



**HIGH-QUALITY CHILD CARE
AND EARLY EDUCATION:**
WHAT ARIZONA'S PARENTS WANT



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Ready for School. Set for Life.

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SUMMARY

The *Arizona Child Care Demand Study* is a large-scale, survey-based research project, designed to find out when and why Arizona parents use child care; how they make child care decisions; and what they think about the quality, cost and accessibility of early care and education programs in their communities.

First Things First commissioned a team of researchers from the University of Arizona, Arizona State University and Northern Arizona University to conduct detailed interviews of more than 1,300 parents from across the state, asking them about the early care and education arrangements they have made, or wish they could make, for their kids.

Specific findings from the *Arizona Child Care Demand Study* include:

» **Arizona's parents tend to rely on a patchwork of child care.**

Consistent with what researchers have observed in a number of other states around the country, this study found that Arizona's parents tend to rely on a "patchwork" of child care arrangements — for example, they might watch their kids at home some days, send them to a paid child care provider other days, and fill in the gaps by taking them to stay with friends or relatives.

» **At any given time, many parents are looking for new child care options.**

Nearly a fifth of parents said they are currently looking for a new child care provider or seeking an alternative to their current arrangement. Parents indicated they were hoping to find better options or to make new arrangements based on their changing circumstances or preferences for care.

» **Parents of all backgrounds, from all over the state, want more or less the same things for their children — quality early care and education, no matter who provides the care or where it is provided.**

When it comes to the kinds of child care that Arizona's parents want for their kids, parents of all races, ethnicities, income levels and educational backgrounds say they value the same things for their children. Views may vary from one *individual* to another, but there are no significant differences among groups of parents.

» **Most of all, Arizona's parents look for environments that are safe, supportive and educationally enriching.**

The vast majority of parents said that they want providers to be trustworthy, reliable, warm and communicative; to have the ability to form strong, positive relationships with their children; and to provide their children with meaningful learning opportunities.



» **Many parents struggle to pay for child care — and many can't afford to pay for it at all.**

Many parents reported that they struggle to pay for the type of care they prefer; that they spend considerable amounts of time and energy searching for affordable care; and/or that they rely on relatives, friends or neighbors to help them out with free or low-cost care. Further, significant numbers of parents reported that they are unable to work because they do not have reliable child care and state subsidies are limited.

» **Many parents say that they need more information to help them decide on a child care arrangement and/or locate providers.**

Most parents reported that before deciding on a child care arrangement or choosing a provider, they obtain information from a variety of sources, including friends and acquaintances, Internet sites, flyers posted in the grocery store or library, and family resource centers. Nevertheless, roughly half the parents in the study said that they did not have enough information about child care options in their area.

» **Arizona's parents are both satisfied *and* unsatisfied with the child care they currently have.**

Most parents said that they are fairly satisfied with their current arrangements; on the other hand, many went on to say that it is difficult to find good, reliable, affordable care close to home or to their workplaces and that they wish they could make better arrangements. This response is consistent with other parts of the country.

INTRODUCTION

When they approved Proposition 203 — the 2006 ballot initiative that funded First Things First — the people of Arizona let it be known that every child, regardless of family background or household income, deserves a fair chance to thrive. The voters affirmed that parents need choices when it comes to high quality early learning options for their kids and support in making those decisions for their families.

Moreover, and as the voters made clear, that’s a win-win proposition. When the public invests in children’s education, health and well-being, everybody stands to gain.

As a wealth of scientific evidence makes clear, high-quality early care and education programs tend to have tremendous benefits for kids, giving them an initial boost that translates over time to greater success in high school and college, lower rates of teen pregnancy, greater success in the workforce, greater lifetime earnings, and even lower rates of incarceration.¹

And for the rest of Arizona’s citizens, the benefits are just as palpable. For example, a number of rigorous, large-scale research studies have shown that, over time, public investments in early care and education pay off many times over, in the form of lower special education costs, lower crime rates, lower welfare enrollments, increased worker productivity and higher tax revenue.² In fact, Nobel Prize-winning economist James Heckman has calculated that for every dollar it costs to enroll an economically disadvantaged child in a high-quality early education program, taxpayers see a return of as much as 10 percent per year throughout that child’s lifetime.³ In the long term, that adds up to between four and seven dollars saved for every dollar spent, yielding a rate of return far better than that of any other kind of public investment.⁴

It is no secret why high-quality early care and education services have such powerful long-term effects: the first five years comprise an absolutely critical period for human development. It is a time when the brain undergoes roughly 90 percent of its growth, a time when kids shape the basic patterns of thought and behavior that will guide them for the rest of their lives, and a time when they acquire the fundamental building blocks of learning.⁵

1 Barnett, W. S. & Ackerman, D. (2006). Costs, benefits, and long-term effects of early care and education programs: Recommendations and cautions for community developers. *Community Development*, 37(2), 86–100; Burchinal, P. et al. (2009). *Early Care and Education: Quality and Child Outcomes*. Research-to-Policy Research-to-Practice Brief (Publication #2009-15). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Fram, M., Kim, J. & Sinha, S. (2012). Early care and prekindergarten care as influences on school readiness. *Journal of Family Issues*, 33(4), 478–505; McCartney, K. & Dearing, E. (2007). Quality child care supports the achievement of low-income children: Direct and indirect pathways through caregiving and the home environment. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 28, 411–426.

2 Campbell, F. (2012). Adult outcomes as a function of an early childhood educational program: An Abecedarian Project follow-up. *Developmental Psychology*, 48(4), 1033–1043; Temple, J. & Reynolds, A. (2007). Benefits and costs of investments in preschool education: Evidence for the Child-Parent Centers and related programs. *Economics of Education Review*, 26(1), 126–144; Galinsky, E. (2006). The economic benefits of high-quality early childhood programs: What makes the difference? Washington, DC: Committee for Economic Development.

3 Heckman, J. (2008). The case for investing in disadvantaged young children. In *Big Ideas for Children: Investing in our Nation's Future*. Washington, DC: First Focus.

4 Committee for Economic Development. (2012). *Unfinished Business: Continued Investment in Child Care and Early Education is Critical to Business and America's Future*. Washington, DC: Author; Rolnick, A. & Grunewald, R. (2003). Early childhood development: economic development with a high public return. Minneapolis, MN: Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis.

5 Lally, J. R. (2010). School readiness begins in infancy. *Phi Delta Kappa*, 92(3): 17–21; Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2011). *Building the Brain's "Air Traffic Control" System: How Early Experiences Shape the Development of Executive Function: Working Paper No. 11*. Available at www.developing-child.harvard.edu

Nor is it secret what high-quality early care and education looks like. While every state comes up with its own quality standards for child care centers and their staff, they all draw upon the same underlying principles, reflecting a strong, research-based consensus about what matters most for young children, wherever they happen to live. It is abundantly clear, for example, that every child needs to feel safe; to have basic health and nutritional needs met; to have opportunities to socialize and play with other children; and to have positive, nurturing relationships with the adults in their lives.

It is also clear that every child needs to be provided with age-appropriate activities to learn and develop. While it may be tempting to assume that education can wait until age 5 or 6, when formal schooling begins, that is, in fact, much too late to get started on building early literacy skills; learning numbers and beginning math concepts; and developing the basic social, emotional and problem-solving competencies that allow kids to thrive in school.⁶ If they have missed out on such early learning experiences, kids arrive at first grade so far behind already, from the moment they walk in the door, that they will be hard-pressed *ever* to catch up to their classmates.⁷

And yet, for all the benefits of receiving high-quality early care and education — not to mention the negative consequences that follow for kids who *do not* receive it — hundreds of thousands of Arizona’s children continue to go without.

Hard Times for Arizona’s Parents and Children

Since First Things First was created in 2006, the organization has made it a priority to compile and share accurate data on a wide range of topics related to the health, well-being and education of young children throughout the state. As it has reported in publications such as the biennial report *Building Bright Futures*, a troubling picture emerges from those data.⁸ Truly, these are hard times for many Arizonans. For example:

- **Of the more than 550,000 young children, ages 0–5, now residing in the state of Arizona, more than half live in low-income households** (having an annual income of \$44,700 or less for a family of four), and **roughly 1 out of every 4 children lives in poverty** (\$23,050 or less).⁹
- **For the majority of Arizona’s families with young children, arranging for child care outside the home is necessary and expensive.**



6 Blair, C. (2002). School readiness: Integrating cognition and emotion in a neurobiological conceptualization of children’s functioning at school entry. *American Psychologist*, 57(2), 111–117.

7 Hart, B. & Risley, T. (2003). The early catastrophe. The 30 million word gap. *American Educator*, 27(1), 4–9.

8 First Things First. (2011). *Building Bright Futures*. Phoenix, AZ: Author.

9 National Center for Children in Poverty (2009); U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Available at <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/12poverty.shtml>

Today, roughly one-third of Arizona's young children are being raised by a full-time stay-at-home parent (usually a mother). However, most of the state's parents rely on a patchwork of care, supplementing the care that they provide with additional arrangements, such as care by family members and friends and enrollment in child care centers.

For the many parents who do rely on child care centers — whether out of personal preference or because they have no other option — fees often consume a sizable portion of family income. On average, it now costs Arizona's parents roughly **\$7,400** to enroll a 4-year-old child in a child care center for one year.¹⁰ That eats up **17 percent**, at minimum, of a low-income family of four's annual income. For a family living in poverty, it accounts for **at least a third** of their annual income.

- **On various measures of children's health and well-being, Arizona's kids fall at, or significantly below, national averages.**

As of 2012, Arizona ranks **46th of 50** states on an overall measure of children's well-being (which combines 16 separate measures of children's health, educational performance and family circumstances).¹¹

Statewide, as of 2010, **13 percent** of all children in the state lacked health insurance.¹²

In Arizona's poor and low-income households, **nearly a third** of children ages 2–4 are already at risk for developing diabetes and other weight-related health problems — more than **14 percent** can be classified as obese, and another **16 percent** are overweight.¹³

Statewide, **half** of all children ages 0–4 have never visited a dentist, and **30 percent** of children ages 2–4 suffer from untreated tooth decay.¹⁴

- **Many of Arizona's parents are unsure about what kinds of things they need to do to support their children's learning and development.**

As revealed by the First Things First Family and Community Survey of 2008, **20 percent** of Arizona's parents are unaware that their child's first year affects later school performance.

27 percent of Arizona's parents are unaware that kids sense and react to parent emotions starting from birth.

21 percent are unaware that play is a critical learning activity for kids under 10 months of age.

And **47 percent** believe that to support children's language development, it is just as good to sit them down in front of a TV as it is to engage them in a genuine face-to-face conversation.

10 National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies. (2011). *2011 Child Care in the State of: Arizona*. Arlington, VA: Author.

11 Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2012). *KIDS COUNT Data Book*. Washington, DC: Author. Available at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org>

12 Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2012). *KIDS COUNT Data Book*. Washington, DC: Author.¹³

13 Polhamus, B. et al. (2009). *Pediatric Nutrition Surveillance, 2008 Report*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

14 Office of Oral Health, Arizona Department of Health Services. (2009). *Arizona Oral Health Survey of Preschool Children*. Phoenix, AZ: Author.



- **Many of Arizona’s children miss out on critical opportunities for early learning.**

Only **43 percent** of Arizona’s children, ages 0–5, are read to by their parents every day — on this measure, Arizona ranks **44th out of 50** states.¹⁵

Fewer than half of Arizona’s children ages 3–5 are enrolled in nursery school, preschool or kindergarten, compared with 60 percent average nationwide — on this measure, Arizona ranks **49th out of 50** states.¹⁶

In 2011, **almost a quarter** of Arizona’s 3rd graders failed to pass the reading portion of the Arizona Instrument to Measure Success (AIMS).¹⁷

Getting a Clearer Picture: The Arizona Child Care Demand Study

For organizations such as First Things First, such data offer a critical reality check, showing just how important it is to keep working to expand access to high-quality early care and education.

Such information is critical for another reason, too: it helps First Things First and other organizations decide how best to use scarce resources. The more complete the picture of the challenges facing Arizona’s families and children, the more effectively those organizations can target investments in better information for parents seeking child care, better resources for parents wishing to care for and educate their children at home, and better training for child care providers.

From sources such as the U.S. Census, public records from the Arizona State Department of Education and the Arizona Department of Economic Security, and its own surveys, First Things First has been able to compile a wide range of information on the economic pressures that face families throughout the state, the impact of poverty on children’s health and well-being, and the availability and costs of early care and education services. However, as useful as those sources of data have been, they leave out a critical piece of the child care puzzle: parents’ own perspectives on their child care needs and experiences.

That’s why First Things First and nine First Things First Regional Partnership Councils decided to launch the *Arizona Child Care Demand Study*, an effort to better understand what parents and other caregivers see as their most critical needs and challenges. For example, when and why do they use child care services? How do they decide what kinds of services to use? How difficult is it for them to ensure that their kids receive high-quality, affordable early care and education? How much do they know about the

¹⁵ Russ, S. et al. (2007). *Reading Across the Nation: A Chartbook*. Boston, MA: Reach Out and Read National Center.

¹⁶ Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2012). *KIDS COUNT Data Book*. Washington, DC: Author. Available at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org>

¹⁷ Arizona Department of Education. (2011). *2011 AIMS Results*. Phoenix, AZ: Author.

kinds of early care and education services that are available to them? And what kinds of information might help them find the best available options for their children?

First Things First commissioned a team of researchers from the University of Arizona, Arizona State University and Northern Arizona University to conduct an intensive, year-long study of the child care needs of parents and other primary caregivers of young children around the state.¹⁸ Particular attention was given to parents residing in nine areas whose First Things First Regional Partnership Councils allocated funds to the study to better understand their community's needs for early care and education.¹⁹ Participants were asked about their expectations regarding child care; their views on the quality, cost and accessibility of local child care options; and their own experiences in making child care arrangements.

Subsequently, First Things First researchers conducted a rigorous analysis of the data, turning up a wealth of new insights into the types of child care that Arizona's parents are using today, their satisfaction with that care, their knowledge about available child care options, and the kinds of early care and education services that they most urgently need and want.

As detailed in the following pages, the picture that emerges from this study is sobering, demonstrating more clearly than ever before just how urgent the need is for better early care and education options for Arizona's families.



¹⁸ Study respondents included parents of children birth through age 6 not yet enrolled in a kindergarten program. Respondents also included nonbiological parents — such as a grandparent, foster parent or soon-to-be adoptive parent — who reported functioning as a parent in a primary caregiver role. Data collection focused on families residing in the nine areas whose Regional Partnership Councils offered to sponsor the study, with regional sample sizes ranging from 50 to 406; approximately 200 families residing in other areas around the state also participated in the study.

¹⁹ They include Central Maricopa, Central Phoenix, Coconino, Navajo/Apache, Northwest Maricopa, South Phoenix, South Pima, Southwest Maricopa and Yavapai. Additional support came from the Pascua Yaqui Tribe Regional Partnership Council.

FINDINGS FROM THE ARIZONA CHILD CARE DEMAND STUDY

The goal of the *Arizona Child Care Demand Study* was to better understand the choices that parents make and the dilemmas they experience as they seek high quality early care and education experiences for their kids. More specifically, researchers focused on three overarching questions:

1. What types of child care do Arizona's parents use?
2. How do they make child care choices?
3. What do they think of their child care options?

Summary of Research Methods

The *Arizona Child Care Demand Study* relied on a “mixed-methods” approach, in which researchers collected and analyzed both quantitative data (including information that can readily be quantified, such as parents’ reported income levels, the number of children they have and the ages of those children) and qualitative data (such as parents’ stated opinions about their satisfaction with their current child care arrangements).

Study participants included parents (and other adults serving as the primary caregiver or in a parental role) of at least one child, birth through age 6, who had not yet started kindergarten at the time of the interview.

All participants were recruited from community sites such as preschools and child care centers, parks, libraries, and shopping areas. They were asked to complete a survey that included both closed and open-ended questions (administered in interview format either in person or by telephone) about their expectations for child care; the types of child care arrangements they had made; and their views on child care accessibility, cost and quality. Participation was voluntary and unpaid, and all data have been kept confidential, with names and other identifying information removed to protect individuals’ privacy.

A total of 1,382 parent survey responses were collected. In turn, 32 parent surveys were found not to meet study criteria for inclusion, resulting in a final sample of 1,350 parents, who varied widely by age, income, ethnicity, education, marital status, household composition and other demographic factors. Findings were based on analyses of the total sample, as well as analyses of smaller subsamples of parents representing the nine regions where First Things First Regional Partnership Councils collaborated on the research effort.

For more information on the research methodology used in the Arizona Child Care Demand Study, please contact the First Things First Research and Evaluation Team at: demandstudy@azftf.gov

Statewide Findings

Data for the *Arizona Child Care Demand Study* were collected mainly in the nine regions whose First Things First Regional Councils collaborated on the research effort. However, findings were largely similar across all regions, and they appear to be representative of Arizona as a whole.

For information on those findings that did vary by region, please see the Appendix (pages 21 – 95).

Child Care Arrangements: Definitions

This report refers to three basic types of child care arrangements. Further, the *combination* of those types of child care is treated as a separate (fourth) category unto itself:



Self/spouse care refers to a child care arrangement in which parents (or other legal guardians) provide care mainly on their own, relying only occasionally on relatives, neighbors or other caregivers.



Family, friend and neighbor (FFN) care refers to paid or unpaid child care that is provided by relatives, neighbors and others *on a regular or routine* (not just occasional) basis and on which parents rely as one of their primary sources of child care.

For example, FFN care is often provided during evening, overnight or weekend hours when few child care centers or licensed care homes are open and is often used by parents who work late-night and swing shifts. It might be provided by an extended family member (such as a grandparent, aunt, uncle or older sibling); a close friend of the family; or someone who lives nearby, including a nanny or babysitter.



Center/home care is any paid or subsidized child care provided on a regular or routine basis in a center-based setting (or in a private home that operates as a child care provider).



A patchwork of care refers to arrangements that combine two or all three of the above types of care. For example, it would describe an arrangement in which a child is cared for at home by a parent most mornings, brought to a child care center most afternoons and cared for by a grandparent most evenings.

Note that these categories were created for data collection purposes and are not identical to those used by the state of Arizona in official regulatory documents or to FTF standards of practice on FFN. Headings have been simplified somewhat to help study participants make clear distinctions among types of child care arrangements.

Note also that First Things First neither endorses a particular kind of child care nor favors any one kind of arrangement over another. Rather, the organization works to improve the quality of *all* types of early care and education, and it is committed to helping all parents — whatever their circumstances and *whichever* kind of care they prefer — make the best child care arrangements they can.

1) WHAT TYPES OF CHILD CARE DO ARIZONA'S PARENTS USE?

As part of the interviews conducted for this study, Arizona parents were asked which kind of care they relied on for their young children — self/spouse care; family, friend and neighbor (FFN) care; center/home care; or a combination of those types of care.

Two findings stood out:

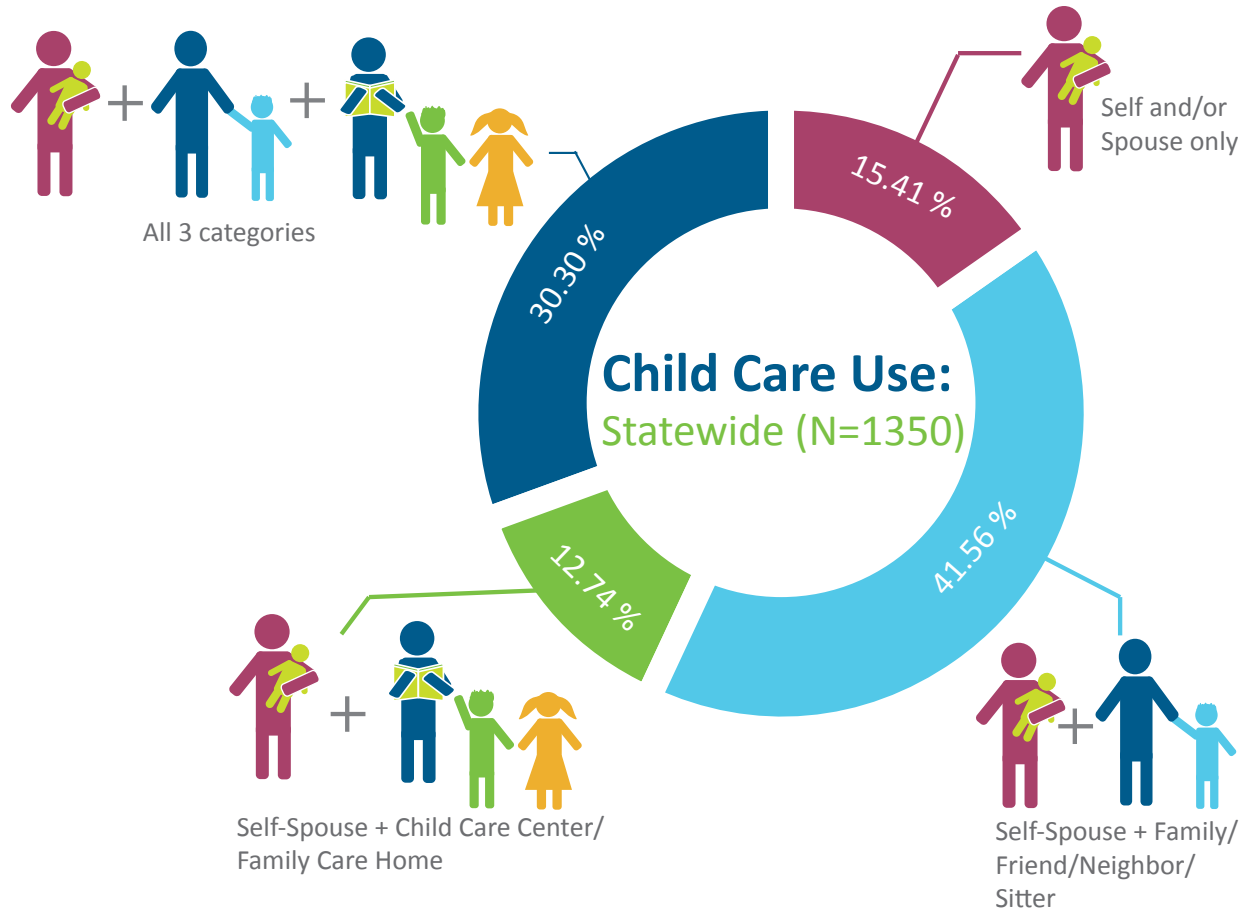
Parents tend to rely on a patchwork of care.

Consistent with what researchers have observed in a number of other states and localities around the country, this study found that Arizona's parents tend to rely on a "patchwork" of child care. That is, rather than using just one kind of child care, parents use a combination of arrangements.

Care combinations may be stitched together to provide care for a single child or for two or more children in a family or to meet changing family circumstances.

Moreover, the shape of the patchwork tends to vary according to a number of factors, such as household income, parents' education levels, the numbers of adults living in the household and especially the age of the child. For example:

- Parents of infants under the age of 12 months were more likely to report relying on family, friends and neighbors (known as FFN care) to supplement the time they spend caring for their children



A 42-year-old father — employed part time and did not finish high school — noted that the mother of his child works while he stays home full time to care for their 19-month-old daughter. He explained that he does seasonal work, and when he is working, it is often difficult to coordinate child care and work schedules. *“We don’t pay for child care. We don’t have child care. It’s just me,”* he said. *“There is no family support, and we cannot financially afford child care.”* He said he is not actively looking for alternative arrangements, but he is *“passively looking ... keeping an eye open for what’s possible ... on my level of income. ... I’m not in a position to utilize it right now, so ..., well, I can’t afford child care, so I care for her myself.”*

A 23-year-old mother — single, employed, mother of three, attends college part-time — described how she pieces together child care: the two youngest children, ages 3 and 5, attend a child care center, thanks to a DES subsidy. *“They go into the [child care center] at 5:30, 5:45 a.m., and then I go to work. I get out at 2:30 p.m. One, two days out of the week they get out at 3:40, and that’s when I drop them off at my mom’s house. Well, and then the other two days, they’re at the center until like almost 6 p.m. That’s just because I go to work, get out and go to school and then go pick them up.”* Over the years, she said she has experienced both higher quality and lower quality child care. Describing a center not far from her home, she said: *“The educational part wasn’t that great. They had no communication with the parents whatsoever. I had an episode when I actually walked in, and the teacher was just cussing like no other ... in front of the kids. ... I told the director, but you know there’s only so much you can do.”* After that, she engaged in an extensive search for another program and was willing to drive a further distance to have her children in a center that was more what she was looking for. She said she likes a child care center where *“my kids are not crying when they get there. Because that says a lot to me. That says that the child is comfortable. I want my child to feel comfortable, safe.”*

than parents of toddlers and preschool children. However, as children get older (ages 3–5), parents become increasingly likely to rely on center/home care in addition to self/spouse care.

- The higher the parents’ income and education levels, the *more likely* they are to use a combination of all three types of care, and the *less likely* they are to rely on self/spouse care alone. Among parents who have not received a high school degree, a much higher percentage relies exclusively on self/spouse care than parents with graduate degrees.
- Parents who struggle to pay out of pocket for child care expenses, and who cannot obtain child care subsidies, tend to be most likely to stitch together a combination of self/spouse care and FFN care. In particular, such parents reported that they tend to look to extended family members to help out by providing free care when they cannot be home themselves.
- Poor and low-income parents tend to remain at home with their children full time, giving up employment and/or educational opportunities if no family or friends are willing or able to donate free care, and if child care subsidies are not available.
- Single parents are more likely to use a combination of all three types of care, and they are less likely to rely on self/spouse care alone. In contrast, households that include three or more adults (including grandparents and other relatives, for example) are likely to combine self/spouse care with FFN care.
- Finally, among those parents who said that they rely exclusively on self/spouse care, most said that they enjoy caring for their child themselves, and many said that it was their preference to stay home full time to provide care. However, a number of parents also noted that they made this decision with the recognition that

other kinds of care were not affordable or available in their community and that they might have opted to combine self/spouse care with another option if it were possible.

At any given time, many parents are looking for new options.

The study included a question asking Arizona parents if they are currently trying to find a new child care provider (switching from one child care center to another, for example) and/or to change the kind of child care arrangements they use (for example, to enroll their kids in a child care center instead of relying on care from a grandparent). Out of the 1,350 parents surveyed, 246 — or nearly 18 percent — reported that they were, in fact, currently trying to make such changes.

In analyzing these responses, researchers found no particular variables — such as the age of the child, the parents' income, the number of adults living in the household or any other factor — that made parents any more or less likely to be looking to change their child care providers or arrangements. Still, it is a notable finding: at any given time, it seems, almost a fifth of Arizona's parents are actively looking to find a better provider, switch to another type of child care, shift from part-time to full-time care, find child care coverage during weekend hours or make some other change to their current arrangements.

A grandmother — single, currently unemployed, with legal guardianship of her 20-month-old grandson — reported that she takes care of the child part time, her mother (the child's great-grandmother) watches him occasionally, and he is in center-based care about 15 hours a week. She spoke with enthusiasm about the center, noting how beneficial it is: *"The developmental center [my grandson attends], I really appreciate. I see [children] going to classes. I hear them going to classes, learning new things. I see my [grandson] coming home every day whether he's painting, or he's learning to sing songs or interacting with the other children. I see him being loving and kind to the other kids that are smaller than him. I think a developmental center is a whole lot better for our children to start learning younger, whatever it is, so they can get a head start on going to class and being a better young gentleman and lady. ... I love that center, and everyone is great."* Over the last year, she has gone from receiving Comprehensive Medical and Dental (CMDP) assistance to receiving Child Protective Services (CPS) assistance, and she now receives an adoption subsidy. As she moves closer to adoption, though, she worries that she will lose this support and will no longer be able to afford the developmental center.

A mother of two — married with two children. *"When I first began looking for child care for my daughter, my husband had just lost his job. Cost was a very big deal. I did want to send her to the program at our church, but I could not afford the amount they charged each month. There was another highly, highly recommended preschool that I looked into, and it was even more expensive than the one at our church. I knew I needed something that was very, very cheap. I knew it was either a really expensive program, or a free preschool type thing, or I would completely keep her at home myself."*

2) HOW DO ARIZONA'S PARENTS MAKE CHILD CARE CHOICES?

Deciding on a child care option is rarely a simple or straightforward process. Rather, and as dozens of research studies have shown to be true across the United States, most parents find themselves having to make difficult tradeoffs, balancing the kinds of care they want with all sorts of other considerations, such as what they can afford, what their schedules allow, what child care providers they can find nearby, what recommendations they hear from friends or others “in-the-know” about top-notch providers, and what kinds of help they can get from family members.²⁰

Further, once parents have made those difficult decisions, they often have to rethink them. Every change in life circumstances (transitions such as when a spouse loses a job, a couple gets divorced or a grandparent moves away) can require a change in child care arrangements. Moreover, parenthood often leads people to reconsider deeply held values and beliefs (about, for example, what it means to be a good father or when the timing is appropriate for working mothers to return to their jobs), causing them to reconsider the kinds of care they want. In short, it can be difficult for parents to say exactly how they made their child care decisions or whether they plan to stick with them over time.

However, while the process of deciding on a child care option tends to vary greatly from parent to parent, this study revealed some key points of agreement, too. Four clear findings stand out from the interview data:

- » **Arizona's parents want more or less the same things when looking for care for their children.**

A major goal of this study was to discern whether

A 45-year-old mother — who works in child care — lives with her 5-year-old son, her 20-year-old son and his 8-month-old infant (her grandson). Her 5-year-old attends a child care center four days a week, thanks to a DES subsidy. She explained that she wanted a center close to home because she “doesn’t drive and relies on public transit.” Before selecting a center, she went to six different providers and “asked a lot of questions because I work in child care myself. ... I wanted my son to have meals made there versus having meals brought in. ... I wanted to make sure that he got a van ride when he would start school. Some do not provide that. I wanted to know they were licensed, and what their program consisted of.” She said that she could not manage without the DES subsidy. “[C]hild care is very expensive: I would not be able to put my son in child care, which means I would not be able to work.”

A 16-year-old mother — married and a high school student — described how she has struggled to arrange care for her infant daughter: “Before I started night school, my friend used to take care of her. But she charged \$16 a day, and it was just too much for us. So we decided to give her to one of my mom’s friends, who charged just \$10 a day, ... but [my daughter] ... didn’t know her, and she would start crying. So I ... decided to withdraw from [the traditional public school] and go to [a charter school that offers evening classes]. So I stay with her in the mornings, then leave, and [my husband] stays with her in the [afternoon and evenings] when I’m in class.” Neither parent is currently employed, although her husband does odd jobs periodically. Her parents help out by providing diapers and medication. She reports that she would like to get a DES subsidy, but “they told me that I have to wait because there’s a lot of people trying to apply for it.”

20 Chaudry, A., Henly, J. & Meyers, M. (2010). *ACF-OPRE White Paper: Conceptual Frameworks for Child Care Decision-Making*. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

A mother — a college graduate, living with the father of her 1-year-old son stated that she prefers in-home care at her own house, provided by *“someone she knows well.”* She and her husband pay \$5 per hour, out of pocket, for child care, noting that *“a large part of our paycheck goes to the babysitters.”* The hardest part of this arrangement is the challenge of finding and retaining a provider, she noted. It’s *“very stressful, very hard. Since he’s been born, he’s been with — let’s see — one, two, three, four ... five people. I started out with my brother. Then his hours changed. Then we went with a gal who had watched my nephew, and she was amazing ... awesome. But then she had the nerve to get married and move away from my son! Then my cousin was kind of able to, for one day. Then I was asking around, asking my friends. Finally, a gal — whose school schedule changed — offered.”*

A mother — single, going to school full time — used to rely on grandparents and other relatives for child care, but thanks to a DES subsidy, she recently enrolled her kids — ages 2 and 3 — full time in a center just down the street from the school she attends. When asked how she chose the center, she said, *“I look[ed] for security ... how secure the child care facility was. I looked to see if the kids were happy while they were there. I looked, of course, to see if they were DES-approved. I also really wanted a program to teach the kids. ... I was looking for a learning environment.”* She likes the convenience of her current child care arrangement, the fact that she can use a DES subsidy, the fact that her children can socialize with other kids, and the fact they’re *“not just watching TV with a babysitter.”* However, she added that she is disappointed that the center does not have an educational focus. If cost was not an issue, she said, she would find a place that was *“more educational.”*

parents’ beliefs and opinions about child care are more or less the same across all demographic categories or whether their views vary depending on factors such as ethnic background, income, marital status, educational attainment and so on.

In this regard, it is important to note what study results do *not* indicate as well as what they do. While individual parents expressed differing views on the kinds of child care they preferred, there were no significant differences between parents based on family characteristics. In short, when it comes to the kinds of early care and education they want for their kids, Arizona parents appear to be more or less the same. The specific type of arrangement selected may vary from parent to parent, but parents from all ethnic, income and educational backgrounds want basically the same thing — a stable, reliable, quality early care and education experience for their children.

» **Specifically, Arizona’s parents look for environments that are safe, supportive and educationally enriching.**

Above all else, this study shows, Arizona’s parents want child care providers to be trustworthy, reliable, warm and communicative and to have the ability to form strong, positive relationships with their children.

Further, while some parents say that they prefer a certain kind of child care setting over others — they might prefer to keep their kids at home, for example, or send them to a Head Start program, or leave them at a grandparent’s house — the kind of care they want for their children is more or less the same, whatever the setting; they want adults to provide emotional warmth and consistent attention, along with age-appropriate learning activities.

It is worth noting also that most parents said that they value educational opportunities for their children just as much as they value emotional support and safety. No matter how loving and attentive the providers, parents do not want their

children to spend extended periods watching television, for example, without having opportunities to participate in stimulating activities and games; join other kids in imaginative play; have books read to them; learn their numbers, shapes, colors and other basic concepts; and develop competencies such as persistence, curiosity and self-control.

» **Most parents struggle to pay for child care — and many cannot afford to pay for it at all.**

For the parents in this study, the high cost of child care was a major preoccupation. Many study participants reported that they spend considerable amounts of time and energy searching for affordable care, attempting to piece together a sustainable child care arrangement, or waiting to be approved for a child care subsidy. Indeed, cost appears to be the main factor leading parents to choose a “patchwork” of care for their children.

Roughly 10 percent of the parents in this study reported that they paid for child care with the help of subsidies from the Department of Economic Security. A far more common form of assistance was free child care donated by family members and friends, such as by a grandparent who offers to watch kids without being paid. However, many parents noted also that while such care tends to be the most affordable option, it can also be the least stable and the least reliable.

In short, while many of Arizona’s parents manage to stitch together a patchwork of care — thanks, mainly, to the generosity of family and friends — most cannot realistically consider any other option.

» **Many parents lack information that might help them make child care decisions.**

Most parents reported that before choosing a child care provider, they obtain information from a variety of sources, including friends and acquaintances, internet sites, flyers posted in the grocery store or library, and family resource centers. Nevertheless, roughly half the parents in the study said that they did not have, or were not able to find, enough information about the child care options in their area. Further, parents’ responses varied considerably depending on their levels of income — the less money parents earned, the less likely they were to say that they had enough information about their child care options.

Moreover, the gap was especially large between parents with differing educational backgrounds. Among parents who had earned at least a bachelor’s degree, for example, 60 percent said that they had enough information about local child care options; among parents who did not complete high school, nearly 60 percent said they *did not* have enough information.

3) WHAT DO ARIZONA'S PARENTS THINK OF THEIR CHILD CARE OPTIONS?

For years, researchers have noted that when they ask parents if they are satisfied with their child care, they get conflicting answers. On one hand, parents tend to say that they are reasonably happy with the child care they have; on the other hand, they tend to suggest all sorts of ways in which their child care could be much better. To complicate things further, when trained observers visit child care facilities that parents have rated highly, they often find that those facilities are, in fact, barely adequate if not inferior in quality.²¹

Having noted this contradiction, researchers are not entirely sure how to explain it. Some have argued that parents may not be truly satisfied with their existing child care so much as they are resigned to it, given that they may not be able to access or afford anything better.²² In any case, this study elicited similarly paradoxical responses.

» **Arizona's parents are both satisfied and unsatisfied with the child care they currently have.**

Many parents participating in the study reported they were satisfied with their care arrangements. At the same time, however, many of those same parents reported that it was often difficult to find good, reliable, affordable care close to home or their workplace.

The most common complaint was that there simply are not enough providers nearby that are affordable and/or meet basic standards of quality (including a clean facility, a safe and orderly environment, and responsiveness to parents' questions and concerns). Additionally, significant numbers of parents said that they have been

A 24-year-old mother — single, unemployed with two children, ages 5 and 2 — talked about how hard it was to make child care arrangements, given the schedule at her former job: *"I worked at Wal-Mart, so I needed 24-hour places When you get employed, they like you to have an open schedule, because if you don't, someone else will."* She is currently unemployed, lives with her mother and teenage brother, and plans to go back to school to complete her GED. She now has a DES child care subsidy for her children, but she pointed out that there are no DES-approved providers in her ZIP code: *"I have to be there at 10:30 and [given how far away] I live, I have to get up really, really early. Taking like three buses there is difficult."* She said she is happy to have a place for her children to go, and she values the assistance she receives to pay for the cost of child care but notes that getting into a *"really good school"* is beyond her means: *"If you want to get them into a good school, even DES, you still have to pay. So it's hard I want my kids to have a good education, but since I have a low income, I can't afford [for] them to have a better school. ... I just want my kids to be taken care of. I want to know they're in safe hands and I don't have to worry while I'm at work."*

A 36-year-old mother said that she relies on her mother and 16-year-old daughter to care for her two younger children — ages 1 and 3 — while she and the children's father work. The grandmother watches the children about 10 hours a week, and the older daughter watches them about 20 hours a week. It's not a good arrangement, she said, explaining that the children are *"not learning anything. They're pretty much just getting fed. That's it. I don't think they're getting attention that they need. Plus, I'm sure that [my 1-year-old son] is confused. One day he's [at home]. One day he's [at grandma's house]."* In her small, rural community, she added, the availability of child care is just as big of problem as the cost: *"They don't have ... day care, and even if they did, I probably couldn't afford it."*

21 Ruhm, C. (2011). Policies to assist parents with young children. *The Future of Children*, 21(2).

22 Meyers, M. & Jordan, L. (2006). Choice and Accommodation in Parental Child Care Decisions. *Community Development*, 37(2), 53–70.

A 27-year-old mother — married, employed full time and a full-time student — she said that her 3-year-old son attends preschool roughly 50 hours per week. She is thankful she can afford to have him in the center he currently attends, noting that she wasn't impressed with the other centers she looked at. But she is bothered by the low quality of child she has observed in her community, especially compared with New Mexico, where she used to live. In Arizona, she said, she has seen television allowed in child care centers, staff drinking soda in front of the children and beds/mats that touch each other. She also said she has smelled feces in the classroom. She wishes she could put her son in the one accredited center available in her area, but she can't afford to do so, and the other centers she liked are too far to drive. *"My biggest gripe with child care [in this area]," she says, "is the lack of child care options for babies, infants, and children ages 1–2. Very few centers will provide that kind of care, and the quality of care is just not there. It is really disappointing that there is nothing for children at this age."*

unable to find providers that:

- Are within range of public transportation;
- Have spaces available;
- Are able to care for their infants and toddlers or can accommodate siblings;
- Can accommodate non traditional work schedules (such as night and weekend shifts and temporary employment);
- Can accommodate their specific parenting styles and choices and function as more than babysitters — for example, providers that restrict their children's television viewing or feed them healthy snacks; and
- Offer not just "care" but also educational activities.

By and large, parents said they have made the best of the child care options available to them and they are willing to make personal sacrifices to ensure their child is well cared for within a safe, clean, friendly environment. At the same time, though, many reported they worry that a lack of good, affordable child care has forced them to give up on their own educational or employment opportunities and/or to put their children's well-being and future educational success at risk.

LOOKING AHEAD

The *Arizona Child Care Demand Study* was designed to generate a wealth of new information about Arizona parents' understanding of the kinds of child care options that are available to them, the kinds of arrangements they make, and the kinds of early care and education they want.

In turn, First Things First and many other community organizations will use these findings to inform their work, helping ensure that the supports and services they provide to Arizona's families are targeted to the greatest areas of need and that, as much as possible, Arizona children benefit from high-quality early care and education experiences that will lead to success in school and life.

Many of these areas of need are ones that the state's child care advocates have long understood to be urgent priorities, including the need for:

- » **Greater access to affordable, high-quality child care providers in every part of the state;**
- » **Greater access to child care providers that serve infants and toddlers and that can accommodate the siblings of the children they already serve;**
- » **Greater access to child care providers that offer flexible schedules** — to accommodate the growing number of parents working at night, on weekends and on rotating shifts;
- » **Greater reliability and continuity of care**, which research shows to be critically important, particularly in the first three years of life;²³
- » **More professional development opportunities for child care providers** — particularly efforts to train staff to provide rich early learning experiences;
- » **More opportunities for parents to learn what they can do to help prepare their children to succeed in school; and**
- » **Clear, accessible information about the child care options that are available to parents in their local communities.**

Further, the study highlights an additional issue that has received relatively little attention from the state's child care advocates until now, but which deserves to be recognized as an urgent priority:

- » **The need for supports and services designed to help families cope with transition periods** — such as when spouses divorce, when a parent loses a job or when a caregiver moves away. According to many of the parents interviewed for this study, such transitions often cause existing arrangements to fall through and create child care emergencies. Such emergencies might be alleviated by services such as child care “transportation pools” that parents can use when they’ve

23 Adams, G. & Rohacek, M. (2010). *Child care instability: Definitions, context, and policy implications*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

lost access to a car, for example, or by access to information about providers that are willing to take in children at the last minute or on a temporary basis.

Finally, one of the most pressing implications of the present study is that much more will have to be learned about the capacity of Arizona's child care providers to meet such needs and — in turn — more will have to be done to help those providers build such capacity.

The data presented here shed new light on the kinds of child care that are now being used by parents across the state, and they provide valuable insights into the kinds of child care that parents want most. What is not yet known, however — and what First Things First will explore in future research studies — are the answers to questions such as:

- » **To what extent can Arizona's existing early care and education programs reasonably be expected to improve and expand upon their services over the coming years?**
- » **How many and what type of new early care and education programs will Arizona's children and families need?**
- » **How much and what kinds of training will be required to ensure the quality of the state's child care providers?**
- » **And what kinds of investments and cost-saving strategies will be required to ensure that greater numbers of parents can take advantage of high-quality child care options?**

FTF and its Partners are Working with Parents and Providers to Give More Kids Access to High-Quality Early Learning

The child care needs highlighted by parents in this report could not be more pressing. It is an economic reality: 60 percent of kids under age 6 in Arizona live in families where all of the adults work, and those parents want to place their kids with caregivers and in environments where they can learn and prepare for success in school.

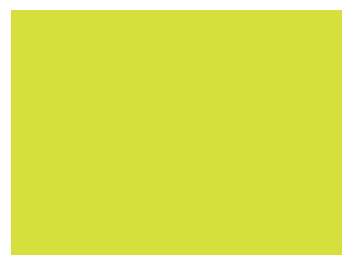
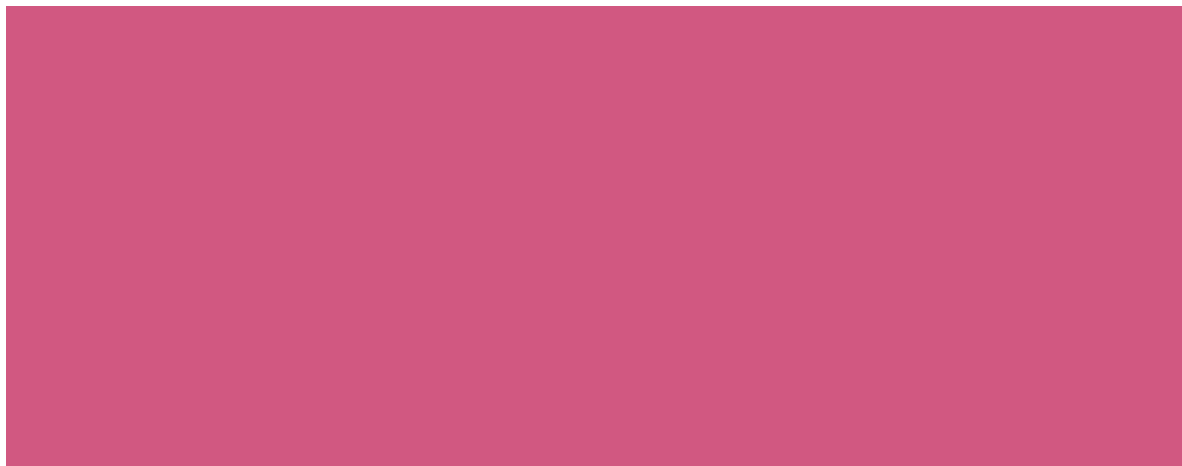
First Things First (FTF) supports those parents by funding efforts to improve the quality of child care and to give more Arizona children access to early learning programs.

Currently, nearly 800 child care centers and homes — almost one-quarter of all the licensed and certified providers in Arizona — voluntarily participate in **Quality First**, Arizona's child care quality improvement and rating system. Funded by FTF Regional Councils statewide, this program now gives more than 41,500 children access to higher-quality early education. With FTF support, participating providers improve in various areas of quality, including safe, healthy environments; highly educated teachers; classrooms and materials that stimulate kids at different stages of learning; lesson plans focused on language development and literacy; and low staff-to-child ratios so that kids get the attention and support they need.

In addition, FTF funds **child care scholarships** and **prekindergarten expansion programs** that help thousands of young children access early education. In fiscal year 2012 alone, almost 9,000 infants, toddlers and preschoolers statewide were able to access early learning programs through these two strategies.

Working together, parents, providers and FTF are giving more young kids the tools they need to be successful in kindergarten and beyond.

APPENDIX



CENTRAL MARICOPA REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

Introduction

This Regional Snapshot is designed to look more closely at the what, how, when and why of child care use in the Central Maricopa Region. The *Arizona Child Care Demand Study* focused on child care choices and preferences of parents with at least one child who had not yet started kindergarten. Some overall questions guiding the study included:

1. What types of child care do Arizona's parents use?
2. How do they make child care choices?
3. What do they think of their child care options?

In thinking about the demand for child care, it is also important to consider the context for families' choices, so the Snapshot begins with information about regional conditions, which is drawn from sources outside the study. Then the Snapshot shares applicable study findings and highlights the voices and experiences of families as they attempt to stitch together a patchwork of care for their young children.

I. Regional Conditions

Demographics

Geographically, the Central Maricopa Region consists of several communities within Maricopa County including the cities of Chandler and Tempe, the fast-growing town of Guadalupe, and the Ahwatukee neighborhood of Phoenix. The region also includes the Sun Lakes CDP (Census Designated Place), a retirement community.

Out of the 196,311 households in the Central Maricopa Region, 27,389 — or 14 percent — are home to young children, ages 0–5. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the region's total population of young children was 37,448, representing a slight decline from the 38,015 reported in 2000.¹

Economics

The Central Maricopa Region shows great variance in poverty rates. For example, Chandler has a relatively low poverty rate for all ages (7 percent) when compared to the county and state rates (almost 18 percent and 17 percent, respectively) and for children ages 0-5 (11 percent) when compared with Maricopa County (23 percent) and the state as a whole (24 percent). Guadalupe's overall poverty rate (33 percent) is almost double the county and state rates, and Guadalupe's poverty rate for children ages 0–5 (63 percent) is nearly triple the county and state rates. Tempe's poverty rates are marginally higher

¹ First Things First. (2012). *Regional Needs and Assets Report, Central Maricopa*. State of Arizona: Norton School, University of Arizona.

than those of the county and the state (21 percent for all ages and 27 percent for children ages 0–5). Median family and median single family income data reflect this pattern; although the median family income in Tempe is similar to the state and county averages, Chandler families bring in nearly double the income of Guadalupe residents.

Maricopa County’s overall unemployment rate for 2011 was roughly 8 percent, which is comparable to the state unemployment rate of 8.3 percent.²

Table 1. Regional Conditions, Central Maricopa

| GEOGRAPHY | MEDIAN FAMILY ANNUAL INCOME (2010 DOLLARS) | MEDIAN INCOME, SINGLE FATHERS WITH OWN CHILDREN | MEDIAN INCOME, SINGLE MOTHERS WITH OWN CHILDREN | POPULATION IN POVERTY (ALL AGES) | ALL RELATED CHILDREN (AGES 0–5) IN POVERTY |
|-----------------|--|---|---|----------------------------------|--|
| Arizona | \$59,840 | \$38,509 | \$26,377 | 15% | 24% |
| Maricopa County | \$65,438 | \$41,227 | \$29,390 | 14% | 23% |
| Chandler city | \$80,004 | \$58,377 | \$37,248 | 7% | 11% |
| Guadalupe town | \$45,946 | XX | XX | 33% | 63% |
| Tempe city | \$63,670c | \$36,626 | \$28,602 | 21% | 27% |

Source: First Things First. (2012). *Regional Needs and Assets Report, Central Maricopa*. State of Arizona: Norton School, University of Arizona.

Child Care Capacity

In the Central Maricopa Region, there are 211 Department of Health Services (DHS) licensed child care centers, according to the December 2011 Arizona Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) report. Additionally, there are 14 DHS licensed group homes, 18 Department of Economic Security (DES) certified homes and 61 unregulated homes that are registered with CCR&R. There may be many more home providers in the region that are not registered with CCR&R; therefore, they are not included in these figures. The upcoming *Child Care Capacity Study* — to be sponsored by First Things First — will take a deeper look at both regulated and unregulated care providers in Central Maricopa and other Arizona regions and will contribute to the pool of knowledge currently existing on child care capacity and related issues.

Quality First

Quality First, a First Things First program, is a voluntary, statewide quality improvement and rating system for providers of center-based or home-based early care and education. Its goal is to improve

² Ibid.

the quality of early learning programs and help parents identify quality care settings for their children. Quality First helps providers to assess their initial level of quality, identify areas for improvement, and then implement changes that will increase the quality of the early learning program at that site.

Quality First is based on research-proven areas of quality, including: low student/teacher ratios and small group sizes; well-qualified teachers who know how to engage young learners; warm, responsive relationships between the children and their adult caregivers; language-rich learning environments; and, developmentally appropriate curriculum and learning materials. The extent to which early care and education settings meet criteria in these areas determines their Quality First rating, signified by one to five stars. One star indicates the provider demonstrates a commitment to examine practices and improve the quality of care beyond regulatory requirements. Five stars indicate the provider offers lower ratios and group sizes, higher staff qualifications, a curriculum aligned with state standards, and nurturing relationships between adults and children.³

As of September 2012, 39 providers from the Central Maricopa Region were enrolled in the Quality First program. This represents 16 percent of the licensed or certified child care providers in the region. The number of providers that can participate in Quality First is dependent upon funding available in the region.

II. Child Care Demand Study: Parent Recruitment

To be included in the *Arizona Child Care Demand Study*, participants had to be the parent or primary caretaker of at least one child age 0–5. Great care was taken to ensure that respondents reflected the demographic makeup of their respective regions. To ensure a diverse research sample, a systematic recruitment approach was utilized that relied on ZIP code weighting, a broad selection of recruitment sites and the use of a diverse group of interviewers. Parents were recruited from more than 37 sites in Central Maricopa, including the Sunset Library, Tempe St. Luke’s Hospital, Tumbleweed Park, Pecos Community Center, and other community-based locations and venues. Only parents living in Central Maricopa were included in analyses specific to this region.

III. Characteristics of Central Maricopa Parents Participating in the Child Care Demand Study

A total of 122 parents living in Central Maricopa were recruited to participate in the *Arizona Child Care Demand Study*. The average age of parent participants was 33. Slightly more than half the sample had a bachelor’s degree or higher, and slightly more than half had an annual household income greater than \$60,000. Approximately two-thirds of the sample self-identified as white, and one-third self-identified as having some other ethnic heritage. On the whole, this sample reflects the diverse mix of families living in the Central Maricopa Region.

³ First Things First. (2011). *Measuring Quality in Early Childhood Education*. Retrieved from http://www.azftf.gov/WhoWeAre/Board/Documents/Policy_Brief_Q2.pdf (April 2012)

Table 2. Parent Characteristics, Central Maricopa

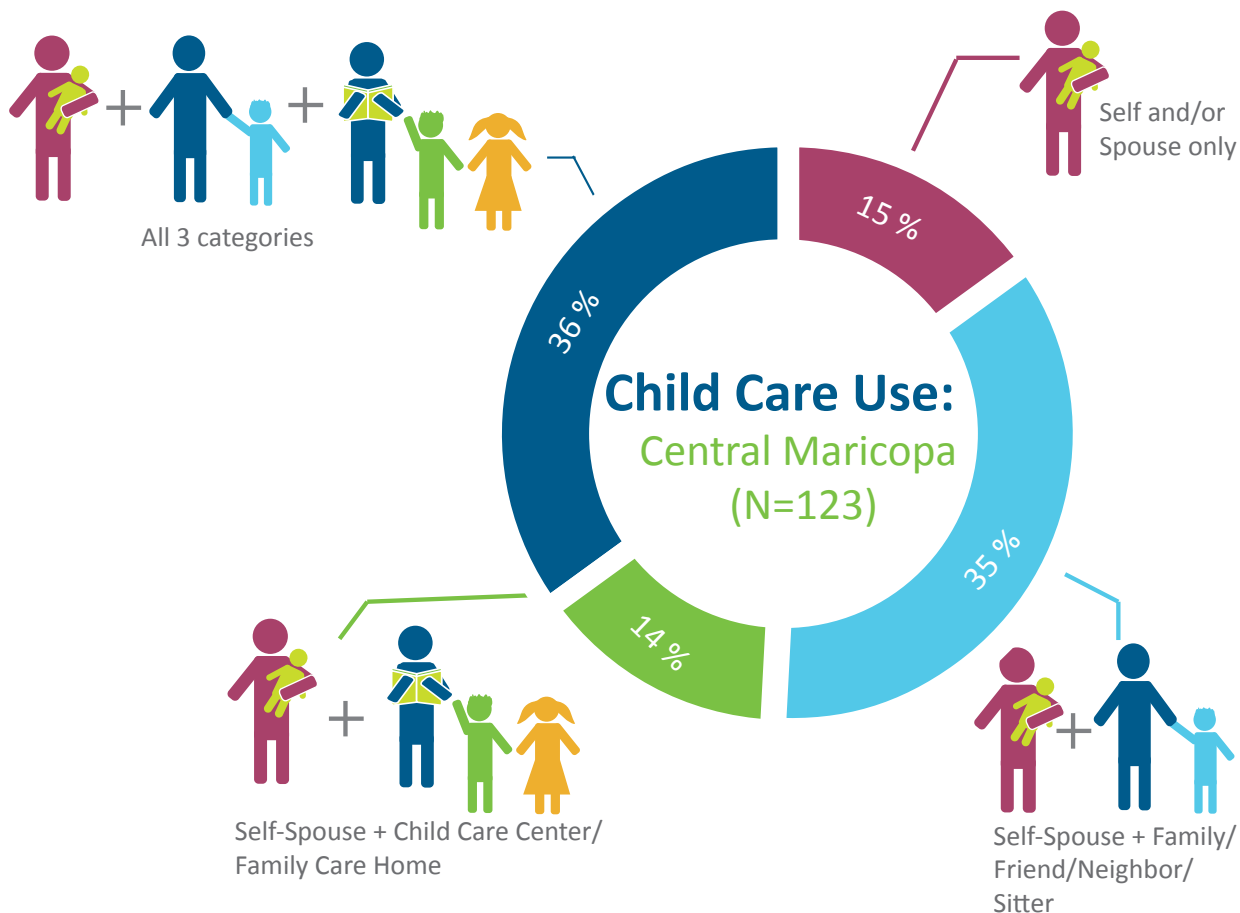
| | | PARENT CHARACTERISTICS CENTRAL MARICOPA | | | Total number of parents interviewed: 122 | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|-------------------|--|--------------------------|
| Parent's Age | | | | | | |
| | Range (Min/Max) | Mean | Median | Mode | | |
| | 18–62 | 33.47 | 33.00 | 34.00 | | |
| Parent's Education | | | | | | |
| | Less than High School Diploma | High School Diploma | Some College or Associate Degree | Bachelor's Degree | Postgraduate Degree | |
| | 7.3% | 18.1% | 21.1% | 27.6% | 35.8% | |
| Household Income | | | | | | |
| | Less than \$20,000 | \$20,001 to \$40,000 | \$40,001 to \$60,000 | \$60,001 or Above | | |
| | 17.2% | 15.5% | 11.2% | 56.0% | | |
| Parent's Ethnic Heritage | | | | | | |
| | Native American/Alaskan Native | Asian American | Black/African American | Hispanic/Latino | White | Other or Mixed Ethnicity |
| | 3.3% | 4.9% | 5.7% | 18.9% | 63.1% | 4.1% |

IV. Study Findings Applicable to Central Maricopa

Types of Child Care Used by Parents Living in Central Maricopa

The figure below shows the percentage of families in the Central Maricopa sample using different combinations of child care arrangements.

Figure 1. Types of Child Care Used by Parents in Central Maricopa



Arizona Child Care Demand Study findings in the Central Maricopa Region were consistent with those in other regions and throughout the state. A summary of key findings is presented below; additional details can be found in the main body of the report.

Child Care Use and Age of Child

The age of a child is important when it comes to the type of child care parents select. Three important findings emerged from the study. First, parents with an older child (ages 3–5) were more likely to use center/home care than parents with a younger child. Second, with the increasing age of a child, a decreasing number of parents selected family, friend and neighbor (FFN) care as the only type of care other than care they provided. Finally, parents with two or more children in the home tended to “customize” the type of care selected to the age of the child — they used a patchwork of care, but the patchwork had different configurations depending on the ages of children in the home. For example, parents might choose a combination of self/spouse care and FFN care for their infant and a combination of self/spouse care and center/home care for their 4-year-old child.

Child Care Use and Household Income

Household income plays an important role in how parents think about child care choices. Families with higher household incomes tended to use all types of care, including center/home care, whereas those with lower household incomes were more likely to use FFN care in combination with self/spouse care.

Child Care Use and Parent Education

Study findings suggest a clear association between parents' educational backgrounds and the types of care they select. For example, parents who had not graduated from high school were *considerably* more likely to use only self/spouse care than parents with a college degree. And with higher educational attainment, parents were more likely to select a center/home-based provider in combination with other types of care.

Child Care Use and Family Heritage

Study findings suggest that for the most part, parents in all ethnic groupings used a combination of all three types of care, including self/spouse care, FFN care and center/home care. Thus, ethnicity itself does not appear to play a dominant role in determining the type of care parents select. Rather, a combination of factors such as parent income, parent education, age of child, and availability and affordability of care appear to play a more influential role.

Child Care Use and Household Composition

Household composition can have an influence on the types of child care parents select. Specifically, findings from this study suggest that the total number of adults in a household plays a larger role in the type of care parents select than does the number of children living in a household. For example, single-adult households were less likely to rely solely on self/spouse care and were more likely to use a combination of care types than households with two or more adults. Households with three or more adults were less likely to have a child enrolled in center/home care and more likely to use FFN care in combination with self/spouse care.

Parent Perceptions about Availability of Child Care Information

Getting good information about child care options and making an informed decision about available options is an important part of "child care demand." Parents turn to different information sources to help them think about child care options, such as the Internet, message boards at the local coffee shop, or their friends and family members. Of course, the perception of having "enough" information, or the "right" kinds of information to make an informed choice, is subjective and does not necessarily mean that information is not available. However, it can be helpful to get a sense of whether or not parents feel like they have enough information to make a good child care choice. Of the nine regions participating in the *Arizona Child Care Demand Study*, the Central Maricopa region had the highest percentage of parents reporting that YES, they DID have enough information about local child care options (67 percent), with a smaller percentage (31 percent) of parents reporting that NO, they did NOT have sufficient information (see Table 3).

Table 3. Regional Findings on Parent Perceptions about Availability of Child Care Information

| 9 REGIONS | % OF PARENTS REPORTING NO, THEY DON'T HAVE ENOUGH INFORMATION ABOUT LOCAL CHILD CARE OPTIONS | % OF PARENTS REPORTING YES, THEY DO HAVE ENOUGH INFORMATION ABOUT LOCAL CHILD CARE OPTIONS |
|-------------------------|--|---|
| Central Maricopa | 31.4% | 68.6% |
| Central Phoenix | 52.5% | 47.5% |
| Coconino | 35.3% | 64.7% |
| Navajo Apache | 56.9% | 43.1% |
| Northwest Maricopa | 48.5% | 51.5% |
| South Phoenix | 53.5% | 46.5% |
| South Pima | 53.4% | 46.6% |
| Southwest Maricopa | 53.8% | 46.2% |
| Yavapai | 39.0% | 61.0% |

Voices from Central Maricopa: Parent Experiences and Perceptions

From all the parent survey interviews, a smaller sample was selected. A number of important themes emerged from these interviews with parents living in Central Maricopa. First, parents are very concerned about the **quality of care** their child receives, and they often think about quality in terms of what their particular child needs. For example, one parent explained how she selected a different type of care for each of her daughters, based on her perceptions of their developmental needs. Her infant daughter is cared for by her in-laws while she attends the local university because *“in a daycare, the ratio is one adult/three babies, but with my in-laws [caring for my daughter], the ratio is two adults/one baby.”* Her older daughter (age 5) attends a preschool program. She described the preschool program as *“smaller”*; she said other schools may be *“bigger, have fancy slides, but this school has teachers who are patient and loving”* and allow her daughter *“freedom to play and make a mess.”* Clearly, for this mom — and for many other parents living in Central Maricopa — quality is important, no matter what type of care is selected.

Parents in Central Maricopa are also concerned about **accessibility of care**. For example, one mother reported that she needs care for her children on weekends and holidays while she works, but it is not easy to find care during these times. A single parent currently looking for employment described how difficult it is to juggle searching for a job while caring for her infant daughter: *“When I go looking for a job, it’s very hard, because I usually have to take her with me.”* For many parents, accessing child care can be problematic, although some parents have turned to innovative care solutions. For example, one parent reported that she participates in a child care co-op (for occasional care) because it is *“very flexible, dependable, and convenient.”* A child care co-op is an early care setting where parents volunteer time or materials to support the program, which they then can use based on their individual needs.

Affordability of care is very important to parents living in Central Maricopa. Many parents have trouble paying for care. For example, one parent with two young sons stated that she has chosen to stay at home and care for her children full time, in part, because of the high cost of child care. *“We were considering [child care] at one point because we weren’t making it financially, but we found out a little bit, and I’m*

not kidding, for both kids they were quoting me about \$1,600 a month. Both kids, and that's like, what, a mortgage payment or something? My whole paycheck would be going to child care, which defeats the purpose." Most parents who rely on a DES subsidy or a scholarship, or who have a child participating in a Head Start program, could not otherwise afford early care and education.

V. Supporting Parents in Central Maricopa

Parents living in Central Maricopa are looking for quality early care and education opportunities for their children. Parents see quality as important, no matter whether the provider is a family, friend or neighbor; a center-based provider; or, another type of provider. Parents prefer care that is stable and reliable, care that meets the developmental and learning needs of their child, and care that provides a setting where children are happy and can thrive. In conducting an analysis of survey interviews with a smaller sample of parents living in Central Maricopa, a number of core themes emerged; based on these emergent themes, types of supports that could potentially benefit families living in this region include the following:

- Programs that strengthen the quality of and ongoing improvements in all types of early care and education settings.
- Child care scholarships and other financial assistance to enable parents to access a high-quality early care and education experience for their children.
- Quality drop-in child care services to give the children of stay-at-home parents – or those whose parents may be busy seeking employment – opportunities to interact and learn with other children.
- Educational programs for parents who opt for full-time self/spouse care to include provision of information and guidance on best practices to support learning and development in infants and young children within home settings.

COCONINO REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

Introduction

This Regional Snapshot is designed to look more closely at the what, how, when and why of child care use in the Coconino Region. The *Arizona Child Care Demand Study* focused on child care choices and preferences of parents with at least one child who had not yet started kindergarten. Some overall questions guiding the study included:

1. What types of child care do Arizona's parents use?
2. How do they make child care choices?
3. What do they think of their child care options?

In thinking about the demand for child care, it is also important to consider the context for families' choices, so the Snapshot begins with information about regional conditions, which is drawn from sources outside the study. Then the Snapshot shares applicable study findings and highlights the voices and experiences of families as they attempt to stitch together a patchwork of care for their young children.

I. Regional Conditions

Demographics

The Coconino Region is a remote region in northern Arizona, crossing three different county lines (Coconino, Navajo and Mohave). The region is defined by six smaller community hubs, each with its own identifying characteristics. The northern part of the region makes up the Northern Hub, which includes the towns of Page and Fredonia, and the Kaibab Paiute Indian Reservation. In the western part of the region, the Havasupai Reservation, located remotely at the bottom of the Grand Canyon and surrounding plateaus, makes up the Havasupai Hub. The Grand Canyon Hub is located on the rim of the Grand Canyon consists of Grand Canyon Village, Tusayan and Valle. The Hopi Hub, consisting of 12 villages, is located in the eastern part of the region. The Southern Hub, the largest hub in the region, encompasses Flagstaff, Williams and surrounding communities. The Winslow Hub consists of Winslow, which is located in Navajo County but is included in this region because residents primarily access resources in Flagstaff, approximately 60 miles west.

There are noticeable differences between all six of the community hubs. The Southern Hub, which incorporates the city of Flagstaff, has the majority of services for children and families within this region. In contrast, the Hopi and Grand Canyon hubs do not have easy access to services. This large, mostly rural geographic area with some remote communities and a diverse population often makes access to early childhood supports, like child care and other services, challenging for families.

Based on US Census data, there were more than 125,000 people in the Coconino Region in 2010. The region grew by more than 10,000 people between 2000 and 2010. During the same time period, the region experienced a 7 percent increase in the number of young children between the ages of 0-5 living

in the region (from 9,758 in 2000 to 10,454 in 2010). The region is home to 8,115 families with one or more children under the age of 6. One unique regional condition in comparison to the state is that 18 percent of children ages 0-5 in the Coconino Region lived in a household maintained by a grandparent in 2010, a higher percentage than Arizona (14 percent). In addition, 23 percent of the regions' children under 18 lived in a single-mother household.⁴

Economics

According to the 2010 Census, 20 percent of children ages 0-5 living in the Coconino County were living in poverty, slightly lower than in Arizona (24 percent). The Hopi Reservation had the highest percentage of children ages 0-5 living in poverty (63 percent). Page (31 percent) and Williams (28 percent) also had a higher percentage of children ages 0-5 living in poverty than Coconino County as a whole.

Healthy communities require an adequate supply of jobs that generate enough income to pay for basic needs. Between 2009 and 2011, the unemployment rate in the Coconino Region increased from 6.1 percent to 7.7 percent. When considering specific communities in the Coconino Region, the highest unemployment rate in 2011 was in Winslow West (41 percent) and on the Hopi Reservation (23 percent).⁵

Child Care in Coconino:

Child Care Capacity

In the Coconino Region, there are 64 Department of Health Services (DHS) licensed child care centers, according to the December 2011 Arizona Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) report. Additionally, there are 8 DHS licensed group homes, 9 Department of Economic Security (DES) certified homes, and 3 unregulated homes that are registered with CCR&R. There may be many more unregulated home providers in the region that are not registered with CCR&R; therefore, they are not included in these figures. The upcoming *Child Care Capacity Study* — to be sponsored by First Things First — will take a deeper look at both regulated and unregulated care providers in Coconino and other Arizona regions and will contribute to the pool of knowledge currently existing on child care capacity and related issues.

Quality First

Quality First, a First Things First program, is a voluntary, statewide quality improvement and rating system for providers of center-based or home-based early care and education. Its goal is to improve the quality of early learning programs and help parents identify quality care settings for their children. Quality First helps providers to assess their initial level of quality, identify areas for improvement, and then implement changes that will increase the quality of the early learning program at that site. Quality First is based on research-proven areas of quality, including: low student/teacher ratios and small group sizes; well-qualified teachers who know how to engage young learners; warm, responsive relationships between the children and their adult caregivers; language-rich learning environments; and, a developmentally appropriate curriculum and learning materials. The extent to which early care and

⁴ First Things First. (2012). *Regional Needs and Assets Report, Coconino*. State of Arizona: Applied Survey Research.

⁵ Ibid.

education settings meet criteria in these areas determines their Quality First rating, signified by one to five stars. One star indicates the provider demonstrates a commitment to examine practices and improve the quality of care beyond regulatory requirements. Five stars indicate the provider offers lower ratios and group sizes, higher staff qualifications, a curriculum aligned with state standards, and nurturing relationships between adults and children.⁶

As of September 2012, there were 17 providers from the Coconino Region enrolled in the Quality First program. This represents almost 21 percent of the licensed or certified child care providers in the region. The number of providers that can participate in Quality First is dependent upon funding available in the region.

II. Child Care Demand Study: Parent Recruitment

To be included in the *Arizona Child Care Demand Study*, participants had to be the parent or primary caretaker of at least one child age 0–5. Great care was taken to ensure that respondents reflected the demographic makeup of their respective regions. To ensure a diverse research sample, a systematic recruitment approach was utilized that relied on ZIP code weighting, a broad selection of recruitment sites and the use of a diverse group of interviewers. Parents were recruited from more than 25 sites in the Coconino Region, including the Flagstaff Library, Little Colorado Medical Center, Winslow City Park, Page Bible Church, Navajo Baptist Church, Williams Head Start, Fredonia Library, Cromer School, and many other community locations and venues. Only parents living in the Coconino Region were included in analyses specific to this region.

III. Characteristics of Coconino Parents Participating in the Child Care Demand Study

A total of 103 parents living in the Coconino Region were recruited to participate in the *Arizona Child Care Demand Study*. The average age of parent participants was 29. A little more than two thirds of the sample reported having some college education or less, and less than one third reported obtaining a bachelor's degree or higher. The majority of parents reported having an annual household income less than \$60,000, with 15 percent reporting a household income of more than \$60,000. About half the parents in the Coconino sample self-identified as white, and approximately one quarter identified as Hispanic/Latino. Slightly more than 10 percent identified as Native American, with the remaining parents reporting some other ethnic background. On the whole, this sample reflects the diverse mix of families living in the Coconino Region.

⁶ First Things First (2011). *Measuring Quality in Early Childhood Education*. Retrieved from http://www.aztf.gov/WhoWeAre/Board/Documents/Policy_Brief_Q2.pdf (April 2012)

Table 1. Parent Characteristics, Coconino

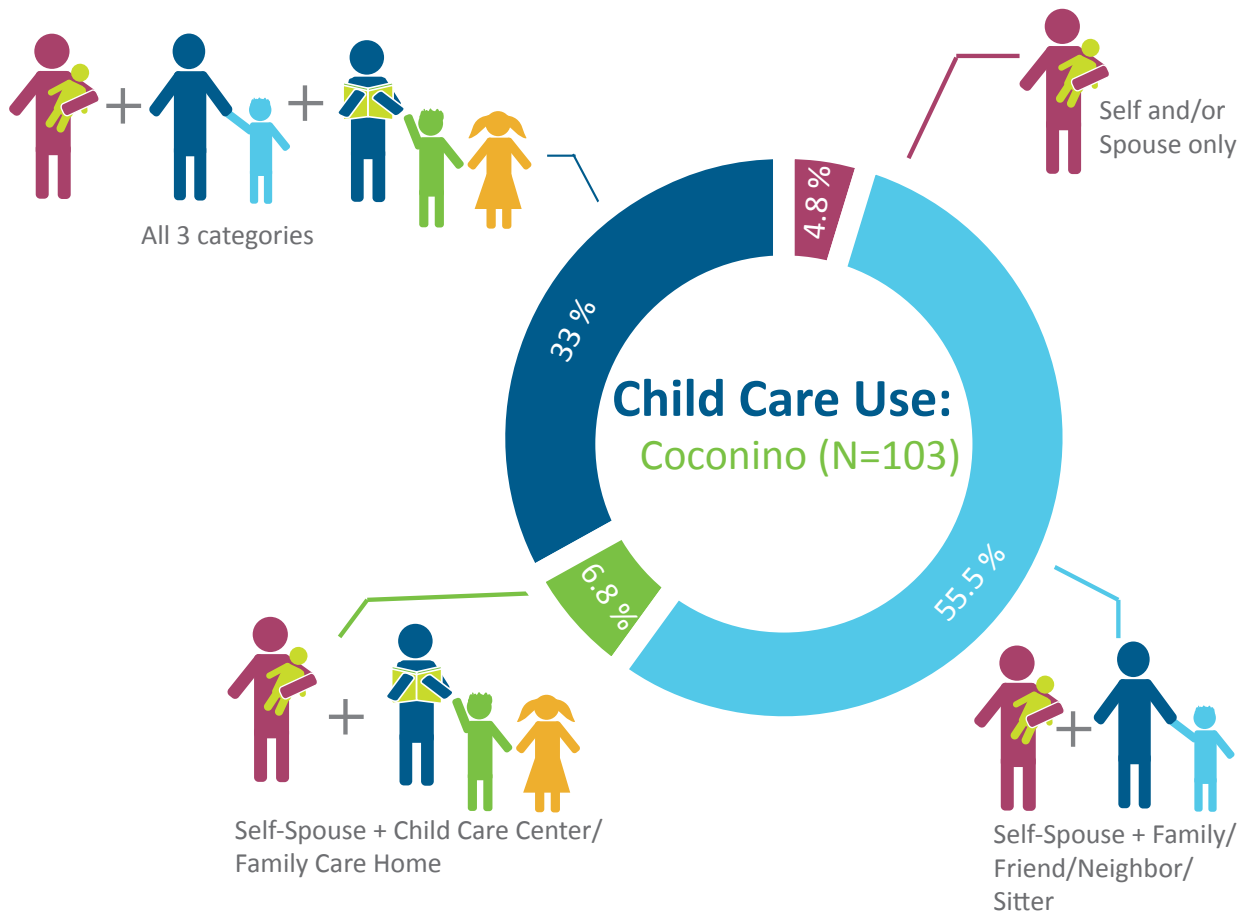
| | | PARENT CHARACTERISTICS COCONINO | | | Total number of parents interviewed: 103 | |
|--------------------------|--|------------------------------------|---|----------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| Parent's Age | | | | | | |
| | Range (Min/Max) | Mean | Median | Mode | | |
| | 18— 55 | 29.60 | 29.00 | 29.00 | | |
| Parent's Education | | | | | | |
| | Less than High School Diploma | High School Diploma | Some College or Associate Degree | Bachelor's Degree | Postgraduate Degree | |
| | 2.9% | 33.0% | 36.9% | 16.5% | 10.7% | |
| Household Income | | | | | | |
| | Less than \$20,000 | \$20,001 to \$40,000 | \$40,001 to \$60,000 | \$60,001 or Above | | |
| | 24.0% | 38.0% | 23.0% | 15.0% | | |
| Parent's Ethnic Heritage | | | | | | |
| | Native American/ Alaskan Native | Asian American | Black/ African American | Hispanic/ Latino | White | Other or Mixed Ethnicity |
| | 11.8% | 1.0% | 0.0% | 23.5% | 53.9% | 9.8% |

IV. Study Findings Applicable to Coconino

Types of Child Care Used by Parents Living in Coconino

The figure below shows the percentage of families in the Coconino sample using different combinations of child care arrangements.

Figure 1. Types of Child Care Used by Parents in Coconino



Arizona Child Care Demand Study findings in the Coconino Region were consistent with those in other regions and throughout the state. A summary of key findings is presented below; additional details can be found in the main body of the report.

Child Care Use and Age of Child

The age of a child is important when it comes to the type of child care parents select. Three important findings emerged from the study. First, parents with an older child (ages 3–5) were more likely to use center/home care than parents with a younger child. Second, with the increasing age of a child, a decreasing number of parents selected family, friend and neighbor (FFN) care as the only type of care other than care they provided. Finally, parents with two or more children in the home tended to “customize” the type of care selected to the age of the child — they used a patchwork of care, but the patchwork had different configurations depending on the ages of children in the home. For example, parents might choose a combination of self/spouse care and FFN care for their infant and a combination of self/spouse care and center/home care for their 4-year-old child.

Child Care Use and Household Income

Household income plays an important role in how parents think about child care choices. Families with higher household incomes tended to use all types of care, including center/home care, whereas those with lower household incomes were more likely to use FFN care in combination with self/spouse care.

Child Care Use and Parent Education

Study findings suggest a clear association between parents' educational backgrounds and the types of care they select. For example, parents who had not graduated from high school were *considerably* more likely to use only self/spouse care than parents with a college degree. And with higher educational attainment, parents were more likely to select a center/home-based provider in combination with other types of care.

Child Care Use and Family Heritage

Study findings suggest that for the most part, parents in all ethnic groupings used a combination of all three types of care, including self/spouse care, FFN care and center/home care. Thus, ethnicity itself does not appear to play a dominant role in determining the type of care parents select. Rather, a combination of factors such as parent income, parent education, age of child, and availability and affordability of care appear to play a more influential role.

Child Care Use and Household Composition

Household composition can have an influence on the types of child care parents select. Specifically, findings from this study suggest that the total number of adults in a household plays a larger role in the type of care parents select than does the number of children living in a household. For example, single-adult households were less likely to rely solely on self/spouse care and were more likely to use a combination of care types than households with two or more adults. Households with three or more adults were less likely to have a child enrolled in center/home care and more likely to use FFN care in combination with self/spouse care.

Parent Perceptions about Availability of Child Care Information

Getting good information about child care options and making an informed decision about available options is an important part of "child care demand." Parents turn to different information sources to help them think about child care options, such as the Internet, message boards at the local coffee shop, or their friends and family members. Of course, the perception of having "enough" information, or the "right" kinds of information to make an informed choice, is subjective and does not necessarily mean that information is not available. However, it can be helpful to get a sense of whether or not parents feel like they have enough information to make a good child care choice. As indicated in the table below, approximately two thirds of Coconino parents reported YES, they DID have enough information about local child care options, and approximately one third reported NO, they did NOT have enough information (see Table 2).

Table 2. Regional Findings on Parent Perceptions about Availability of Child Care Information

| 9 REGIONS | % OF PARENTS REPORTING <u>NO</u> , THEY DON'T HAVE ENOUGH INFORMATION ABOUT LOCAL CHILD CARE OPTIONS | % OF PARENTS REPORTING <u>YES</u> , THEY DO HAVE ENOUGH INFORMATION ABOUT LOCAL CHILD CARE OPTIONS |
|--------------------|--|---|
| Central Maricopa | 31.4% | 68.6% |
| Central Phoenix | 52.5% | 47.5% |
| Coconino | 35.3% | 64.7% |
| Navajo Apache | 56.9% | 43.1% |
| Northwest Maricopa | 48.5% | 51.5% |
| South Phoenix | 53.5% | 46.5% |
| South Pima | 53.4% | 46.6% |
| Southwest Maricopa | 53.8% | 46.2% |
| Yavapai | 39.0% | 61.1% |

Voices from Coconino: Parent Experiences and Perceptions

From all the parent survey interviews, a smaller sample was selected. A number of important themes emerged from these interviews with parents living in the Coconino Region. First, parents are very concerned about the **quality of care**, and they often think of quality in terms of what their child needs. For example, one parent reported that she preferred a Montessori school for her son, but that was too expensive. So, she selected another preschool which her son attends while she works. She likes the school because it has *“solid lessons plans, and keeps kids engaged all day long.”* Another parent reported that her ideal child care setting would be a facility where they *“have tons of activities, flexible hours and a well-educated staff.”*

Two other extremely important concerns for parents living in Coconino are **accessibility** and **affordability** of child care. The stories of parents living in Coconino suggest that quality, accessibility and affordability go hand in hand, and parents are equally concerned about all three. For example, one mother who relies on her own father (her child’s grandfather) as a care provider while she works said that the reason she has not selected a licensed center/home provider is because *“we can’t afford it. Believe me, if I could choose to have them in a facility rather than with grandpa, I would, if I could afford it.”* Another mother who pays to have a provider come to her own home to care for her children said that the biggest problem she faces is retaining providers. Since the birth of her son, she has been through five different providers. Finding care *“is very stressful, very hard.”* She also said *“a large part of our paycheck goes to paying for child care.”*

It is clear that many of the child care choices parents make in Coconino are not their first preferences, but rather a compromise based on limited choices within the community and their own limited financial resources. One mother said she had hoped her son could attend a Head Start program, but he didn’t qualify. *“I wish Flagstaff had a little more variety in choices for child care facilities,”* she said. *“I guess I’m not happy with [the facility her son attends]. I wish there was something better, and I try talking with the staff. I don’t really have anywhere else to take him.”*

Another parent talked about her search to find a child care facility that could accommodate her two children. *“In Flagstaff, it’s really all about finding a school that has room for two children. You know, I have two kids so I have to find a school where I can take both of my children, one that I can afford, with a program I like. It’s hard to find centers that will take them full day.”* She went on to say that *“there’s a waitlist for programs, and parents fight over spots at good centers. For those of us without much money, it stinks. That’s my biggest concern.”*

V. Supporting Parents in Coconino

Parents living in the Coconino Region are looking for quality early care and education opportunities for their children. Parents see quality as important, no matter if the provider is a family member, friend or neighbor, a center-based provider, or another type of provider. Parents prefer care that is stable and reliable, care that meets the developmental and learning needs of their child, and care that provides a setting where children are happy and can thrive. In conducting an analysis of survey interviews with a smaller sample of parents living in the Coconino Region, a number of core themes emerged; based on these emergent themes, types of supports that could potentially benefit families living in this region include the following:

- Programs that strengthen the quality of and ongoing improvements in all types of early care and education settings.
- Child care scholarships and other financial assistance to enable parents to access a high-quality early care and education experience for their children.
- Quality drop-in child care services to give the children of stay-at-home parents – or those whose parents may be busy seeking employment – opportunities to interact and learn with other children.
- Educational programs for parents who opt for full time self/spouse care, to include provision of information and guidance on best practices to support learning and development in young children within home settings.
- Supports for non-traditional families, such as grandparents caring for children and single parents who are struggling to work and find affordable care for their children.
- Greater availability of affordable, high quality programs for parents who need full time care for one or more children, especially in rural areas.

NAVAJO/APACHE REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

Introduction

This Regional Snapshot is designed to look more closely at the what, how, when and why of child care use in the Navajo/Apache Region. The *Arizona Child Care Demand Study* focused on child care choices and preferences of parents with at least one child who had not yet started kindergarten. Some overall questions guiding the study included:

1. What types of child care do Arizona's parents use?
2. How do they make child care choices?
3. What do they think of their child care options?

In thinking about the demand for child care, it is important to consider the regional context and conditions which form the backdrop for family choice and experiences with child care. Then, the Snapshot shares applicable study findings and highlights the voices and experiences of families as they attempt to stitch together a patchwork of care for their young children.

I. Regional Conditions

Demographics

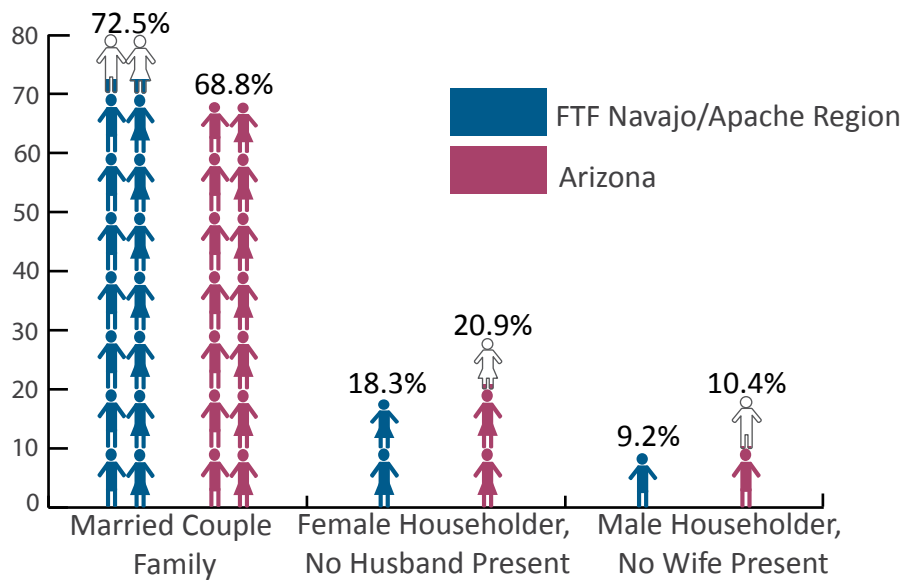
The Navajo/Apache Region is comprised of the non-reservation portions of Navajo and Apache counties in northeastern Arizona. It extends to New Mexico in the east, to the Navajo Nation in the north, to Coconino County in the west, and to the White Mountain Apache Tribal Reservation and Greenlee County in the south. The region includes the community of Forest Lakes, but not the city of Winslow, which is a part of the FTF Coconino Region. Show Low is the largest community in the region. To access services beyond what the region can offer, Navajo/Apache residents must drive about two hours to Flagstaff or four hours to Phoenix.

The Navajo/Apache Region experienced a 33 percent increase in population since the 2000 Census, with 72,331 residents in 2010. Young children between the ages of 0-5 living in the region reflected a similar growth pattern since 2000, increasing from 4,538 in 2000 to 6,099 in 2010 (34 percent).

Almost three out of every four young children in the region live in married couple households; about 28 percent live with single parents. Eighteen percent were in female headed households with no husband present, which is lower than the state rate of 21 percent.⁷

⁷ First Things First. (2012). *Regional Needs and Assets Report*, Navajo/Apache. State of Arizona: Applied Survey Research.

Figure 1. Types of Families with Children Ages Birth Through Five, 2010



Economics

Twenty-seven percent of children ages 5-17 living in the areas served by the school districts within the First Things First Navajo/Apache Region were living in poverty in 2010. This was an increase from 22 percent in 2006. In looking at county-level data, these numbers increase. According to the American Community Survey's five-year estimates (2005-2009), 50 percent of children ages 0-5 were living in poverty in Apache County, and 36 percent of young children were living in poverty in Navajo County. Healthy communities also require an adequate supply of jobs that generate enough income to pay for basic needs. The overall unemployment rate in the Navajo/Apache Region was 8.5 percent in 2011. This was lower than the rate for Arizona as a whole at 9.5 percent. Although the state saw unemployment decrease between 2010 and 2011, unemployment rates in the region continue to climb.⁸

⁸ Ibid.

Unemployment Rate by Community

| PLACE | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Eagar | 2.6% | 3.5% | 4.5% | 5.3% | 6.2% |
| Springerville | 3.4% | 4.5% | 5.9% | 6.8% | 8.0% |
| St. Johns | 3.0% | 3.9% | 5.2% | 6.0% | 7.1% |
| Heber-Overgaard | 1.6% | 2.5% | 3.6% | 4.2% | 4.2% |
| Holbrook | 4.1% | 6.3% | 9.1% | 10.4% | 10.7% |
| Pinetop-Lakeside | 3.3% | 5.1% | 7.5% | 8.6% | 8.8% |
| Show Low | 3.0% | 4.7% | 6.8% | 7.8% | 8.0% |
| Snowflake | 3.4% | 5.3% | 7.7% | 8.9% | 9.1% |
| Taylor | 2.8% | 4.4% | 6.4% | 7.3% | 7.5% |
| Apache County Less Native American Tribes | 3.1% | 4.1% | 5.4% | 6.3% | 7.3% |
| Navajo County Less Native American Tribes | 3.3% | 5.0% | 7.3% | 8.4% | 8.6% |
| Arizona | 3.8% | 5.9% | 8.5% | 10.0% | 9.5% |

Source: Department of Commerce Research Administration. (2012). Special unemployment report. Arizona Workforce Informer. Retrieved 2012 from <http://www.workforce.az.gov>.

Child Care in Navajo/Apache:

Child Care Capacity

In the Navajo/Apache Region, there are 24 Department of Health Services (DHS) licensed child care centers, according to the December 2011 Arizona Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) report. Additionally, there are 5 DHS licensed group homes, 8 Department of Economic Security (DES) certified homes, and no unregulated homes that are registered with CCR&R. There may be many more unregulated home providers in the region that are not registered with CCR&R; therefore, they are not included in these figures. The upcoming *Child Care Capacity Study* — to be sponsored by First Things First — will take a deeper look at both regulated and unregulated care providers in Navajo/Apache and other Arizona regions and will contribute to the pool of knowledge currently existing on child care capacity and related issues.

Quality First

Quality First, a First Things First program, is a voluntary, statewide quality improvement and rating system for providers of center-based or home-based early care and education. Its goal is to improve the quality of early learning programs and help parents identify quality care settings for their children. Quality First helps providers to assess their initial level of quality, identify areas for improvement, and then implement changes that will increase the quality of the early learning program at that site. Quality First is based on research-proven areas of quality, including: low student/teacher ratios and

small group sizes; well-qualified teachers who know how to engage young learners; warm, responsive relationships between the children and their adult caregivers; language-rich learning environments; and, a developmentally appropriate curriculum and learning materials. The extent to which early care and education settings meet criteria in these areas determines their Quality First rating, signified by one to five stars. One star indicates the provider demonstrates a commitment to examine practices and improve the quality of care beyond regulatory requirements. Five stars indicate the provider offers lower ratios and group sizes, higher staff qualifications, a curriculum aligned with state standards, and nurturing relationships between adults and children.⁹

As of September 2012, there were 3 providers from the Navajo/Apache Region enrolled in the Quality First program. This represents 8 percent of the licensed or certified child care providers in the region. The number of providers who can participate in Quality First is dependent upon funding available in the region.

II. Child Care Demand Study: Parent Recruitment

To be included in the *Arizona Child Care Demand Study*, participants had to be the parent or primary caretaker of at least one child age 0–5. Great care was taken to ensure that respondents reflected the demographic makeup of their respective regions. To ensure a diverse research sample, a systematic recruitment approach was utilized that relied on ZIP code weighting, a broad selection of recruitment sites and the use of a diverse group of interviewers. Parents were recruited from more than 20 sites in the Navajo/ Apache Region, including the Holbrook Library, Pinetop Head Start, North Country Health Care—Holbrook, Ehmke’s Child Haven—Show Low, and other community locations and venues. Only parents living in the Navajo/Apache Region were included in analyses specific to this region.

III. Characteristics of Navajo/Apache Parents Participating in the Child Care Demand Study

A total of 66 parents living in the Navajo/Apache region were recruited to participate in the *Arizona Child Care Demand Study*. The average age of parent participants was 28. More than 80 percent of the sample reported having some college education or less, with slightly more than 10 percent reporting they had obtained a bachelor’s degree or higher. Almost 95 percent of the sample reported having an annual household income of less than \$60,000, with only 5 percent of parents reporting an income greater than \$60,000. Approximately two thirds of the sample self-identified as white, with slightly less than one third identifying as Hispanic/Latino, and the remaining parents self-identifying as Native American or having a mixed heritage. On the whole, this sample represents the diverse mix of families living in the Navajo/Apache Region.

⁹ First Things First (2011). *Measuring Quality in Early Childhood Education*. Retrieved from http://www.azftf.gov/WhoWeAre/Board/Documents/Policy_Brief_Q2.pdf (April 2012)

Table 2. Parent Characteristics, Navajo/Apache

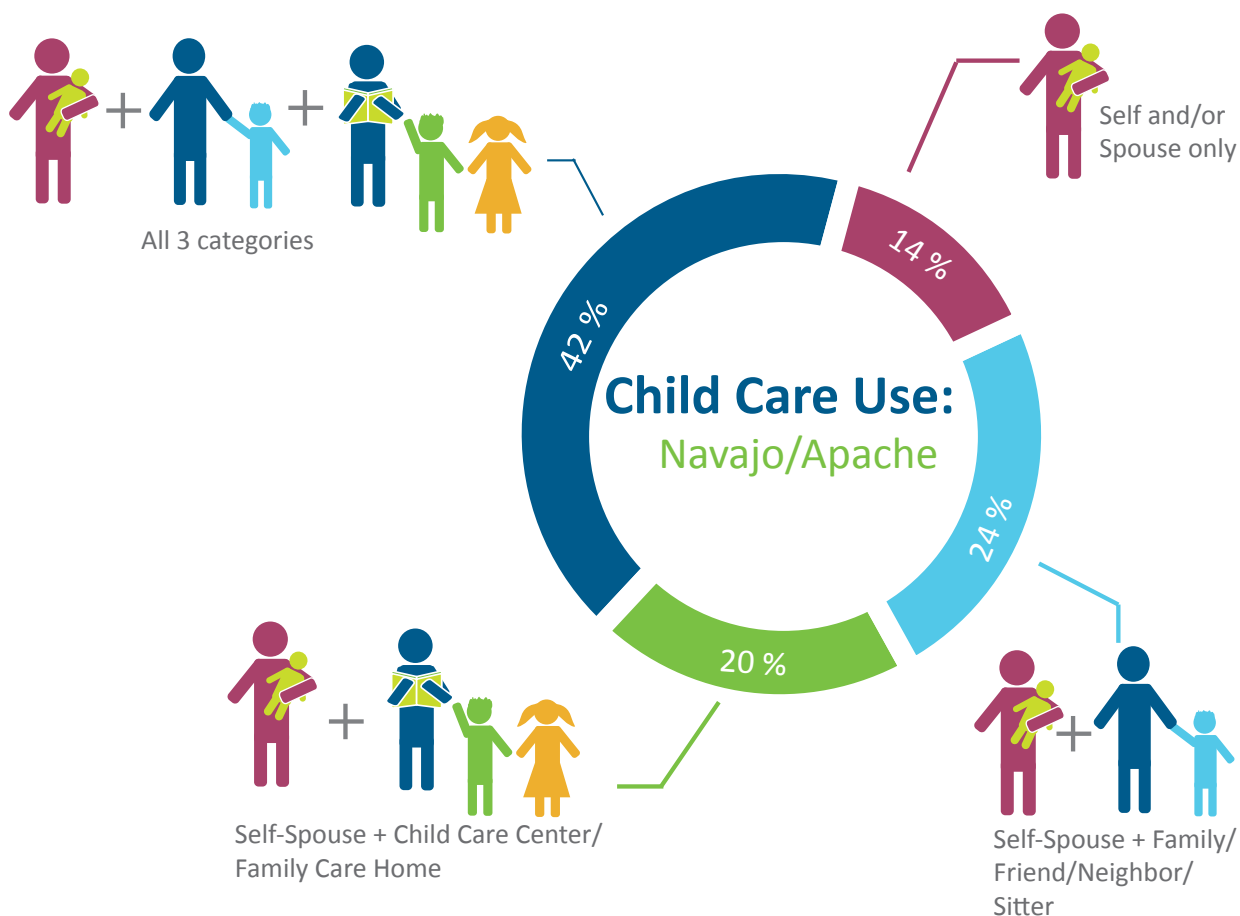
| | | PARENT CHARACTERISTICS NAVAJO/APACHE | | | Total number of parents interviewed: 66 | |
|--------------------------|--|---|---|----------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| Parent's Age | | | | | | |
| | Range (Min/Max) | Mean | Median | Mode | | |
| | 18-42 | 28.24 | 28.00 | 25.00 | | |
| Parent's Education | | | | | | |
| | Less than High School Diploma | High School Diploma | Some College or Associate Degree | Bachelor's Degree | Postgraduate Degree | |
| | 21.2% | 24.2% | 40.9% | 12.1% | 1.5% | |
| Household Income | | | | | | |
| | Less than \$20,000 | \$20,001 to \$40,000 | \$40,001 to \$60,000 | \$60,001 or Above | | |
| | 45.2% | 33.9% | 16.1% | 4.8% | | |
| Parent's Ethnic Heritage | | | | | | |
| | Native American/ Alaskan Native | Asian American | Black/ African American | Hispanic/ Latino | White | Other or Mixed Ethnicity |
| | 4.5% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 24.2% | 63.6% | 7.6% |

IV. Study Findings Applicable to the Navajo/Apache Region

Types of Child Care Used by Parents Living in Navajo/Apache

The figure below shows the percentage of families in the Navajo/Apache sample using different combinations of child care arrangements.

Figure 2. Types of Child Care Used by Parents in Navajo/Apache



Arizona Child Care Demand Study findings in the Navajo/Apache Region were consistent with those in other regions and throughout the state. A summary of key findings is presented below; additional detail can be found in the main body of the report.

Child Care Use and Age of Child

The age of a child is important when it comes to the type of child care parents select. Three important findings emerged from the study. First, parents with an older child (ages 3–5) were more likely to use center/home care than parents with a younger child. Second, with the increasing age of a child, a decreasing number of parents selected family, friend and neighbor (FFN) care as the only type of care other than care they provided. Finally, parents with two or more children in the home tended to “customize” the type of care selected to the age of the child — they used a patchwork of care, but the patchwork had different configurations depending on the ages of children in the home. For example, parents might choose a combination of self/spouse care and FFN care for their infant and a combination of self/spouse care and center/home care for their 4-year-old child.

Child Care Use and Household Income

Household income plays an important role in how parents think about child care choices. Families with higher household incomes tended to use all types of care, including center/home care, whereas those with lower household incomes were more likely to use FFN care in combination with self/spouse care.

Child Care Use and Parent Education

Study findings suggest a clear association between parents' educational backgrounds and the types of care they select. For example, parents who had not graduated from high school were *considerably* more likely to use only self/spouse care than parents with a college degree. And with higher educational attainment, parents were more likely to select a center/home-based provider in combination with other types of care.

Child Care Use and Family Heritage

Study findings suggest that for the most part, parents in all ethnic groupings used a combination of all three types of care, including self/spouse care, FFN care and center/home care. Thus, ethnicity itself does not appear to play a dominant role in determining the type of care parents select. Rather, a combination of factors such as parent income, parent education, age of child, and availability and affordability of care appear to play a more influential role.

Child Care Use and Household Composition

Household composition can have an influence on the types of child care parents select. Specifically, findings from this study suggest that the total number of adults in a household plays a larger role in the type of care parents select than does the number of children living in a household. For example, single-adult households were less likely to rely solely on self/spouse care and were more likely to use a combination of care types than households with two or more adults. Households with three or more adults were less likely to have a child enrolled in center/home care and more likely to use FFN care in combination with self/spouse care.

Parent Perceptions about Availability of Child Care Information

Getting good information about child care options and making an informed decision about available options is an important part of "child care demand." Parents turn to different information sources to help them think about child care options, such as the Internet, message boards at the local coffee shop, or their friends and family members. Of course, the perception of having "enough" information, or the "right" kinds of information to make an informed choice, is subjective and does not necessarily mean that information is not available. However, it can be helpful to get a sense of whether or not parents feel like they have enough information to make a good child care choice. As indicated in the table below, a higher percentage of parents living in the Navajo/Apache Region indicated that NO, they did NOT have enough information about child care options than those parents in the region indicating that YES, they DID have enough information (see Table 3).

Table 3. Regional Findings on Parent Perceptions about Availability of Child Care Information

| 9 REGIONS | % OF PARENTS REPORTING <u>NO</u> , THEY DON'T HAVE ENOUGH INFORMATION ABOUT LOCAL CHILD CARE OPTIONS | % OF PARENTS REPORTING <u>YES</u> , THEY DO HAVE ENOUGH INFORMATION ABOUT LOCAL CHILD CARE OPTIONS |
|----------------------|--|---|
| Central Maricopa | 31.4% | 68.6% |
| Central Phoenix | 52.5% | 47.5% |
| Coconino | 35.3% | 64.7% |
| Navajo Apache | 56.9% | 43.1% |
| Northwest Maricopa | 48.5% | 51.5% |
| South Phoenix | 53.5% | 46.5% |
| South Pima | 53.4% | 46.6% |
| Southwest Maricopa | 53.8% | 46.2% |
| Yavapai | 39.0% | 61.0% |

Voices from Navajo/Apache: Parent Experiences and Perceptions

From all the parent survey interviews, a smaller sample was selected. A number of important themes emerged from these interviews with parents living in the Navajo/Apache Region. First, parents are very concerned about the **quality of care**, and they often think of quality in terms of what their particular child needs. Many parents equate quality child care as having a strong educational component. For example, when asked what she looked for selecting a child care provider, one mother of a 4-year-old said, *"I look for kind and caring teachers...and an actual educational aspect to it. Not just a place to put your kids while you're at work. I want her to be taught things."* Another mother commented on how much she likes the Head Start program her child attends: *"it's set up more like a preschool, not really a day care. My daughter is learning; she has learned some of the alphabet, and she learned to write her name. I just feel it has helped her get ready for kindergarten."*

Many parents in Navajo/Apache are also concerned about accessibility to child care. For some parents, accessibility may be compromised by not having information about available options; for others, it might mean not having a quality provider close to home or not having the financial resources to pay for a preferred type of care. One mother who had recently lost her job, expressed concern that her daughter might lose her First Things First scholarship, and therefore might not be able to continue to attend a preschool program. Even if she was not employed, this mother felt that child care with an early education component was important because she wanted her daughter to socialize with other children and have learning opportunities. A teen mother of a newborn expressed a desire to care for her child full time; as a new mom, safety issues were of greater concern than accessing a child care provider: *"I like to have her around; that way, I know nothing happens to her."* However, she also admitted she was hoping her family would be able to help out with care on a part-time basis.

Affordability of care is another important matter for many parents living in the Navajo/Apache Region. One mother reported that she feels it is her job to raise her children, and she also wants her daughter to attend preschool. She said that the cost of care *"is a very big deal"* because her husband had just lost

his job. Another mother reported that she ended up having to pull her children out of a child care center *“because of the cost mostly, because I don’t make enough for the day care to watch them.”* She had been told she will not be able to receive a DES subsidy.

V. Supporting Parents in the Navajo/Apache Region

Parents living in the Navajo/Apache Region are looking for quality early care and education opportunities for their children. Parents see quality as important, no matter if the provider is a family, friend or neighbor, a center-based provider, or another type of provider. Parents prefer care that is stable and reliable, care that meets the developmental and learning needs of their child, and care that provides a setting where children are happy and can thrive. In conducting an analysis of survey interviews with a smaller sample of parents living in the Navajo/Apache Region, a number of core themes emerged; based on these emergent themes, types of supports that could potentially benefit families living in this region include the following:

- Programs that strengthen the quality of and ongoing improvements in all types of early care education settings.
- Child care scholarships and other financial assistance to enable parents to access a high-quality early care and education experience for their children.
- Quality drop-in child care services to give the children of stay-at-home parents – or those whose parents may be busy seeking employment – opportunities to interact and learn with other children.
- Educational programs for parents who opt for full time self/spouse care, to include provision of information and guidance on best practices to support learning and development in infants and young children within home settings.

NORTHWEST MARICOPA REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

Introduction

This Regional Snapshot is designed to look more closely at the what, how, when and why of child care use in the Northwest Maricopa Region. The *Arizona Child Care Demand Study* focused on child care choices and preferences of parents with at least one child who had not yet started kindergarten. Some overall questions guiding the study included:

1. What types of child care do Arizona's parents use?
2. How do they make child care choices?
3. What do they think of their child care options?

In thinking about the demand for child care, it is important to consider the regional context and conditions which form the backdrop for family choice and experiences with child care. Then the Snapshot shares applicable study findings and highlights the voices and experiences of families as they attempt to stitch together a patchwork of care for their young children.

I. Regional Conditions

Demographics

With 697,630 residents, the Northwest Maricopa Region represents 18.3 percent of Maricopa County's total population and 10.9 percent of Arizona's total population. The region includes the cities of Aguila, Glendale, El Mirage, Morristown, Peoria, Sun City, Surprise, Youngstown, Sun City West, Waddell, Wittmann, and Wickenburg. Aguila and Wickenburg extend in to Yavapai County.

The Northwest Maricopa Region spans diverse rural and urban communities that represent 2,109 square miles of land, or 22.9 percent of Maricopa's 9,200 square miles. Most of the communities are suburban, reflecting the proximity to Phoenix, while Aguila, Morristown, Wickenburg and Wittmann are extremely rural. The most densely populated area is Youngtown, followed by Glendale; however, Wickenburg has the largest geographic area.

The Northwest Maricopa Region has experienced an almost 28 percent increase in the number of young children ages 0-5 living in the region since 2000; from 36,346 in 2000 to 46,454 in 2010. The region is home to 161,604 families; 14,144 (8.8 percent) with one or more children under the age of 6. About 13 percent of children ages 0-5 in the Northwest Maricopa Region are living under the care of their grandparents, which is slightly higher than the county figure (about 12.5 percent), but less than the state as a whole (14 percent).¹⁰

¹⁰ First Things First. (2012). *Regional Needs and Assets Report, Northwest Maricopa*. State of Arizona: Southwest Institute for Families & Children with Special Needs.

Economics

Poverty remains a persistent problem in many communities. The number of children ages 0-5 living below the poverty level in the Northwest Maricopa Region varies depending on the community. Glendale has the largest number (6,032), followed by Peoria (1,304) and Surprise (1,112). However, the communities with the highest percentage of young children living in poverty were Glendale (35 percent), Youngtown (34 percent) and El Mirage (27 percent) which were also higher than county (23 percent) and state levels (24 percent).

Healthy communities also require an adequate supply of jobs that generate enough income to pay for basic needs. When looking at unemployment rates for 2011, the rate for Maricopa County is around 8 percent and is comparable to the state unemployment rate of 8.3 percent. On a positive note, in looking more specifically at the Bureau of Labor Statistics unemployment rates for the Phoenix-Mesa-Glendale statistical areas, there has been a decrease in the unemployment rate over the past three years: 2010, 9.8 percent; 2011, 8.6 percent; and, 2012, 7.3 percent.¹¹

Child Care Northwest Maricopa:

Child Care Capacity

In the Northwest Maricopa Region, there are 198 Department of Health Services (DHS) licensed child care centers, according to the December 2011 Arizona Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) report. Additionally, there are 14 DHS licensed group homes, 16 Department of Economic Security (DES) certified homes, and 59 unregulated homes that are registered with CCR&R. There may be many more unregulated home providers in the region that are not registered with CCR&R; therefore, they are not included in these figures. The upcoming *Child Care Capacity Study* — to be sponsored by First Things First — will take a deeper look at both regulated and unregulated care providers in Northwest Maricopa and other Arizona regions and will contribute to the pool of knowledge currently existing on child care capacity and related issues.

Quality First

Quality First, a First Things First program, is a voluntary, statewide quality improvement and rating system for providers of center-based or home-based early care and education. Its goal is to improve the quality of early learning programs and help parents identify quality care settings for their children. Quality First helps providers to assess their initial level of quality, identify areas for improvement, and then implement changes that will increase the quality of the early learning program at that site.

Quality First is based on research-proven areas of quality, including: low student/teacher ratios and small group sizes; well-qualified teachers who know how to engage young learners; warm, responsive relationships between the children and their adult caregivers; language-rich learning environments; and, a developmentally appropriate curriculum and learning materials. The extent to which early care and education settings meet criteria in these areas determines their Quality First rating, signified by one to

¹¹ Ibid.

five stars. One star indicates the provider demonstrates a commitment to examine practices and improve the quality of care beyond regulatory requirements. Five stars indicate the provider offers lower ratios and group sizes, higher staff qualifications, a curriculum aligned with state standards, and nurturing relationships between adults and children.¹²

As of September 2012, there were 60 providers from the Northwest Maricopa Region enrolled in the Quality First program. This represents 26 percent of the licensed or certified child care providers in the region. The number of providers that can participate in Quality First is dependent upon funding available in the region.

II. Child Care Demand Study: Parent Recruitment

To be included in the *Arizona Child Care Demand Study*, participants had to be the parent or primary caretaker of at least one child age 0–5. Great care was taken to ensure that respondents reflected the demographic makeup of their respective regions. To ensure a diverse research sample, a systematic recruitment approach was utilized that relied on ZIP code weighting, a broad selection of recruitment sites and the use of a diverse group of interviewers. Parents were recruited from more than 20 sites in the Northwest Maricopa Region, including the El Mirage Branch Library, Benevilla Healthy Families, Healthy Kids Fair, ASU West Campus, La Hacienda Child Care, Rio Vista Community Park, and many other community locations and venues. Only parents living in the Northwest Maricopa Region were included in analyses specific to this region.

III. Characteristics of Northwest Maricopa Parents Participating in the Child Care Demand Study

A total of 104 parents living in the Northwest Maricopa Region were recruited to participate in the *Arizona Child Care Demand Study*. The average age of parent participants was 31. Approximately three-quarters of the sample reported having some college education or less, and approximately one quarter reported having obtained at least a bachelor's degree or higher. Approximately 80 percent of the sample reported having an annual household income of \$60,000 or less, with the remaining 20 percent reporting a household income of more than \$60,000. A little more than 40 percent of the sample self-identified as Hispanic/Latino, a little more than 30 percent as white, and the remaining families self-identified as black or African-American, Asian American, Native American, or other. On the whole, this sample reflects the diverse mix of families living in the Northwest Maricopa Region.

¹² First Things First (2011). *Measuring Quality in Early Childhood Education*. Retrieved from http://www.azftf.gov/WhoWeAre/Board/Documents/Policy_Brief_Q2.pdf (April 2012)

Table 1. Parent Characteristics, Northwest Maricopa

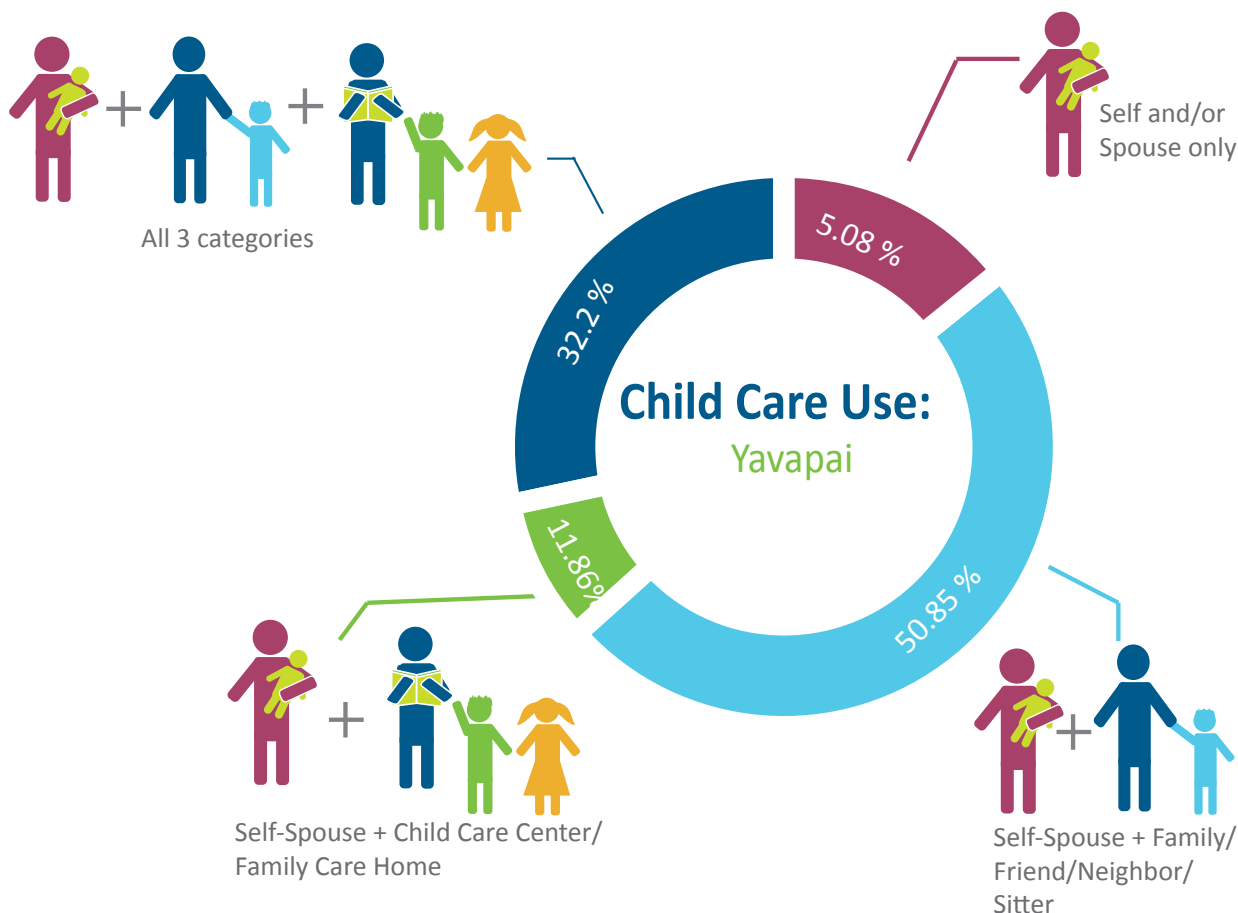
| | | PARENT CHARACTERISTICS NORTHWEST MARICOPA | | | Total number of parents interviewed: 104 | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|----------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| Parent's Age | | | | | | |
| | Range (Min/Max) | Mean | Median | Mode | | |
| | 19-56 | 31.80 | 31.00 | 27.00 | | |
| Parent's Education | | | | | | |
| | Less than High School Diploma | High School Diploma | Some College or Associate Degree | Bachelor's Degree | Postgraduate Degree | |
| | 8.7% | 13.5% | 44.2% | 24.0% | 9.6% | |
| Household Income | | | | | | |
| | Less than \$20,000 | \$20,001 to \$40,000 | \$40,001 to \$60,000 | \$60,001 or Above | | |
| | 21.6% | 27.5% | 19.6% | 31.4% | | |
| Parent's Ethnic Heritage | | | | | | |
| | Native American/ Alaskan Native | Asian American | Black/ African American | Hispanic/ Latino | White | Other or Mixed Ethnicity |
| | 1.0% | 2.9% | 7.7% | 30.8% | 51.0% | 6.7% |

IV. Study Findings Applicable to Northwest Maricopa

Types of Child Care Used by Parents Living in Northwest Maricopa

The figure below shows the percentage of families in the Northwest Maricopa sample using different combinations of child care arrangements.

Figure 1. Types of Child Care Used by Parents in Northwest Maricopa



Arizona Child Care Demand Study findings in the Northwest Maricopa Region were consistent with those in other regions and throughout the state. A summary of key findings is presented below; additional details can be found in the main body of the report.

Child Care Use and Age of Child

The age of a child is important when it comes to the type of child care parents select. Three important findings emerged from the study. First, parents with an older child (ages 3–5) were more likely to use center/home care than parents with a younger child. Second, with the increasing age of a child, a decreasing number of parents selected family, friend and neighbor (FFN) care as the only type of care other than care they provided. Finally, parents with two or more children in the home tended to “customize” the type of care selected to the age of the child — they used a patchwork of care, but the patchwork had different configurations depending on the ages of children in the home. For example, parents might choose a combination of self/spouse care and FFN care for their infant and a combination of self/spouse care and center/home care for their 4-year-old child.

Child Care Use and Household Income

Household income plays an important role in how parents think about child care choices. Families with higher household incomes tended to use all types of care, including center/home care, whereas those with lower household incomes were more likely to use FFN care in combination with self/spouse care.

Child Care Use and Parent Education

Study findings suggest a clear association between parents' educational backgrounds and the types of care they select. For example, parents who had not graduated from high school were *considerably* more likely to use only self/spouse care than parents with a college degree. And with higher educational attainment, parents were more likely to select a center/home-based provider in combination with other types of care.

Child Care Use and Family Heritage

Study findings suggest that for the most part, parents in all ethnic groupings used a combination of all three types of care, including self/spouse care, FFN care and center/home care. Thus, ethnicity itself does not appear to play a dominant role in determining the type of care parents select. Rather, a combination of factors such as parent income, parent education, age of child, and availability and affordability of care appear to play a more influential role.

Child Care Use and Household Composition

Household composition can have an influence on the types of child care parents select. Specifically, findings from this study suggest that the total number of adults in a household plays a larger role in the type of care parents select than does the number of children living in a household. For example, single-adult households were less likely to rely solely on self/spouse care and were more likely to use a combination of care types than households with two or more adults. Households with three or more adults were less likely to have a child enrolled in center/home care and more likely to use FFN care in combination with self/spouse care.

Parent Perceptions about Availability of Child Care Information

Getting good information about child care options and making an informed decision about available options is an important part of "child care demand." Parents turn to different information sources to help them think about child care options, such as the Internet, message boards at the local coffee shop, or their friends and family members. Of course, the perception of having "enough" information, or the "right" kinds of information to make an informed choice, is subjective and does not necessarily mean that information is not available. However, it can be helpful to get a sense of whether or not parents feel like they have enough information to make a good child care choice. As indicated in the table below, parents living in the Northwest Maricopa Region were approximately equal in reporting that NO, they did NOT have enough information, and YES, they DID have enough information (see Table 2).

Table 2. Regional Findings on Parent Perceptions about Availability of Child Care Information

| 9 REGIONS | % OF PARENTS REPORTING <u>NO</u> , THEY DON'T HAVE ENOUGH INFORMATION ABOUT LOCAL CHILD CARE OPTIONS | % OF PARENTS REPORTING <u>YES</u> , THEY DO HAVE ENOUGH INFORMATION ABOUT LOCAL CHILD CARE OPTIONS |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| Central Maricopa | 31.4% | 68.6% |
| Central Phoenix | 52.5% | 47.5% |
| Coconino | 35.3% | 64.7% |
| Navajo Apache | 56.9% | 43.1% |
| Northwest Maricopa | 48.5% | 51.5% |
| South Phoenix | 53.5% | 46.5% |
| South Pima | 53.4% | 46.6% |
| Southwest Maricopa | 53.8% | 46.2% |
| Yavapai | 39.0% | 61.1% |

Voices from Northwest Maricopa: Parent Experiences and Perceptions

From all the parent survey interviews, a smaller sample was selected. A number of important themes emerged from these interviews with parents living in the Northwest Maricopa Region. First, parents are very concerned about the **quality of care**, and they often think of quality in terms of what their particular child needs. For example, one parent, who reported that she “loves” the preschool her daughter attends, described the specific ways the program excels: *“...it’s friendly, and the teachers have a lot of interaction with the kids; a routine. The kids learn a lot, like their ABC’s. They do all this educational stuff. Their snacks and food are awesome. My daughter actually eats it! The staff...are caring; really, really caring.”* Another parent, listing what she liked about the half-day program her daughter attends, said, *“...the amenities, and the academics. It’s a small school, and it’s a small class size...it’s not just a daycare—academics are brought in. It’s a foundation for kindergarten.”*

Many parents in the Northwest Maricopa Region are also concerned about **accessibility to child care**. For some parents, accessibility may be compromised by not having information about available options; for others, it might mean not having a quality provider close to home or not having the financial resources to pay for a preferred type of care. For example, one parent reported that she has had to change providers several times because her son has behavioral problems and *“it’s been hard to find reliable care”*. Another parent said that she is not religious, and has had trouble finding affordable child care in her area that does not have a religious emphasis. She said she has been trying to get her son into a free, public preschool program but *“they have a huge waiting list.”* On the other hand, some parents are not concerned about accessibility because, as one father stated, *“I don’t want to put my children in child care because I prefer to have my spouse stay home.”*

Affordability of care is another important matter for many parents living in the Northwest Maricopa Region. This comment typifies concerns expressed by many parents: *“It’s pricy—the kind of care I want is out of reach for me.”* Although some parents receive financial assistance — for example, a DES subsidy or a scholarship, or the child is in Head Start — it is clear that without this assistance, they could not afford to pay for care.

V. Supporting Parents in Northwest Maricopa

Parents living in the Northwest Maricopa Region are looking for quality early care and education opportunities for their children. Parents see quality as important, no matter if the provider is a family member, friend or neighbor, a center-based provider, or another type of provider. Parents prefer care that is stable and reliable, care that meets the developmental and learning needs of their child, and care that provides a setting where children are happy and can thrive. In conducting an analysis of survey interviews with a smaller sample of parents living in the Northwest Maricopa Region, a number of core themes emerged; based on these emergent themes, types of supports that could potentially benefit families living in this region include the following:

- Programs that strengthen the quality of and ongoing improvements in all types of early care and early education settings.
- Child care scholarships and other financial assistance to enable parents to access a high-quality early care and education experience for their children.
- Quality drop-in child care services to give the children of stay-at-home parents – or those whose parents may be busy seeking employment – opportunities to interact and learn with other children.
- Educational programs for parents who opt for full time parent-provided care, to include provision of information and guidance on best practices to support learning and development in young children within home settings.

YAVAPAI REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

Introduction

This Regional Snapshot is designed to look more closely at the what, how, when and why of child care use in the Yavapai Region. The *Arizona Child Care Demand Study* focused on child care choices and preferences of parents with at least one child who had not yet started kindergarten. Some overall questions guiding the study included:

1. What types of child care do Arizona's parents use?
2. How do they make child care choices?
3. What do they think of their child care options?

In thinking about the demand for child care, it is also important to consider the context for families' choices, so the Snapshot begins with information about regional conditions, which is drawn from sources outside the study. Then the Snapshot shares applicable study findings and highlights the voices and experiences of families as they attempt to stitch together a patchwork of care for their young children.

I. Regional Conditions

Demographics

The Yavapai Region covers most of Yavapai County, and includes all of Sedona. The Yavapai Region also includes the tribal lands of the Yavapai-Apache Nation Indian Tribe. The majority of the population in the region lives in either the Prescott-Prescott Valley area or the Verde Valley-Sedona area.

According to the 2010 US Census, the Yavapai Region had a population of 214,253, of whom 12,703 were children under the age of 6. In the last decade, the population of young children in the region has grown at about the same rate as the state as a whole. In 2010, there were 2,191 more young children in Yavapai County than 2000. Much of that growth was in the towns of Prescott Valley and Chino Valley.

The majority of children under 6 in the region (82 percent) live with both parents, and about 22 percent live in a single-female headed household. Across the region, 12 percent of children were living in their grandparents' household.¹³

Economics

According to the American Community Survey (ACS), the percentage of people living in poverty in Yavapai County (14 percent) was almost the same as the state as a whole (15 percent), with about one-quarter of the children under 6 living in poverty.

¹³ First Things First. (2012). *Regional Needs and Assets Report, Yavapai*. State of Arizona: Norton School, University of Arizona.

Healthy communities also require an adequate supply of jobs that generate enough income to pay for basic needs. The average unemployment rate in Yavapai County in 2011 was 9.9 percent, slightly higher than the statewide average of 9.2 percent. In 2007, prior to the recession, unemployment in the county as well as the state was a little under 4 percent. In 2009 and 2010, the unemployment rate in the county jumped to about 10 percent (about half a percentage point less than the Arizona average). The Yavapai County communities with the highest estimated unemployment rates for 2011 were Ash Fork (29 percent), Peebles Valley (20 percent), Cordes Lakes (19 percent), and Mayer (18 percent). At the opposite end of the scale, the lowest 2011 unemployment rates were in Paulden (7 percent), Dewey-Humboldt (7 percent), and the Williamson Valley area (8 percent).¹⁴

Child Care Capacity

In the Yavapai Region, there are 86 Department of Health Services (DHS) licensed child care centers, according to the December 2011 Arizona Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) report. Additionally, there are 9 DHS licensed group homes, 8 Department of Economic Security (DES) certified homes, and 1 unregulated home that are registered with CCR&R. There may be additional unregulated home providers in the region that are not registered with CCR&R; therefore, they are not included in these figures. The upcoming *Child Care Capacity Study* — to be sponsored by First Things First — will take a deeper look at both regulated and unregulated care providers in Yavapai other Arizona regions and will contribute to the pool of knowledge currently existing on child care capacity and related issues.

Quality First

Quality First, a First Things First program, is a voluntary, statewide quality improvement and rating system for providers of center-based or home-based early care and education. Its goal is to improve the quality of early learning programs and help parents identify quality care settings for their children. Quality First helps providers to assess their initial level of quality, identify areas for improvement, and then implement changes that will increase the quality of the early learning program at that site.

Quality First is based on research-proven areas of quality, including: low student/teacher ratios and small group sizes; well-qualified teachers who know how to engage young learners; warm, responsive relationships between the children and their adult caregivers; language-rich learning environments; and, a developmentally appropriate curriculum and learning materials. The extent to which early care and education settings meet criteria in these areas determines their Quality First rating, signified by one to five stars. One star indicates the provider demonstrates a commitment to examine practices and improve the quality of care beyond regulatory requirements. Five stars indicate the provider offers lower ratios and group sizes, higher staff qualifications, a curriculum aligned with state standards, and nurturing relationships between adults and children.¹⁵

As of September 2012, there were 27 providers from the Yavapai Region enrolled in the Quality First program. This represents 26 percent of the licensed or certified child care providers in the region. The number of providers that can participate in Quality First is dependent upon funding available in the region.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ First Things First (2011). *Measuring Quality in Early Childhood Education*. Retrieved from http://www.azftf.gov/WhoWeAre/Board/Documents/Policy_Brief_Q2.pdf (April 2012)

II. Child Care Demand Study: Parent Recruitment

To be included in the *Arizona Child Care Demand Study*, participants had to be the parent or primary caretaker of at least one child age 0–5. Great care was taken to ensure that respondents reflected the demographic makeup of their respective regions. To ensure a diverse research sample, a systematic recruitment approach was utilized that relied on ZIP code weighting, a broad selection of recruitment sites and the use of a diverse group of interviewers. Parents were recruited from more than 28 sites in the Yavapai Region, including the Cottonwood Library, Sedona Library, Prescott Library, Family Enrichment Center—Prescott, WIC—Chino Valley, Camp Verde Library, The Spot Children’s Museum—Prescott, and many other community locations and venues. Only parents living in the Yavapai Region were included in analyses specific to this region.

III. Characteristics of Yavapai Parents Participating in the Child Care Demand Study

A total of 59 parents living in the Yavapai Region were recruited to participate in the *Arizona Child Care Demand Study*. The average age of parent participants was 32. Approximately two thirds of the sample reported having some college education or less, and approximately one third reported having obtained at least a bachelor’s degree or higher. A little over two thirds of the sample reported having an annual household income of less than \$60,000 or less, and a little less than one third reported a household income of more than \$60,000. Almost 80 percent of the sample self-identified as white, 13 percent as Hispanic/Latino, and the remaining families reported some other ethnic background. On the whole, this sample reflects the diverse mix of families living in the Yavapai Region.

Table 1. Parent Characteristics, Yavapai

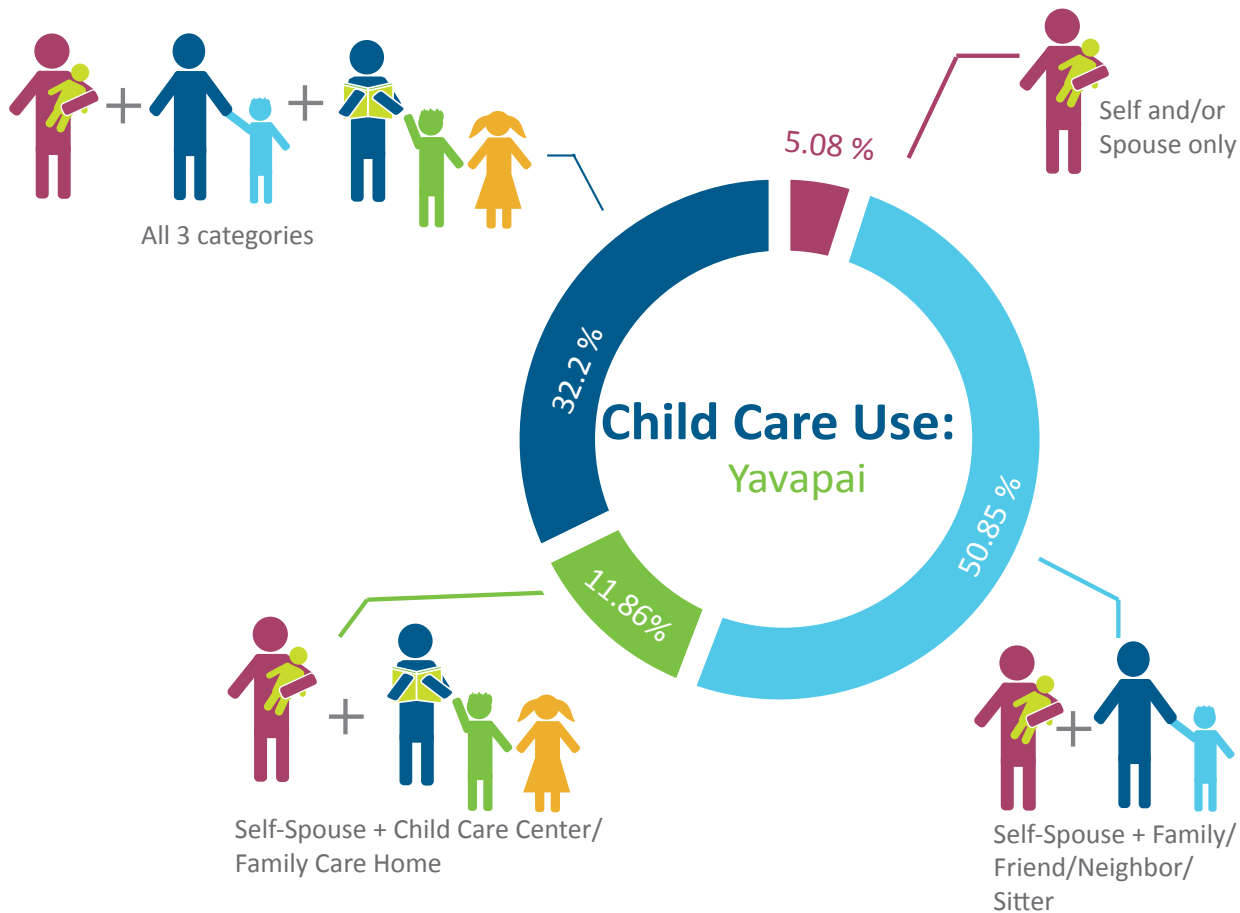
| | | PARENT CHARACTERISTICS YAVAPAI | | | Total number of parents interviewed: 59 | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|---|--------------------------|
| Parent's Age | | | | | | |
| | Range (Min/Max) | Mean | Median | Mode | | |
| | 18-60 | 32.86 | 32.50 | 26 | | |
| Parent's Education | | | | | | |
| | Less than High School Diploma | High School Diploma | Some College or Associate Degree | Bachelor's Degree | Postgraduate Degree | |
| | 8.5% | 15.3% | 40.7% | 27.1% | 8.5% | |
| Household Income | | | | | | |
| | Less than \$20,000 | \$20,001 to \$40,000 | \$40,001 to \$60,000 | \$60,001 or Above | | |
| | 26.3% | 22.8% | 19.3% | 31.6% | | |
| Parent's Ethnic Heritage | | | | | | |
| | Native American/Alaskan Native | Asian American | Black/African American | Hispanic/Latino | White | Other or Mixed Ethnicity |
| | 0.0% | 1.7% | 0.0% | 13.6% | 79.7% | 5.1% |

IV. Study Findings Applicable to Yavapai

Types of Child Care Used by Parents Living in Yavapai

The figure below shows the percentage of families in the Yavapai sample using different combinations of child care arrangements.

Figure 1. Types of Child Care Used by Parents in Yavapai



Arizona Child Care Demand Study findings in the Yavapai Region were consistent with those in other regions and throughout the state. A summary of key findings is presented below; additional details can be found in the main body of the report.

Child Care Use and Age of Child

The age of a child is important when it comes to the type of child care parents select. Three important findings emerged from the study. First, parents with an older child (ages 3–5) were more likely to use center/home care than parents with a younger child. Second, with the increasing age of a child, a decreasing number of parents selected family, friend and neighbor (FFN) care as the only type of care other than care they provided. Finally, parents with two or more children in the home tended to “customize” the type of care selected to the age of the child — they used a patchwork of care, but the patchwork had different configurations depending on the ages of children in the home. For example, parents might choose a combination of self/spouse care and FFN care for their infant and a combination of self/spouse care and center/home care for their 4-year-old child.

Child Care Use and Household Income

Household income plays an important role in how parents think about child care choices. Families with higher household incomes tended to use all types of care, including center/home care, whereas those with lower household incomes were more likely to use FFN care in combination with self/spouse care.

Child Care Use and Parent Education

Study findings suggest a clear association between parents' educational backgrounds and the types of care they select. For example, parents who had not graduated from high school were *considerably* more likely to use only self/spouse care than parents with a college degree. And with higher educational attainment, parents were more likely to select a center/home-based provider in combination with other types of care.

Child Care Use and Family Heritage

Study findings suggest that for the most part, parents in all ethnic groupings used a combination of all three types of care, including self/spouse care, FFN care and center/home care. Thus, ethnicity itself does not appear to play a dominant role in determining the type of care parents select. Rather, a combination of factors such as parent income, parent education, age of child, and availability and affordability of care appear to play a more influential role.

Child Care Use and Household Composition

Household composition can have an influence on the types of child care parents select. Specifically, findings from this study suggest that the total number of adults in a household plays a larger role in the type of care parents select than does the number of children living in a household. For example, single-adult households were less likely to rely solely on self/spouse care and were more likely to use a combination of care types than households with two or more adults. Households with three or more adults were less likely to have a child enrolled in center/home care and more likely to use FFN care in combination with self/spouse care.

Parent Perceptions about Availability of Child Care Information

Getting good information about child care options and making an informed decision about available options is an important part of "child care demand." Parents turn to different information sources to help them think about child care options, such as the Internet, message boards at the local coffee shop, or their friends and family members. Of course, the perception of having "enough" information, or the "right" kinds of information to make an informed choice, is subjective and does not necessarily mean that information is not available. However, it can be helpful to get a sense of whether or not parents feel like they have enough information to make a good child care choice. As indicated in the table below, approximately 60 percent of parents from the Yavapai sample reported YES, they DID have enough information about child care, and approximately 40 percent reported NO, they did NOT have enough information (see Table 2).

Table 2. Regional Findings on Parent Perceptions about Availability of Child Care Information

| 9 REGIONS | % OF PARENTS REPORTING <u>NO</u> , THEY DON'T HAVE ENOUGH INFORMATION ABOUT LOCAL CHILD CARE OPTIONS | % OF PARENTS REPORTING <u>YES</u> , THEY DO HAVE ENOUGH INFORMATION ABOUT LOCAL CHILD CARE OPTIONS |
|--------------------|--|---|
| Central Maricopa | 31.4% | 68.6% |
| Central Phoenix | 52.5% | 47.5% |
| Coconino | 35.3% | 64.7% |
| Navajo Apache | 56.9% | 43.1% |
| Northwest Maricopa | 48.5% | 51.5% |
| South Phoenix | 53.5% | 46.5% |
| South Pima | 53.4% | 46.6% |
| Southwest Maricopa | 53.8% | 46.2% |
| Yavapai | 39.0% | 61.1% |

Voices from Yavapai: Parent Experiences and Perceptions

From all the parent survey interviews, a smaller sample was selected. A number of important themes emerged from these interviews with parents living in the Yavapai Region. First, parents are very concerned about the **quality of care**, and they often think of quality in terms of the needs of their particular family and child or children. For example, one mother of a two-year old boy described the family's weekly routine: Mom works part time and dad fluctuates between full time and part time work. Because work schedules vary, their son spends part of the week with mom and dad, part of the week with grandma, and part of the week in a DES certified group home. Mom explained what she likes about this arrangement: *"I like that he's with family, particularly my mom. That works out really well because of the intergenerational aspect of it, and that children learn more when they are with grandparents. He also spends time with his dad, so he gets male interaction. The thing I like about child care [in the DES certified home] is that he's able to interact with other children his age."* Another parent talked about what she likes about the Head Start program her children attend: *"It's close to my house, and close to where I work. It's the best place for them...because it's a child care and a school. They get cared for and they're in school at the same time...that's what I love about this center especially."*

Sometimes parents in the Yavapai Region struggle to put into words what they are looking for, but they nevertheless know how to recognize a quality child care provider. For example, when asked to describe what she looks for in child care, one mother reported: *"I look for accreditation. I look for results in my child's progress. I look for communication and a schedule of activities – the curriculum. I look for – I guess it's just, I don't know how to put it. I listen to my instincts and I look for ambience, a feeling the place is pleasant and loving toward children."*

Many parents in the Yavapai Region are also concerned about **accessibility to child care**. For some parents, accessibility may be compromised by not having information about available options; for others, it might mean not having a quality provider close to home or not having the financial resources to pay for a preferred type of care. For example, one mother struggled to find affordable child care for her two children. She finally was able to get her children into Head Start – but in two separate locations.

Although it is inconvenient to have the children in two different centers, she is grateful her children have a place to go while she attends college. Another parent stated that *“my biggest gripe with child care [in the region] is the lack of child care options for babies and children aged 1-2. Very few centers will provide that kind of care and just the quality of care is not there. It is really disappointing there is nothing for children of this age.”*

Affordability of care is another important matter for many parents living in the Yavapai Region. This comment typifies concerns expressed by many parents: *“Child care is really expensive! I can’t get what I want if it costs too much.”* Another mother explained how she weighs her choices: *“If I can’t afford it, I can’t afford it. I have to weigh out the costs. If it’s not in my budget and I can’t afford it, then I will just have to stay home and not continue my education and work will have to wait. I’ll have to be a stay-at-home mom. I have to weigh out the options.”* Although some parents receive financial assistance — for example, a DES subsidy or a scholarship, or the child is in Head Start — it is clear that without this assistance they could not afford to pay for care.

V. Supporting Parents in Yavapai

Parents living in the Yavapai Region are looking for quality early care and education opportunities for their children. Parents see quality as important, no matter if the provider is a family member, friend or neighbor, a center-based provider, or another type of provider. Parents prefer care that is stable and reliable, care that meets the developmental and learning needs of their child, and care that provides a setting where children are happy and can thrive. In conducting an analysis of survey interviews with a smaller sample of parents living in the Yavapai Region, a number of core themes emerged; based on these emergent themes, types of supports that could potentially benefit families living in this region include the following:

- Programs that strengthen the quality of and ongoing improvements in all types of early care and early education settings.
- Child care scholarships and other financial assistance to enable parents to access a high-quality early care and education experience for their children.
- Quality drop-in child care services to give the children of stay-at-home parents – or those whose parents may be busy seeking employment – opportunities to interact and learn with other children.
- Educational programs for parents who opt for full time parent-provided care, to include provision of information and guidance on best practices to support learning and development in young children within home settings.
- Greater availability of high quality child care providers that serve infants and toddlers.

SOUTH PIMA REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

Introduction

This Regional Snapshot is designed to look more closely at the what, how, when and why of child care use in the South Pima Region. The *Arizona Child Care Demand Study* focused on child care choices and preferences of parents with at least one child who had not yet started kindergarten. Some overall questions guiding the study included:

1. What types of child care do Arizona's parents use?
2. How do they make child care choices?
3. What do they think of their child care options?

In thinking about the demand for child care, it is also important to consider the context for families' choices, so the Snapshot begins with information about regional conditions, which is drawn from sources outside the study. Then the Snapshot shares applicable study findings and highlights the voices and experiences of families as they attempt to stitch together a patchwork of care for their young children.

I. Regional Conditions

Demographics

The First Things First South Pima Region has a diverse geography, including many small rural towns and remote communities. There are also a few highly urban and suburban areas to the south and east of Tucson. It is an expansive region that covers more than 5,632 square miles and spans the far eastern, western and southern boundaries of Pima County. The southern boundary borders Mexico at Lukeville in the far western part of the region and at Sasabe, southwest of Tucson. Its northern boundary reaches up to Speedway Boulevard on the far east of Tucson. There are 17 ZIP codes in the South Pima Region representing 20 communities or geographical areas.

The South Pima Region experienced a 40 percent population increase between 2000 and 2010, with a 26 percent increase in the number of families with children ages 0-5. The region is home to approximately 267,603 people, including 7,428 families with children under the age of 6. The region's population growth has out-paced the growth of both the state and the county in the last decade. Since 2000, the population of children ages 0-5 grew nearly 34 percent with 23,149 young children in 2010.¹⁶

Economics

Economically, the percentage of families with children ages 0-5 living below the poverty level in the South Pima Region is greater (28 percent) than the percentage of households with children living below the poverty level in Pima County (23 percent) and Arizona (24 percent).

¹⁶ First Things First. (2012). *Regional Needs and Assets Report, South Pima*. State of Arizona: Donelson Consulting.

Healthy communities also require an adequate supply of jobs that generate enough income to pay for basic needs. The unemployment rate for Pima County rose sharply from 4.7 percent in January of 2008 to 9.2 percent in January 2011. As of January 2011, the following South Pima Region communities had the highest estimated unemployment rates: Ajo (16.3 percent); Three Points (14.8 percent); and, Summit View (11.2 percent).¹⁷

Child Care Capacity

In the South Pima Region, there are 50 Department of Health Services (DHS) licensed child care centers, according to the December 2011 Arizona Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) report. Additionally, there are 40 DHS licensed group homes, 163 Department of Economic Security (DES) certified homes, and 22 unregulated homes that are registered with CCR&R. There may be many more unregulated home providers in the region that are not registered with CCR&R; therefore, they are not included in these figures. The upcoming *Child Care Capacity Study* — to be sponsored by First Things First — will take a deeper look at both regulated and unregulated care providers in South Pima other Arizona regions and will contribute to the pool of knowledge currently existing on child care capacity and related issues.

Quality First

Quality First, a First Things First program, is a voluntary, statewide quality improvement and rating system for providers of center-based or home-based early care and education. Its goal is to improve the quality of early learning programs and help parents identify quality care settings for their children. Quality First helps providers to assess their initial level of quality, identify areas for improvement, and then implement changes that will increase the quality of the early learning program at that site. Quality First is based on research-proven areas of quality, including: low student/teacher ratios and small group sizes; well-qualified teachers who know how to engage young learners; warm, responsive relationships between the children and their adult caregivers; language-rich learning environments; and, a developmentally appropriate curriculum and learning materials. The extent to which early care and education settings meet criteria in these areas determines their Quality First rating, signified by one to five stars. One star indicates the provider demonstrates a commitment to examine practices and improve the quality of care beyond regulatory requirements. Five stars indicate the provider offers lower ratios and group sizes, higher staff qualifications, a curriculum aligned with state standards, and nurturing relationships between adults and children.¹⁸

As of September 2012, there were 66 providers from the South Pima Region enrolled in the Quality First program. This represents 26 percent of the licensed or certified child care providers in the region. The number of providers that can participate in Quality First is dependent upon funding available in the region.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ First Things First (2011). *Measuring Quality in Early Childhood Education*. Retrieved from http://www.azftf.gov/WhoWeAre/Board/Documents/Policy_Brief_Q2.pdf (April 2012)

II. Child Care Demand Study: Parent Recruitment

To be included in the *Arizona Child Care Demand Study*, participants had to be the parent or primary caretaker of at least one child age 0–5. Great care was taken to ensure that respondents reflected the demographic makeup of their respective regions. To ensure a diverse research sample, a systematic recruitment approach was utilized that relied on ZIP code weighting, a broad selection of recruitment sites and the use of a diverse group of interviewers. Parents were recruited from more than 50 sites in South Pima, including the Miller Library, Purple Heart Park, Santa Monica Catholic Church, grocery stores (Wal-Mart---Green Valley & Tucson Mall; Fry’s---Houghton & Sahuarita), Rancho Sahuarita Club House, Springs Gymnastics, Old Vail Station, Mission Manor Park, El Pueblo Health Center, and other community locations and venues. Only parents living in the South Pima Region were included in analyses specific to this region.

III. Characteristics of South Pima Parents Participating in the Child Care Demand Study

A total of 113 parents living in the South Pima Region were recruited to participate in the *Arizona Child Care Demand Study*. The average age of parent participants was 32. Approximately two thirds of the sample reported having some college education or less with approximately one third reporting they had obtained a bachelor’s degree or higher. Approximately two thirds of the sample reported having an annual household income of less than \$60,000, with approximately one third reporting an income greater than \$60,000. Approximately 40 percent of the sample identified as white, a little more than 40 percent identified as Hispanic/Latino, and the remaining 20 percent identifying as black or African American, Asian American, Native American, or having a mixed heritage. On the whole, this sample reflects the diverse mix of families living in the South Pima Region.

Table 1. Parent Characteristics, South Pima

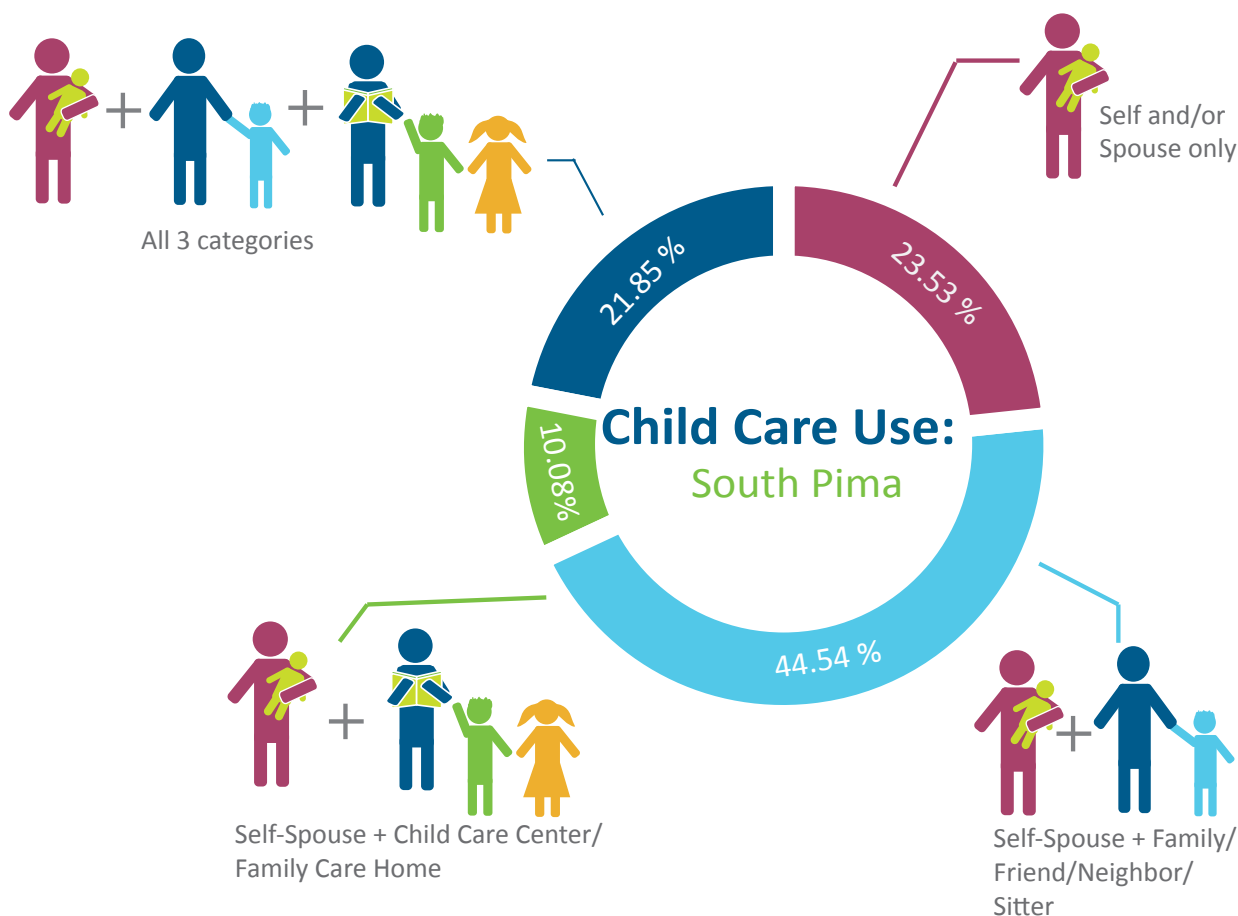
| | | PARENT CHARACTERISTICS SOUTH PIMA | | | Total number of parents interviewed: 113 | |
|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|---|----------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| Parent's Age | | | | | | |
| | Range (Min/Max) | Mean | Median | Mode | | |
| | 19-58 | 32.31 | 32.00 | 28.00 | | |
| Parent's Education | | | | | | |
| | Less than High School Diploma | High School Diploma | Some College or Associate Degree | Bachelor's Degree | Postgraduate Degree | |
| | 5.0% | 26.1% | 34.5% | 21.8% | 12.6% | |
| Household Income | | | | | | |
| | Less than \$20,000 | \$20,001 to \$40,000 | \$40,001 to \$60,000 | \$60,001 or Above | | |
| | 17.9% | 26.5% | 21.4% | 34.2% | | |
| Parent's Ethnic Heritage | | | | | | |
| | Native American/ Alaskan Native | Asian American | Black/ African American | Hispanic/ Latino | White | Other or Mixed Ethnicity |
| | 1.7% | 3.4% | 5.0% | 44.5% | 40.3% | 5.0% |

IV. Study Findings Applicable to the South Pima Region

Types of Child Care Used by Parents Living in South Pima

The figure below shows the percentage of families in the South Pima sample using different combinations of child care arrangements.

Figure 1. Types of Child Care Used by Parents in South Pima



Arizona Child Care Demand Study findings in the South Pima Region were consistent with those in other regions and throughout the state. A summary of key findings is presented below; additional details can be found in the main body of the report.

Child Care Use and Age of Child

The age of a child is important when it comes to the type of child care parents select. Three important findings emerged from the study. First, parents with an older child (ages 3–5) were more likely to use center/home care than parents with a younger child. Second, with the increasing age of a child, a decreasing number of parents selected family, friend and neighbor (FFN) care as the only type of care other than care they provided. Finally, parents with two or more children in the home tended to “customize” the type of care selected to the age of the child — they used a patchwork of care, but the patchwork had different configurations depending on the ages of children in the home. For example, parents might choose a combination of self/spouse care and FFN care for their infant and a combination of self/spouse care and center/home care for their 4-year-old child.

Child Care Use and Household Income

Household income plays an important role in how parents think about child care choices. Families with higher household incomes tended to use all types of care, including center/home care, whereas those with lower household incomes were more likely to use FFN care in combination with self/spouse care.

Child Care Use and Parent Education

Study findings suggest a clear association between parents' educational backgrounds and the types of care they select. For example, parents who had not graduated from high school were *considerably* more likely to use only self/spouse care than parents with a college degree. And with higher educational attainment, parents were more likely to select a center/home-based provider in combination with other types of care.

Child Care Use and Family Heritage

Study findings suggest that for the most part, parents in all ethnic groupings used a combination of all three types of care, including self/spouse care, FFN care and center/home care. Thus, ethnicity itself does not appear to play a dominant role in determining the type of care parents select. Rather, a combination of factors such as parent income, parent education, age of child, and availability and affordability of care appear to play a more influential role.

Child Care Use and Household Composition

Household composition can have an influence on the types of child care parents select. Specifically, findings from this study suggest that the total number of adults in a household plays a larger role in the type of care parents select than does the number of children living in a household. For example, single-adult households were less likely to rely solely on self/spouse care and were more likely to use a combination of care types than households with two or more adults. Households with three or more adults were less likely to have a child enrolled in center/home care and more likely to use FFN care in combination with self/spouse care.

Parent Perceptions about Availability of Child Care Information

Getting good information about child care options and making an informed decision about available options is an important part of "child care demand." Parents turn to different information sources to help them think about child care options, such as the Internet, message boards at the local coffee shop, or their friends and family members. Of course, the perception of having "enough" information, or the "right" kinds of information to make an informed choice, is subjective and does not necessarily mean that information is not available. However, it can be helpful to get a sense of whether or not parents feel like they have enough information to make a good child care choice. As indicated in the table below, approximately 47 percent of parents from the South Pima sample reported YES, they DID have enough information about child care, and approximately 53 percent reported NO, they did NOT have enough information (see Table 2).

Table 2. Regional Findings on Parent Perceptions about Availability of Child Care Information

| 9 REGIONS | % OF PARENTS REPORTING <u>NO</u> , THEY DON'T HAVE ENOUGH INFORMATION ABOUT LOCAL CHILD CARE OPTIONS | % OF PARENTS REPORTING <u>YES</u> , THEY DO HAVE ENOUGH INFORMATION ABOUT LOCAL CHILD CARE OPTIONS |
|--------------------|--|---|
| Central Maricopa | 31.4% | 68.6% |
| Central Phoenix | 52.5% | 47.5% |
| Coconino | 35.3% | 64.7% |
| Navajo Apache | 56.9% | 43.1% |
| Northwest Maricopa | 48.5% | 51.5% |
| South Phoenix | 53.5% | 46.5% |
| South Pima | 53.4% | 46.6% |
| Southwest Maricopa | 53.8% | 46.2% |
| Yavapai | 39.0% | 61.0% |

Voices from South Pima: Parent Experiences and Perceptions

From all the parent survey interviews, a smaller sample was selected. A number of important themes emerged from these interviews with parents living in the South Pima Region. First, parents are very concerned about the **quality of care**, and they often think of quality in terms of what their particular child needs. For example, one mother of a two year old felt like quality is evidenced by how well a provider works with children of varying ages and developmental stages, and listens to the views of parents.

She said that her provider is open to talking about such things as toileting and snacks. *“She [the provider] is respectful of my opinions, like using diapers and potty training. I told her I thought my daughter was ready, and she said, oh, you need to bring this...and we’ll work with her.”* Another parent, who is struggling to obtain child care, was concerned not only about her own ability to find and keep a job, but also with the educational opportunities quality care could potentially provide for her children. *“I want my kids to have a good education, but since I have a low income, I can’t afford that.”* Summing up her views on basic quality requirements, she said, *“I just want my kids to be taken care of. I want to know they’re in safe hands, and I don’t have to worry while I’m at work.”* Another mother reported concerns about her current arrangements: *“My children aren’t learning anything. They pretty much just get fed. That’s it. I don’t think they’re getting the attention that they need.”*

Many parents in the South Pima Region are also concerned about **accessibility to child care**. For some parents, accessibility may be compromised by not having information about available options; for others, it might mean not having a quality provider close to home or not having the financial resources to pay for a preferred type of care. For example, one mother talked about the difficulty of getting her children to child care. Since there are no DES approved providers in her ZIP code, she must travel a long distance to get to the center where her children currently receive care: *“I have to be there at 10:30 and as far as I live, I have to get up really, really early...so taking three buses there is difficult.”* Other parents mentioned trouble with locating providers that offer days and hours of operation consistent with their

schedule or their preferences. One mother reported that she has a job where she must work evenings and has had trouble finding reliable care so she can work. Another mother reported that she was looking a part-time preschool program for her son, but *“they don’t do part time...they said they want people to do full time.”*

Affordability of care is another important matter for many parents living in the South Pima Region. Although some parents receive financial assistance — for example, a DES subsidy or a scholarship, or the child is in Head Start — it is clear that without this assistance they could not afford to pay for care. Other parents simply do not consider care options that require an out-of-pocket payment. For example, one mother, who has relied on a series of family members and friends to care for her children while she works, confided that *“I never have looked for a day care center or any kind of place like that for them to go to, because I know I can’t afford it. I would work and never see my kids and give them [the child care provider] all my money...in general, it is very expensive for child care and I’m very lucky right now to have such a wonderful friend to help me.”*

V. Supporting Parents in the South Pima Region

To summarize, parents living in the South Pima Region are looking for quality early care and education opportunities for their children. Parents see quality as important, no matter if the provider is a family, friend or neighbor, a center-based provider, or another type of provider. Parents prefer care that is stable and reliable, care that meets the developmental and learning needs of their child, and care that provides a setting where children are happy and can thrive. In conducting an analysis of survey interviews with a smaller sample of parents living in the South Pima Region, a number of core themes emerged; based on these emergent themes, types of supports that could potentially benefit families living in this region include the following:

- Programs that strengthen the quality of and ongoing improvements in all types of early care and early education settings.
- Child care scholarships and other financial assistance to enable parents to access a high-quality early care and education experience for their children.
- Quality drop-in child care services to give the children of stay-at-home parents – or those whose parents may be busy seeking employment – opportunities to interact and learn with other children.
- Educational programs for parents who opt for full time parent-provided care, to include provision of information and guidance on best practices to support learning and development in infants and young children within home settings.
- Greater availability of affordable, high quality child care programs---for all families---but especially for families living in rural areas.

CENTRAL PHOENIX REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

Introduction

This Regional Snapshot is designed to look more closely at the what, how, when and why of child care use in the Central Phoenix Region. The *Arizona Child Care Demand Study* focused on child care choices and preferences of parents with at least one child who had not yet started kindergarten. Some overall questions guiding the study included:

1. What types of child care do Arizona's parents use?
2. How do they make child care choices?
3. What do they think of their child care options?

In thinking about the demand for child care, it is also important to consider the context for families' choices, so the Snapshot begins with information about regional conditions, which is drawn from sources outside the study. Then the Snapshot shares applicable study findings and highlights the voices and experiences of families as they attempt to stitch together a patchwork of care for their young children.

I. Regional Conditions

Demographics

The City of Phoenix, located in Maricopa County, covers more than 517 square miles and has a population of nearly 1.5 million, ranking it the sixth largest city in the country and the largest capital city in terms of population. The FTF Board established three regions in the City of Phoenix: North, Central and South. The Central Phoenix Region's boundaries reach as far north as Glendale Avenue. In the west, they extend to 43rd Avenue. The eastern boundary of the region reaches near 64th Street. The south side of the region spans all the way to Broadway Road. The Central Phoenix Region includes neighborhoods as diverse as Arcadia, the North Central Corridor, the State Capitol, and the East Van Buren Street Corridor.

The Central Phoenix Region has experienced a 12 percent decrease in the number of young children ages 0-5 living in the region since 2000; from 38,531 in 2000 to 33,891 in 2010. The region is home to 69,046 families; 18,860 (27 percent) with one or more children under the age of 6. One unique regional condition is that more than 40 percent of young children under the age of 6 live in single parent homes compared to about 30 percent at the national, state, and county levels.¹⁹

¹⁹ First Things First. (2012). *Regional Needs and Assets Report, Central Phoenix*. State of Arizona: MGT of America.

Economics

The percentage of families living below the poverty level in the Central Phoenix Region is more than twice the percentage of households with children living below the poverty level in Maricopa County, Arizona and the nation. Not surprisingly, the data also show that single parent families make up a larger percentage of households living in poverty than do two parent households.

The percentage of families with children in Central Phoenix living below the poverty level rose 8.6 percent between 2005 and 2010, mirroring the trend in the county, state and nation.

Healthy communities also require an adequate supply of jobs that generate enough income to pay for basic needs. In 2011, the unemployment rate for Maricopa County was around 8 percent, comparable to the state's rate of 8.3 percent. On a positive note, in looking more specifically at Bureau of Labor Statistics unemployment rates for the Phoenix-Mesa-Glendale statistical areas, there has been a decrease in the unemployment rate over the past three years: 2010, 9.8 percent; 2011, 8.6 percent; and, 2012 7.3 percent.²⁰

Child Care Central Phoenix:

Child Care Capacity

In the Central Phoenix Region, there are 157 Department of Health Services (DHS) licensed child care centers, according to the December 2011 Arizona Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) report. Additionally, there are 7 DHS licensed group homes, 23 Department of Economic Security (DES) certified homes, and 15 unregulated homes that are registered with CCR&R. There may be many more unregulated home providers in the region that are not registered with CCR&R; therefore, they are not included in these figures. The upcoming *Child Care Capacity Study* — to be sponsored by First Things First — will take a deeper look at both regulated and unregulated care providers in Central Phoenix and other Arizona regions and will contribute to the pool of knowledge currently existing on child care capacity and related issues.

Quality First

Quality First, a First Things First program, is a voluntary, statewide quality improvement and rating system for providers of center-based or home-based early care and education. Its goal is to improve the quality of early learning programs and help parents identify quality care settings for their children. Quality First helps providers to assess their initial level of quality, identify areas for improvement, and then implement changes that will increase the quality of the early learning program at that site.

Quality First is based on research-proven areas of quality, including: low student/teacher ratios and small group sizes; well-qualified teachers who know how to engage young learners; warm, responsive relationships between the children and their adult caregivers; language-rich learning environments; and, a developmentally appropriate curriculum and learning materials. The extent to which early care and

²⁰ Ibid.

education settings meet criteria in these areas determines their Quality First rating, signified by one to five stars. One star indicates the provider demonstrates a commitment to examine practices and improve the quality of care beyond regulatory requirements. Five stars indicate the provider offers lower ratios and group sizes, higher staff qualifications, a curriculum aligned with state standards, and nurturing relationships between adults and children.²¹

As of September 2012, there were 47 providers from the Central Phoenix Region enrolled in the Quality First program. This represents 25 percent of the licensed or certified child care providers in the region. The number of providers that can participate in Quality First is dependent upon funding available in the region.

II. Child Care Demand Study: Parent Recruitment

To be included in the *Arizona Child Care Demand Study*, participants had to be the parent or primary caretaker of at least one child age 0–5. Great care was taken to ensure that respondents reflected the demographic makeup of their respective regions. To ensure a diverse research sample, a systematic recruitment approach was utilized that relied on ZIP code weighting, a broad selection of recruitment sites and the use of a diverse group of interviewers. Parents were recruited from more than 80 sites in Central Phoenix, including Basha’s Grocery Store, the Arizona Science Center, the Children’s Museum of Phoenix, Eastlake Park Community Center, Phoenix Day School for the Deaf, Southwest Autism Research and Resource Center, Lincoln YMCA, and many other community locations and venues. Only parents living in the Central Phoenix Region were included in analyses specific to this region.

III. Characteristics of Central Phoenix Parents Participating in the Child Care Demand Study

A total of 141 parents living in the Central Phoenix Region were recruited to participate in the *Arizona Child Care Demand Study*. The average age of parent participants was 33. Approximately three-quarters of the sample reported having some college education or less, and approximately one quarter reported having obtained at least one college degree. Approximately 80 percent of the sample reported having an annual household income of \$60,000 or less, with the remaining 20 percent reporting a household income of more than \$60,000. A little more than 40 percent of the sample self-identified as Hispanic/Latino, a little more than 30 percent as white, and the remaining families self-identified as black or African-American, Asian American, Native American or other. On the whole, this sample reflects the diverse mix of families living in the Central Phoenix Region.

21 First Things First (2011). *Measuring Quality in Early Childhood Education*. Retrieved from http://www.azftf.gov/WhoWeAre/Board/Documents/Policy_Brief_Q2.pdf (April 2012)

Table 1. Parent Characteristics, Central Phoenix

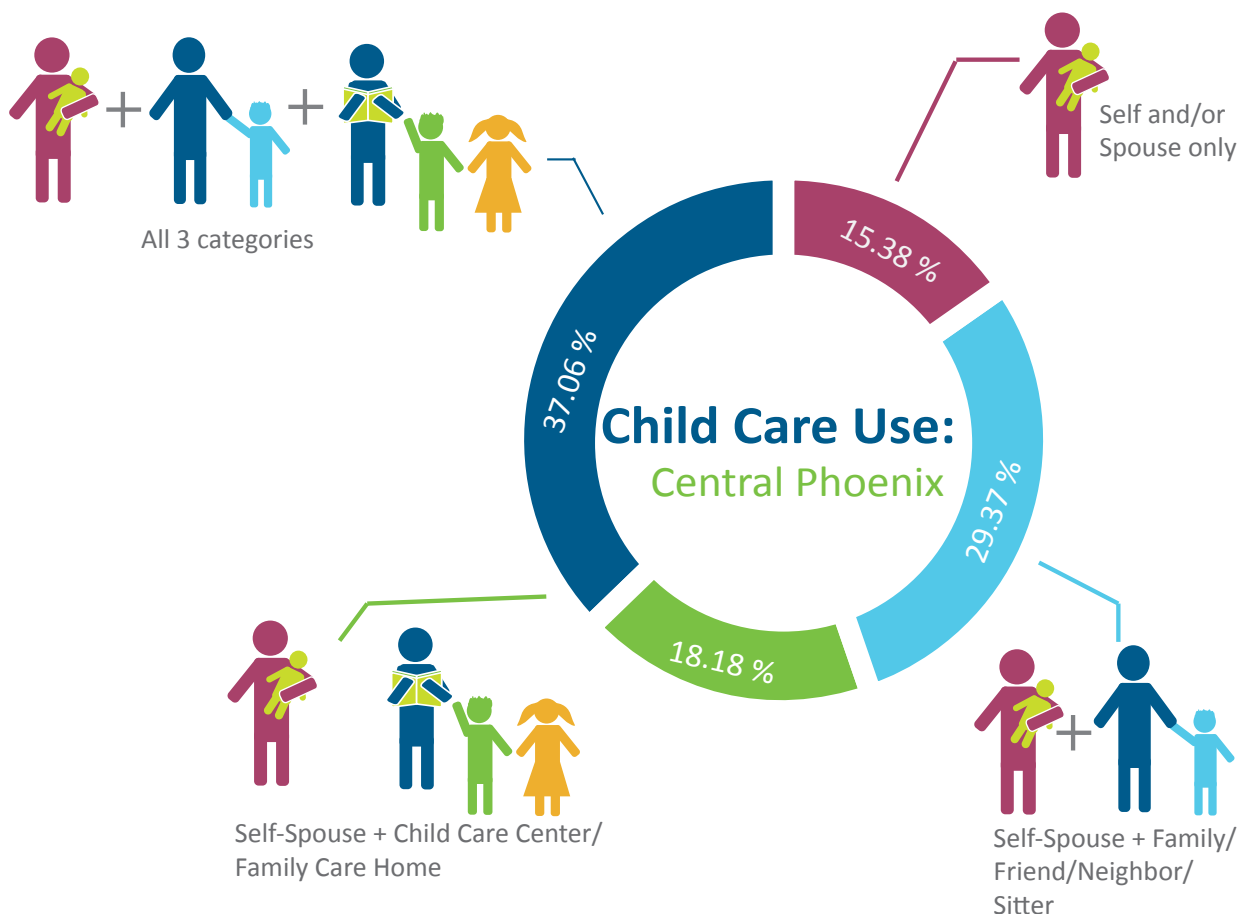
| | | PARENT CHARACTERISTICS CENTRAL PHOENIX | | | Total number of parents interviewed: 141 | |
|--------------------------|--|---|---|----------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| Parent's Age | | | | | | |
| | Range (Min/Max) | Mean | Median | Mode | | |
| | 19-62 | 33.34 | 33.00 | 24.00 | | |
| Parent's Education | | | | | | |
| | Less than High School Diploma | High School Diploma | Some College or Associate Degree | Bachelor's Degree | Postgraduate Degree | |
| | 20.7% | 22.1% | 32.9% | 12.1% | 12.1% | |
| Household Income | | | | | | |
| | Less than \$20,000 | \$20,001 to \$40,000 | \$40,001 to \$60,000 | \$60,001 or Above | | |
| | 41.6% | 27.0% | 10.9% | 20.4% | | |
| Parent's Ethnic Heritage | | | | | | |
| | Native American/ Alaskan Native | Asian American | Black/ African American | Hispanic/ Latino | White | Other or Mixed Ethnicity |
| | 1.5% | 1.5% | 14.7% | 41.2% | 34.6% | 6.6% |

IV. Study Findings Applicable to Central Phoenix

Types of Child Care Used by Parents Living in Central Phoenix

The figure below shows the percentage of families in the Central Phoenix sample using different combinations of child care arrangements.

Figure 1. Types of Child Care Used by Parents in Central Phoenix



Arizona Child Care Demand Study findings in the Central Phoenix Region were consistent with those in other regions and throughout the state. A summary of key findings is presented below; additional details can be found in the main body of the report.

Child Care Use and Age of Child

The age of a child is important when it comes to the type of child care parents select. Three important findings emerged from the study. First, parents with an older child (ages 3–5) were more likely to use center/home care than parents with a younger child. Second, with the increasing age of a child, a decreasing number of parents selected family, friend and neighbor (FFN) care as the only type of care other than care they provided. Finally, parents with two or more children in the home tended to “customize” the type of care selected to the age of the child — they used a patchwork of care, but the patchwork had different configurations depending on the ages of children in the home. For example, parents might choose a combination of self/spouse care and FFN care for their infant and a combination of self/spouse care and center/home care for their 4-year-old child.

Child Care Use and Household Income

Household income plays an important role in how parents think about child care choices. Families with higher household incomes tended to use all types of care, including center/home care, whereas those with lower household incomes were more likely to use FFN care in combination with self/spouse care.

Child Care Use and Parent Education

Study findings suggest a clear association between parents' educational backgrounds and the types of care they select. For example, parents who had not graduated from high school were *considerably* more likely to use only self/spouse care than parents with a college degree. And with higher educational attainment, parents were more likely to select a center/home-based provider in combination with other types of care.

Child Care Use and Family Heritage

Study findings suggest that for the most part, parents in all ethnic groupings used a combination of all three types of care, including self/spouse care, FFN care and center/home care. Thus, ethnicity itself does not appear to play a dominant role in determining the type of care parents select. Rather, a combination of factors such as parent income, parent education, age of child, and availability and affordability of care appear to play a more influential role.

Child Care Use and Household Composition

Household composition can have an influence on the types of child care parents select. Specifically, findings from this study suggest that the total number of adults in a household plays a larger role in the type of care parents select than does the number of children living in a household. For example, single-adult households were less likely to rely solely on self/spouse care and were more likely to use a combination of care types than households with two or more adults. Households with three or more adults were less likely to have a child enrolled in center/home care and more likely to use FFN care in combination with self/spouse care.

Parent Perceptions about Availability of Child Care Information

Getting good information about child care options and making an informed decision about available options is an important part of "child care demand." Parents turn to different information sources to help them think about child care options, such as the Internet, message boards at the local coffee shop, or their friends and family members. Of course, the perception of having "enough" information, or the "right" kinds of information to make an informed choice, is subjective and does not necessarily mean that information is not available. However, it can be helpful to get a sense of whether or not parents feel like they have enough information to make a good child care choice. As indicated in the table below, approximately 48 percent of parents from the Central Phoenix sample reported YES, they DID have enough information about child care, and approximately 53 percent reported NO, they did NOT have enough information(see Table 2).

Table 2. Regional Findings on Parent Perceptions about Availability of Child Care Information

| 9 REGIONS | % OF PARENTS REPORTING <u>NO</u> , THEY DON'T HAVE ENOUGH INFORMATION ABOUT LOCAL CHILD CARE OPTIONS | % OF PARENTS REPORTING <u>YES</u> , THEY DO HAVE ENOUGH INFORMATION ABOUT LOCAL CHILD CARE OPTIONS |
|------------------------|--|---|
| Central Maricopa | 31.4% | 68.6% |
| Central Phoenix | 52.5% | 47.5% |
| Coconino | 35.3% | 64.7% |
| Navajo Apache | 56.9% | 43.1% |
| Northwest Maricopa | 48.5% | 51.5% |
| South Phoenix | 53.5% | 46.5% |
| South Pima | 53.4% | 46.6% |
| Southwest Maricopa | 53.8% | 46.2% |
| Yavapai | 39.0% | 61.0% |

Voices from Central Phoenix: Parent Experiences and Perceptions

From all the parent survey interviews, a smaller sample was selected. A number of important themes emerged from these interviews with parents living in the Central Phoenix Region. First, parents are very concerned about the **quality of care** their child receives, and they often think about quality in terms of what their particular child needs. For example, one father stated the reason he wants a child care experience for his son is so he *“can get his social skills up — over there he’ll learn how to talk to people, how to get along with people.”* A mother of a two year old described her ideal child care setting as one that has *“a low adult to child ratio, a lot of adult interaction and guidance, compassionate teacher, an educational and learning environment, and a lot of free play and physical activity.”* Another mother with a son who has just turned 5 reported that her son is learning a lot at the child care center he attends, and is *“ready for kindergarten.”*

Parents in the Central Phoenix Region are also concerned about **accessibility to child care**. For some parents, accessibility may be compromised by not having information about available options; for others, it might mean not having a quality provider close to home or not having the financial resources to pay for a preferred type of care. For example, one father described how he and his wife had decided to care for their child full time in their home, but then admitted he really didn’t have good information about other possible options that might fit with their preferences. Another parent reported that prior to receiving a First Things First scholarship, she was *“having a lot of difficulty”* with her provider; she described being *“stressed out all the time and worried about [her son].”* The scholarship enabled her to enroll her son in a nearby center, where she was *“very pleased”* with how the center handles things, and feels like her son is doing much better. A parent of four described how she sometimes takes her children to the Crisis Nursery while she waits to be approved for a DES child care subsidy.

Affordability of care is very important to parents living in the Central Phoenix Region. Many parents described how the cost of child care influences their decisions, and limits child care options available to them. This comment by one parent typifies the experiences of many: *“We would love to have child care. We’ve been wanting to get it, but any time we check into it, it’s just way too expensive.”* Based on reports

of parents living in Central Phoenix, it is clear parents who rely on a DES subsidy or a scholarship, or have a child participating in a Head Start program could not otherwise afford care.

V. Supporting Parents in Central Phoenix

Parents living in the Central Phoenix Region are looking for quality early care and education opportunities for their children. Parents see quality as important, no matter if the provider is a family member, friend or neighbor, a center-based provider, or another type of provider. Parents prefer care that is stable and reliable, care that meets the developmental and learning needs of their child, and care that provides a setting where children are happy and can thrive. In conducting an analysis of survey interviews with a smaller sample of parents living in the Central Phoenix Region, a number of core themes emerged; based on these emergent themes, types of supports that could potentially benefit families living in this region include the following:

- Programs that strengthen the quality of and ongoing improvements in all types of early care and early education settings.
- Child care scholarships and other financial assistance to enable parents to access a high-quality early care and education experience for their children.
- Quality drop-in child care services to give the children of stay-at-home parents – or those whose parents may be busy seeking employment – opportunities to interact and learn with other children.
- Educational programs for parents who opt for full time parent-provided care, to include provision of information and guidance on best practices to support learning and development in young children within home settings.
- Greater availability of high quality, affordable providers who can accommodate parents who need care during the evenings or weekends, or who need to make flexible child care arrangements.

SOUTHWEST MARICOPA REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

Introduction

This Regional Snapshot is designed to look more closely at the what, how, when and why of child care use in the Southwest Maricopa Region. The *Arizona Child Care Demand Study* focused on child care choices and preferences of parents with at least one child who had not yet started kindergarten. Some overall questions guiding the study included:

1. What types of child care do Arizona's parents use?
2. How do they make child care choices?
3. What do they think of their child care options?

In thinking about the demand for child care, it is also important to consider the context for families' choices, so the Snapshot begins with information about regional conditions, which is drawn from sources outside the study. Then the Snapshot shares applicable study findings and highlights the voices and experiences of families as they attempt to stitch together a patchwork of care for their young children.

I. Regional Conditions

Demographics

The Southwest Maricopa Region represents 7.2 percent (274,866) of Maricopa County's total population (3,817,117) and 4.3 percent of Arizona's total population (6,392,017). With its constituent cities and continual rapid population growth, the region has almost tripled in size from 91,994 to 274,866 residents since the year 2000.

The region, including the cities of Arlington, Avondale, Buckeye, Gila Bend, Goodyear, Litchfield Park, Luke Air Force Base, Palo Verde, Tolleson and Tonopah, has grown in tandem with the rest of the Valley of the Sun; more than half of the cities within the Southwest Maricopa Region sustained triple-digit population growth through the first decade of the 21st century. The Southwest Valley spans the diverse rural and urban communities that represent 2,141 square miles of land, or 23.3 percent of Maricopa's total landmass of 9,200 square miles.

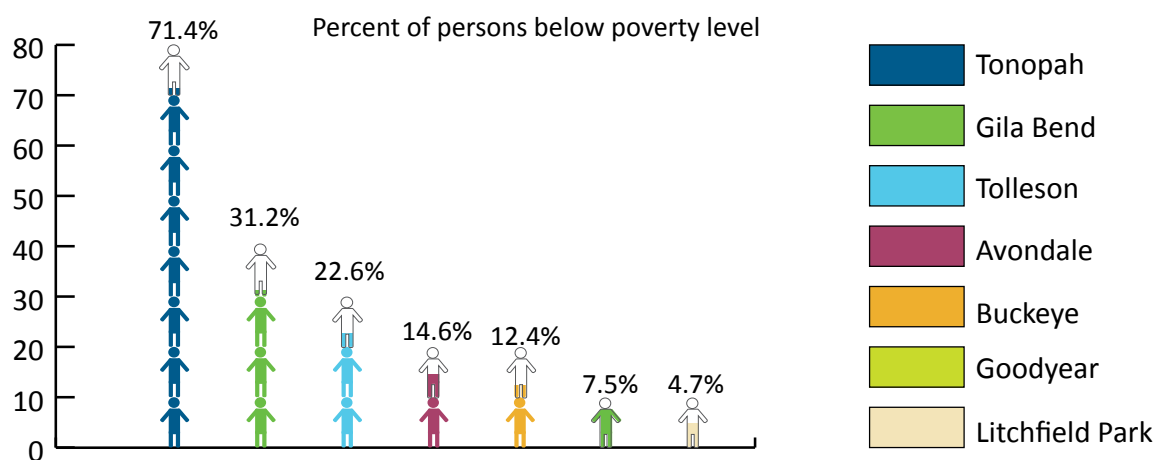
The Southwest Maricopa Region has experienced a 221 percent increase in children under 6 over the last decade, from 7,392 in 2000 to 23,756 in 2010. The percentage of children in this age range compared to the overall population in the region (8.6 percent) is slightly higher than the state and county rates of 7 percent. There are approximately 84,607 households located in the Southwest Maricopa Region. According to the 2010 census, 78.4 percent of those households are defined as family households, that is, a household that has at least one member of the household related to the householder by birth, marriage or adoption. The average family size is 3.21 people per family.

The family households in the Southwest Maricopa Region represent 7.1 percent of the estimated 932,814 family households in the entire county. Approximately 9 percent of the family households within this region include children under the age of 6. Out of households with young kids, slightly more than 70 percent are headed by married couples; 16.7 percent are households led by single females.²²

Economics

Economically the Southwest Maricopa Region varies greatly across communities in the percentage of people living in poverty. Tonopah had the highest percentage of its residents living in poverty at 70 percent; Litchfield Park, at 4.7 percent, had the lowest.

Figure 1. People Living below Poverty Level (Selected Communities)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2006-2010 Estimates, as cited in 2012 *Regional Needs and Assets Report, Southwest Maricopa*

Healthy communities also require an adequate supply of jobs that generate enough income to pay for basic needs. When looking at unemployment rates for the communities within the region, families in Buckeye had the highest unemployment rate at 13.5 percent in 2010 with Litchfield Park having the lowest rate of unemployment at 7.5 percent. When looking at unemployment rates for 2011, the rate for Maricopa County was around 8 percent and was comparable to the state unemployment rate of 8.3 percent.²³

²² First Things First. (2012). *Regional Needs and Assets Report, Southwest Maricopa*. State of Arizona: Southwest Institute for Families & Children with Special Needs.

²³ Ibid.

Table 1. Southwest Maricopa Families Selected Characteristics

| AREA | SOUTHWEST MARICOPA FAMILIES SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS (PERCENT) | | | |
|-------------------|--|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| | SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES ¹ | FEMALE HEADED HOUSEHOLDS ¹ | CHILDREN <12 IN POVERTY ² | UNEMPLOYED ³ |
| Avondale/Tolleson | 28.2 | 7.7 | 18.8 | 8.2 |
| Buckeye | 23.0 | 7.0 | 9.0 | 13.5 |
| Gila Bend | 17.0 | 5.1 | 0.0 | 9.6 |
| Litchfield Park | 18.2 | 6.1 | 11.9 | 7.5 |
| Luke | 11.9 | 0.1 | 1.9 | 9.0 |
| Maricopa | 27.6 | 5.9 | 21.4 | 8.6 |
| Arizona | 27.3 | 6.2 | 22.2 | 9.5 |

Source: Bureau of Health Systems Development, Arizona Department of Health Services, 02-14-2012, Based on the 2010 Census Bureau.

¹ Percent of total families per 2010 Census Summary File 1. ² Below 100 of Poverty, estimated from American Community Survey 2005-2009.

³ Average percent of unemployment (special Unemployment Report for Jan-Dec 2010 for Arizona Local Area Statistics).

Child Care Capacity

In the Southwest Maricopa Region, there are 78 Department of Health Services (DHS) licensed child care centers, and one tribal regulated center according to the December 2011 Arizona Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) report. Additionally, there are 8 DHS certified group homes, 17 Department of Economic Security (DES) certified homes, and 33 unregulated homes that are registered with CCR&R. There may be many more unregulated home providers in the region that are not registered with CCR&R; therefore, they are not included in these figures. The upcoming *Child Care Capacity Study* — to be sponsored by First Things First — will take a deeper look at both regulated and unregulated care providers in Southwest Maricopa and other Arizona regions and will contribute to the pool of knowledge currently existing on child care capacity and related issues.

Quality First

Quality First, a First Things First program, is a voluntary, statewide quality improvement and rating system for providers of center-based or home-based early care and education. Its goal is to improve the quality of early learning programs and help parents identify quality care settings for their children. Quality First helps providers to assess their initial level of quality, identify areas for improvement, and then implement changes that will increase the quality of the early learning program at that site. Quality First is based on research-proven areas of quality, including: low student/teacher ratios and small group sizes; well-qualified teachers who know how to engage young learners; warm, responsive relationships between the children and their adult caregivers; language-rich learning environments; and, a developmentally appropriate curriculum and learning materials. The extent to which early care and education settings meet criteria in these areas determines their Quality First rating, signified by one to five stars. One star indicates the provider demonstrates a commitment to examine practices and improve the quality of care beyond regulatory requirements. Five stars indicate the provider offers lower ratios and group sizes, higher staff qualifications, a curriculum aligned with state standards, and nurturing relationships between adults and children.²⁴

As of September 2012, there were 20 providers from the Southwest Maricopa Region enrolled in the Quality First program. This represents 19 percent of the licensed or certified child care providers in the region. The number of providers that can participate in Quality First is dependent upon funding available in the region.

II. Child Care Demand Study: Parent Recruitment

To be included in the *Arizona Child Care Demand Study*, participants had to be the parent or primary caretaker of at least one child age 0–5. Great care was taken to ensure that respondents reflected the demographic makeup of their respective regions. To ensure a diverse research sample, a systematic recruitment approach was utilized that relied on ZIP code weighting, a broad selection of recruitment sites and the use of a diverse group of interviewers. Parents were recruited from more than 30 sites in Southwest Maricopa, including Arizona State University-Tempe Campus, Basha’s in Litchfield Park, the Chinese Cultural Center, Estrella Park, Gila Bend Community Center, Golden Gate Community Center, and many other community locations and venues. Only parents living in the Southwest Maricopa Region were included in analyses specific to this region.

III. Characteristics of Southwest Maricopa Parents Participating in the Child Care Demand Study

A total of 65 parents living in the Southwest Maricopa Region were recruited to participate in the *Arizona Child Care Demand Study*. The average age of parent participants was 31. Approximately two thirds of the sample reported having some college education or less, and approximately one third reported having obtained a bachelor’s degree or higher. Approximately 65 percent of the sample reported having an annual household income of \$60,000 or less, with the remaining 35 percent reporting a household income of more than \$60,000. A little more than half the sample self-identified as Hispanic/Latino, a little more than a quarter of the sample self-identified as white, and the remaining families self-identified as black or African-American, Asian American or other. On the whole, this sample reflects the diverse mix of families living in the Southwest Maricopa Region.

24 First Things First (2011). *Measuring Quality in Early Childhood Education*. Retrieved from http://www.azftf.gov/WhoWeAre/Board/Documents/Policy_Brief_Q2.pdf (April 2012)

Table 1. Parent Characteristics, Southwest Maricopa

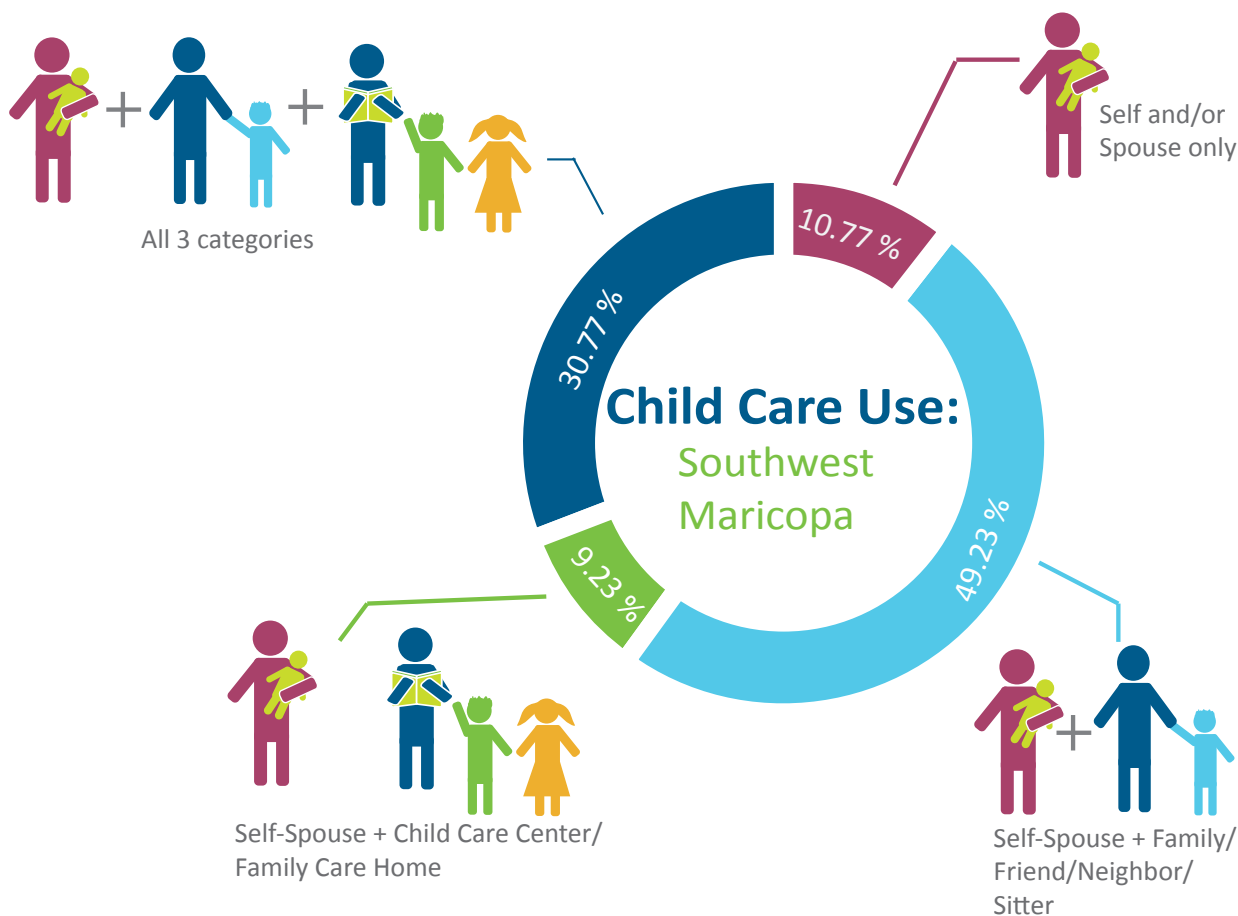
| | | PARENT CHARACTERISTICS SOUTHWEST MARICOPA | | | Total number of parents interviewed: 65 | |
|--------------------------|--|--|---|----------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| Parent's Age | | | | | | |
| | Range (Min/Max) | Mean | Median | Mode | | |
| | 19-62 | 31.83 | 31.00 | 31.00 | | |
| Parent's Education | | | | | | |
| | Less than High School Diploma | High School Diploma | Some College or Associate Degree | Bachelor's Degree | Postgraduate Degree | |
| | 12.5% | 18.8% | 32.8% | 34.4% | 1.6% | |
| Household Income | | | | | | |
| | Less than \$20,000 | \$20,001 to \$40,000 | \$40,001 to \$60,000 | \$60,001 or Above | | |
| | 18.3% | 25.0% | 21.7% | 35.0% | | |
| Parent's Ethnic Heritage | | | | | | |
| | Native American/ Alaskan Native | Asian American | Black/ African American | Hispanic/ Latino | White | Other or Mixed Ethnicity |
| | 0.0% | 3.1% | 10.9% | 54.7% | 28.1% | 3.1% |

IV. Study Findings Applicable to Southwest Maricopa

Types of Child Care Used by Parents Living in Southwest Maricopa

The figure below shows the percentage of families in the Southwest Maricopa sample using different combinations of child care arrangements.

Figure 2. Types of Child Care Used by Parents in Southwest Maricopa



Arizona Child Care Demand Study findings in the Southwest Maricopa Region were consistent with those in other regions and throughout the state. A summary of key findings is presented below; additional details can be found in the main body of the report.

Child Care Use and Age of Child

The age of a child is important when it comes to the type of child care parents select. Three important findings emerged from the study. First, parents with an older child (ages 3–5) were more likely to use center/home care than parents with a younger child. Second, with the increasing age of a child, a decreasing number of parents selected family, friend and neighbor (FFN) care as the only type of care other than care they provided. Finally, parents with two or more children in the home tended to “customize” the type of care selected to the age of the child — they used a patchwork of care, but the patchwork had different configurations depending on the ages of children in the home. For example, parents might choose a combination of self/spouse care and FFN care for their infant and a combination of self/spouse care and center/home care for their 4-year-old child.

Child Care Use and Household Income

Household income plays an important role in how parents think about child care choices. Families with higher household incomes tended to use all types of care, including center/home care, whereas those with lower household incomes were more likely to use FFN care in combination with self/spouse care.

Child Care Use and Parent Education

Study findings suggest a clear association between parents' educational backgrounds and the types of care they select. For example, parents who had not graduated from high school were *considerably* more likely to use only self/spouse care than parents with a college degree. And with higher educational attainment, parents were more likely to select a center/home-based provider in combination with other types of care.

Child Care Use and Family Heritage

Study findings suggest that for the most part, parents in all ethnic groupings used a combination of all three types of care, including self/spouse care, FFN care and center/home care. Thus, ethnicity itself does not appear to play a dominant role in determining the type of care parents select. Rather, a combination of factors such as parent income, parent education, age of child, and availability and affordability of care appear to play a more influential role.

Child Care Use and Household Composition

Household composition can have an influence on the types of child care parents select. Specifically, findings from this study suggest that the total number of adults in a household plays a larger role in the type of care parents select than does the number of children living in a household. For example, single-adult households were less likely to rely solely on self/spouse care and were more likely to use a combination of care types than households with two or more adults. Households with three or more adults were less likely to have a child enrolled in center/home care and more likely to use FFN care in combination with self/spouse care.

Parent Perceptions about Availability of Child Care Information

Getting good information about child care options and making an informed decision about available options is an important part of "child care demand." Parents turn to different information sources to help them think about child care options, such as the Internet, message boards at the local coffee shop, or their friends and family members. Of course, the perception of having "enough" information, or the "right" kinds of information to make an informed choice, is subjective and does not necessarily mean that information is not available. However, it can be helpful to get a sense of whether or not parents feel like they have enough information to make a good child care choice. As indicated in the table below, approximately 54 percent of parents living in the Southwest Maricopa Region reported that NO, they did NOT have enough information about local child care option, while approximately 46 percent reported that YES, they DID have enough information (see Table 3).

Table 3. Regional Findings on Parent Perceptions about Availability of Child Care Information

| 9 REGIONS | % OF PARENTS REPORTING <u>NO</u> , THEY DON'T HAVE ENOUGH INFORMATION ABOUT LOCAL CHILD CARE OPTIONS | % OF PARENTS REPORTING <u>YES</u> , THEY DO HAVE ENOUGH INFORMATION ABOUT LOCAL CHILD CARE OPTIONS |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| Central Maricopa | 31.4% | 68.6% |
| Central Phoenix | 52.5% | 47.5% |
| Coconino | 35.3% | 64.7% |
| Navajo Apache | 56.9% | 43.1% |
| Northwest Maricopa | 48.5% | 51.5% |
| South Phoenix | 53.5% | 46.5% |
| South Pima | 53.4% | 46.6% |
| Southwest Maricopa | 53.8% | 46.2% |
| Yavapai | 39.0% | 61.0% |

Voices from Southwest Maricopa: Parent Experiences and Perceptions

From all the parent survey interviews, a smaller sample was selected. A number of important themes emerged from these interviews with parents living in the Southwest Maricopa Region. First, parents are very concerned about the **quality of care**, and they often think of quality in terms of what their particular child needs. For example, when asked to describe the kind of child care center she had looked for, one parent said, *"I looked for security...how secure the child care facility was. I look to see if the kids were happy while they were there. I looked, of course, to see if they were DES approved. I also really wanted a program to teach the kids...I was looking for a learning environment."* She went on to explain that if cost was not an issue, she would find a place that was "more educational" than the current center she is using.

Many parents in the Southwest Maricopa Region are also concerned about **accessibility to child care**. For some parents, accessibility may be compromised by not having information about available options; for others, it might mean not having a quality provider close to home or not having the financial resources to pay for a preferred type of care. For example, one parent who is currently looking for a provider described how she was having difficulty finding one with flexible hours: *"I'm looking for [a provider] with flexible hours. A lot of them like the kids for the whole week versus a day by day basis. I just haven't been able to find flexible child care providers."* Another parent, who was looking for a provider who can care for her children overnight and on weekends, observed that *"shift work and child care is a challenge!"*

Affordability of care is another important matter for many parents living in the Southwest Maricopa Region. Although some parents receive financial assistance — for example, a DES subsidy or a scholarship, or the child is in Head Start — it is clear that without this assistance they could not afford to pay for care. Even parents with relatively high incomes report having trouble paying for quality care. For example, one father with a relatively higher income described how he relies on various family members to care for his two children, mainly because *"my family will take better care of them than other people."* But the cost of care is also an issue. He said his ideal care would be for the kids to attend a child care center, but *"the cost is too high."*

V. Supporting Parents in Southwest Maricopa

Parents living in the Southwest Maricopa Region are looking for quality early care and education opportunities for their children. Parents see quality as important, no matter if the provider is a family member, friend or neighbor, a center-based provider, or another type of provider. Parents prefer care that is stable and reliable, care that meets the developmental and learning needs of their child, and care that provides a setting where children are happy and can thrive. In conducting an analysis of survey interviews with a smaller sample of parents living in the Southwest Maricopa Region, a number of core themes emerged; based on these emergent themes, types of supports that could potentially benefit families living in this region include the following:

- Programs that strengthen the quality of and ongoing improvements in all types of early care and early education settings.
- Child care scholarships and other financial assistance to enable parents to access a high-quality early care and education experience for their children.
- Quality drop-in child care services to give the children of stay-at-home parents – or those whose parents may be busy seeking employment – opportunities to interact and learn with other children.
- Educational programs for parents who opt for full time parent-provided care, to include provision of information and guidance on best practices to support learning and development in young children within home settings.
- Greater availability of high quality, affordable providers who can accommodate parents who need care during the evenings or weekends, or who need to make flexible child care arrangements.

SOUTH PHOENIX REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

Introduction

This Regional Snapshot is designed to look more closely at the what, how, when and why of child care use in the South Phoenix Region. The *Arizona Child Care Demand Study* focused on child care choices and preferences of parents with at least one child who had not yet started kindergarten. Some overall questions guiding the study included:

1. What types of child care do Arizona's parents use?
2. How do they make child care choices?
3. What do they think of their child care options?

In thinking about the demand for child care, it is also important to consider the context for families' choices, so the Snapshot begins with information about regional conditions, which is drawn from sources outside the study. Then the Snapshot shares applicable study findings and highlights the voices and experiences of families as they attempt to stitch together a patchwork of care for their young children.

I. Regional Conditions

Demographics

The City of Phoenix, located in Maricopa County, covers more than 517 square miles and has a population of nearly 1.5 million, ranking it the sixth largest city in the country and the largest capital city in terms of population. The FTF Board established three regions in the City of Phoenix: North, Central and South.

The First Things First South Phoenix Region is a primarily urban area within metropolitan Phoenix. The region covers ZIP codes: 85009, 85031, 85033, 85035, 85037, 85040, 85041, 85042, 85043 and 85339. According to U.S. Census data, the population was 419,714 in 2010, including an estimated 52,710 children ages 0-5 (13 percent of the population).

To better understand the diversity within the region, the South Phoenix Regional Council has divided the region into neighborhoods: Maryvale (85037, 85031, 85033 and 85035); a portion of Central City South (85009); Laveen/Southwest Suburban (85043 and 85339); and, South Phoenix (85041, 85040 and 85042). The South Phoenix Region experienced a 20 percent increase in the number of young children between the ages of 0-5 living in the region since 2000; from 42,198 in 2000 to 52,710 in 2010. Sixty-one percent of young children are living in married-couple families, down from 70 percent in 2000. Approximately 26 percent of children are living in single-parent families headed by a female, an increase from 18 percent in 2000.²⁵

25 First Things First. (2012). *Regional Needs and Assets Report, South Phoenix*. State of Arizona: Applied Survey Research.

Economics

Thirty-five percent of children ages 0-5 in the South Phoenix Region are living in poverty, higher than the state's 24 percent. According to school district data, children living in the Isaac and Murphy elementary school districts had a much higher poverty rates (43 percent and 44 percent, respectively) than those in the Laveen and Pendergast elementary school districts (20 percent and 23 percent, respectively). Healthy communities also require an adequate supply of jobs that generate enough income to pay for basic needs. The unemployment rate in Phoenix was almost 9 percent in 2011, however this was lower than the 11 percent seen in 2010. The unemployment rate remains much higher than rates prior to the economic downturn.²⁶

Table 1. Unemployment Rate

| PLACE | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 |
|------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Phoenix City | 3.7% | 6.2% | 10.6% | 11.2% | 8.9% |
| Maricopa County | 3.1% | 5.2% | 9.1% | 9.6% | 8.4% |
| Arizona | 3.7% | 6.0% | 9.9% | 10.5% | 9.5% |

Source: Department of Commerce Research Administration. (2012). Special unemployment report. *Arizona Workforce Informer*. Retrieved 2012 from <http://www.workforce.az.gov/>; 2012 *Regional Needs and Assets Report, South Phoenix*.

Child Care Capacity

In the South Phoenix Region, there are 99 Department of Health Services (DHS) licensed child care centers, according to the December 2011 Arizona Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) report. Additionally, there are 55 DHS licensed group homes, 55 Department of Economic Security (DES) certified homes, and 22 unregulated homes that are registered with CCR&R. There may be many more unregulated home providers in the region that are not registered with CCR&R; therefore, they are not included in these figures. The upcoming *Child Care Capacity Study* — to be sponsored by First Things First — will take a deeper look at both regulated and unregulated care providers in South Phoenix and other Arizona regions and will contribute to the pool of knowledge currently existing on child care capacity and related issues.

Quality First

Quality First, a First Things First program, is a voluntary, statewide quality improvement and rating system for providers of center-based or home-based early care and education. Its goal is to improve the quality of early learning programs and help parents identify quality care settings for their children. Quality First helps providers to assess their initial level of quality, identify areas for improvement, and then implement changes that will increase the quality of the early learning program at that site. Quality First is based on research-proven areas of quality, including: low student/teacher ratios and small group sizes; well-qualified teachers who know how to engage young learners; warm, responsive relationships between the children and their adult caregivers; language-rich learning environments; and,

²⁶ Ibid.

a developmentally appropriate curriculum and learning materials. The extent to which early care and education settings meet criteria in these areas determines their Quality First rating, signified by one to five stars. One star indicates the provider demonstrates a commitment to examine practices and improve the quality of care beyond regulatory requirements. Five stars indicate the provider offers lower ratios and group sizes, higher staff qualifications, a curriculum aligned with state standards, and nurturing relationships between adults and children.²⁷

As of September 2012, there were 70 providers from the South Phoenix Region enrolled in the Quality First program. This represents 33 percent of the licensed or certified child care providers in the region. The number of providers that can participate in Quality First is dependent upon funding available in the region.

II. Child Care Demand Study: Parent Recruitment

To be included in the *Arizona Child Care Demand Study*, participants had to be the parent or primary caretaker of at least one child age 0–5. Great care was taken to ensure that respondents reflected the demographic makeup of their respective regions. To ensure a diverse research sample, a systematic recruitment approach was utilized that relied on ZIP code weighting, a broad selection of recruitment sites and the use of a diverse group of interviewers. Parents were recruited from more than 50 sites in South Phoenix, including Beacon Light Church, Desert Sage Library, Garden of Tomorrow, Home For All, Maryvale Community Center, South Mountain YMCA, the WIC Office-Phoenix, and many other community locations and venues. Only parents living in the South Phoenix Region were included in analyses specific to this region.

III. Characteristics of South Phoenix Parents Participating in the Child Care Demand Study

A total of 406 parents living in South Phoenix were recruited to participate in the *Arizona Child Care Demand Study*. The average age of parent participants was 31. A little more than three-quarters of the sample reported having some college education or less, and slightly less than one quarter reported having obtained a bachelor's degree or higher. Approximately 81 percent of the sample reported having an annual household income of \$60,000 or less, with the remaining 19 percent reporting a household income of more than \$60,000. Slightly more than half the sample self-identified as Hispanic/Latino, with approximately 16 percent identifying as white, 18 percent as black or African American, and approximately 8 percent as Asian American, Native American, or some other background combined. On the whole, this sample reflects the diverse mix of families living in the South Phoenix Region.

27 First Things First (2011). *Measuring Quality in Early Childhood Education*. Retrieved from http://www.azftf.gov/WhoWeAre/Board/Documents/Policy_Brief_Q2.pdf (April 2012)

Table 2. Parent Characteristics, South Phoenix

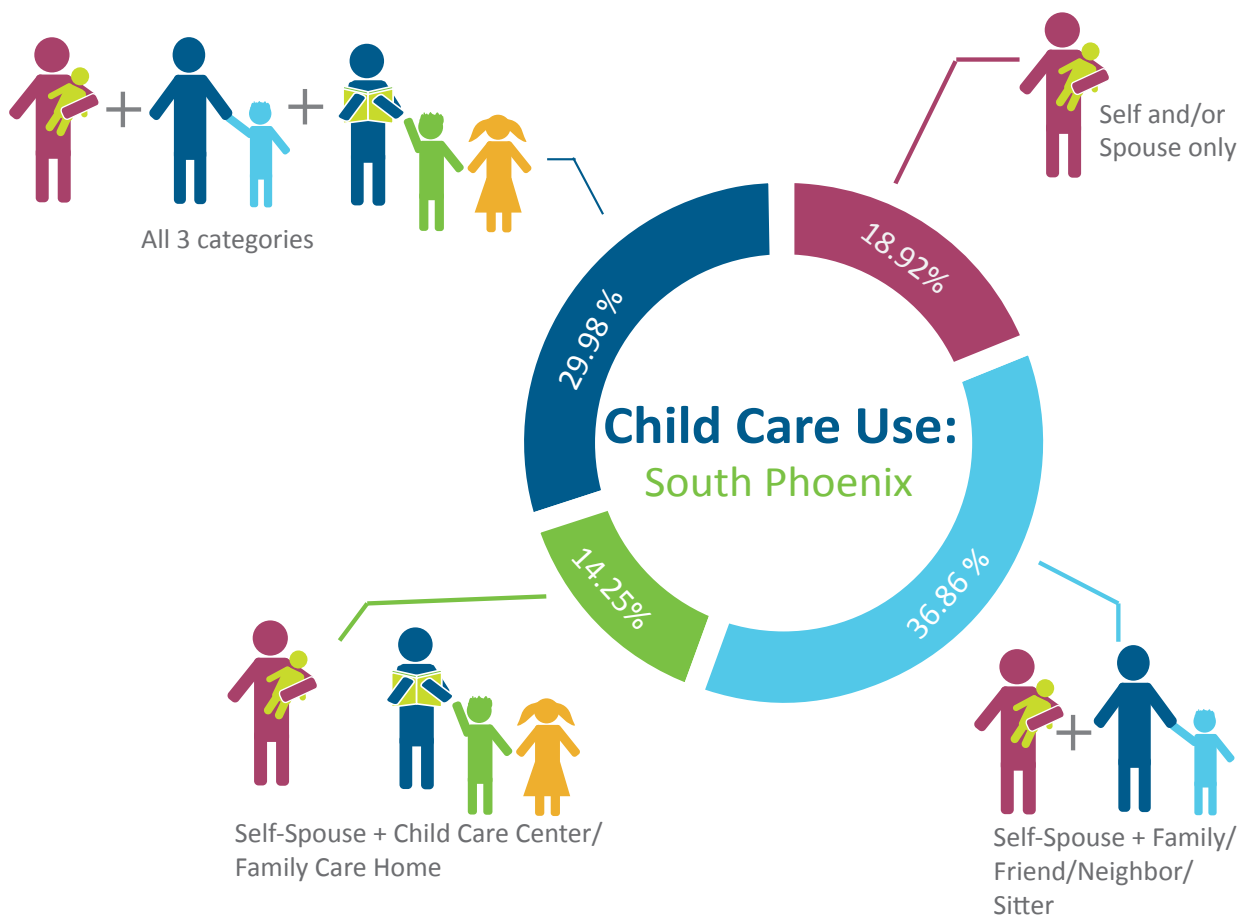
| | | PARENT CHARACTERISTICS SOUTH PHOENIX | | | Total number of parents interviewed: 406 | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|-------------------|--|--------------------------|
| Parent's Age | | | | | | |
| | Range (Min/Max) | Mean | Median | Mode | | |
| | 18-69 | 31.32 | 31.00 | 25 | | |
| Parent's Education | | | | | | |
| | Less than High School Diploma | High School Diploma | Some College or Associate Degree | Bachelor's Degree | Postgraduate Degree | |
| | 18.3% | 26.5% | 34.9% | 13.1% | 7.2% | |
| Household Income | | | | | | |
| | Less than \$20,000 | \$20,001 to \$40,000 | \$40,001 to \$60,000 | \$60,001 or Above | | |
| | 39.4% | 29.6% | 11.9% | 19.0% | | |
| Parent's Ethnic Heritage | | | | | | |
| | Native American/Alaskan Native | Asian American | Black/African American | Hispanic/Latino | White | Other or Mixed Ethnicity |
| | 0.7% | 2.2% | 18.4% | 56.7% | 16.4% | 5.5% |

IV. Study Findings Applicable to South Phoenix

Types of Child Care Used by Parents Living in South Phoenix

The figure below shows the percentage of families in the South Phoenix sample using different combinations of child care arrangements.

Figure 2. Types of Child Care Used by Parents in South Phoenix



Arizona Child Care Demand Study findings in the South Phoenix Region were consistent with those in other regions and throughout the state. A summary of key findings is presented below; additional details can be found in the main body of the report.

Child Care Use and Age of Child

The age of a child is important when it comes to the type of child care parents select. Three important findings emerged from the study. First, parents with an older child (ages 3–5) were more likely to use center/home care than parents with a younger child. Second, with the increasing age of a child, a decreasing number of parents selected family, friend and neighbor (FFN) care as the only type of care other than care they provided. Finally, parents with two or more children in the home tended to “customize” the type of care selected to the age of the child — they used a patchwork of care, but the patchwork had different configurations depending on the ages of children in the home. For example, parents might choose a combination of self/spouse care and FFN care for their infant and a combination of self/spouse care and center/home care for their 4-year-old child.

Child Care Use and Household Income

Household income plays an important role in how parents think about child care choices. Families with higher household incomes tended to use all types of care, including center/home care, whereas those with lower household incomes were more likely to use FFN care in combination with self/spouse care.

Child Care Use and Parent Education

Study findings suggest a clear association between parents' educational backgrounds and the types of care they select. For example, parents who had not graduated from high school were *considerably* more likely to use only self/spouse care than parents with a college degree. And with higher educational attainment, parents were more likely to select a center/home-based provider in combination with other types of care.

Child Care Use and Family Heritage

Study findings suggest that for the most part, parents in all ethnic groupings used a combination of all three types of care, including self/spouse care, FFN care and center/home care. Thus, ethnicity itself does not appear to play a dominant role in determining the type of care parents select. Rather, a combination of factors such as parent income, parent education, age of child, and availability and affordability of care appear to play a more influential role.

Child Care Use and Household Composition

Household composition can have an influence on the types of child care parents select. Specifically, findings from this study suggest that the total number of adults in a household plays a larger role in the type of care parents select than does the number of children living in a household. For example, single-adult households were less likely to rely solely on self/spouse care and were more likely to use a combination of care types than households with two or more adults. Households with three or more adults were less likely to have a child enrolled in center/home care and more likely to use FFN care in combination with self/spouse care.

Parent Perceptions about Availability of Child Care Information

Getting good information about child care options and making an informed decision about available options is an important part of "child care demand." Parents turn to different information sources to help them think about child care options, such as the Internet, message boards at the local coffee shop, or their friends and family members. Of course, the perception of having "enough" information, or the "right" kinds of information to make an informed choice, is subjective and does not necessarily mean that information is not available. However, it can be helpful to get a sense of whether or not parents feel like they have enough information to make a good child care choice. As indicated in the table below, approximately 53 percent of parents living in the South Phoenix Region reported that NO, they did NOT have enough information about local child care options, while approximately 47 percent reported that YES, they DID have enough information (see Table 3).

Table 3. Regional Findings on Parent Perceptions about Availability of Child Care Information

| 9 REGIONS | % OF PARENTS REPORTING <u>NO</u> , THEY DON'T HAVE ENOUGH INFORMATION ABOUT LOCAL CHILD CARE OPTIONS | % OF PARENTS REPORTING <u>YES</u> , THEY DO HAVE ENOUGH INFORMATION ABOUT LOCAL CHILD CARE OPTIONS |
|------------------------|--|---|
| Central Maricopa | 31.4% | 68.6% |
| Central Phoenix | 52.5% | 47.5% |
| Coconino | 35.3% | 64.7% |
| Navajo Apache | 56.9% | 43.1% |
| Northwest Maricopa | 48.5% | 51.5% |
| South Phoenix | 53.5% | 46.5% |
| South Pima | 53.4% | 46.6% |
| Southwest Maricopa | 53.8% | 46.2% |
| Yavapai | 39.0% | 61.1% |

Voices from South Phoenix: Parent Experiences and Perceptions

From all the parent survey interviews, a smaller sample was selected. A number of important themes emerged from these interviews with parents living in the South Phoenix Region. First, parents are very concerned about the **quality of care**, and they often think of quality in terms of what their particular child needs. For example, one father who receives a DES subsidy for care described how happy both he and his son are with their current provider: *“He’s been at this child care for about two years now. And he really likes it. He really likes going to school. He likes all the teachers, and I can tell all his teachers really care about him. And, you know, I like the fact that when he’s there, he’s learning stuff. He tells us all about the things he does at school. He has a lot of friends...he’s not just some kid in the crowd...the staff really care about him.”* Another father reported that he and his wife like their current arrangements because *“it’s flexible, it’s close to home, they are a licensed facility.”*

Many parents in the South Phoenix Region are also concerned about **accessibility to child care**. For some parents, accessibility may be compromised by not having information about available options; for others, it might mean not having a quality provider close to home or not having the financial resources to pay for a preferred type of care. For example, one mother who lives in a large, blended household with several working adults (including grandparents and an aunt), explained that she would prefer an educational child care program for her oldest son, but she can’t afford it because she doesn’t qualify for a DES subsidy based on the composite household income. Another mother, a full time student, currently relies on child care provided by the child’s grandmother, but worries that she won’t be able to afford child care if the grandmother (who is currently unemployed) gets a paid job, and therefore would not be able to care for her son.

Affordability of care is another important matter for many parents living in the South Phoenix Region. Although some parents receive financial assistance—for example, a DES subsidy or a scholarship, or the child is in Head Start—it is clear that without this assistance they could not afford to pay for care. As one mother explained: *“Child care is very expensive...I would not be able to put my son in care without a*

DES subsidy, which means I would not be able to work.” A stay-at-home father explained the reason he cares for his son while his wife works: “It’s cheaper. I think that’s about it. I don’t have a job, so there’s no point in putting him in child care. I can watch him full time. If I had a job, I’d obviously put him in, but I don’t, so there’s no point.”

V. Supporting Parents in South Phoenix

Parents living in the South Phoenix Region are looking for quality early care and education opportunities for their children. Parents see quality as important, no matter if the provider is a family member, friend or neighbor, a center-based provider, or another type of provider. Parents prefer care that is stable and reliable, care that meets the developmental and learning needs of their child, and care that provides a setting where children are happy and can thrive. In conducting an analysis of survey interviews with a smaller sample of parents living in the South Phoenix Region, a number of core themes emerged; based on these emergent themes, types of supports that could potentially benefit families living in this region include the following:

- Programs that strengthen the quality of and ongoing improvements in all types of early care and early education settings.
- Child care scholarships and other financial assistance to enable parents to access a high-quality early care and education experience for their children.
- Quality drop-in child care services to give the children of stay-at-home parents – or those whose parents may be busy seeking employment – opportunities to interact and learn with other children.
- Educational programs for parents who opt for full time parent-provided care, to include provision of information and guidance on best practices to support learning and development in young children within home settings.
- Greater availability of affordable, high quality child care options for families with more than one child under age 5.
- Greater availability of high quality, affordable providers who can accommodate parents who need care during the evenings or weekends, or who need to make flexible child care arrangements.



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