

**Butte County Local Child Care Planning Council**  
**2006 Needs Assessment**



## **Acknowledgements**

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**Executive Summary**

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**BUTTE  
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## Executive Summary

The Butte County Local Child Care Planning Council (LPC) has completed a countywide needs assessment appraising the supply and demand of child care in the county, as requisite by the California Department of Education. The needs assessment is designed as a tool for determining where the LPC should focus efforts in the local child care industry in order to meet the goals for affordable, available, accessible, high quality care and education for the county's children. As such, specialized areas were considered an integral part of the assessment, depicting a comprehensive picture of the current state of child care programs in the county.

County demographics illustrate the context in which the assessment was formed. There continues to be growth in the county **population**, resulting in a total of 39,750 children ages infant to 12 years necessitating some level of daily care. Sixty-two percent of the county households are families. For families with children under the age of six, 66 percent are two parent households.

There are five primary **communities** and 17 unincorporated communities in the county, each with a unique composition of ethnicity, languages spoken, economy, and industry. The county is primarily white, with large segments of Hispanic and Hmong citizens, contributing to 23,906 county residents who do not speak English well. This large segment of monolingual (non-English) and bi-lingual families impacts the educational challenges faced by its residents, as over half of the adult residents have no college experience. What's more, Butte County students scored lower than 50 percent on the National Percentile Ranking for English and Math according to the 2005 Children Now California County Data Book, foreshadowing another generation of academic underachievement.

Perhaps resulting from **academic challenges** is a low annual income, with 40 percent of families earning less than \$35,000 per year; high unemployment rates with a 56.8 percent employment status; and 21 percent of children living in poverty. Other factors impacting the county include high rates of homelessness, teen pregnancy, child abuse, and drug manufacturing and use.

A plethora of national and state research is clearly indicating the positive **lifelong influences the child care industry** – both early care and education and after school programs – has on children’s improved academic performance, readiness for school, understanding of consequences, special education intervention, better health through life, financial stability, decreased welfare dependency, and reduced crime rates. Further, child care opportunities allow adults to work, providing financial and familial self-sufficiency, and improving the county economy by generating and sustaining a stable, productive workforce. So despite the county’s somewhat bleak demographic profile, a committed and thriving child care industry may offer immediate and long-term answers to positive social, educational, and economic change for the county.

Since the LPC’s 1999 Needs Assessment was produced, the local child care industry has accomplished many goals in their effort to expand available, accessible, affordable, quality child care. Table I below compares variables from the 1999 and 2006 needs assessments to illustrate this progress in several areas.

<b>Table I - Changes in Butte County Child Care and Influencing Factors, Previous and Current Assessments</b>		
	<b>1999*</b>	<b>2004/5**</b>
Births in Butte County	1,736	2,353
Number of children 12 years old and younger (US Census)	33,366	33,824
Number of children under six years with all parents in the labor force (2000 U.S. Census)	5,878	7,224
Number of licensed FCCHs (Community Care Licensing)	190	180
Capacity of licensed FCCHs (Community Care Licensing)	1,802	1,764
Number of licensed Centers (Community Care Licensing)	68	115
Capacity of licensed Centers (Community Care Licensing)	2,515	4,029
Number of license-exempt after school programs	Not available	40
Capacity of license-exempt after school programs	Not available	3,085
Subsidized child care spaces (not including after school programs)	697	1,535
Dollars spent on child care staff retention	\$32,500	\$822,601

\* Statistics from 1999 Butte County Needs Assessment

\*\* Sources listed under category description

The natural increase in population results in an increased demand in 2006. The **demand** methodology used in 2006 allows a range to be considered, a broad range included children with all parents in the workforce and a more conservative estimate that overlays national utilization patterns over the broad estimate figures. The demand, or need for child care, ranges from 11,663 to 20,085 children ages birth to 12 years of age.

This increase in demand has been coupled with a significant increase in **supply** of child care for the children. With the exception of small family child care homes (FCCH), there has been an increase in supply of care, overall, by 35 percent. The increase is seen in infant care (primarily center care), preschools, large family child care homes (FCCH), and school age care/ after school care. Unlicensed care, with the exception of school-based, license-exempt programs, was not included in the supply calculations.

In spite of such significant progress in available child care, the need for more available child care is substantiated. There remains a significant **gap**, of between 2,771 and 11,193 children who do not have formal child care available to them. Further, the report does not provide analysis on parent preference of need and supply (i.e. location, cost, quality, etc.) which is a substantial indicator for “true” supply and demand. Infants and toddlers, and smaller communities continue to have the largest gap in supply.

The **annual cost** of care for infants ranges from \$6,073 in centers to \$6,365 in FCCHs. Preschool expenses are \$4,894 in centers and \$5,851 in FCCHs. The average cost is 17 percent of the county median wage and 41 percent of minimum wage. The cost of infant care in a FCCH is almost twice the amount of the annual tuition at California State University Chico.

A necessity for low to moderate income families is **subsidies** that come in the form of subsidized centers or subsidy vouchers issued to parents for their chosen child care providers. There are 13,985 families in the county that meet the income requirements for subsidies, There are only 1,488 subsidized center slots (largely shared slots), 1,979 subsidized vouchers, and over 3,000 subsidized slots for after school programs (slots/supply not distinguished by age of student attending the after school program).

There are many challenges faced in the specificity of needed child care, from **non-traditional hours** to care for children with special needs. The number of working parents, particularly working mothers, continues to grow and in jobs that don't always follow traditional schedules. Consequently, there is a substantial need for care that can accommodate sick children as well as care that is available for parents that must work before 8:00 a.m. and after 5:00 p.m. Parents, like all employees, may need to work an alternative schedule (such as positions in the medical and hospitality fields), work late hours on an occasional basis, or travel overnight for their jobs.

The supply does not come close to meeting the demand with less than 30 Family Child Care Homes and no centers offering care during these non-traditional hours. As a result, parents are piecing together care with providers, family, and friends or sacrificing professional commitments and achievement.

**Transportation** across the 1,050,000 acres of Butte County for employment purposes is common. Over 80,800 workers commute to work, with over 2,500 residents commuting more than 90 minutes. Access to child care in proximity to home or work is essential for parents to reduce commute time, comply with child care pick up and drop off requirements, and to have the peace of mind that their child is nearby in case of emergency in order to be productive at work. Reliability of private transportation can be a large barrier for lower income families to maintain employment, with public transportation schedules impractical for most working parents. Transportation between programs for part-day preschools, kindergarten, and grade school is nearly impossible for parents to arrange. More elementary school campus-based after school and child care programs will allow parents to maintain productivity and maximize work time. Employers who support parents with flex time to use breaks and lunches to transport their children between programs is also a plausible solution and will inevitably build company loyalty. And finally, new financial subsidies for parents to use Cab4Kids, a door-to-door child transportation service, would positively impact children, families and businesses.

Special populations within the county may realize even greater benefits from child care, at the same time needing to overcome additional barriers to receiving quality care. In a recent assessment with social workers serving **abused, neglected, and exploited children** (and those at risk), it was identified that 100 percent of social workers believe that there is a need for child care for the children they serve. The benefits identified included an added level of supervision to monitor potential abuse, enrichment activities, school readiness skills, establishing a positive attitude toward education, social development opportunities, supporting proper nutrition and physical activities, modeling appropriate caretaker relationships, supporting parents, and providing parent respite. Also identified through the assessment was a clear disconnect between social workers and accessing child care. A large portion of workers didn't feel confident that they knew what constitutes quality care and where to find it. Most of them didn't know the income and eligibility requirements of free programs, although most of their clients would have priority qualification. And only 23 percent of social workers knew which programs had a parent education or support component. This assessment uncovered an

enormous opportunity and responsibility to connect child care advocates with those who could enroll and impact children who need the care and support the most.

Another high-risk group who might reap the benefits of quality child care is children of **teen parents**. Although many of these parents have work and/or school commitments, and most need social and emotional support opportunities, only about 25 percent of these parents (enrolled in a local teen parents program) use child care. It was reported that teen parents often express apprehension in using out-of-home care. This insight opens an avenue to offer outreach and education information that will support both teen parents and their children.

**Migrant child care** needs are unique in Butte County in that the majority of migrant farmworkers are permanent residents in the county and commute within and outside the county each day. As a result, the child care needs of their children remain consistent throughout the year. What is also consistent is the need for bilingual and monolingual English/Spanish child care providers to support families and children in their primary language. Continued provision of training and education in multiple languages will further efforts toward accomplishing this goal.

Providing child care to **children with special needs** is a challenging undertaking for most child care providers. Those children who have received a formal assessment, an Individual Family Service Plan or Individualized Education Plan, are provided specialized care through school districts or the county office of education, which expand or reduce slots according to the need. Other children with special needs are left to find care within the traditional child care industry. On the other side of the need are child care providers mandated to accept children with special needs, but who may be reluctant to do so because of the increased staff, time, and materials that care for these children may require. The LPC has initiated an inclusion team that trains providers, as well as distributes resources, training materials and related information. Efforts to expand and sustain this team seem vital to increasing a cadre of prepared and eager providers.

In 2006, the **Preschool For All** initiative was placed on the ballot with hopes of providing more children the opportunity of a quality pre-kindergarten experience that would bring about lasting benefits for children and communities. Consequently, an advisory committee was formed, with the financial and staff support of the Butte County Children and Families Commission, to assess the county's preparedness for the possible adoption of Preschool For All and to recommend next steps. Using a methodology suggested by Preschool For All advocates,

the committee determined that the demand would be a range of 70 to 100 percent of four-year-olds, or 1,504 to 2,148 children in 2006. The supply was determined by considering number of slots, quality standards, and duplicate enrollment to net 1,703 available slots. The gap continues to increase as the population grows to an additional 1,565 children in the next ten years. Ultimately the initiative was not passed, but unremitting efforts continue at the state level for a future universal preschool.

The research is clear that the benefits of child care are correlated with quality care and quality care is largely determined by what the **child care workforce** offers. Providers/teachers must have extensive knowledge about child development, have the ability to translate that knowledge into appropriate activities and interactions, and be consistent in their relationship and care for the children they serve. Teacher competencies – what they need to know and do to demonstrate they are well-rounded and well prepared - are correlated to children's achievement domains. In order to develop and sustain a quality workforce, providers/teachers must be offered the education, training, work experience, wages, and benefits that reduces turnover and builds a stable foundation for child care programs. Therefore, despite all the benefits postulated about what child care can offer, without an investment in a competent and valued workforce the outcomes for children, parents, employers, and the community will be not exist. Future efforts to meet child care needs for Butte County should involve a community-wide approach to supporting providers/teachers in order to realize the essential and monumental value of meeting the county's true child care need.