhancing operational efficiency and care quality. In Morris County, New Jersey, the Early Childhood Educators Shared Services Alliance⁸⁰, led by Child & Family Resources, aims to improve child care quality and financial sustainability by pooling resources and expertise. This Alliance has helped members save significant costs, secure necessary supplies, and improve service quality through collaborative programs and technical assistance.

Implementing Shared Service Alliances among child care providers will foster a collaborative and efficient child care system, benefiting providers, families, and the community. This policy will enhance the quality and sustainability of child care services, ensuring that more children have access to high-quality early education. By investing in SSAs, the county can build a stronger, more resilient child care sector and support the well-being and development of its youngest residents.

The establishment and implementation of an SSA system would be significantly enhanced by the creation of a Chief Children's Office. This office would serve as a central coordinating body, facilitating collaboration between various agencies involved in child care, education, health, and family services. The Chief Children's Office could streamline the integration of services, ensure consistent communication, and monitor the effectiveness of SSAs. By providing strategic oversight and fostering partnerships, the Chief Children's Office

⁷⁸ [Link](#) to Coos and Curry County Shared Service Alliance webpage

⁷⁹ [Link](#) to Community Coordinated Child Care of Union City, New Jersey webpage

⁸⁰ [Link](#) to Early Childhood Educators Shared Services Alliance Morris County, NJ webpage



would help to ensure that the benefits of SSAs are fully realized, promoting a cohesive and supportive environment for all stakeholders involved in early childhood education and care.

Case Study: Kentucky's Child Care Benefits for Early Educators⁸¹

Kentucky has implemented a transformative initiative to support its early childhood education (ECE) workforce by providing free daycare for child care workers, regardless of income, through changes in licensing regulations. This innovative policy addresses the critical shortage of early educators driven by low wages and workforce competition.

Since the implementation of this change, child care centers have been able to fully staff their operations, leading to increased availability of child care spots for working families. Notably, the number of children receiving state subsidies for child care has surged to 40,000, with 3,600 being the children of child care employees.

Jennifer Washburn, owner of iKids Childhood Enrichment Center in Benton, Kentucky, describes this initiative as "a beautiful incentive." Teachers employed at iKids can work knowing that their children's daycare costs are covered by the state, offering financial relief and peace of mind.

Kentucky's approach highlights the positive impact of prioritizing child care support for ECE workers, ultimately benefiting child care centers, working families, and the broader community. This case study serves as an inspiring model for local efforts to enhance child care accessibility and support for early educators. By investing in the well-being and stability of the ECE workforce, communities can foster a more sustainable and inclusive environment for families and children.

SB1307 (Becker) - Child Care subsidies for ECE Workforce

California faces a critical shortage of Early Childhood Education (ECE) workers, partly due to the high cost of childcare for these workers' own children. The unaffordability of childcare acts as a deterrent for individuals considering entering or remaining in the ECE workforce, exacerbating the existing shortage. Drawing inspiration from initiatives in Kentucky, Senator Becker collaborated with local child care providers and advocates to introduce SB 1307, aimed at fostering growth in the ECE workforce by making ECE workers eligible for state-subsidized child care.

SB 1307 specifically grants eligibility for state-subsidized child care and exempts the income of ECE workers from their total household income, provided they are employed at a child care center or family child care home. Additionally, the bill prioritizes ECE worker families for subsidized child care programs. By implementing these

⁸¹ [NPR article](#) posted on October 6, 2023 "Kentucky had an outside-the-box idea to fix child care worker shortages. It's working"



measures, SB 1307 incentivizes employment in the ECE sector and facilitates broader access to this workforce.

"California is facing a dire shortage of available childcare due to an insufficient early childhood education workforce," stated Senator Becker. "SB 1307 aims to expand the ECE workforce and increase childcare availability for all Californians by making childcare more affordable for ECE workers." SB 1307, sponsored by All Five, the winner of the 2024 "There Ought to be a Law" contest in Senate District 13, is endorsed by organizations such as Good2Know Partners, Footsteps Child Care Inc., Mi Segunda Casa Preschool and Daycare, San Mateo County Child Care Partnership Council, Early Care and Education Consortium, Silicon Valley Community Foundation, and Foster City Vice Mayor Stacy Jimenez. The bill now proceeds to the Committee on Appropriations for consideration.

Legislation like SB 1307 and other creative solutions is crucial for supporting and retaining the existing ECE workforce while attracting new talent to the field, ultimately bolstering childcare availability and quality across California.

Multisector Coalitions

Child Care and Housing

Families in California face significant challenges due to the high costs of both housing and childcare, often leading to compromises in living conditions and care arrangements. Building the supply of affordable, high-quality childcare within housing developments presents a compelling opportunity to enhance family incomes, support healthy child development, and advance economic and climate goals.

According to LIIF, "Quality affordable housing and child care in tandem help families achieve self-sufficiency. Without placing an undue burden on the families' finances, affordable housing provides a stable base for family life. On-site or easily accessible, affordable child care allows parents to work and to return to school while their children receive the early care and education they need for a successful future." BuildUp for San Mateo County highlights that, "Child care is valuable community infrastructure that interrelates with housing and transit. Child care sited near housing, jobs, and transit reduces car trips. Currently, families may drive an extra 45+ mins to get to quality care."⁸² The shortage of childcare directly impacts residents and employers, with working parents often forced into less-than-ideal arrangements or declining job opportunities due to childcare constraints.

Child Care & New Development Collaborations

Expanding initiatives like Greystar (ELCO) in Redwood City showcases successful collaborations addressing childcare facility barriers. Greystar partnered with Build Up San Mateo County to integrate community needs

⁸² <https://buildupsmc.com>



into development projects. Access to space remains a major obstacle in developing childcare facilities, compounded by real estate challenges and high costs. On average, it costs between \$300-400 per square foot to develop a new quality early care and education environment designed specifically for the needs of parents, caregivers, educators, administrators, and young children. Corporate childcare operators serving affluent families are better positioned to cover substantial upfront expenses, disadvantaged family child care providers (FCCs) and locally owned centers. Collaborative efforts like Greystar (ELCO) demonstrate innovative approaches to addressing childcare supply challenges.

Family Child Care Home

Policy makers should include Family Child Care in making affordable housing policy, designs, and financing considerations. Housing and childcare affordability issues are intertwined. The burden of housing and childcare costs disproportionately affects young parents, hindering economic flexibility. Co-location strategies, such as incorporating childcare facilities within housing developments, represent a promising avenue to address these challenges. Family Child Care (FCC) providers offer an alternative within home-based settings, serving smaller groups of children and offering flexibility in hours. Affordable housing developers have successfully integrated FCC opportunities, providing essential childcare services for residents and communities.

Rent Registry & Tenant Protections

One tool that San Mateo County could consider would be the creation of a county rent registry coupled with school-year tenant protections for priority populations, including parents, children, and teachers (including early educators). This dual initiative could facilitate the collection of comprehensive rental data, prevent evictions, and ensure housing stability throughout the school year, thereby supporting educational continuity and family well-being. A rent registry would provide detailed data on rental housing and eviction trends, enabling informed local housing policy-making and targeted interventions. Coupling this with school-year tenant protections ensures that vulnerable populations, especially those with school-aged children and those working in education, are not displaced during the academic year. This stability is crucial for educational success and community cohesion. Stable housing is vital for children's academic performance and overall development. Evictions during the school year can lead to disruptions in education, negatively affecting a child's learning and emotional well-being. By implementing school-year tenant protections, the county can ensure that children remain in a consistent educational environment, which is essential for their growth and success. Teachers and early educators, who play a critical role in students' lives, also benefit from housing stability, allowing them to focus on providing high-quality education without the stress of potential displacement. The rent registry could identify families and educators at risk of eviction, allowing the county to provide targeted support such as rental assistance, legal aid, and housing counseling. Combining this data-driven approach with tenant protections during the school year will create a safety net for priority populations. A Chief Children's Office could be a hub for coordinating this type of integrated support system that will help maintain stable housing and access to child care services, fostering a secure environment for children and supporting educators in their vital roles. Early identification of at-risk households through the rent registry



reduces harm to children, families and educators but also brings significant cost savings to the county. For example, preventative measures lower emergency shelter costs, increases workforce productivity and even increases property values. This dual approach, with the proper infrastructure for effective implementation (ie: Children's Office) can enhance community stability and support the well-being of children and families.

Local Business and Employer Engagement

Historically, businesses have been instrumental in advocating for public education systems to enhance basic literacy and numeracy among workers, a key factor in the burgeoning industrial economy. This advocacy was pivotal in establishing public education as a norm. According to Elliot Haspel, in the post-World War II era, businesses also heavily invested in university programs, especially in STEM fields, to ensure a consistent supply of graduates equipped to handle new technological advancements. Today, there is a similarly compelling business case for supporting child care. The economic costs of the child care crisis and the financial benefits of supporting early childhood education have been extensively documented. With decades of data and ample evidence, the focus must now shift from merely reporting to taking decisive action. Business leaders need to step up, recognizing that their direct interests are impacted by the availability of reliable and affordable child care, which influences workforce stability and productivity through reduced absenteeism and turnover.

Commission Survey respondents offered insights on how businesses can support families, emphasizing cultural and operational changes. One respondent noted, "Normalize families. Normalize children. Have bosses who actually respect families. Many do not have children or families or think we should all behave like 1950s men (even the women who are in charge think this)." Flexibility was a common theme, with another respondent urging, "Be understanding and flexible if the kids are sick, there's nothing we can do and nobody wants to take them." Respondents also stressed the need for businesses to address the realities of modern workloads. One shared, "Listen to our needs and issues. Almost everyone I know has two jobs, so these questions should have also included a section devoted to managing several jobs while caring for others. It's not a sustainable practice and employers aren't getting the message. They have built in the expense to replace you versus work with you and be inclusive." Another suggested a more holistic approach to work-life balance: "Walk the talk of 'work-life balance' - meaning, don't overload employees, be flexible about working hours. Focus on outcomes and not hours worked. Have childcare on site/help pay for it." Lastly, recognizing childcare as essential was highlighted: "Consider childcare as a basic pillar of support for employee benefit packages. Engage in solutions with employees, find out more about how and what other businesses are doing. Take action to engage employees in the process. Then choose a path and do it." These insights underline the need for a shift in workplace culture towards more family-friendly practices and benefits.

Clearly, businesses are crucial partners in initiatives that not only expand access to child care but also integrate it with broader multi-sector efforts such as housing or environmental sustainability, creating a supportive environment for working families. By participating in child care facility initiatives and partnering with housing developers, employers can significantly boost employee retention, productivity, and job



satisfaction. Such proactive involvement in child care and housing solutions not only strengthens community resilience and economic development but also secures a brighter future for both families and businesses.

Actions that businesses in the Bay Area can take to support their own employees include providing on-site child care, offering subsidies and vouchers, implementing flexible work arrangements, expanding paid leave, partnering with local child care providers, and advocating for supportive policies. These initiatives not only aid their employees but also yield broader societal benefits, fostering a more inclusive and supportive community. Examples of companies investing in this area include Patagonia, known for its on-site child care facilities since 1983, and Genentech, which offers various family-friendly benefits, including on-site child care and backup child care services. The engagement of these businesses showcases the profound impact that corporate support can have on enhancing child care accessibility and quality in the community.

At a recent event hosted by Genentech on April 5, 2024, organized by the San Mateo County Economic Development Association, the spotlight was on the critical need for affordable and accessible child care. Elliot Haspel emphasized viewing child care as a communal asset crucial for community vitality and economic growth. The event also featured discussions on collaborative solutions and the necessity of consistent messaging to propel child care initiatives forward. Nicole Reihl, president and CEO of EPIC (Executives Partnering to Invest in Children), showcased how businesses could help create family-friendly work environments and increase access to quality, affordable early childcare and education.

These discussions and examples highlight the indispensable role of businesses in advancing child care solutions, demonstrating that by supporting child care, Bay Area businesses and others can play a transformative role in fostering a more equitable and prosperous future.

Mindsets

Changing mindsets, especially those reinforcing systemic biases against child care, caregiving, and the support of women and children, requires a multifaceted strategy involving education, policy change, community engagement, and the pivotal role of business leaders. History provides numerous examples where significant shifts in societal attitudes were achieved through grassroots advocacy, legislative action, cultural representation changes, and educational reforms. For instance, the Women's Suffrage Movements in the late 19th and early 20th centuries across the United States, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand successfully changed societal views on women's roles and rights, leading to women gaining the right to vote—a fundamental shift in societal attitudes towards women's public and political roles. Similarly, the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s dramatically reshaped American attitudes towards race and equality through persistent activism, including marches and nonviolent protests, with leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. using compelling rhetoric to redefine public perceptions of justice and equality, resulting in significant legislative changes like the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. More recently, the marriage equality movement for LGBTQ+ individuals combined legal battles, public advocacy, and shifts in cultural representations to challenge and change societal norms. These examples underscore that, while challenging, profound changes in societal attitudes are achievable with sustained effort across diverse fronts.



Education and Awareness: Increasing awareness about the value and complexity of caregiving roles is fundamental. Educational campaigns that highlight the skills, labor, and emotional intelligence involved in caregiving can reframe it as skilled labor deserving of respect and adequate compensation. Educational initiatives should target all age groups but particularly focus on young people to foster more equitable gender norms from an early age.

Policy Advocacy: Advocating for and implementing policies that support caregivers and recognize caregiving as essential work is crucial. This includes advocating for fair wages, better working conditions, and comprehensive benefits for caregivers. Policies like paid family leave, subsidized child care, and health care benefits for part-time workers can provide the structural support needed to elevate the caregiving profession.

Community Engagement: Building coalitions across different social, racial, and economic groups can strengthen movements aimed at changing societal attitudes towards caregiving. Community forums, workshops, and partnership with local businesses and schools can generate dialogue and foster a collective commitment to valuing and supporting caregivers.

Leadership and Representation: Ensuring that caregivers, particularly women of color, have representation in policymaking and leadership positions can shift how policies are formed and implemented. This means supporting women and minority leaders in elections, on boards, in unions, businesses and in any other positions of influence.

Corporate Responsibility: Encouraging corporate practices that support caregiving can also lead to broader cultural shifts. This includes creating more flexible work environments, providing on-site child care, and recognizing caregiving as an essential part of life that impacts employees' performance and well-being. It is also worth noting that in many other historical expansions of educational access, from K12 public schools during the industrial era of the 19th and 20th centuries to colleges and universities during the post-WWII era - business needs were a key driver in building and supporting a workforce that could meet economic interests.

Psychological Interventions: According to psychology research, interventions such as perspective-taking exercises and bias training can be effective in reducing biases. Programs that encourage individuals to consider the experiences and challenges of caregivers can reduce stigma and foster empathy, making them more likely to support policies and practices that uplift caregivers.

Media Representation: Changing how caregivers are depicted in media can influence public perception. Media plays a powerful role in shaping attitudes and norms, so portraying caregivers in diverse, respectful, and empowering ways can help shift societal views and values towards caregiving.

By integrating these strategies, we can foster a more supportive environment for caregivers and elevate the perception of caregiving as a critical and respected profession. This comprehensive approach ensures that change is driven through both institutional frameworks and cultural shifts, promising enduring transformations in the valuation and perception of caregiving. History serves both as an inspiration, with numerous examples of significant shifts in societal mindsets, and as a cautionary tale. Changes in mindset are crucial but achieve their full potential when coupled with policies that secure and safeguard access to rights and privileges. This includes advocating for child care as a fundamental right and pushing for universally accessible and free child care services. Such dual efforts are essential for making substantive, long-lasting changes.



Conclusion

The "Child Care Impact Report 2024" underscores the significant role of comprehensive, accessible child care in the socioeconomic vitality of San Mateo County. The extensive research and survey data compiled by the Commission on the Status of Women offers profound insights into how inadequate child care and caregiving solutions limit career advancement, impose financial burdens, and elevate stress among families. These issues particularly impact women's workforce participation and contribute to ongoing economic disparities.

In 2023, Matthew Desmond addressed leaders in San Mateo County at an event on ending child poverty, organized by Representative Jackie Speier. He articulated a powerful vision: "You lift the floor by rebalancing the safety net; you empower the poor by taking on exploitation; and you turn away from segregation to invest in broad prosperity – that's how we can end poverty in America." Inspired by women, children, educators and allies as well as Desmond's call to action, our report advocates for transformative measures to enhance the child care and caregiving infrastructure. Desmond's compelling observation—that poverty robs society of potential talent across every sector—resonates deeply with the findings of our study.

Building on these principles, the report puts forth substantial recommendations designed to transform the child care landscape in San Mateo County. It prioritizes the establishment of an Office of Children and Families and commits to dedicated funding for child and family support policies. The report also outlines key programs local leaders can endorse, including universal child care which extends to school-aged children, enhanced compensation and professional development opportunities for child care providers, and multi-sector collaborations that not only improve child care but also bolster housing and climate-related initiatives. Furthermore, it advocates for the expansion of paid leave programs and increased workplace flexibility, both of which could significantly benefit working parents. The endorsement of these policies is backed by thorough research, surveys, interviews with local partners, and feedback from attendees at the RISE Women's Leadership Conference, reinforcing their potential impact and feasibility. As one woman at the conference wrote in her feedback, "Women will always be there to pick up the pieces of a broken culture. Enough is enough." It is time for change.

As we look to the future, it is imperative that we leverage the collective commitment of our community to enact these recommendations, supporting women and families through all ages and stages of child care and caregiving. Such efforts will not only meet the immediate needs but also anticipate and adapt to future challenges, ensuring a child care system that supports economic stability and quality of life for all. This initiative is a step towards a more equitable, inclusive, and prosperous San Mateo County, where child care is a fundamental right that enriches the entire community. Returning to the words of Matthew Desmond, "The people of the richest country in the world can and finally should put an end to it. We don't need to outsmart this problem, we just need to hate it more." In the spirit of the women of San Mateo, we challenge ourselves not just to detest the problem but to love our community deeply enough to invest in building systems that enable all its members to flourish and thrive. This commitment to transformative action is crucial for fostering a community where every individual has the opportunity to succeed.

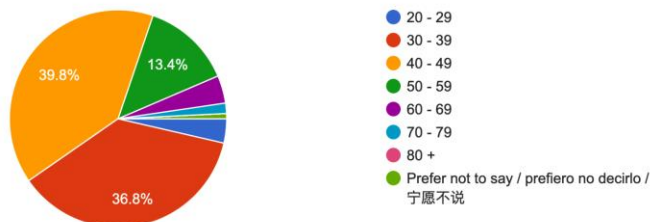


Appendices

Appendix A: Commission on the Status of Women 2023 Survey Data

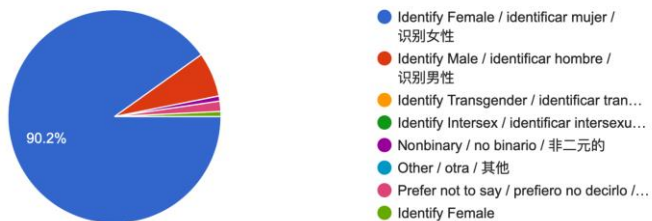
Your age Su edad 你的年龄

389 responses



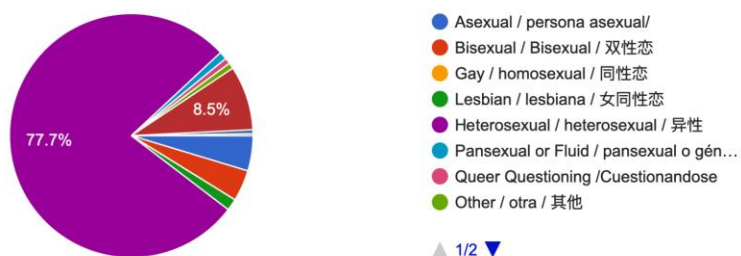
Gender Identity Identidad de género 性别认同

386 responses



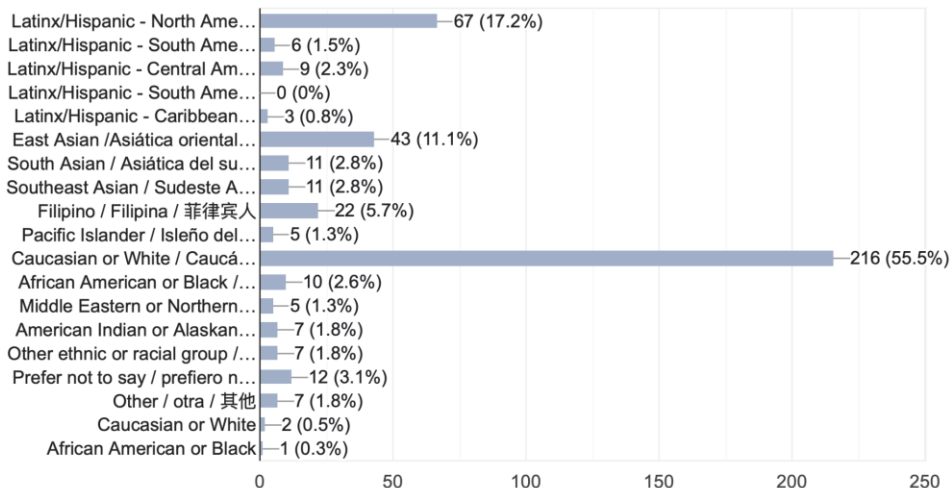
Sexual Orientation Orientación sexual 性取向

386 responses



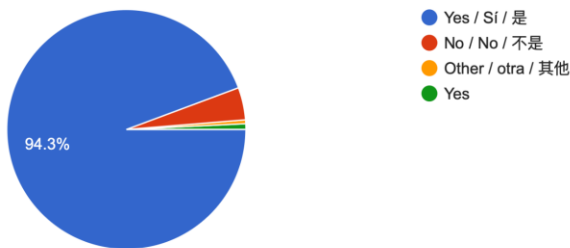
Ethnicity Etnia 种族 (Select all that apply / seleccione todas las que correspondan / 选择所有符合条件的)

389 responses



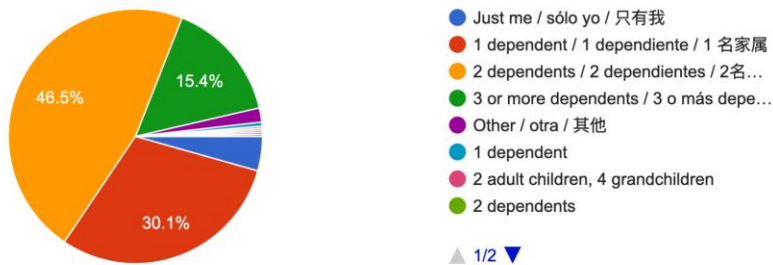
Parent or guardian of at least one child Padre o tutor de al menos un niño 至少一名儿童的父母或监护人

389 responses



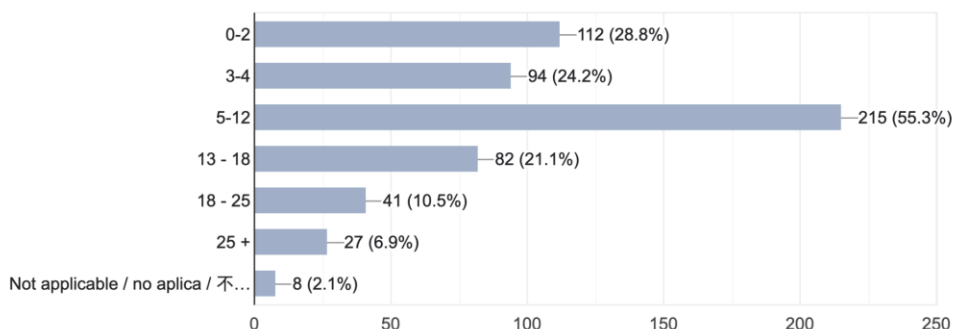
Children or dependents Hijos o dependientes 儿童或家属

389 responses



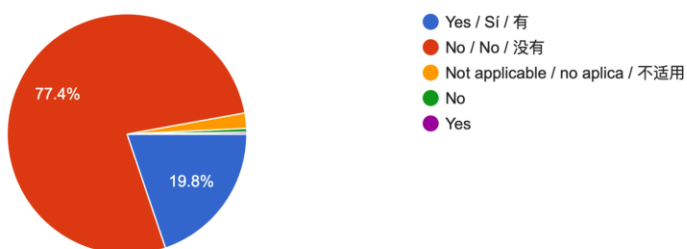
Age of children now (select all that apply) Edad de los niños ahora (seleccione todas las que correspondan) 现在孩子的年龄 (选择所有适用项)

389 responses



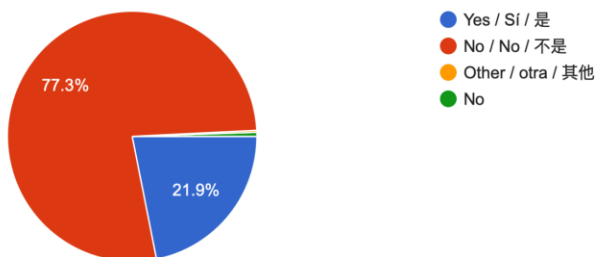
Do any of your children have disabilities or special needs? ¿Alguno de sus hijos tiene discapacidades o necesidades especiales? 您的孩子有残疾或有特殊需要吗?

389 responses



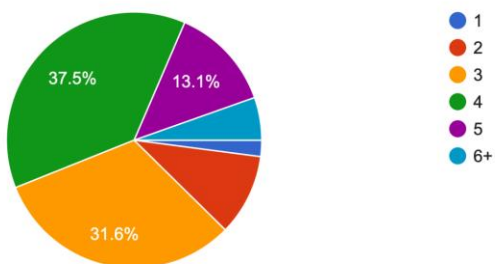
Do you provide caregiving support for a parent, relative or other adult? ¿Proporciona apoyo para el cuidado de un padre, pariente u otro adulto? 您是否为父母、亲戚或其他成年人提供看护支持?

384 responses



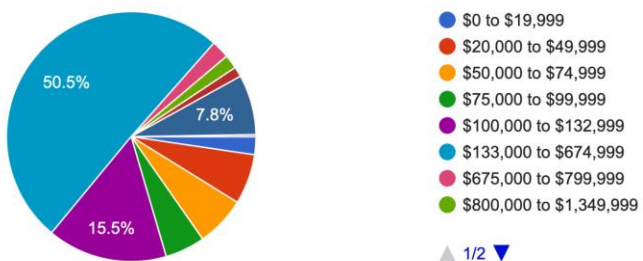
Current household size Tamaño actual del hogar 目前家庭规模

389 responses



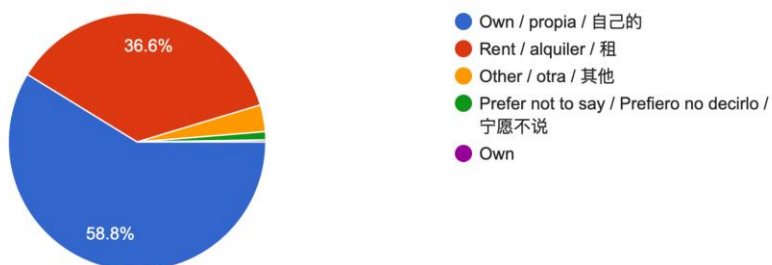
Estimated Household Income Ingresos familiares estimados 估计家庭收入

386 responses



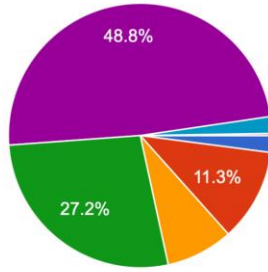
Own or rent Propia o alquiler 拥有或租用

388 responses



Education Educación 教育

389 responses

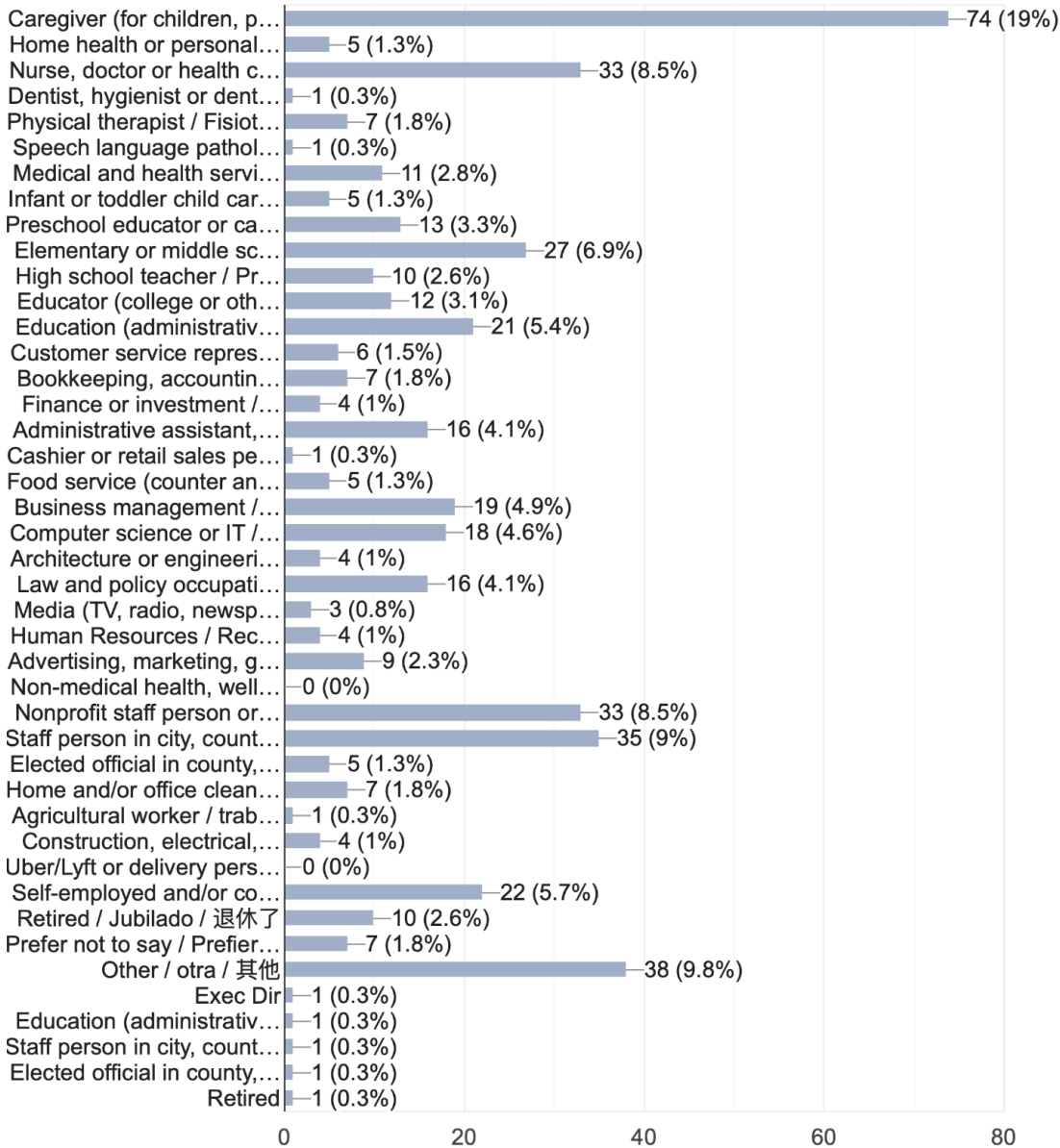


- Less than High School / Menos que el colegio / 低于高中
- High school diploma (GED) / diploma de escuela secundaria / 高中毕业文凭
- Associates Degree / Título de asociado / 副学士学位
- Bachelors Degree / Licenciatura / 学...
- Graduate Degree / Maestría o superi...
- Other / otra / 其他
- Graduate Degree



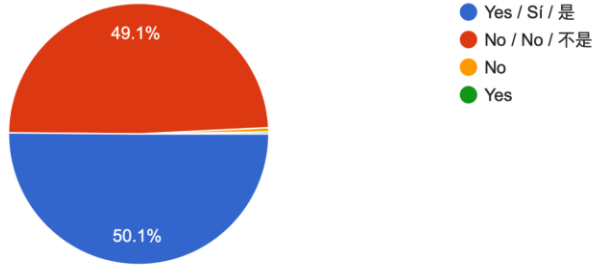
Current occupation (Select all that apply) Ocupación actual (seleccione todas las que correspondan) 现在的职业 (选择所有符合条件的)

389 responses



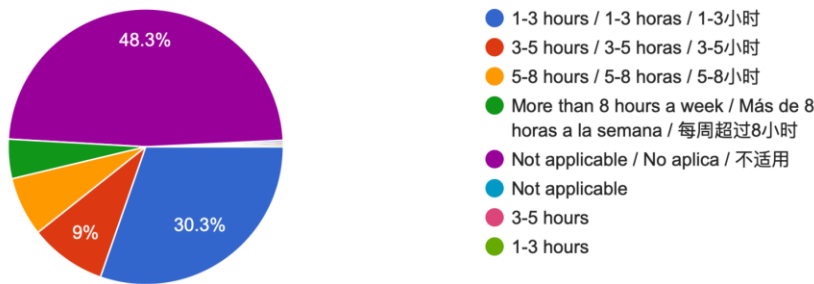
Do you engage in any form of unpaid or volunteer work outside the home? ¿Realiza alguna forma de trabajo no remunerado o voluntari... del hogar? 您是否在户外从事任何形式的无偿工作或志愿工作?

389 responses



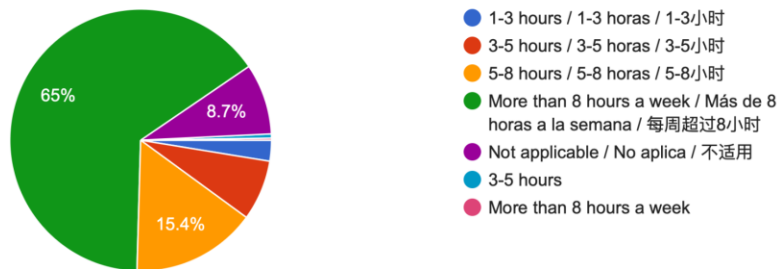
If yes, how many hours of unpaid work (outside the home) do you do a week? Si responde que sí, ¿cuántas horas de trabajo no remun...a semana? 如果是，您每周做多少小时的无薪工作（在家外）？

389 responses



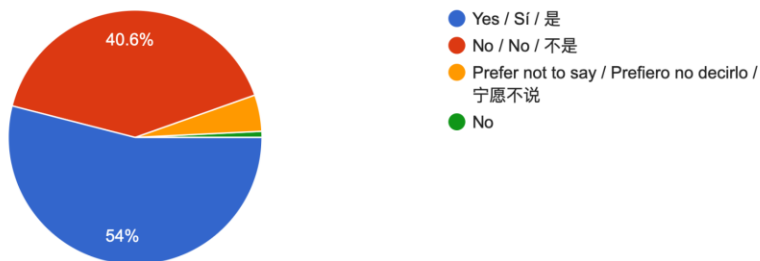
How many hours of unpaid work do you do inside the home (cleaning, cooking, child care, elder care) per week? ¿Cuántas horas ...家中做多少小时的无薪工作（清洁、做饭、照顾孩子、照顾老人）？

389 responses



Do you and other members of your household share caregiving responsibilities equally? ¿Usted y otros miembros de su hogar comparten...do por igual? 您和您家庭的其他成员是否平等分担看护责任?

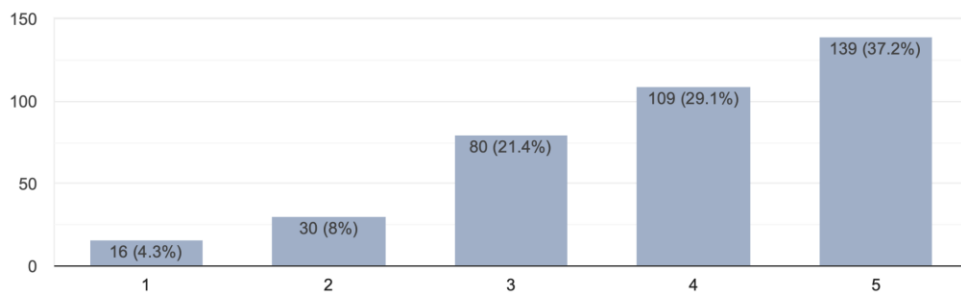
389 responses



(1= easy and 5 = difficult)

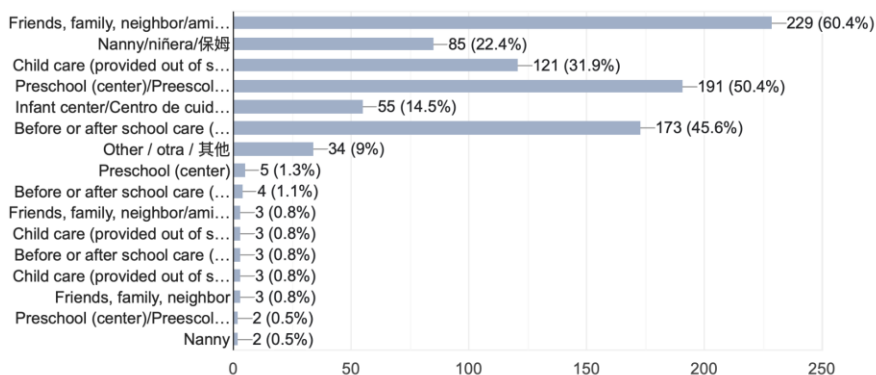
How easy or difficult was it to find child care that met your needs and was within your budget? ¿Qué tan fácil o difícil fue encontrar c...to? 找到满足您的需求且在您的预算之内的托儿服务有多容易或困难?

374 responses

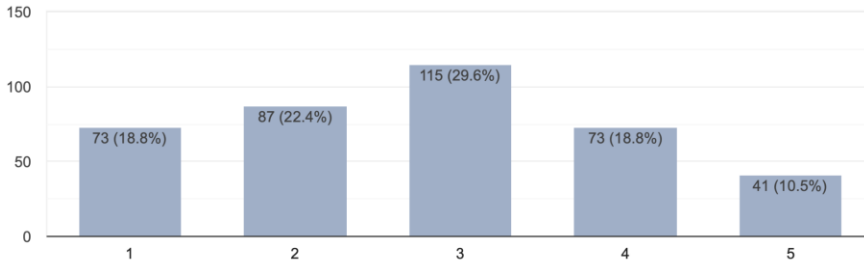


In a typical week, what types of child care have you used (or are using)? Check all that apply. En una semana típica, ¿qué tipo de ...中, 您使用过 (或正在使用) 什么类型的托儿服务? 检查所有适用。

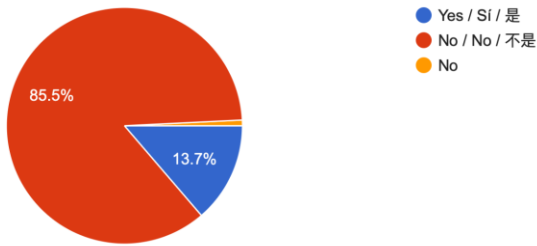
379 responses



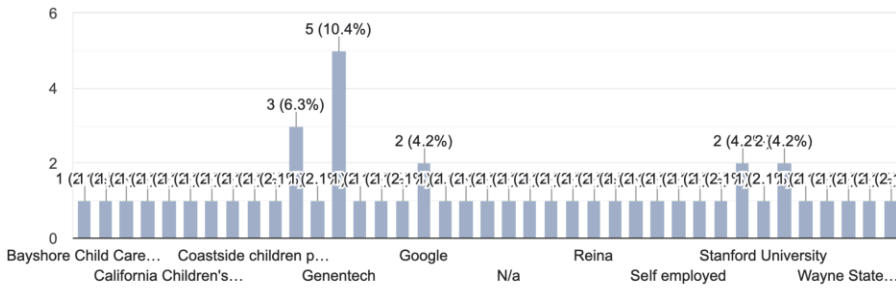
How would you rate your satisfaction with your child care arrangements/options? ¿Cómo calificaría su satisfacción con los arreglos/opciones de cuidado infantil? 您对托儿安排/选择的满意度如何?
389 responses



Have you ever (or do you presently) worked for a company that provided child care on site? ¿Ha trabajado alguna vez (o trabaja ... 您是否曾经 (或目前) 在一家提供现场儿童保育服务的公司工作过?
387 responses

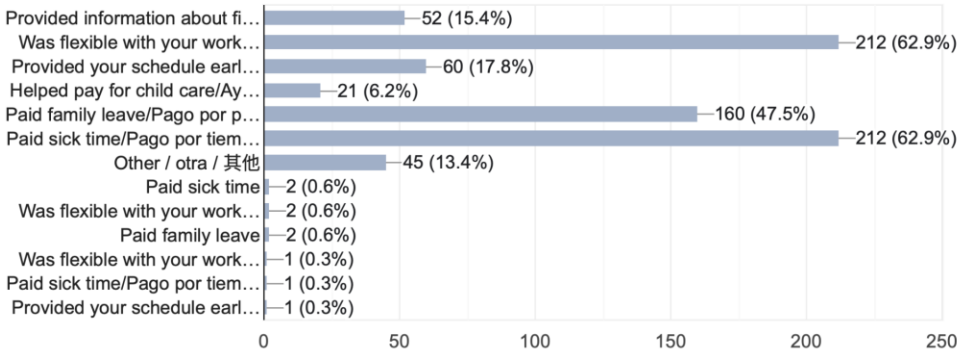


If yes, please provide the name of the employer (if you care to share). Si responde que sí, proporcione el nombre del empleador (...ompartirlo). 如果是, 请提供雇主的姓名 (如果您愿意分享)。
48 responses



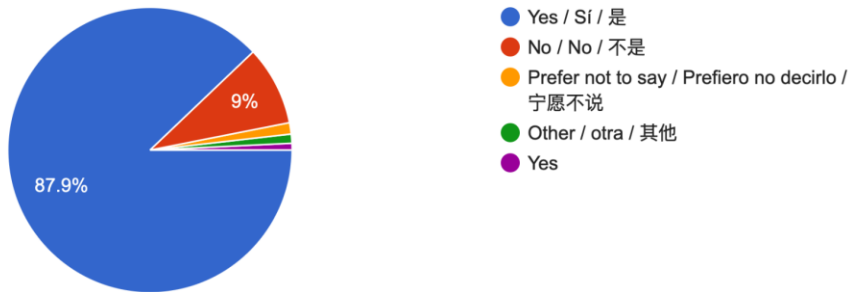
What other accommodations has your employer (past or present) made to enable you to balance work and child care/caregiving? P...其他措施来帮助您平衡工作和儿童保育/看护? 请勾选所有适用项。

337 responses



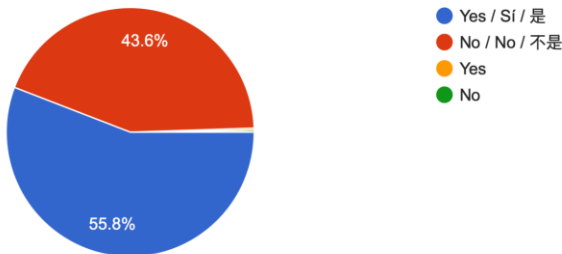
Have child care related challenges past or present impacted you or other members of your family? ¿Los desafíos relaciona...去或现在与儿童保育相关的挑战是否影响过您或您的家庭其他成员?

389 responses



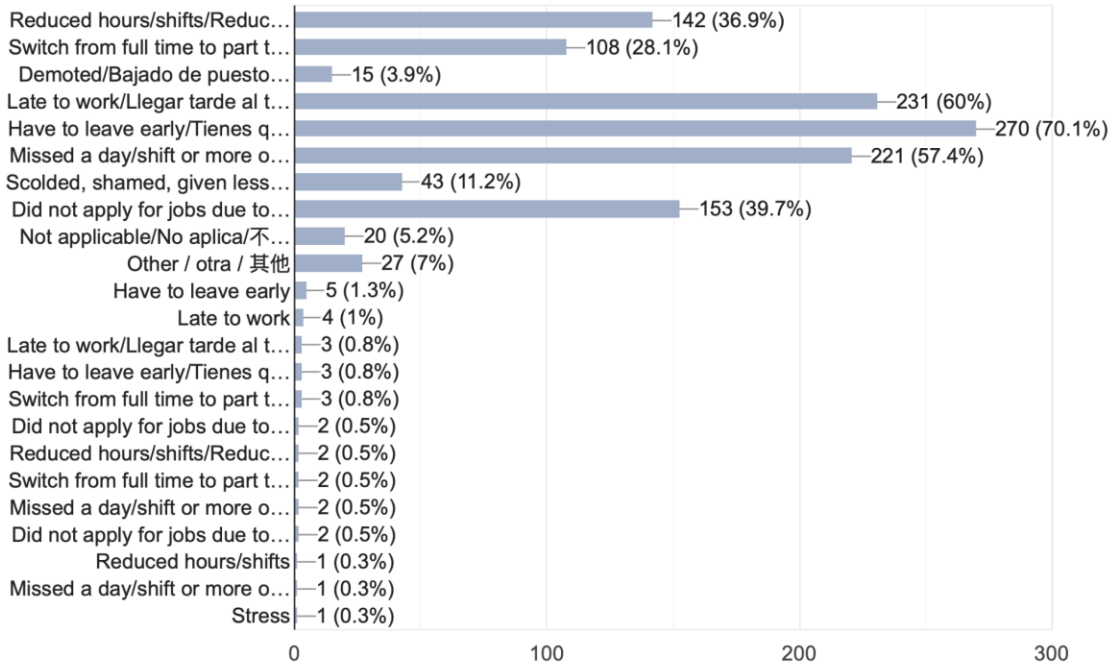
Have other caregiving challenges (such as caring for a partner, parent, relative or other adult) past or present impacted you or other...侣、父母、亲戚或其他成年人) 是否影响过您或您的家庭其他成员?

385 responses



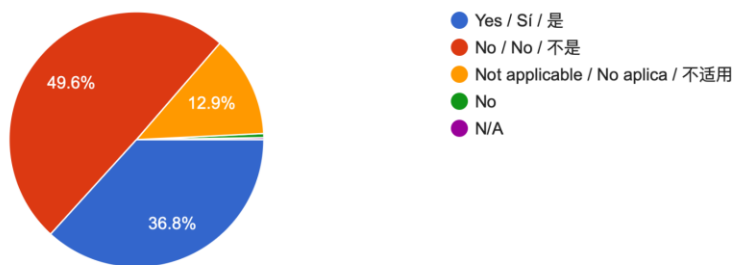
Which of the following of the following challenges have you experienced due to child care and/or caregiving challenges? Select all.../或看护方面的挑战而经历过以下哪些挑战? 选择所有符合条件的。

385 responses



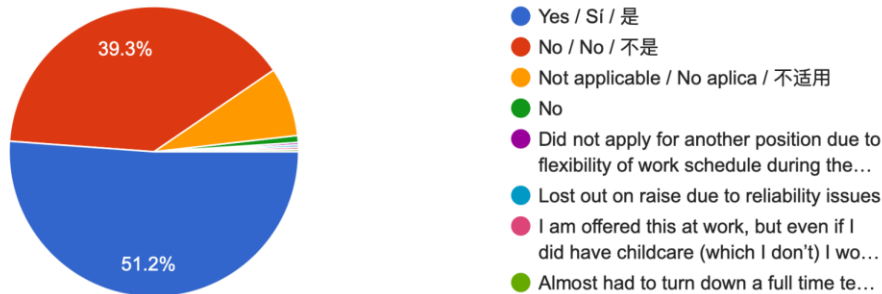
Do you and other household members currently work different shifts to reduce child care or other caregiving needs? ¿Trabajan ust...和其他家庭成员目前是否轮班工作以减少儿童看护或其他看护需求?

389 responses



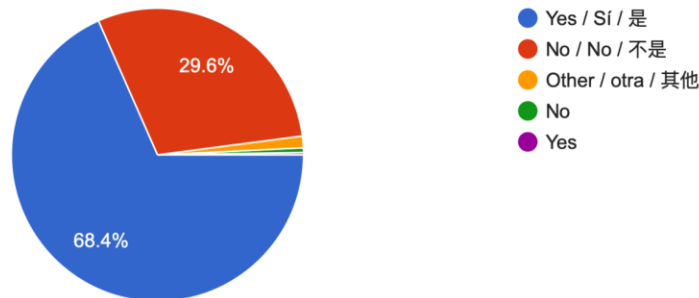
Have you ever had to turn down work or a promotion due to a lack of child care/caregiving challenges? ¿Alguna vez ha teni...是否曾因缺乏照顾孩子/照顾孩子的挑战而不得不拒绝工作或升职?

389 responses



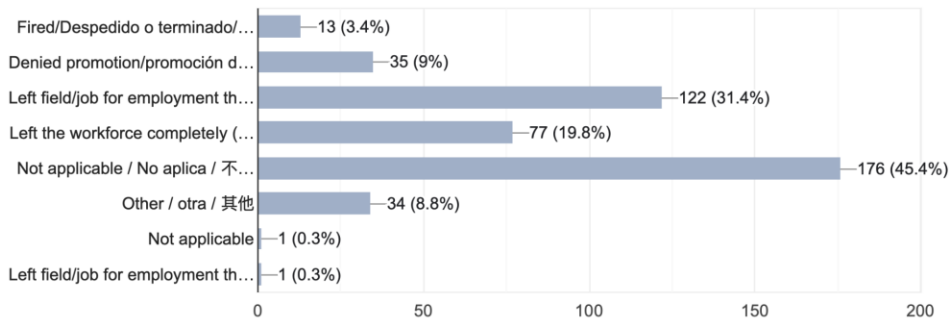
Have you delayed or abandoned professional development opportunities (ie: higher education, license(s), certifications, etc.) ...挑战而推迟或放弃了职业发展机会 (即: 高等教育、执照、认证等)?

389 responses



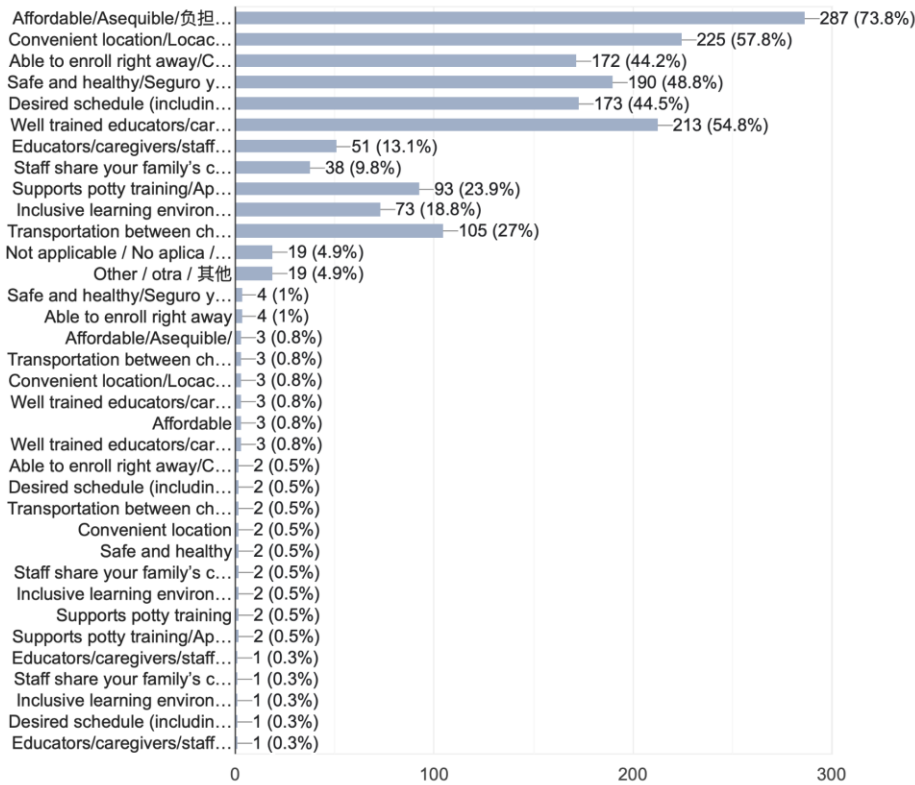
Which employment status consequences have you experienced due to caregiving challenges? (check all that apply) ¿Qué cons...于护理方面的挑战, 您经历过哪些就业状况后果? (检查所有适用)

388 responses



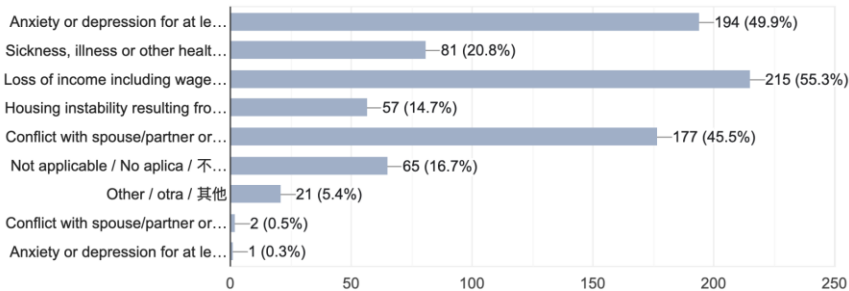
What child care improvements (related to the providers) would have the biggest impact or positive change for you and your household...与提供者相关) 会对您和您的家庭产生最大的影响或积极的变化?

389 responses

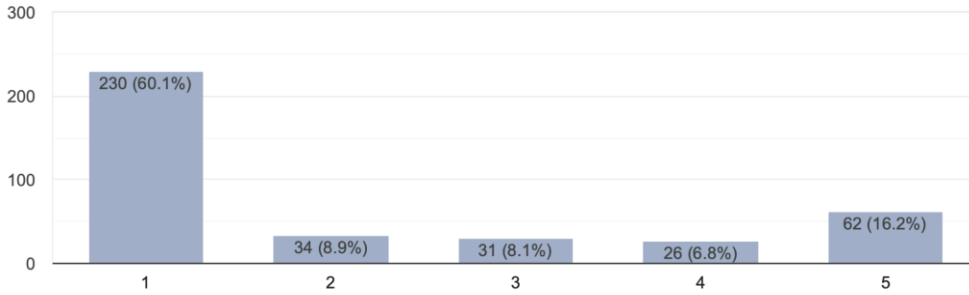


Which personal impacts would you associate with these challenges? (check all that apply) ¿Qué impactos personales asociaría con ...da) 您会将哪些个人影响与这些挑战联系起来? (检查所有适用)

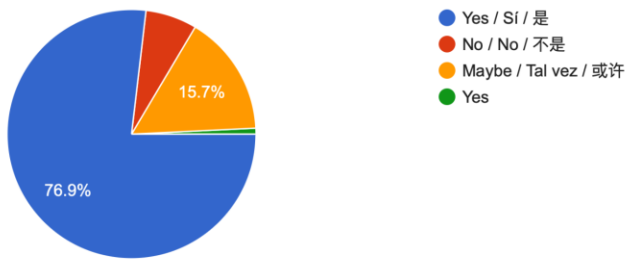
389 responses



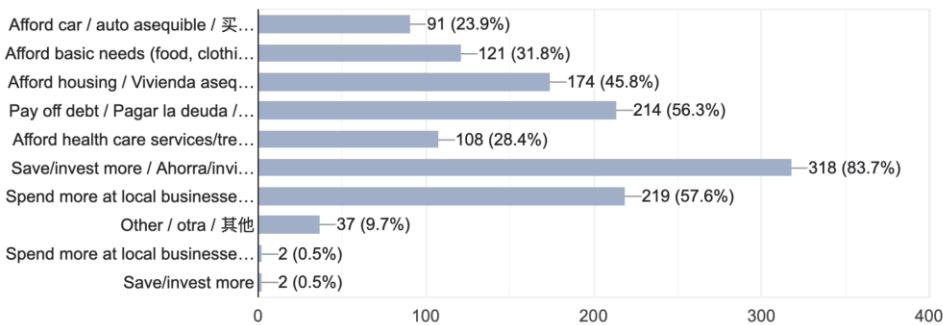
If possible, how impactful would it be for you to have high quality child care at your place of employment? (You may answer bas...对您产生多大的影响? (您可以根据过去或现在的影响来回答)
383 responses



If an employer provided onsite care or benefits tied to child care, would you be more likely to apply for a job? Si un empleador brind...提供现场护理或与儿童保育相关的福利, 您是否更有可能申请工作?
389 responses

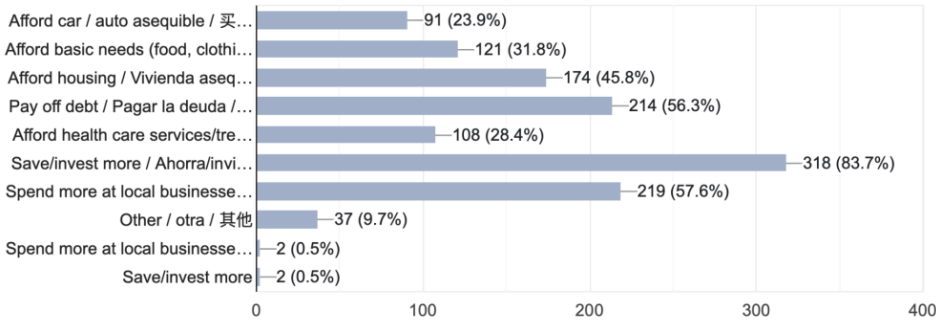


What would be the financial benefits (past or present) of policies like universal paid family leave and universal child care (available a...补贴) 等政策会给您和您的家庭带来哪些经济利益 (过去或现在)?
380 responses



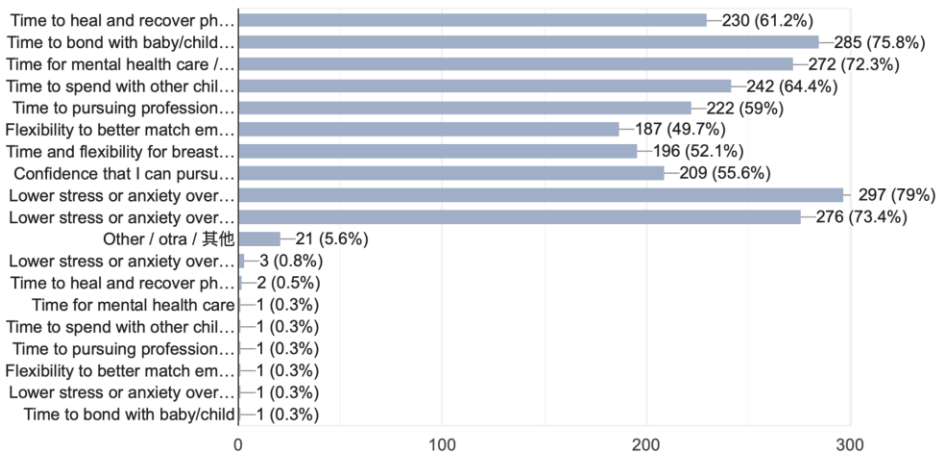
What would be the financial benefits (past or present) of policies like universal paid family leave and universal child care (available a... 补贴) 等政策会给您和您的家庭带来哪些经济利益 (过去或现在) ?

380 responses



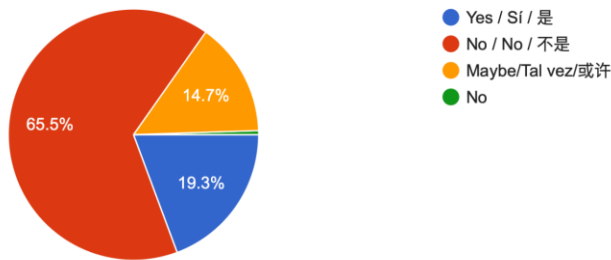
What would be the non-financial benefits (past or present) of policies like universal paid family leave and universal child care (availa... 保育 (免费或大量补贴) 等政策的非经济利益 (过去或现在) 是什么?

376 responses



Are you considering moving from SMC or finding work in another area because of lack of child care? ¿Está considerando mudarse ... 乏托儿服务, 您是否正在考虑离开 SMC 或在其他地区寻找工作?

388 responses



Appendix B: Survey Respondents in their own words

Respondents at the end of the survey could answer free response questions. A significant number took advantage of this opportunity to expand on the importance of these issues, the challenges and the changes they would like to see:

What can businesses do differently or better to support parents/caregivers?

- "Normalize families. Normalize children. Have bosses who actually respect families. Many do not have children or families or think we should all behave like 1950s men (even the women who are in charge think this)."
- "Be understanding and flexible if the kids are sick, there's nothing we can do and nobody wants to take them"
- "Listen to our needs and issues. Almost everyone I know has two jobs, so these questions should have also included a section devoted to managing several jobs while caring for others. It's not a sustainable practice and employers aren't getting the message. They have built in the expense to replace you versus work with you and be inclusive."
- "Walk the talk of "work-life balance" - meaning, don't overload employees, be flexible about working hours. Focus on outcomes and not hours worked. Have childcare on site/help pay for it."
- "Consider childcare as a basic pillar of support for employee benefit packages. Engage in solutions with employees, find out more about how and what other businesses are doing. Take action to engage employees in the process. Then choose a path and do it."

If you could make recommendations to local leaders on policies that support working parents and caregivers, what would you say?

- "Encourage remote work/work from home and flexible schedules for companies operating in SMC. This has made a world of difference for us and our ability to afford childcare!"
- "Require flexible work schedules so that women don't have to leave the workforce, particularly in education. It [is] extremely challenging for educators to keep working during the years they have young children. It also makes it more likely that they will pivot out of education and into another field (as I am working on now)."
- "Consider policies that increase the amount of sick time available to take care of young kids who are sick. It's VERY stressful and exhausting. Policies for universal childcare and/or subsidized child care and making it easier to start daycares is also critical. Also requiring employers to continue to pay for healthcare benefits while employees are out on paid family leave for baby bonding and/or disability. Even if employers provide on site childcare (like mine - the County), there was a very long waiting list. I couldn't get in. I've been working here 3 years - still haven't gotten a call back with a spot available to enroll."
- "Create more opportunities at schools. Daycare programs, TK, after school and summer programs. Schools need more staff so these programs can take more kids. These programs currently have waitlists over a year long and the summer program is full within an hour of being available and costs \$1500 per kid for the summer. I talk to parents almost everyday about the childcare struggle."



- "Good, safe, healthy universal childcare options during working hours MUST be available and affordable to people of all incomes so that we don't have to sacrifice our children for our jobs or our jobs for our children. Women will always have to bear the brunt of childcare, and we need to put every protection in place to make sure that they have even a chance of being as productive and empowered as men are."
- "I have witnessed the lack of pay for child care providers over the last 35 years being in the child development field and a parent of three. If religion is important enough to be tax free for our communities, imagine the impact of being income tax free for child care providers. We need our excellent providers to remain in the field to help care for our children. Parents who need to work, need child care to do so. Help parents afford care and help providers stay in the field. NO INCOME TAXES FOR CHILD CARE PROVIDERS!"
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- "Good, safe, healthy universal childcare options during working hours MUST be available and affordable to people of all incomes so that we don't have to sacrifice our children for our jobs or our jobs for our children. Women will always have to bear the brunt of childcare, and we need to put every protection in place to make sure that they have even a chance of being as productive and empowered as men are."
- "Child Care providers should NOT be required to pay state and federal income tax. They are in the lowest income bracket in our nation, yet provide the most needed and valued service to families. The state and private child care programs cannot afford to pay child care providers a livable wage. To do so, parents/state would have to pay more for services. I have witnessed the lack of pay for child care providers over the last 35 years being in the child development field and a parent of three. If religion is important enough to be tax free for our communities, imagine the impact of being income tax free for child care providers. We need our excellent providers to remain in the field to help care for our children. Parents who need to work, need child care to do so. Help parents afford care and help providers stay in the field. NO INCOME TAXES FOR CHILD CARE PROVIDERS!"
- "Tell software companies that women have children AND brains."
- "Universal paid childcare for all. Pay early childhood educators as much as tech workers. Educators in all fields should be making more than tech workers. Instead of paying tech workers so much, pay teachers. Our children are the future - they deserve the best care. Paying teachers well means they can take care of themselves & their families & incentives to do a good job teaching/caring for children."
- "Stop pretending that the welfare of children doesn't matter to society. Everyone was a child once, and virtually all mothers work, so it's incomprehensible that people act like providing adequate child care is an onerous burden on society. What's an onerous burden on society is a generation of children who grow up in poverty with exhausted and overextended mothers who live miserable lives trying to adequately provide for their children."
- "I sleep 4 hours a night because only way can manage work and child care and cost of child care and housing in bay area"
- "I am exhausted"
- "I always feel that I am failing as an employee and mother. It's very depressing."



Appendix C: San Mateo County Census and Needs Assessment Data

Demographics

- Total Population 805,000 people
 - Children 0-12 - 109,600 or 13.6%
 - Infants (0-2) - 18,100
 - Preschool (2-4) - 27,600
 - Infant + toddler (0-4) - 45,700
 - School age (5-12) - 63,800
- Ethnic distribution of children 0-12
 - Hispanic/Latino at 33%
 - White at 31%
 - Asian American/Pacific Islanders at 17%
 - Multi-racial at 9%,
 - Filipino at 7%,
 - other ethnicities at 3%

Demand/Need

- 58,500 spaces
 - 15% Infants
 - 34% Preschool
 - 51% School Age.
- Resident/Non-resident
 - 92% residents
 - 8% non-resident employees

Supply/Shortage

- Current Slots is 41,350 (for children 0-12)
 - Child Care Homes is 5,800 (14%)
 - Child Care Centers is 35,600 (86%)
- Current Shortage - 17,157
 - Infants - 5,790
 - Preschool - 1,107
 - School Age - 10,260

Cost of Care

- Average market rates
 - Center based care ranges from \$972 to \$2,042
 - FCCHs \$1,013 to \$1,561

Workforce

- Current workers total 5,331
 - Shortage is 2,829 (to fulfill the unmet need of 17,157 spaces)
- Current Wages
 - \$20 per hour for aides/support staff to \$31 per hour for directors
- Living wage
 - Should be \$36 to \$52 per hour (increase of 65-127% with adjustments for education and experience).
 - Cost addressing the wage gap is \$207 million per year for a total cost of \$461 million per year.
 - Cost to meet the staff shortfall (with living wage) is \$240 million.
- Professional Development Cost
 - BA/BS for center-based child care 0 to 5 workforce is about \$6.86 million (\$20,900 per student)
 - Net cost with potential financial aid is \$2.4 million (\$7,300 per student)

Economic Benefits - Multiplier Effect

- For every \$1 spent in the industry, \$1.88 is generated in the County.
- The current wages of ECE workers generate \$476 million annually in economic activity.
- If ECE workers received a living wage, the industry would generate \$866 million per year.

Source: 2020 United States Census and 2022 San Mateo County Child Care Needs Assessment



Appendix D: Project Timeline

2023

- June
 - Project launch with outline of work plan including definition of goals, data gathering methods and key constituents/local partners
- July
 - Local data & information gathering
 - Creation and translation of survey into Spanish and Mandarin
 - Creation of outreach materials in English, Spanish and Mandarin
 - National research
 - Gathering state data and national research/studies
 - Learning about child care and its impact on women, inclusive of the rights of women and the ways women/families are impacted by factors at home and work.
- August
 - Local data & information gathering
 - Survey launch at Women’s Equality Day Event
 - National research
 - Gathering state data and national research/studies
 - Learning about child care and its impact on women, inclusive of the rights of women and the ways women/families are impacted by factors at home and work.
- September
 - Local data & information gathering
 - South San Francisco Listening Session hosted in collaboration with Measure DD
 - Outreach to local partners, including organizations that support women and/or children to encourage participation
 - National research
 - Review and analysis of state and national data gathered
- October
 - Local data & information gathering
 - Survey deadline extended to 10/31; notices sent to cities with lower participation rates with invitations to share with community members
 - Preliminary review of data with child care sector leaders including Sarah Kinahan of the Child Care Partnership Council, Christine Padilla of BuildUp San Mateo County and Christine Thorsteinson of Silicon Valley Community Foundation
 - Interviews, conversations and written statements from community partners
 - Written statements from child care leaders: Skyline College, Family Connections, Izzi Early Education, All Five, Kristen Anderson Consulting



- Video interviews with local electeds, child care providers and early education leaders: BuildUp, Mayor of Menlo Park, Director of AllFive, First5
 - Written statements gathered from community members who wished to tell their story
 - National research
 - Organization of state and national data for analysis and comparison with local data
 -
- November
 - Local data & information gathering
 - Original survey closed; total of 389 survey participants
 - Analysis of local survey data and comparison with state/national data
 - Interviews and conversations continued with community partners
 - Skyline College, Family Connections, Izzi Early Education, All Five, Kristen Anderson Consulting
 - Alignment with child care leaders
 - Share preliminary data with the Workforce, Quality and Access Committees of the Child Care Partnership Council and gather feedback/inputs from community members
 - RISE Presentation
 - Invitation to Christine Padilla and Sarah Kinahan to co-present at the RISE conference
- December
 - Local data & information gathering
 - Community member interviews
 - Videos captured of local community members who agreed to share their story on camera
 - Alignment with child care leaders
 - Interview with family child care home leader, Liz Scully
 - RISE Presentation
 - Identify key stories, themes and data (local and state/national) to share at conference
 - Data Sharing with County leaders
 - Tent: Preview of data and recommendations to Supervisor Noelia Corzo

2024

January

- RISE Conference
 - Finalize testimonials/stories and key data points/recommendations with guidance from Christine Padilla and Sarah Kinahan

February

- RISE Conference
 - Edit and prepare videos/stories
 - Finalize slides in collaboration with Christine Padilla and Sarah Kinahan

March

- RISE Conference
 - Present stories and data at RISE conference



- Gather feedback on recommendations from conference attendees

April

- Review feedback from RISE conference attendees on key questions including how child care drives power and choice in the lives of women, what mindset changes need to shift in order to give more power to women and what policies would have the biggest impact on the lives of women and families in their lives.

May-July

- Work on draft report
- Provide Child Care Impact Report 2024 to integrate/merge into CSW Fund the Future Report

August

- Fund the Future Report created and designed

September

- Present to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors



Appendix E: Feedback Methods & Interview Data

Feedback was collected from community partners via four mechanisms

- Listening session - organized in partnership Measure DD and United Way in September, 2023
- Online feedback forms - 6 responses submitted in October, 2023 from Tina Watts (Skyline College, ECE Faculty, Melissa Guariglia, Director of Infrastructure & Clinical Services at Family Connections,
 - Link to Google Sheet with [Data](#)
- Public presentations - Child Care Partnership Council presentations to Workforce and Access Committees in November 2023 and Leadership & Impact Committee in January 2024
 - Link to Google Slide Presentation
- Video interviews conducted at community site (AllFive) with CCPC Coordinator, Sarah Kinahan, Mayor of Menlo Park, Jen Wolosin, AllFive Preschool Director Carol Thompsen and BuildUp Directors Christine Padilla and Esmeralda Martin-Singh.
 - [Link](#) to Google Drive with Videos

1:1 Interviews with Liz Scully (San Mateo County Family Child Care Organization)

Communities Served

- Tina Watts, Skyline
 - 16 - 40 years of age; women who are working, going to school, and/or raising families cannot find quality, affordable, and convenient childcare.
 - Zip Codes and demographics most impacted by child care challenges: South San Francisco, Daly City, San Bruno, Colma, Millbrae, East Palo Alto. Women of color - Asian, Black, Latina, & Pacific Islander
- Melissa Guariglia, Family Connections
 - We provide early learning programming, home visiting, basic need distribution, parent education, and mental health services to caregivers with children bring birth through age 5 The age of the caregivers we serve ranges - however, there are multigenerational impacts as many women in the workforce have to enlist grandparents or other relatives to step in to help provide care for their little ones.
 - We predominantly serve Daly City, Redwood City, and East Palo Alto - each community (with multiple zip codes) is incredibly impacted and in need of resources.
 - Latinx, black, and other families who have recently come to the US
- Angel Barrios, IZZI
 - As a Head Start and Early Head Start program, our mission is to provide high quality early care education to pregnant mothers, children ages 0 -3 and their families in Redwood City, Coastal Cities, East Palo Alto, San Mateo, Daly City

Child Care Challenges & Special Needs

- Tina Watts, Skyline
 - They are desperate to find programs and placements that can support their children and meet their needs for gainful employment, education, etc. They are often using two or three programs to piece together childcare. And that is if existing programs can meet their child's needs - some need one-on-one services that are not offered in existing settings.
- Melissa Guariglia, Family Connections



- The need for quality care for children with special needs are often incrementally more significant than the needs experienced by other families with young children. Each year, we see an increase in the number of children entering our program with diagnosed and undiagnosed developmental delays and other special needs. Not only is there a lack of trained early childhood providers who are equipped to handle this population, we are unable to hire enough staff to simply increase the number of adults in our classrooms to provide support. In working with partner schools (public sector), we hear about long waitlists to receive placement and/or diagnosis. Even sharing a playground with the special needs classes, and anecdotally sharing stories with school staff, we hear about the intensity of the work with little benefits and very low pay. These people enter the field because they truly care, but are quickly getting burnt out and are often unable to afford to live in the community they are serving on their salary. Not only that but the families at home are significantly more taxed and getting mental health services (particularly in non-English) means high cost or long waitlists - so caregivers are unable to get the support they need to provide an enriching environment at home... obviously each challenge only increases risk factors for families and children.
- Angel Barrios, IZZI
 - This is a very complex as the impact can be quite significant based on navigating services, supporting a child with special needs, resources available to families, etc.

Impact of caregiving responsibilities beyond early childhood - for partners, relatives or other adults?

- Tina Watts, Skyline
 - Many parents use extended family and friends to meet their childcare needs, again piecing together a variety of people to pick up, drop off, and transport children between programs and home. Add in the unpredictability of young children's health and families do not have the resources to main regular and consistent schedules for themselves or their children.
- Melissa Guariglia, Family Connections
 - When the primary caregiver is over-taxed or over extended there are ripple effects that impact the overall health and wellbeing of the family unit. Wrap-around family support would be ideal but it's so difficult to access.

Average Incomes for Families Served

- Tina Watts, Skyline
 - This varies significantly - from CalWORKs families to families earning \$12K per month. A living wage for a family of 4 is roughly \$6500 per month - this will pay for rent in an apartment, groceries, and transportation. Living wage does not include rest and relaxation, education, or other hobbies or endeavors. Living wage should be defined more comprehensively. If we want families to STAY in San Mateo County, we need to look affordable home ownership options.
- Melissa Guariglia, Family Connections
 - 30K and below - and I'd say a liveable family income would be well over 150K
- Angel Barrios, IZZI
 - 100% below the Federal Poverty Line. A liveable family income for a family of 3 or 4, would be at least \$150K.

Housing for communities served

- Tina Watts, Skyline



- Affluent families own (25%), middle and low income families rent (75%).
- There is no affordable housing - \$3500 for an apartment, most likely two bedrooms, is not affordable. Childcare costs for families with subsidized care are affordable, however it often doesn't always meet their needs. Families that are paying more often have to choose between rent and childcare. Families will often compromise on their childcare options to meet their other obligations.
- Melissa Guariglia, Family Connections
 - 95% rent or live rent free with other relatives.
 - People cannot afford to live in the area, but they also can't afford to go to work because most childcare and early learning programs are so costly that they are unable to afford the care. It's a really challenging situation that perpetuates itself.
- Angel Barrios, IZZI
 - Majority are renting their home.
 - Affordable housing is the number need of our families. Our program provides free child care to our families which takes off a lot of burden on them.

Occupations for communities served

- Tina Watts, Skyline
 - Service industry, teacher, health care - or students who do not work.
- Melissa Guariglia, Family Connections
 - We work with many families that have at least 1 unemployed caregiver - which may be due to concerns around citizenship status.

Unpaid work

- Tina Watts, Skyline
 - Unpaid? Not very often outside of familial or religious obligations. Informal paid work? All the time - childcare, housekeeping, cash jobs for family and friends, etc. It's huge! They manage all aspects of their households - cooking, cleaning, childcare, finances - often while working and/or going to school. It is a huge source of stress managing both the traditional expectations of managing a household and family as well as work and pursuing education.

Women with equitable support at home have more time to pursue self-care and leisure activities that are good for the body and the mind. They have agency over pursuing areas of personal interest rather than solely managing the day to day aspects of their life.
- Melissa Guariglia, Family Connections
 - We see a number of caregivers caring for others' children. It's unclear the payment status.

Child Care Use, Access & Satisfaction with Care for communities served

- Tina Watts, Skyline
 - Work and school - they need to work to support their families and they pursue education to work towards a career and more sustainable income.
 - No. In fact, other economic factors like wages for early childhood educators affect women's access to services. There are not enough programs to meet the needs of the workforce. I think some families who have "lucked" out have found programs they like/love. Others settle for



convenience and cost, with limited choices that truly support their ideas of learning for their children.

- Melissa Guariglia, Family Connections
 - Friends/family/neighbor, free and low cost child care center
 - Those who are linked with us have access to built in resources and, if what we provide is not enough, we work together to link families as best we can with outside resources.
 - It's complicated - I think they are happy with the care they receive but I do think there are limitations that could be alleviated with providing more hours of care, having more free sites, having full drop-off models - but of course that means more staffing, more space, more overhead - which isn't always available to orgs like ours. Being thoughtful and strategic about sustainable growth doesn't always allow us to meet the glaring needs of our community which is why we are always happy to build partnerships!
- Angel Barrios, IZZI
 - They need to work and need a place for their children.
 - No, it is very challenging. We have families that don't qualify because they earn too much and have trouble accessing affordable child care. Also, there is not enough infant and toddler spaces available in the county.

Accommodations Employers Could Make to Balance Caregiving and Work

- Tina Watts, Skyline
 - This is a hard question to answer because different jobs require different hours, locations, etc. I would love to see employers work with public systems to ensure there are variety of high-quality programs, in faculties built for children, in a variety of settings to meet workforce needs. Paying the childcare workforce ample wages would ensure a variety of programs exist to serve families.
- Melissa Guariglia, Family Connections
 - Have quality childcare available at the office, offering stipends for families with children under 6 - and flexible hour/time off/alternative work arrangements.
- Angel Barrios, IZZI
 - Companies providing on-site child care for their employees.

Child Care Impact on Other Family Members

- Tina Watts, Skyline
 - Everyone is stressed about childcare. It adds additional tension between the heads of the household and requires significant coordination with extended family and friends.
- Angel Barrios, IZZI
 - This effects the entire family including the children. When a child doesn't have stable child care, then this can impact their development.

Impact on Women, Including Reduced Hours, Professional Development, Personal & Financial Wellbeing

- Tina Watts, Skyline



- Yes. They have schedules based on perceived need and who can help with transportation.

Yes. It's one of the challenges in providing axillary supports and resources. We have to include childcare services to reduce the barriers for participation. Without affordable and consistent childcare, women often have to choose jobs that align with hours of operation and/or locations for ease of commute, access and time in managing family obligations. Both! Financial - lost income, reduced income, and jobs not related to career pursuits; non-financial - stress and anxiety

- Melissa Guariglia, Family Connections
 - YES - child care related challenges DO reduce hours and forgo professional development related opportunities. This then results in an inability to advance because of inequity around issues (i.e. employment related consequences) like these.
 - Personal impacts include financial, lost income, housing instability or non-financial, such as anxiety/stress, conflict with partners, etc. Inability to access basic needs resources (diapers, food, hygiene products, clothing), trauma...
- Angel Barrios, IZZI
 - Sometimes yes! Especially for those that have school aged children.
 - Yes, I am sure there are moms in our program that have to make some sacrifices to their professional aspirations.
 - Yes, the challenge between having to work because of the high cost of living vs. being able to stay home with their child when they are still young.
 - Personal impacts include financial, such as lost income, housing instability or non-financial, such as anxiety/stress, conflict with partners, etc.

Impact of onsite child care

- Tina Watts, Skyline
 - Very helpful, but we always must consider spaces that are intentional for children - hosting childcare in an office space may be good for parents, but not necessarily for children.
Benefits to families, however programs that support these benefits also need financial support to sustain long periods of time for families to not utilize services.
- Melissa Guariglia, Family Connections
 - The impact would be "incredible."
- Angel Barrios, IZZI
 - Yes, our teachers would definitely benefit from on-site child care.

Financial and non-Financial Benefits of Policies like Paid Leave or Universal Child Care

- Tina Watts, Skyline
 - Parents spending more time with family, reduced stress - physical and mental, financial security and overall well being.
 - Universal free childcare would have the biggest impact on families - regardless of employment status, all families could utilize childcare based on their individual needs/wants and families would not have to consider the cost of childcare as part of their household budget.
- Melissa Guariglia, Family Connections



- The increased equity/access would be beneficial/impactful not just at the parent level but also for children. Reduced stress/anxiety/depression and other detrimental/deleterious mental health costs.

Recommendations

- Tina Watts, Skyline
 - Invest in the folks who make childcare for families possible - maintain or improve teacher requirements and pay them ample wages to remain in San Mateo County.
 - Invest in free public education for children from birth through bachelor's degree. Childcare is early education! Invest in our children and invest in the folks who care for our children.
- Melissa Guariglia, Family Connections
 - Free adult education and professional development programs, vocational training in multiple languages, access to mental health services (in native language)
 - We need to fund Early Childhood programs more fully because the need is unending and far-reaching. It's concerning to anticipate the future outcomes of this crisis, but it is clear that unless we invest in families with young children, we are setting our communities up for failure. We are also missing out on huge portions of the population with a voice that needs to be heard/uplifted and contribute directly to this conversation.
- Angel Barrios, IZZI
 - Living in a high cost county causes a lot of stress on women with young children. There is a lack of affordable and subsidized childcare for Infants and Toddlers. How do we look at benefits to women that have young infants so that they are not forced to return to work so quickly and have that time for family bonding.



Appendix F: RISE Leadership Conference Reflection Writing & Feedback

Sampling of responses from the RISE Leadership Conference Engagement

What stood out to you?

- The dramatic difference it would make not just in the lives of individual women and their families but in the entire community to invest in child care.
- The hidden importance of child care as infrastructure.
- Happy moms lead to happy households.
- Caregiver penalty - being an eldest daughter, you are the one who takes care of other family members.
- We need to invest in all children, 0-18.
- Economic power is economic justice.
- It continues to amaze me that the people trusted with caring for the future of our nation are paid such low wages.

How does childcare drive choice and power in the lives of women?

- Women are frazzled and burnt out.
- Immensely. Child care is vital for families to join the workforce. If you have no one to care for your child, you can't physically work or like most take your mind to work because your mind is wondering if your child is SAFE.
- Child care gives women freedom to work and take care of themselves.
- We can work as long as we are assisted with child care. We sometimes have to drop our good-paying jobs for another with less pay because we have to work around our kids' schedules.
- Elder care needs support infrastructure.
- Having affordable child care could benefit overall education.
- Need child care beyond 5 years - not many resources especially for single parents. There are needs beyond child care itself, like transportation.
- Shout-out to 4C's If not for them, I would not have been able to go to work as a medical consultant.
- You can't work or achieve self-sufficiency without access to high quality child care.
- The guilt women feel leads them to feel like they have to choose being a professional over being a mom. Child care directly affects the autonomy and decision-making power of women, enabling them to pursue careers and education while ensuring their children are cared for. Child care is everything to women. Mothers who don't have that support will not be able to have good financial health.
- Influences the decisions due to not having accessible or affordable child care many have to quite jobs in order to care for kids.
- Increase their earnings and seek new job opportunities. Allows women to progress in their careers. They don't have to choose between paying a portion of their income on child care, finding cheaper, lower quality care or leaving the workforce.
- The ability and access to affordable child care can immensely drive more opportunities for women.
- Child care gives women more freedom and freedom within their careers to make money and prioritize their families.



- I've experienced it myself, as an immigrant from the Philippines at age 7 - where my parents were affected with child care responsibilities and later as a working mother and having to make choices (work vs motherhood).
- It can be all consuming when child care costs as much or more than college tuition and there is federal financial aid/scholarships for college but not the same for infrastructure for childcare.

What mindsets need to shift in order to prioritize children/families as well as give more power to women?

- Women will always be there to pick up the pieces of a broken culture. Enough is enough.
- We need to see children and women as actually important and essential instead of just an afterthought.
- We need to put more community importance.
- All companies need to have child care available to ensure success in their companies. Employees who have somewhere to leave their children will show up for work and produce for companies.
- Shift mindsets that this is a zero-sum game. There is more than enough money to solve these challenges.
- It's a collective issue.
- The belief that child care is not part of our society's infrastructure.
- There needs to be an entire culture shift in the community and workforce.
- We need to shift government mindsets - allocating funds from policing to investing in child care for the community.
- Include family child care.
- Parents should have choice.
- I hear a lot of "don't have kids if you can't afford them" but a family shouldn't be a privilege afforded only to the well-off.
- Follow Canada. They have a better system, especially when it comes to single mothers. Child care is free, college education is free. Medical insurance is free.
- Pay women who care for children so they can stay home.
- Making children and families a priority in our policies, laws and regulations. Increase remote work/telecommunity, increase shared jobs and increase flexible schedules.
- If SSDI paid for senior caregiving.
- That companies need to do their part. It is not just the mother's responsibility.
- We need an overhaul. It begins with our teachers who help raise our children, child care providers fall under the same umbrella.
- More supportive/flexible workplaces - taking care of kids is okay!
- The mindset of "I don't have kids, this doesn't affect me." Kids are our FUTURE even if you don't have kids!
- As an investment, not an expense. It is not just babysitting. It is early childhood education, even when they are infants.
- The message of child care as infrastructure really resonated with me. It needs to be at the foundation - not as an afterthought. Loved the idea of buildings incorporating child care.
- Companies need to be involved in the conversation on how to support parents.



What policies would have the biggest impact on your life or women and families in your life?

- Legislating that a certain percentage of each county dollar be spent on child welfare. Expanding current programs. Universal child care.
- One year paid leave, flexible work from home/hours, universal child care, TK starting at younger age.
- 4 day work week.
- Policies to provide free or affordable childcare and increase wages for child care providers.
- Longer leaves for maternity and eldercare.
- Child care as a right, universally provided or at least subsidies. Have wealthy companies contribute to programs like this.
- Make the permit processes easier.
- Access to affordable child care. Not having to jump through hoops to get funding.
- Women as elected officials.
- Supports for elder care.
- More paid leave and job production while on leave. Universal child care.
- Universal child care. Higher pay for child care workers.
- Universal child care.
- Universal child care. Paying early child care educators a living wage so that centers may be staffed adequately. Educators who are paid well will show up to work happy and will educate children better.
- 4 day work week.
- Financial assistance for those who are caregivers.
- I don't have kids but policies that prioritize families, child care and living wages (REAL living wages) for caregivers would change our world for the better.
- Free childcare.
- Policies regarding universal child care and health care could impact women in my life.
- An office of children and families.
- Co-locating child care with housing - make this mandatory.
- Direct funding streams to help sustain FCC's.
- Jobs offering resources for child care (onsite child care, flexible hours, etc.)
- Tax private corporations more.
- Universal child care, higher ECE pay.
- More tax benefits/child care benefits.
- Universal child care and eldercare.
- Free health care, child care and education.
- Tax corporations and give that tax (money) to raise wages of educators.
- Child care support and equal pay/pay equity.
- Universal quality child care with summer options. Employer benefits and incentives.

Appendix G: RISE Leadership Conference Child Care Handouts

Full Handouts at: [Fund the Future Report | County of San Mateo, CA \(smcgov.org\)](https://www.smcgov.org/fund-the-future-report)



Acknowledgements

- Supervisor Noelia Corzo and Chief of Staff Jacki Rigoni for their close partnership with the Commission on the Status of Women and support for initiatives that support children and families
- Child Care Partnership Council Coordinator Sarah Kinahan and BuildUp San Mateo County Director Christine Padilla for their guidance and support throughout this process, including their participation as guest speakers at the RISE Leadership Conference
- The hundreds of community members and dozens of local partners who collaborated in the data collection, analysis and sharing of this vital information.
- President Susan Kokores and Vice President Ann Girard and Director Tanya Beat of the San Mateo County Commission for the Status of Women for their leadership and service.
- The members of the Child Care Subcommittee of the Commission for the Status of Women for their inspired work on this report and commitment to the wellbeing of women and children in our county. We honor and recognize them here by elevating their voices, lived experiences and strongly held beliefs as they relate to child care. We also want to thank Melissa Lukin for her contributions to the Child Care subcommittee.

Child Care Subcommittee Members (listed in Alphabetical order)

Julissa Acosta
Tanya Beat
Dayna Chung
Ann Girard

Jess Hudson
Aysha Pamukcu
Michelle Stewart
Rosie Tejada

Julissa Acosta

- “I put my name on a waiting list the moment I found out I was pregnant with my first child. I never got a call and then, a second baby came. I had to bring my mom out of retirement so she could care for my two children. Had I had the opportunity to access affordable childcare at the time, I would have been able to finish my education early on and transition into professional growth much sooner. Most importantly, my mom would have enjoyed her retirement in a very different way.”

Dayna Chung

- “When women and children thrive, entire communities are lifted up. Economies grow. Wellbeing improves. The moral arc of the universe bends further towards justice. We have the research. We know the science. We have plenty of models and case studies. The real question is whether we truly care because if we do, we will not only make the declarations but we will build the systems and fund the work.”

Ann Girard

- “Our daughters' caregiver will always be an important figure in their lives. We all still stay in touch with her, although the girls are adults and married. It is impossible to place a value on her service over the years, as this is a role that transcends typical employment. I am proud to see San Mateo County shining a light on the importance of this work and taking steps to ensure that it is properly compensated and supported.”



Aysha Pamukcu

- "Child care is often a make-or-break issue that shapes a family's trajectory, from access to opportunity to overall health and wellbeing. We need to shift our mindset. Child care isn't simply a service that you may or may not be fortunate enough to afford. It is essential infrastructure that is required for healthy families, thriving communities, and our nation's prosperity."

