

## DESCRIPTION

With 61.1 percent of American families having two parents in the workforce, child care has become a necessity for many growing families.<sup>1</sup> When parents are trying to decide what type of child care to use, there are many factors to consider. Two popular options are family child care and commercial child care centers.<sup>2</sup>

Head Start and Early Head Start are comprehensive child care, health and social service programs for low-income families. Over 1400 children, from prenatal through age 5, are enrolled in programs each year throughout Ramsey County.<sup>3</sup>

## HOW ARE WE DOING

Licensed family child care most often takes place in someone's home. Children are cared for by one or two main providers, and are usually kept in a mixed age group of children. In 2016, there were 512 licensed family child care providers in Ramsey County. Infant prices averaged \$177 per week. Toddler and preschool-age care fell between \$160 and \$170. School-age care was about \$145 every week.

Licensed child care centers are often similar to school and usually have a more structured environment. Due to licensing and staff numbers, groups of children in center child care tend to be much larger and are usually separated by age. For center care, average prices are almost double family child care in the same year. For the 207 facilities, the weekly cost for an infant averaged \$331. Toddler care was \$283 and preschooler care, \$199.

Each type has its own advantages. In family child care, children are cared for in an environment that feels more like home with an adult they get to know well. This familiarity along with the sizable price difference makes family based child care a popular option. Center child care tends to be a good option for parents who have children that will soon be starting school. The educational environment, larger staff numbers and age based grouping gives a child a chance to get accustomed to more structure.

Each type also has disadvantages. One negative to family child care can be schedule related. Since there are usually only one or two providers, if they get sick or have a schedule conflict, it can be difficult for parents to find a backup. On the other hand, center based child care tends to be the more expensive option which deters many parents. Schedule flexibility may also be a difficult challenge as there is less likely to be nonstandard hours, holiday or last-minute care options.<sup>4</sup>

## DISPARITIES

Parents choose center based child care for a multitude of reasons; these facilities are more regulated and inspected than family-based programs, children are usually grouped with others of the same age, and staff in these programs more commonly found to have previous education or experience in child care. Research has shown that low-income parents, parents of infants and toddlers, and Hispanic families prefer family and home-based care.<sup>5</sup> (continued on back)

## Information to note

- In 2016, there were 512 licensed family child care providers and 207 child care centers in Ramsey County.
- The average weekly cost in 2016 for family based infant care was \$177, compared to the cost of center based infant care of \$331.

## Community voice

*"Sometime child care gets in the way."*  
- Somali Female, age 25-34

Although child care was rarely specifically mentioned, many of the respondents identified time, stress and lack of resources for children and support as barriers to being healthy.

<sup>1</sup> Economic Characteristics of Families. Bureau of Labor Statistics Webs site. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/famee.nr0.htm>. Accessed July 31, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Family Child Care and Day Care Center: What's the Difference. Care.com Web site. <https://www.care.com/c/stories/3438/family-child-care-and-day-care-center-whats/>. Accessed July 31, 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Community Action Partnership of Ramsey and Washington Counties. Web site. <http://www.capr.org/community-action-services/head-start/> Accessed January 04, 2018.

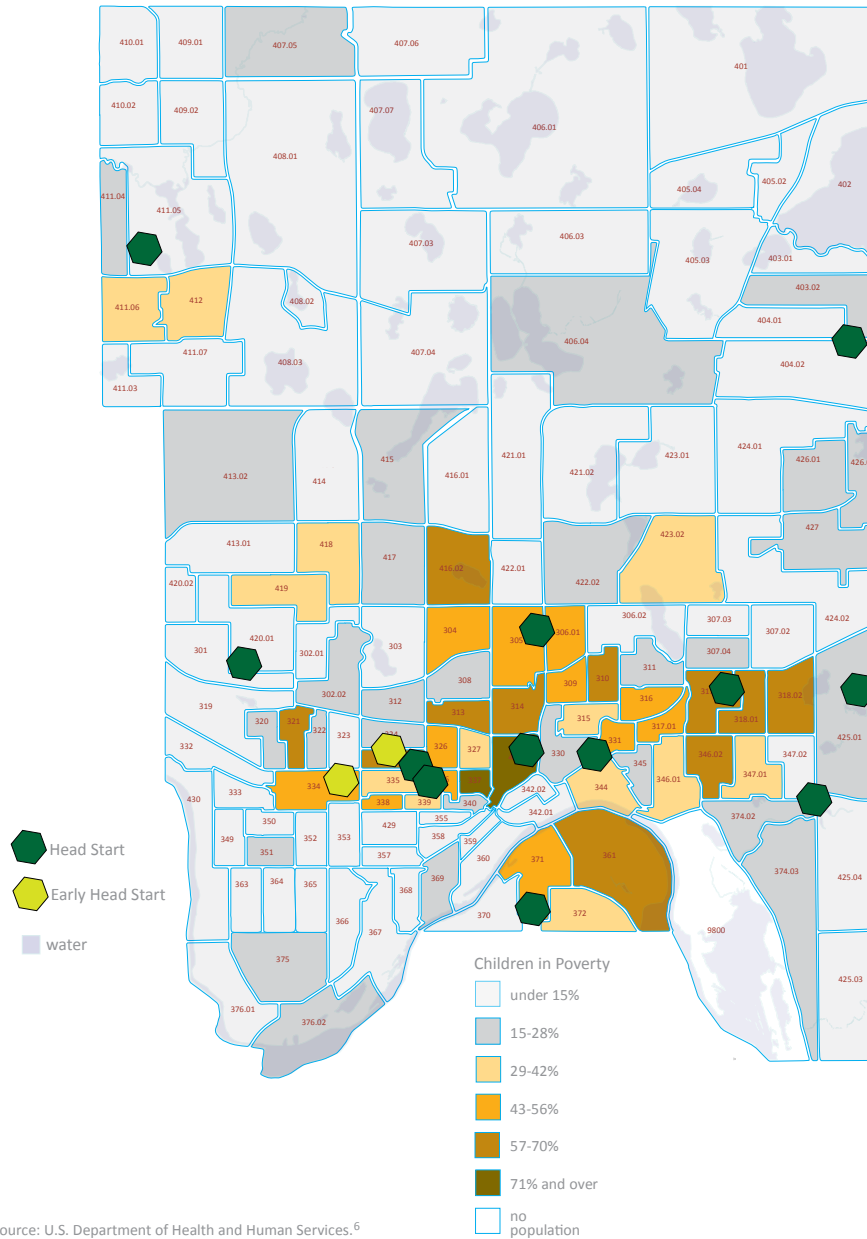
<sup>4</sup> Ramsey County Licensed Family Child Care Homes Average Rates by City and Total Centers Average Rates. Think Small Web site. [https://www.thinksmall.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/2016-Ramsey-average-rates\\_2.pdf](https://www.thinksmall.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/2016-Ramsey-average-rates_2.pdf). Accessed July 29, 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Unequal Access: Barriers to Early Childhood Education for Boys of Color (2016) Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Accessed June 28, 2017 from: [https://usa.childcareaware.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/UnequalAccess\\_BoysOfColor.pdf](https://usa.childcareaware.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/UnequalAccess_BoysOfColor.pdf).

### WHAT RAMSEY COUNTY GOVERNMENT IS DOING

Ramsey County provides financial assistance through the Minnesota Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) to parents who can't afford child care. CCAP provides child care assistance to families who have been on the Minnesota Family Investment Program or Diversionary Work Program in the last 12 months and to others who meet income guidelines on a sliding scale. Funds are available for children up to age 12, and for children with special needs up to age 15. Parents receiving child care assistance may pay part of the child care cost based on income and size of family. Ramsey County also licenses in-home child care homes, offers training, and monitors child care homes to support the health and safety of children.

Head Start and Early Head Start Programs by Percent of Children Age 0-4 Below Poverty Level by Census Tracts, Ramsey County, 2016



<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families; U.S. Census American Community Survey 2012-2016.