Newton County Child Care Needs Assessment

Gail Johnston Ulmer  
_Purdue University_

Ting Liu  
_Purdue University_

James Elicker  
_Purdue University_

Follow this and additional works at: [http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/cffpub](http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/cffpub)
Newton County Child Care Needs Assessment

September 1999

This report was written by:
Gail Johnston Ulmer, Ph.D.
Ting Liu, MS
James Elicker, Ph.D.

The Center for Families at Purdue University

Sponsored by:
Newton County Step Ahead Council
Funded by:
Newton County Local Planning Council

Strengthening services to families with research, education, and outreach
Newton County Child Care Needs Assessment

September 1999

This report was written by
Gail Johnston Ulmer, Ph.D.
Ting Liu, MS
James Ellicker, Ph.D.

The Center for Families at Purdue University

Sponsored by the Newton County Step Ahead Council
Funded by the Newton County Local Planning Council
Preface

In April 1998 Pam Hasser, Coordinator of the Newton County Step Ahead Council approached the Center for Families at Purdue University for assistance in conducting a county-wide child care needs assessment. The Step Ahead Council wanted to determine the child care needs of the county for strategic planning efforts.

The Center for Families contacted Dr. Gail Johnston Ulmer, a Postdoctoral Research Associate at the Center. She agreed to oversee the project with the assistance of a graduate student, Ting Liu. The needs assessment is based on a model developed by Dr. James Elicker, Associate Professor of Child Development and Family Studies, and his research team.

Planning meetings were held at Purdue in September 1998 with Pam Hasser and Chris Bitler from Newton County Extension and with the Step Ahead Council in April 1999. Dr. Ulmer and Ting Liu also attended a Newton County Planning Council meeting in January 1999. Collection of needs assessment data began in February 1999 and ended in early July. Data gathering methods included reviews of existing data, phone interviews, survey questionnaires, and focus group interviews.

This report is the result of efforts by the Purdue research team, Step Ahead Council members, and many community members. The child care needs we identify and our recommendations will provide a basis for discussion and planning of more effective child care support and services in Newton County. These services will benefit children, families, employers, and communities throughout the county.
Acknowledgements

This child care needs assessment could not have been completed without the support of members of the Newton County Step Ahead Council. Their suggestions during meetings were very helpful. Pam Hasser, Step Ahead Coordinator and several Council members provided feedback on a draft of the parent survey. In addition, Jackie Jennings, Newton County Child Care Center, provided helpful information throughout the needs assessment process. Charles Swoop, Newton Office of Families and Children, provided transportation survey data. Don Anderson, Kankakee Valley Workforce, provided a list of Newton County industries. Finally, some members of the Council participated in phone interviews as community professionals.

The researchers would also like to thank the following persons for helping to coordinate focus group interviews:

Jackie Jennings, Newton County Child Care Center
Garlene Brown, Head Start
Kathy Kissner, Healthy Families
Lynn Mailloux, Adkev Inc.
Hank Shaffer, Vikase
Charles Swoop, Newton Office of Families and Children

The researchers would also like to thank the following persons and businesses for their help in distributing child care parent surveys. Their dedication made this needs assessment possible.

Don Anderson, Kankakee Valley Workforce
Sue Anderson
Dr. Bess and Carolyn Peerson, South Newton School Corporation
Candi Bostian, Kentland-Jefferson Township Public Library
Carol Gilbert, INTEC Group
Mike Hall and Kris Wentzel, Magnetek
Betty Heid, Crisis Center
Lou Hill, Capital Products
Jeff Hoehn, Crestmark of Roselawn
Ronald Humphrey, Kentland Bank
Jackie Jennings, Newton County Child Care Center
Kathy Kissner, Healthy Families
Kathy Little, North Newton School Corporation
Sherry Miller, North Newton School Corporation
Cathy Rheude and Lynn Mailloux, AdKev Inc.
Charles Swoop, Newton Office of Family and Children
Executive Summary

The Needs Assessment Study

The purpose of the 1999 Newton County Child Care Needs Assessment Study, conducted by the Purdue University Center for Families, was to provide information useful for planning child care services in Newton County in the next 5 years. This information includes:

- Current supply and demand for child care
- Types of child care preferred
- Types of child care needed but not available
- Common child care problems and their impact on families
- Adequacy of resources for child care providers, and
- Recommendations for meeting child care needs in the next 5 years.

The needs assessment was conducted using: 1) existing information relevant to child care needs; 2) phone interviews with community professionals; 3) focus group interviews with parents and child care providers; and 4) parent child care survey questionnaires.

Findings

Supply and Demand for Child Care

1. The demand for child care in Newton County is expected to remain stable in the next 5 years.

2. Both licensed providers and community professionals overwhelmingly agree that there is a shortage of quality child care in Newton County.

3. There is a limited supply of licensed child care in Newton County, particularly licensed home care.

Types of Care Needed But Not Available

1. Lack of care for children when they are sick was the most common problem identified by parents surveyed. Currently, there is no licensed sick care in the county.
2. Other types of child care in Newton County are in short supply including: 2nd shift, 3rd shift, infant/toddler, and weekend care.

Types of Child Care Preferred

1. Newton County parents prefer licensed care, particularly licensed center care.

2. Newton County parents also would prefer more business sponsored care such as on-site or near-site day care. This would help with transportation problems.

3. Many Newton County families currently use a babysitter or unlicensed child care home but would prefer to use a different form of child care.

Child Care Problems and Their Impact on Families

1. Newton County parents are concerned about the cost of child care. Many low income and single parents are unable to afford quality child care.

2. Many Newton County parents are forced to miss work or leave early due to child care problems. Parents with a 3-5 year old child miss the most work.

3. Child care is not located at a place convenient to work or home for many parents, particularly those with a pre-school aged child.

4. Parents also have trouble finding 2nd and 3rd shift care. Providers identified second shift as the bigger need.

5. Transportation issues are most likely to affect families with a school-aged child.

Resources for Child Care Providers

1. Licensed and unlicensed providers often have different needs. Unlicensed providers tend to be less connected to services in the county.

2. Child care providers may not be aware of the resources available for them to become licensed and to receive professional training.

3. The support group for child care providers is a good way to assist providers and aid in retention of providers.
Recommendations for Action

Increase the Supply of Quality Child Care

1. Increase the number of licensed child care slots available for infants and toddlers. Provide incentives for providers to take more infants. Incentives could include special training, equipment grants, supplements to reimbursements or fees, and regular relief/substitute care.

2. Develop a plan to provide sick care in the county.
   a. Explore grant possibilities to supplement costs for a licensed sick care home or sick care room at the Newton County Child Care Center. The provider support group may be a good place to identify providers interested in providing sick care.
   b. Look into the possibility of a hospital sick room for children. This could be done in conjunction with a neighboring county. Also, assess whether parents would be interested in using this type of sick care, how much they would be willing to pay, and staffing options.

3. Increase the number of slots for afternoon or 2nd shift care. Working through the Newton County Child Care Center may be the most effective way to do this.

4. Work with local businesses to develop on-site or near-site day care. Form a coalition of family-friendly businesses to collaborate on this issue.

Support Child Care Providers and Increase Quality

5. Continue to encourage experienced child care providers to seek licensing and accreditation through financial support for their course work. Advertise the Council's activities and the importance of licensing to providers.

6. Continue to work with providers through the monthly support group meetings. Encourage unlicensed providers as well as licensed providers to attend.

7. Educate parents about the costs of quality child care and the importance of seeking quality care. Develop a public education campaign that includes information about how to find a provider, what is a reasonable cost for quality child care, and the importance of seeking a licensed provider.
Support Families Needing Child Care

8. Work with local employers to educate them about the child care needs of their employees. Organize a seminar for local business representatives or a public education campaign aimed at employers to educate them about the child care needs and problems parents with young children face. Find a way, possibly through a newsletter, to publicly recognize businesses who take steps to implement "family-friendly" policies. Encourage employers to use the "Indiana Tool-Kit for Employers and Community Planners", developed by The Center for Families at Purdue University, to assess the child care needs of their employees.
Overview of the Needs Assessment Study

The Newton County Step Ahead Council approached the Center for Families at Purdue University in April 1998 about conducting a child care needs assessment in the county. The Center for Families contacted Dr. Gail Johnston Ulmer, a Postdoctoral Research Associate at the Center for Families. Dr. Ulmer met with Pam Hasser, the Step Ahead Coordinator and Chris Bitler from Newton County Extension in September 1998 and presented a plan for the needs assessment. The needs assessment is modeled after a 1998 needs assessment done in Clinton County by Dr. James Ellicker and his research team. The model was modified to meet the needs of Newton County. The needs assessment took place between January 1999 and May 1999. The results will be presented in a report to the Step Ahead Council and also to the Local Planning Council in June and July 1999. A final report will be written by August 1999.

The needs assessment conducted by Purdue University used the following methods of data collection: 1) examination of existing data; 2) phone interviews with key community professionals; 3) focus group interviews with parents and child care providers; and 4) child care parent survey questionnaires.

The research questions were:

1. What is the current and projected demand for child care services in Newton County? What is the current child care supply?

2. What types of child care services are needed but not available?

3. What types of child care do families in Newton County prefer?

4. What are the most common child care problems experienced by Newton County families? How do these problems affect families?

5. What resources are available to Newton County child care providers to help them offer quality care? Are the resources adequate, or are there unmet provider needs?

6. What are recommendations for meeting Newton County child care needs in the next five years?
Review of Existing Data

Existing Newton County data relevant to the needs assessment was gathered and examined prior to collecting the new child care data. The existing information came from the U.S. Census, Internet resources, the SIFT Profiles (Status of Indiana Families), and other sources. Population trends such as birth trends, and school enrollment are examined along with employment, and child care supply and demand.

Newton County is a rural county in Northwest Indiana. The county had 14,683 persons in 1997, with 1,001 of those under age 5. The largest employer in the county is Capital Products Corporation with approximately 300 employees. Followed closely by Viskase, a food casings manufacturer, with approximately 290 employees. Both of these industries are located in Kentland. Overall, 24.4% of the county’s employed population work in manufacturing industries. The Newton County unemployment rate fell faster than the state average between 1992 and 1997. By 1997, the county unemployment rate was 4.3%. The overall poverty rate for Newton County was 9.8% in 1993. The child poverty rate was 13.5% in the same year (children under 18). This rate was lower than the state child poverty rate (17.3%). Finally, the median household income for all households was $33,222 in 1993 ($31,055 for the state).

Population Trends and Projections

Newton County had an estimated total population of 14,683 in 1997. This represents an 8.4 percent increase in population from 1990 (1990 population = 13,551). The state population grew by 5.8 percent during the same time period. The county growth is faster than the state although, the county was still ranked 82nd out of 92 Indiana counties in population size in 1997. Also in 1997 Newton County had 1,001 children under age 5, 1,121 children between ages 5 and 9, and 1,246 children between ages 10-14. According to published projections, Newton County’s population is predicted to increase steadily over the next 5 years. Population trends will impact the future child care needs of the county. Trends for births, school enrollment, and recent population projections are examined below.

---

1 Status of Indiana Families 1999: Living Poor in Indiana
2 Status of Indiana Families 1999: Living Poor in Indiana
3 Status of Indiana Families 1999: Living Poor in Indiana
4 Status of Indiana Families 1999: Living Poor in Indiana
5 Status of Indiana Families 1999: Living Poor in Indiana
Birth Trends
Newton County had 162 births in 1997. This represents a birth rate of 11 births for every 1000 persons in the county. The Indiana birth rate was 14.2 in 1997. The Newton County birth trends represent a small decline in the actual number of births from 1992 (3.9% decline or 13 fewer births in 1997). Figure 1 contains the number of births to Newton County residents from 1992-1997. In the past 6 years Newton County birth rates have remained relatively stable with small year to year fluctuations.

Public School Enrollment Trends
There are 2 school corporations in Newton County: North Newton School Corporation and South Newton School Corporation. For the 1998-99 school year Newton County schools had a combined enrollment of 2917 students. Of these students, the kindergarten through 3rd grade enrollment was 556 students, and the 4th through 8th grade enrollment was 700 students. The largest school corporation in the county was North Newton School Corporation located in Morocco (1,816 students with 1256 students in K-8th grade). The total projected enrollments for both school corporations in the 1999-2000 school year is 2886 (1,096 for South Newton and 1,790 for North Newton). This represents a 0.53 percent decline (loss of 31 students) in overall enrollment between the current and next year’s school years. Figure 2 contains K-3 school enrollment figures for North and South Newton School Corporations from 1998-99 to 2002-03 (projected). These figures show that school enrollments will continue to decline in the next five years. Between the 1998-99 school year and the 2002-03 school year the K-3 population in North Newton School Corporation is projected to decline by 39 students. During the same period of time the K-3 enrollment in South Newton School Corporation is also projected to decline by 39 students.

Population Projections
Recent population projections have predicted a steady growth for the Newton County population through the year 2020. According to the Indiana Business Research Center, Newton County’s population will reach 15,258 by 2000 and 15,802 by 2005. This represents a projected increase of 1119 persons from 1997 to 2005 or a 3.7% increase in the population. The projected increase could indicate an increase in the demand for child care in the next 5 to 6 years.

---

8 Access Indiana Website
9 For each school year there were also 21 students enrolled in Pre-Kindergarten in South Newton School Corporation. These students are included in the number of students from K-3rd grade.
Figure 1: Births by Year in Newton County

Source: IN State Dept. of Health, Natality Tables.
and Kids Count in IN Data Book, Indiana Youth Institute, 1997.
Employment

Newton County had a 4.3% unemployment rate in 1997. This is slightly larger than the state average (3.5%) but considerably lower than the county unemployment rate in 1992 (6.3%). In 1997 there were 280 unemployed persons in the county. The majority of employed adults are employed in manufacturing industries (24.4%). The major industries in the county are manufacturing (1,453 workers in 1995), followed by service (926 employed in 1995), and retail trade (712 workers in 1995). About 66% of women with children are employed outside the home.11

Previous Studies

No child care needs assessments have been done in Newton County in the past few years. A survey of Transportation Needs was done in July 1997 by Charles Swoop of the Newton County Division of Family and Children. The purpose of this survey was to estimate the transportation needs of the county by surveying employers. Employers were asked to indicate the number of employees they had by shift, where employees lived, and the need for public transportation.

In addition to the Transportation Needs Survey, a survey was done by the Newton County CSR (Community Systemwide Response) team in May 1996. Public school children in grades 4-12 were surveyed about “the pressures they face on a daily basis.”12 Ninety-five percent of county students in grades 4-12 participated in the survey. The data were analyzed by Dr. Laura Hess at Purdue University. Dr. Hess found that “students who are successful academically, and more involved in school and community activities are least likely to be at risk for [problem behaviors such as teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol use, and delinquency].” In addition, Dr. Hess found that the profile of Newton County youths in terms of health risks is similar that of rural youths nationally.

Child Care Supply and Demand

Currently there is one licensed child care center in Newton County (Newton County Child Care Center in Brook, IN). The center operates from 6am to 6pm and takes children from age 6 weeks to 6 years. The center currently has 35 children but has slots for 50.13 The Center has a short waiting list for infant care but no waiting list for older children. In addition to the Center, there are 2 licensed home day care providers in the county with 21 children as of April 1999.14 One home is located at

13 Phone interview with Jackie Jennings, Director, Newton County Child Care Center, August 2, 1999.
14 Provider focus group, April 13, 1999.
the South end of the county (Kentland) and the other at the North end (Lake Village). Both of these providers have waiting lists.\textsuperscript{15} There are also at least 24 unlicensed home care providers although the actual number is unknown.\textsuperscript{16} The majority of children in Newton County are cared for by their parents and/or relatives. In 1990 the Family and Social Services Administration estimated that only 3 percent of the children needing day care in Newton County were in licensed day care homes/centers.\textsuperscript{17} There is also one Head Start Center in the county with 36 slots for children ages 3-5. There is currently no waiting list for the Head Start Center.\textsuperscript{18} There are no church sponsored day care programs or child care ministries although there is one church sponsored Pre-school.

Conclusions

Newton County is a rural county in Northwestern Indiana. Based on population projections, birth trends, and school enrollment projections the population of the county should increase at a slow but steady rate in the next five years. The overall population is projected to grow at a steady rate. School enrollments are predicted to decline in the next five years. Birth trends in the past few years have shown slight year to year deviations but a relatively stable birth rate during the 1990s. In addition, employment figures show low unemployment rates, which will support population growth.

Based on the information gathered, Newton County will not experience much growth in the overall demand for child care in the next few years. Although, there may be some year to year fluctuation as the birth rates vary. At the same time, there is currently a shortage of licensed child care in the county particularly at the North end of the county.

\textsuperscript{15} Provider focus group, April 13, 1999.
\textsuperscript{16} Phone interview with Jackie Jennings, Director, Newton County Child Care Center, August 2, 1999.
\textsuperscript{17} Status of Indiana Families 1999: Living Poor in Indiana
\textsuperscript{18} Phone interview with Jackie Jennings, Director, Newton County Child Care Center, August 2, 1999.
Newton County Step Ahead Child Care Needs Assessment

Introduction

Child care issues are important to both parents and employers. Each year business and industries lose money due to lost work time from employees' child care problems. A national survey conducted by the National Conference of State Legislatures found that 80% of employers reported that their employees were forced to miss work due to child care problems. One way to deal with this issue is to identify where the biggest child care needs are in a county and try and solve some of the problems. In order to identify where the biggest child care needs are in Newton County three different methods were used: Phone interviews, survey questionnaires, and focus group interviews. The first section of this report gives findings from phone interviews done with key community professionals. This section will give an overall perspective on child care issues. The next section contains the results of parent survey questionnaires. This section provides the clearest indication of problems parents face in dealing with child care issues. The final section contains focus group interview data. Focus groups were done with both parents and child care providers. This section provides more in-depth information on the child care problems parents face as well as issues affecting providers. All of these sections together should help to provide a good picture of the child care needs in Newton County.

Section 1: Interviews with Key Community Professionals

Interviews were conducted with key community professionals or "key informants" to learn about current child care needs in the county. Key informants are persons with an informed perspective on families and child care in Newton County. Key informants were identified through Pam Hasser, the Step Ahead Coordinator, as well as other members of the Step Ahead Council. Fifteen potential key informants were identified. Initial contact was made by phone. Seven key informants agreed to be interviewed. When a professional agreed to be interviewed an interview was scheduled. All interviews were done by phone and lasted no more than 25 minutes. A standard interview protocol was used. Each professional was asked about the child care needs of parents, providers, and the county in general. A copy of the interview protocol is included in Appendix A. The interviews were not taped but notes were taken by the interviewer with the consent of the interviewee.

Following the interview, information from each interview was summarized. The summaries were analyzed according to the following categories:
- The supply of quality child care available
- Factors parents consider when making choices about child care
- Parents' complaints about child care
- Unmet needs of families
- Unmet needs of child care providers
- Possible solutions for unmet needs of child care providers and parents

**Child Care Supply**

Community professionals were asked if they felt there was an adequate supply of quality child care for all families in Newton County. Eighty-six percent of the professionals (6 out of 7) said no, there was not an adequate supply of child care for all families in Newton County. One professional said the child care supply was "getting better." No professionals said there was an adequate supply of child care in the county.

Professionals were then asked why they thought there was not an adequate supply of child care in the county. Professionals cited different reasons for their answer. Four professionals cited the lack of licensed care providers in the county. One of these professionals indicated that 2 additional licensed homes are needed at both ends of the county. In addition, professionals cited the lack of push for providers to get licensed. According to one professional the funding and training are available for providers to become licensed but providers are not taking advantage of this. Another provider highlighted a different side to the licensing debate and said that it is often hard for providers to meet the licensing requirements, particularly because there is no city water. This lack of city water makes it hard for providers to get licensed. Similarly, two providers also noted that Newton County is a rural county and transportation is an issue for availability of child care. Finally, one professional mentioned the low pay that providers make and said that parents often can not afford to pay a lot for child care.

**Factors Parents Consider in Choosing Child Care**

Community professionals were asked to think about the parents they are familiar with in Newton County and list the most important factors these parents consider when making choices about child care. Professionals cited 4 main categories of factors that they considered to be important to parents in making choices about their child care: Availability, quality, cost, and transportation. Because professionals could list more than one factor 21 total factors were listed.
These 21 responses were categorized into the 4 categories. The most frequently cited category was availability of child care. Professionals discussed availability in terms of the hours or types of shifts available, as well as flexibility in hours and sick care. One professional indicated the need for 2nd shift care and two professionals indicated the need for 3rd shift or night shift child care. Availability is a problem for parents because of their work schedules. Child care needs to be available when they are at work. This is especially a problem for parents that work 2nd or 3rd shift. Finally, one professional noted that parents need to have a back up plan when their child is sick.

In addition to availability of child care, professionals also emphasized that parents are concerned with the quality of care their child receives. Five professionals cited quality of child care as an important factor. Quality was defined as licensed child care, learning activities, and health issues. An additional professional noted that parents may not be as concerned with quality child care as professionals would like them to be. Of the professionals citing quality as a concern, one person talked about the lack of licensed child care in Newton County as a factor parents face. Another person defined quality care as reliable, not abusive, concerned with the well-being of the children, and interesting. Similarly, quality was also defined as not having too many children in one home and having consistency in teachers in a center. Finally, quality was also defined in terms of health issues, such as having clean equipment in the home or center and how providers deal with sick children. Quality is important to parents because they are concerned with their child’s welfare.

Two other factors cited by professionals were cost and transportation. Four professionals indicated that child care cost is a factor parents consider when choosing child care and one professional indicated that transportation was a factor. Child care needs to be affordable for parents. The importance of cost as a factor often depends on the parent’s income according to the professionals. Many persons do not have enough money to pay for a babysitter. In terms of transportation, the day care also needs to be convenient for parents.

Child Care Problems for Families

Key Community professionals also were asked to discuss some of the child care problems they felt Newton County parents face. The professionals listed 9 complaints. Overwhelmingly the biggest issue professionals discussed was availability of child care. Seventy-eight percent of the complaints listed dealt with availability. Availability problems included lack of evening child care, infant/toddler care, sick care, and back-up care. In addition, one professional cited both the lack of availability for both licensed and nonlicensed care.
Along with availability of care, about 11% of the complaints (or 1 out of 9) cited quality of care or having too many children in one home as a problem. Finally, another 11% of complaints cited the cost of child care as a common complaint of parents in Newton County. Parents are likely to pay about $50 per child per week for nonlicensed care and about $80 per child week for a licensed home or child care center.

Unmet Child Care Needs of Newton County

Professionals were asked to identify what they thought the most critical unmet child care needs of Newton County were. Eighteen critical unmet needs were identified. Professionals could list as many needs as they felt were important. Everyone listed at list two needs and three persons identified three needs. The critical unmet needs can be grouped into four categories: Availability, quality, cost, and other.

Availability of child care was overwhelmingly cited as a critical need. Half of the needs cited (9 of 18) could be categorized as having to do with availability of child care. Of the 9 needs relating to availability of child care cited, 4 (44%) referred to general availability of child care, 2 (22%) referred to availability of licensed child care or licensing, and 4 (44%) referred to availability of a specific type of care. These specific types of child care include: Child care for school age children (6-12 years), afternoon care (3-11pm shift), infant care, and preschool age care. According to the community professionals child care availability issues seem to affect low income, single, and parents that work in factories the most. In addition, the lack of infant care is more likely to affect young families.

Community professionals were asked to provide some reasons as to why they felt the need was not being met. As would be expected, professionals listed a variety of reasons as to why availability of child care was a problem in Newton County. Three of the professionals indicated that local support for child care was a problem, both in terms of a lack of awareness by county officials and a lack of networking with local businesses. One professional said that one of the main problems with the lack of child care for school aged children was a lack of awareness of the problem by county officials. Another professional said one of the reasons behind the lack of available child care was that no one has ever talked to the local businesses. The professional indicated the need for networking with local businesses to make them aware of the issue of child care. Similarly, another professional said that no businesses support child care in the area.

Along with availability, the second critical unmet need cited by professionals was quality child care. Four out of 18 or 22% of the unmet needs cited can be categorized as quality issues. Quality issues include both education for care
providers (e.g., CDA) and educational activities for children. Professionals indicated that all families (including higher income families) are affected by the quality of child care. Likewise the need for higher quality child care is widespread in the county.

A third critical unmet need in Newton County is the affordability or cost of child care. Seventeen percent (3 out of 18) of the unmet needs cited were cost issues. Families, particularly low income and some factory workers, are affected by the cost of child care.

Finally, one other critical unmet need was identified in the county - transportation. Low-income and single parent families are most affected by transportation problems.

After identifying the most critical unmet needs in Newton County professionals were then asked to rank the needs in terms of priority for action. Of the 6 professionals that ranked the needs, the majority (67% or 4 of 6) said that child care availability was the top issue. Two professionals said there was a need for more licensed centers or licensing in general. One professional cited the need for more evening care (2nd shift). Finally, 2 other professionals ranked cost issues as the most critical unmet need facing the county.

Six professionals also indicated a second ranking need. Once again availability issues dominated these needs (4 out of 6), while quality and cost tied for second place. Among the availability issues cited, both care for infants and care for school age populations were each mentioned. The quality issue cited was for education of care providers.

Finally, 4 professionals indicated a third critical unmet child care need (ranked 3rd). Two persons talked about quality issues including the need for care providers to provide educational activities for children. One professional mentioned child care cost and a final professional said that transportation was a critical unmet need.

Unmet Child Care Provider Needs

Along with the critical unmet needs of Newton County and the needs of parents, professionals were also asked for their views on the unmet needs of Newton Child care providers. Professionals identified different issues they felt care providers face. Two persons mentioned the need for higher pay for providers. Providers traditionally are not highly paid. This can discourage people from becoming providers. Similarly, another professional indicated the need for substitute providers for fill in if a provider is unavailable. A professional also mentioned the need to recruit new persons to set up day cares in their homes. Another frequently mentioned issue had to do with all aspects of licensing. One professional stressed that there needs to be more encouragement for providers to become licensed. The professional suggests that continuing education, grants, and even a dinner
recognizing providers might be helpful. Likewise, another professional said that the Newton County Step Ahead Council is already addressing some of the needs of providers with the formation of a support group, monthly meetings, and education opportunities. Finally one provider noted that the child care resource and referral agency is doing a poor job now.

Possible Solutions

The final issue professionals were asked to discuss was possible solutions to the child care needs facing both parents and providers that they identified. Professionals suggested a variety of different solutions ranging from encouraging on-site day care to educating parents about child care issues. In general, the solutions suggested by professionals can be grouped into 3 broad categories: Education, networking, and grants.

In terms of education or awareness, professionals felt that the need for more education of both parents and providers could best be addressed by encouraging the parents to get more education about what is quality child care. In addition, the Child Development Associate (CDA) classes and other classes for care providers can help to educate providers. Along with just offering classes, one professional suggested that there is a need to advertise the Step Ahead Council's effort to pay for child care classes. Advertising the Council's efforts would help providers to understand that money and or help is available for them now to work on becoming licensed.

Professionals also stressed the need to work with local businesses. Three professionals mentioned the need to encourage local businesses/factories and the school systems to support on-site or near-site child care. Similarly, another professional suggested that there needs to be more one on one contact with the human resource people at local businesses and factories. All of these networking strategies can aid in the development of both employer support for child care and possibly more child care options for the future. Having more on-site or near-site child care options would also aid in solving transportation problems.

Finally, the last category of solutions professionals discussed was financial solutions, in particular grants. One person suggested putting more pressure on county officials for financial support for child care. Three professionals suggested that a federal or state-level grant could help low-income parents in Newton County with their child care costs. Similarly, applying for financial assistance for a program to offer evening care would also be helpful. While some of these solutions are more feasible than others, they do suggest that there are some concrete things the Step Ahead Council could do to help meet the unmet child care needs of the county.
Conclusions

The overwhelming majority of community professionals interviewed felt that the child care supply in Newton County was inadequate. Suggestions on what to do varied. Three central themes emerged from the interviews with community professionals: Availability, cost, and quality of child care. Each of these themes represents an unmet critical need in the county with availability needs being the most pressing. It should be noted that although the Newton County Child Care Center is not full, there is still a need for more licensed child care in the county. Newton County is a large county and the center is not convenient for all families in the county. At the same time, because the center operates from 6am to 6pm, it is not available for families needing 2nd and 3rd shift care.

Recommendations

Community professionals proposed a number of different solutions to the child care unmet needs facing Newton County. Of their solutions and the needs that they indicated three recommendations emerge.

1. There is a need to coordinate county child care efforts with local businesses and factories. More networking with local business, particularly with human resource representatives, needs to be done. One way to start the networking process would be to organize a seminar for local business representatives to educate them about the child care needs and problems parents with young children face. Emphasis on the problems child care issues create for parents and ultimately business (e.g., lost work days, stress) would be important.

2. Second, there is also a need to educate parents about child care issues: How to find a provider, what is a reasonable cost for child care, the importance of licensing for providers, etc. The Council could produce a brochure about what to look for when finding a provider.

3. Finally, while the Council currently provides much support to child care providers, there is a need to advertise this effort. More providers need to be made aware of the Council's activities and the importance of licensing. The council also needs to continue to work with providers (support group). The more legitimacy the providers have the more likely they will be to continue and also the more providers you will attract.
Section 2: Parent Survey Questionnaire

"The best care is provided by either parent. When not possible – safe, dependable, enriching care by a provider close to home, taking only limited #’s of children is essential.\textquotedbl", Kentland Parent, Survey Questionnaire

The second data analysis method used was survey questionnaires. Parent survey questionnaires were developed and administered to parents throughout Newton County. The surveys allowed the researchers to collect quantitative data from many parents. The surveys were designed to take about 5-10 minutes to complete. Parents were asked to complete questions about their work hours, the ages of their children, the current child care they use and the type of child care they would prefer to use, the problems they have experienced with child care, the effect of the problems, and what issues are important to them when choosing child care.

The surveys were administered by local businesses and social service agencies. Local businesses and social service agencies were contacted by phone by the research team and asked if they would allow their employees to complete the survey. Most of the businesses/agencies contacted agreed to participate. Surveys were mailed to the contact person and distributed. A copy of the survey is included in Appendix B. Survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as means and frequencies. Analyses are done for all respondents (families) and by the age of their children.

Survey Respondents

A total of 127 completed surveys were received. The return rate was about 10 percent (1227 surveys were distributed). Of the returned surveys, 2 were excluded because the respondents did not work or live in the county. In addition, 17 surveys were completed by persons with no children under age 18. After the nonusable surveys were discarded there were 108 usable surveys.

Location

Table 1 contains the location of survey respondents by their place of residence and where they work. Both ends of the county were represented in the survey, although a larger proportion (68%) of the respondents lived/worked in the Southern half of the county (Kentland, Goodland, Brook, or Morocco). This is a function of who returned the surveys. Surveys were distributed to persons working in both ends of the county. In addition, many of the survey respondents (about 26%) did not indicate where they lived or worked. Instead they checked either town or county. It is possible that many of these unknown persons may live or work Lincoln
Township thus making the survey more representative of the county's overall population distribution.

Table 1. Location of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Live</th>
<th>Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kentland</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodland</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brook</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln Township</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of Countya</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of State (Watseka, IL)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do Not Work</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondents</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a* Crown Point, Earl Park, Fowler, Remington, and Rensselaer

The largest number of respondents who completed where they lived were from Lincoln Township (23). Lincoln Township includes towns in the Northern part of the county such as Roselawn, Demotte, Fair Oaks, and Lake Village. When asked to indicate where they worked, the largest number of respondents worked in Morocco (27), followed closely by Goodland (26). A small number of respondents (5) indicated that they did not work outside the home. These respondents tended to have very young children. Because the surveys were primarily distributed through places of employment it is not surprising that there would be very few stay at home parents.

The same analysis was also done to see how many children are represented in the survey and where they are located. The results are listed in Appendix C. Once again, the largest numbers of children lived in Lincoln Township (49), whereas, the largest numbers of children had parents who worked in Goodland (59) and Morocco (52). This is not surprising given that more respondents lived or worked in these towns.

*Age of children*

There were 240 children in the 108 families that responded to the survey. Families had an average of 2.2 children with family size ranging from 1 child to 5 children. The mean or average age of the children is 8.84 years. *Figure 3* contains the number of children of respondents by age. The results show that the needs of families with children at each age are reflected in the survey. The largest category of
Figure 3: Age of Children

Number of Children by Age

- <3: 7
- 3-5 yr: 42
- 6-12 yr: 58
- 13-18 yr: 30
- 19+ yr: 101
children is those ages 6-12. Respondents had 101 children between age 6 and age 12. The second largest category was ages 13-18 (58 children). Respondents also had 42 children under age 3 and 30 children ages 3-5. These last two groups are the ones in which child care is of the most concern to parents. They are not old enough for school or to stay alone and require child care. This age distribution is similar to the age distribution of all children in Newton County.\textsuperscript{20}

**Work**

Respondents were asked how many hours per day and days per week they work. Ten respondents reported working no days in the previous year. Of those respondents that worked outside the home, respondents worked an average of 4.79 days per week. The range of days per week worked was 1 to 6 days. Ninety respondents worked between 1 and 5 days per week while 8 respondents worked more than 5 days/week on average. Employed respondents also reported that they worked an average of 8.2 hours/day. Seven respondents reported working 12 hours/day.

When the hours and days worked per week are broken down by the ages of children, employed respondents with at least one child under age 3 worked an average of 4.83 days/week and 8.11 hours/day. Respondents with at least one child between the ages of 3 and 5 worked 4.85 days/week and 8.2 hours/day. Finally respondents with at least one child aged 6 – 12 worked 4.69 days/week on average and 8.2 hours/day. The slightly fewer number of days/week worked for parents with an older child may be a reflection of larger family size. Parents with more children may not be able to work as many hours as parents can with just one or two children.

**Types of Child Care Currently Used and Preferred**

Respondents were asked to indicate the type(s) of child care they currently use and the type(s) they would prefer to use (Figure 4). The majority of respondents currently use family for child care. Family includes themselves, their spouse or partner, an older child, or other relative. The largest category of current care is a tie between care by a relative (27%) and care by a babysitter or unlicensed care provider (27%). Respondents were asked to check as many forms of child care as currently they used. Many checked more than one form. The least common categories of care currently being used by the respondents are Head Start (2%) and a licensed family home (2%).

\textsuperscript{20} Based on population estimates by age group for Indiana Counties from the Indiana Business Research Center, 1997 data.
I will be terminating myself from my current job to stay home w/my child soon. This is what I always wanted...”, Morocco Parent, Survey

At the same time, when asked what type(s) of child care respondents would prefer the largest percentage of respondents indicated that they would prefer a business sponsored program either on site or near their workplace (16%). The second largest type preferred was a tie at 15% between a desired to stay home and care for the child themselves and a licensed day care center.

Overall the results show that the two largest types of child care in the current use responses (relative and babysitter) were much smaller in the preferred column. Respondents desiring a babysitter or unlicensed family child care provider fell by 71%. Only 5% of respondents indicated they would prefer a babysitter to take care of their child(ren), whereas 27% of respondents currently use a babysitter for child care. Similarly, 27% of respondents currently rely on a relative such as a grandparent, sister, mother, or aunt for child care, but only 11% indicated that this would be their preferred type of care (decline of 41%). Most respondents also would prefer that their children are not home alone (4%) and that an older child is not caring for their younger child at home (3%).

Use and Preference by Age

When the same analysis is done by age of child the results indicate that current child care use and child care preference also vary by age. Families were categorized as less than 3 if they had at least one child under age 3, 3-5 if they had at least one child age 3 to 5, and 6-12 if they had one child between ages 6 and 12. Families could be classified in more than one category if they had children of different ages. Classifying families by age helps to illustrate age differences in child care needs.

In general, the results for age specific current child care use (Figure 5) show that families with at least one child under age 6 are most likely to use a babysitter or unlicensed home (over 36%) or rely on a relative (over 36%) for child care. Families with at least one child between ages 6 and 12, are still likely to use relative care (29%) or a babysitter (26%), but they are also more likely to have an older child care for their other child(ren) (29%) or leave the child home alone (20%). Persons with school aged children are also more likely to use a business sponsored child care (9%). Persons indicating that they use some other type of care for their child, generally used after-school care.

When asked what type of child care they prefer (Figure 6), a high percentage of respondents with at least one child under age 6 indicated that they would prefer to stay home with their child (almost 30%). Likewise, respondents also indicated that a
Figure 5: Current Child Care by Age of Child

- Age < 3
- Age 3-5
- Age 6-12

Percent of Families

Current Type of Child Care

- Own Home
- Spouse
- Old child
- Relative
- Home Alone
- Presch
- H. Start
- L. Home
- L. Center
- Ministry
- Babysit
- Bus. Spon
- Other
Figure 6: Preferred Child Care by Age of Child

Percent of Families

Preferred Type of Child Care

- Own Home
- Spouse
- Old child
- Relative
- Home Alone
- Presch
- H. Start
- L. Home
- L. Center
- Ministry
- Babysit
- Bus. Spon
- Other

Legend:
- □ Age < 3
- ■ Age 3-5
- □ Age 6-12
business sponsored child care (about 25%) would be a desired form of child care, particularly for those with non school age children (under 6).

Persons with at least one child between ages 3 and 5 indicated a strong preference for a licensed child care center (33%). This is much greater than the 7% that currently use a center. Persons with a preschool aged child (3-5) also indicated that relative care (30%) is desirable, as well as licensed home care (23%). These results show that a family's child care use and preference do depend heavily on the age(s) of their child(ren). What is desirable to a family with an infant is not necessarily what is desirable to a family with a four year old.

Child Care Problems

Respondents were then asked to indicate the problems they have had with child care in the last 12 months. The results for all respondents are listed in Figure 7. Thirty-four percent of respondents indicated that they had problems finding care for a sick child in the last 12 months. This was almost twice the next highest category of problems (respondents could mark more than one problem). The next highest category of problems respondents indicated was the location of child care was not convenient (19%). This was followed by no 2nd/3rd shift care (18%) and cost too high (16%).

Of respondents that indicated the cost of child care was too high 10 respondents listed how much they would be willing to pay for one child/week. The average desired cost was $52/week. The range of desired cost was from $20 to $65. The average is almost $30 lower than the cost for one child/week in the Newton County Day Care Center in Brook ($80/child). The relatively low number may be a reflection of a lack of knowledge of the cost of quality child care or just a reflection of the income level of persons that answered the survey.

Problems by Age

When the problems are broken down by age of child (Figure 8), problems with finding care when a child is sick remained the largest category for persons with a
Figure 7: Child Care Problems Experienced by All Families

[Bar chart showing the percentage of families experiencing various child care problems in the last 12 months. Problems include: Cost, Transp, Don't kn, Spec N, Sch, No inf/t, Low Qual, Not saf, No Sch, No Af, No 2/3, Loc, Other, and 35%.]
Figure 8: Child Care Problems Experienced by Age of Child
child ages 3-5 (41%) and ages 6-12 (42%). Persons with at least one child under age 3 also indicated that sick care is a problem although the percentage is smaller (30%). At the same time persons with infants or toddlers are concerned about the cost of child care (27%), the location of child care (24%), and the lack of infant/toddler care (22%). Parents with a 3-5 year old also have problems with the location of child care (30%) and the cost (30%).

Parents seem to have had few problems with unsafe child care (highest percentage was for 3-5 year old families at 7%). At the same time safe child care is an important issue for parents.

Impact of Child Care Problems on Families

In addition to reporting the child care problems they faced, respondents were asked how these problems affected them in the last year (Figure 9). Respondents were given 4 choices and could check as many as they wanted. The largest category was missed work. Thirty-five percent of parents reported missing hours or days of work in the past year due to child care problems. Of those that reported missing work, 23 persons answered an additional question about how many days of work they missed during the past year due to child care problems, usually when children are sick. The average number of days missed was 5.78 days. The range of days missed was from 1 day to 20 days. Two respondents missed 1 day while 1 respondent missed 20 days.

Along with missed work, 29% of parents also reported that they had to leave early in the past year due to child care problems. Finally, about 21% of respondents indicated that they had had problems concentrating at work due to child care issues. All three of these problems have implications for both workers and employers. Workers are not as productive as they could be because of problems with their child care. At the same time employers lose money due to lost work time and poor quality of work. One recent national study found that women with children under age 6 missed an average of 8.5 days of work per year due to family-related issues (e.g., when children are sick).21 At the same time men with children under age 6 also missed an average of 5 days of work.

Respondents also listed some other problems they experienced due to child care problems. These problems include: Lost overtime opportunities, untrained

caregivers, strain placed on family, and stress over trying to find a babysitter everyday.

**Effect of Problems by Age**

*Figure 10* contains the effect of child care problems by age of child. Families with a 3-5 year old seem to have experienced the most problems in the last year. Over 50 percent missed work. The average number of days missed for families with a 3-5 year old was 8.63 days (*Figure 11*). The range was from 2 to 20 days. Families with a 3-5 year old were also more likely to have left work early (43%) and more likely to have experienced problems with concentration at work due to child care (33%).

**Choices**

The final section of the survey questionnaire asked parents to indicate what issues are important to them when they are choosing a child care provider. Parents were given a list of issues and were asked to indicate whether they thought the issue was important, not important, or they had no opinion. For all but one of the issues a very high percentage of parents said the issue was important to their decision (e.g., provider offers educational activities, snacks and/or meals, small number of children in group, close to home, reasonable cost, and provider is experienced). Only when asked about the provider accepting children of different ages did more parents indicate that this issue was not important (14.8%) or they had no opinion (10.2%). An additional 12% of parents did not answer the question.

When the provider decision issues are broken down by age, the answers are slightly different. Some issues are more important to parents with younger children than those with school aged children. *Figure 12* contains the provider choice issue results for all parents and by age of child. All of the issues were the most important for parents with a 3-5 year old. For example, 100% of parents with a 3-5 year old said that provider experience, reasonable cost, and educational activities are important to them.

**Conclusions**

Parent surveys were completed by parents throughout Newton County. While the sample of parents was not randomly-selected nor was it representative of all parents in Newton County, the survey results do provide some indication of the child
Figure 10: Effect of Child Care Problems by Age of Child

Percent of Families

Effect of Child Care Problem Experienced in Last Year

Missed work
Leave early
No concentrate
Other

Ages <3
Ages 3-5
Ages 6-12
Figure 11: Missed Days of Work Due to Child Care Problems by Age of Child

- Families with Child Under 3:
  - Mean = 5.75 days/year
  - Range: 1-20 days
  - N=8
- Families with Child Age 3-5:
  - Mean = 8.63 days/year
  - Range: 2-20 days
  - N=8
- Families with Child Age 6-12:
  - Mean = 5.68 days/year
  - Range: 1-11 days
  - N=19
Figure 12: Important Issues When Choosing a Child Care Provider by Age of Child

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>&lt; 3</th>
<th>Age 3-5</th>
<th>Age 6-12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diff Ages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small #</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snacks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educ Act</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percent of Families Indicating that Issue is Important
care needs of parents in the county. When compared with the population distribution of Newton County, the surveys overrepresent the views of parents living in the Southern half of the county to some extent. It is important to keep this in mind when examining the results.

Care at home or by relatives is the most common type of child care currently used by Newton County families. While some parents preferred to watch their children themselves or to use a family member, many parents indicated that they would prefer a different type of child care. Likewise, almost one third of parents currently use a babysitter or unlicensed care. Less than 5 percent would prefer this option if they had a choice. Parents tended to prefer licensed care or child care near their work site (business sponsored care).

Parents also have experienced many problems with finding child care. The overwhelmingly largest problem was in finding care for their child when they are sick. As a result of this and other child care problems many parents were forced to miss work, leave work early, or had problems concentrating when they were at work.

Recommendations

Based on the parent surveys the following recommendations can be made:

1. There is a need for more licensed child care in the county. Parents are particularly interested in center care. Parents also would like more flexibility in the type of care available to them such as hourly or drop in care at the center.

2. Licensed sick care is needed in Newton County. This is a big problem for many parents.

3. Finally, there is a need to educate local businesses about the impact of child care problems on their employees. Many employees with young children are forced to miss work, leave work early, and/or have concentration problems at work as a result of child care problems. One way to deal with this problem would be to encourage more business sponsored care such as on-site or near-site day care. This would allow parents a more stable day care situation for their children and would also reduce the stress of traveling to child care.
Section 3: Focus Group Interviews

One focus group was conducted with 4 child care providers in Newton County.\(^{22}\) The providers were either licensed home care providers or they worked at a licensed child care center. The group was conducted by the research team at the Newton Council on Aging in Morocco, a location convenient for the participants. The group took about an hour and participants were asked questions about the supply of child care in Newton County, unmet needs of providers and other provider issues, and the unmet child care needs of Newton County. Because only licensed home care providers and providers from the licensed center were represented the results should not be generalized to nonlicensed providers. Nonlicensed providers often have different problems and issues than licensed providers. Appendix D contains the Interview Protocol that was used.

Problems for Providers

Supply of Licensed Providers

Providers were asked to identify some of the needs that child care providers face. All of the providers felt that there was not an adequate supply of child care in Newton County. According to one provider, "There is definitely a lack of quality providers, that is one of the main problems." There are only two licensed providers in the county. Both of these licensed providers have a waiting list. Both providers work Monday - Friday. One provider works from 6am to 6pm. The other provider works 24 hrs a day but did not have many children at night.

Along with discussing the lack of quality providers, participants listed a variety of problems providers’ face. These problems include: Financial issues, staffing problems, security issues, and professionalism.

Financial Issues Related to Parents

Child care providers cited financial issues as one of the biggest problems they face. Low income parents often have problems affording child care. These parents face many barriers in obtaining government support for their child care. Providers try to work with parents to help them obtain the proper financial support. This is particularly a problem for single parents:

---

\(^{22}\) Many attempts were made by the research team to conduct parent focus groups. One focus group was held but only one participant came. To protect the confidentiality of that participant the results will not be reported here.
“Single parents...have a very, very hard time and you can see why, they are supposed to be getting help but they are not getting help [from the county] and what help there is not enough, financial is biggest [problem].” (Provider)

Along with the need for more county level help, providers also identified the state bureaucracy as a contributor to the financial stress of their parents.

“...you standardize your rates and because of the financial, again goes back to financial, they can't meet the needs, and what do you do, you try and work with the parent because you know the circumstance, so again you would be in the situation as what the person working in the center is, that you are not getting paid, and then the state says you are supposed to do such and such and it is like, ... I mean you just can't.” (Home Provider)

Providers were also asked if they had trouble getting parents to pay their bills. Both licensed providers stated that they had parents sign a contract and therefore had the official means to get parents to pay their bill. Payment was usually not a problem. One participant noted that nonlicensed providers often have trouble with parents not paying their bill. Nonlicensed providers do not have the legal means to get parents to pay because they seldom have parents sign a contract.

“Nonlicensed people have a much greater problem with this....They haven't taken the measures to get parents to sign a contract. When you are not licensed you do not have a leg to stand on.” (Provider)

Staff Issues

Along with financial issues relating to parents and payment of bills, another problem providers identified was a lack of reliable staff. This was particularly true for the child care center.

“From a center perspective keeping reliable care [staff] is very hard ... because it is entry level, these people are making barely above minimum wage. And, ...we offer health insurance, but that is only because the county commissioners pay that for us. Which is a big help. But other than that they get sick days, and no vacation [days].” (Center Provider)

Later in the focus group discussion, a center provider discussed why wages were so low at the center and why they could not afford to raise them.
“When you operate off of grants for your places, it seems like there are always grants to get you bricks and mortar and to get you books and equipment, but there’s nothing to help with operations cost, that is hard. Just ongoing operations costs are very hard to keep up with and unless we raise rates so high, other centers are charging $100 or $110/week. We charge $80 because otherwise parents aren’t going to be able to afford it and we are not going to be benefiting the county at all. So to be able to keep our rates low we need help with operations cost and that money isn’t there.” (Center Provider)

The home providers did not discuss the staffing issue. They did discuss however what happens when they take a vacation or have a family emergency. They both give parents several months notice before they take a vacation. Neither provider charges parents for vacation time when she is closed. The Center also gives parents 10 free days a year. These are days when they do not have to pay and can use for vacation time. The Center has only closed 2 days in last year and a half. This was due to road conditions.

Security Issues
Another issue providers discussed was security. One provider expressed concern that police are too spread out in the county.

“...If we had called for help it would have been so long before we got someone there...The county is too spread out and they [police] are not close enough.” (Provider, Brook)

Another provider did not express the same concern having had a positive experience with the police responding quickly to her call. Security seems to be more of a location issue. Providers located the furthest away from police seem to worry more about this than providers closer to police.

Professionalism
Finally, the child care providers noted that they often get no respect. This is a common complaint of child care workers and is not a problem unique to Newton County. Child care workers are generally low paid and often considered to be just “babysitters” by many people. Child care work is not seen as a profession.
Unmet Needs in the County

The providers were also asked to identify any unmet child care needs in Newton County. They listed a number of unmet needs but felt the biggest need was for more second shift or afternoon child care. Other unmet needs they identified include: Third shift care, weekend care, infant care, and sick care.

Afternoon Shift

The providers felt that second shift child care was the most critical unmet need in the County. According to providers, grandparents and other family members are often willing to watch children at night but not during the evening hours. Providers were asked what could be done to better meet this need. According to a Center provider, the local planning council will apply for a grant for the Center to provide afternoon care. The grant will include lighting, and startup dollars. If enough kids enroll they will look into continuing this care.

Night Shift/Split Shift

Along with afternoon shift, providers also identified night shift care as a need, although less of a need than afternoon care. Two participants identified this as a critical unmet need but also pointed out that for many people, family members or grandparents watch the children at night while they sleep. A related problem providers mentioned was the need for child care that spans two shifts.

"A lot of factories have like 3-3 and that is another shift that is not met. That is probably more dominate at the South end because there are several factories down there that are 24 hours and ...working nights." (Provider)

Weekend Care

Lack of available child care on weekends and particularly second shift on weekends was also identified by providers as an unmet need.

"Weekend care is another problem, bounced to another sitter on the weekend, [is this] really better for the kids?" (Provider)

The Newton County Child Care Center is not open on weekends.

Infant care

Infant care was another unmet need identified by providers. The child care center currently has a short waiting list for infant spots. Participants seemed to feel
there would be a big baby boom in the county in September resulting from the January snowstorm.

"Southend, there is a big baby boom. This is going to be a big problem. There is a boom in September, [resulting from the] snowstorm. I know three moms [that are pregnant] and one is having twins." (Provider)

Sick Care

Finally providers identified sick care as another unmet need in the county. There is currently no licensed sick care in the county. When children get sick one of their parents must miss work.

"There is a problem with sick care. Parents bring little ones that should not be in a center situation. We are not licensed as sick care so if that kid is sick, we have a room for them to stay until mom comes." (Center Provider)

Participants did have good suggestions for what could be done about the lack of sick care in the county. One suggestion was to offer financial incentives for providers to become licensed for sick care. Providers stressed the importance of financial incentives.

"If there was some way to provide and extra incentive. Two dollars an hour is not going to cut it if you are only going to watch a few kids some of the time. If you were going to be a sick care provider and just back up other places there would have to be a good incentive to do so." (Provider)

Another suggestion discussed by providers was to work with the local hospital to open a sick care room. They suggested that this would work best if done in conjunction with another county.

"From a medical standpoint,….sick care within the hospital. Southend could go and work with Jasper County or Iroquois. They are close counties. See if they would do that. That to be would be more logical …[they] would be right there with care. …Jasper is in the same situation with no sick care, so if the two counties went together and approached the hospital it might be more feasible." (Provider)

Needs Already Being Met

Along with identifying unmet needs, providers discussed some previously unmet needs in Newton County that have been met or at least partially met. These
needs include after school care and full day kindergarten. In terms of after school care, providers spoke favorable of the care offered by local schools.

"School aged child care has improved a lot, since they added care until 5:30. This has really helped." (Provider)

Similarly, talking about after school care being added to both ends of the county another provider said,

"South end is having more success with it but I think both ends are doing it. They pretty much all have waiting lists at this point."

Along with the increase in after school care, providers also felt that the addition of full day kindergarten in the South Newton schools was good for the child care situation in the county.

"Another thing that was really successful was extending the kindergarten day at South end, they have half a day of day care and half a day of kindergarten. For that they have a huge waiting list for next year. That has really helped." (Provider)

Providers were helpful in accessing the strengths and weaknesses of the child care situation in Newton County. While they identified some specific unmet needs they also pointed out some successes the county has had in dealing with the child care situation.

**Summary**

Focus group child care providers all felt that there was not an adequate supply of quality child care in Newton County. The county has two licensed home providers and both have waiting lists. In contrast, the Newton Child Care Center is not full. This is probably more a function of the location of the center than an indication of no need. Providers highlighted some of the problems they face. These issues include dealing with the financial problems of parents, staff issues for the child care center, security issues with the distribution of police in the county, and professionalism. Providers also identified what they saw as the current most critical unmet child care needs in Newton County. These needs include: Afternoon or second shift care, to some extent night or third shift care, weekend care, infant care, and sick care.
Recommendations

Based on the child care provider focus group the following recommendations could be made:

1. Continue to hold monthly or periodic meetings with child care providers. Make sure to encourage as many unlicensed providers as possible to attend. These meetings will help to facilitate professionalism among providers and lead to better retention of providers. They also are a good way to disseminate information on grants and opportunities available for providers.

2. Encourage more unlicensed providers to become licensed.

3. Encourage providers to offer more evening care.

4. Explore ways to increase the number of slots for infants in the county.

5. Finally, develop a plan to provide sick care in the county. The best way to start would be to explore the feasibility of the two suggestions made by providers:
   a.) Explore grant possibilities to supplement costs for a licensed sick care home or sick care room in the Center.
   b.) Look into the possibility of a hospital sick room. Find out about interest of neighboring counties. Also, assess whether parents would be interested in using this type of sick care and how much they would be willing to pay.
1999 Newton County Step Ahead Child Care Needs Assessment:
Summary of Findings

Supply and Demand for Child Care

1. The demand for child care in Newton County is expected to remain stable in the next 5 years.

2. Both licensed providers and community professionals overwhelmingly agree that there is a shortage of quality child care in Newton County.

3. There is a limited supply of licensed child care in Newton County, particularly licensed home care.

Types of Care Needed But Not Available

1. Lack of care for children when they are sick was the most common problem identified by parents surveyed. Currently, there is no licensed sick care in the county.

2. Other types of child care in Newton County are in short supply including: 2nd shift, 3rd shift, infant/toddler, and weekend care.

Types of Child Care Preferred

1. Newton County parents prefer licensed care, particularly licensed center care.

2. Newton County parents also would prefer more business sponsored care such as on-site or near-site day care. This would help with transportation problems.

3. Many Newton County families currently use a babysitter or unlicensed child care home but would prefer to use a different form of child care.

Child Care Problems and Their Impact on Families

1. Newton County parents are concerned about the cost of child care. Many low income and single parents are unable to afford quality child care.

2. Many Newton County parents are forced to miss work or leave early due to child care problems. Parents with a 3-5 year old child miss the most work.
3. Child care is not located at a place convenient to work or home for many parents, particularly those with a pre-school aged child.

4. Parents also have trouble finding 2nd and 3rd shift care. Providers identified second shift as the bigger need.

5. Transportation issues are most likely to affect families with a school-aged child.

Resources for Child Care Providers

1. Licensed and unlicensed providers often have different needs. Unlicensed providers tend to be less connected to services in the county.

2. Child care providers may not be aware of the resources available for them to become licensed and to receive professional training.

3. The support group for child care providers is a good way to assist providers and aid in retention of providers.

Recommendations for Action

Increase the Supply of Quality Child Care

1. Increase the number of licensed child care slots available for infants and toddlers. Provide incentives for providers to take more infants. Incentives could include special training, equipment grants, supplements to reimbursements or fees, and regular relief/substitute care.

2. Develop a plan to provide sick care in the county.
   a. Explore grant possibilities to supplement costs for a licensed sick care home or sick care room at the Newton County Child Care Center. The provider support group may be a good place to identify providers interested in providing sick care.
   b. Look into the possibility of a hospital sick room for children. This could be done in conjunction with a neighboring county. Also, assess whether parents would be interested in using this type of sick care, how much they would be willing to pay, and staffing options.
3. Increase the number of slots for afternoon or 2nd shift care. Working through the Newton County Child Care Center may be the most effective way to do this.

4. Work with local businesses to develop on-site or near-site day care. Form a coalition of family-friendly businesses to collaborate on this issue.

Support Child Care Providers and Increase Quality

5. Continue to encourage experienced child care providers to seek licensing and accreditation through financial support for their course work. Advertise the Council’s activities and the importance of licensing to providers.

6. Continue to work with providers through the monthly support group meetings. Encourage unlicensed providers as well as licensed providers to attend.

7. Educate parents about the costs of quality child care and the importance of seeking quality care. Develop a public education campaign that includes information about how to find a provider, what is a reasonable cost for quality child care, and the importance of seeking a licensed provider.

Support Families Needing Child Care

8. Work with local employers to educate them about the child care needs of their employees. Organize a seminar for local business representatives or a public education campaign aimed at employers to educate them about the child care needs and problems parents with young children face. Find a way, possibly through a newsletter, to publicly recognize businesses who take steps to implement “family-friendly” policies. Encourage employers to use the “Indiana Tool-Kit for Employers and Community Planners”, developed by The Center for Families at Purdue University, to assess the child care needs of their employees.
Appendices

A. Key Informant Interview Protocol
B. Parent Survey Questionnaire
C. Town Live and Work by Children and Family
D. Provider Focus Group Protocol
Appendix A: Key Informant Interview Protocol

1999 Child Care Needs Assessment
Key Informant Interview
2/1/99

I. Introduction

Hello, my name is (insert name here), and I am from Purdue University. We are working with the (insert county name) Step Ahead Council on a child care needs assessment for the county. The purpose of this needs assessment is to identify critical unmet child care needs and to make recommendations for ways to improve child care services within (insert county name).

I am calling you to request a 20 to 25 minute phone interview to gain your informed perspective on families and child care within the county. If you agree to the interview, summaries of your main points may be used in the final needs assessment report in combination with other informants' comments. Your name would be listed in the final report as a participant, but your name will not be attributed to any statement or opinion. Names of interviewees will be included in the final report in order to show that a broad representation of experts in the county have contributed their knowledge to the needs assessment. I will take notes on our conversation, but the interview will not be tape recorded.

Are you willing to participate in this interview?

[If yes] Do you have 25 minutes for the interview now, or would another time be more convenient?

[If no] Thank you for your time and have a nice day.
II. Questions

A. Family Issues

First I am going to ask you a few questions about the families you know and the child care issues they face.

1. For the parents you are familiar with in [Insert County name] County, what are the most important factors they consider when making choices about child care?

   [Probes to get at least 3 considerations – make sure the considerations are defined clearly by the informant]

   1.

   2.

   3.

2. Why do you think these factors are the most important to the parents?

3. What are the most common complaints you hear from parents about child care in [insert county name] county?

III. Provider Issues

Now I am going to ask you some general questions about child care and child care providers in [insert county name] County.

A. Is there an adequate supply of quality child care for all families in [insert county name] County?

   [If the supply is inadequate] Why is this?

   [Remember to probe for root causes!]

B. What are some of the unmet needs of [insert County name] County child care providers?

   [If appropriate, probe with what are the reasons for these unmet needs and/or problems?] [Remember to probe for multiple needs!]

   1.

   2.

   3.
III. General problems in child care

Next, I am going to ask you a few questions about the overall child care needs in [xx] County. I'd like you to consider the most critical unmet child care needs in the county.

NEED 1:
What would you consider to be one of the unmet child care needs within the county?

What types of families are most affected by [Need 1]?

How widespread throughout the county is [Need 1]?

What are some of the reasons this need is not being met? [Probe for more than one reason if appropriate]

NEED 2:
What would you consider to be another of the unmet child care needs within the county?

What types of families are most affected by [Need 2]?

How widespread throughout the county is [Need 2]?

What are some of the reasons this need is not being met? [Probe for more than one reason if appropriate]

NEED 3:
What would you consider to be another of the unmet child care needs within the county?

What types of families are most affected by [Need 3]?

How widespread throughout the county is [Need 3]?

What are some of the reasons this need is not being met? [Probe for more than one reason if appropriate]

NEED 4:
What would you consider to be another of the unmet child care needs within the county?

What types of families are most affected by [Need 4]?

How widespread throughout the county is [Need 4]?
Newton County Child Care Needs Assessment

What are some of the reasons this need is not being met? [Probe for more than one reason if appropriate]

In considering the unmet child care needs you have addressed [give brief summary of each need], which need would you consider the top priority? Why? [Continue to get the ranking for the remaining needs and the reasons for the ranking]

1.

2.

3.

4.

V. Possible Solutions

We have discussed a variety of child care needs facing both parents and providers. These include ...[see loose note-taking sheet]

How do you think these needs could best be addressed?

VI. Additional information on child care in [XX] County

Is there anything else you would like to add about child care in [XX] County that we have not touched upon yet?

VII. Needs Assessment Questions

I am going to ask you a few questions that pertain directly to the needs assessment we are doing. This will be the last subject that we address.

A. Can you suggest any reports or sources of data that would inform us about child care needs in the county?

B. Can you suggest any other people with an informed perspective on child care in the county that we should contact for these interviews?

C. We are planning to conduct several focus groups in [XX] County. The goal of these focus groups is to gain an in-depth understanding of the child care needs of parents within the county. Each group will be composed of 5 to 10 people, and the group discussion will last approximately 90 minutes. Can you suggest any particular groups within the county that have a unique perspective or need that would be informative to the needs assessment we are doing?

[If Yes, Would you be willing to help us contact these people and organize the focus group? What particular times and locations would be most convenient for the members of this group?]
D. Our needs assessment will also include surveying the residents of [XX] County to gain a broader perspective on child care issues and problems prevalent throughout the county.

Do you have any suggestions for getting the survey to as many parents as possible other than by mail (i.e., events, locations, etc.)?

Would you be willing to distribute surveys to the parents than you work with? [If Yes, explain that we will provide a drop box and discuss where it might be placed]
[Closing and Thanks]

Possible Solutions - Supplementary Sheet

Unmet needs facing parents:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Unmet needs facing Providers:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.
Appendix B: Parent Survey Questionnaire

Newton County Child Care Survey

If you are a parent or guardian of a child, please take a few minutes to fill out this survey. The Newton County Step Ahead Council with financial support from the Newton County Local Planning Council will use this information to plan better services for children and families now and in the future. This survey is completely voluntary.

1. Where do you live?
   Town __________________
   County __________________

2. Where are you employed?
   Town __________________
   County __________________

3. What hours do you work?
   Days per week: ________________
   Hours per day: ________________

4. Does your employer support child care in any way? If so, how? (i.e., flexible spending account for child care expenses, flexible work hours)

5. Are you the parent or guardian of a child from birth to 18 years?
   ____ YES, I have one or more children.
   ____ EXPECTING a child within the next year.
   ____ NO. (Go to end of survey.)

6. What are the ages of your children? (Write the age of each child, in years.)
   ____________________________

7. Tell us about the child care you currently use and about the child care you would prefer to use, if possible. (Check all that apply in both columns).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I Currently Use</th>
<th>I Would Prefer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I care for my own child at home.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My spouse or partner cares for my child at home.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My older child(ren) care(s) for my child at home.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My relative (grandparent, sister, mother, aunt, etc.) care(s) for my child at home.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child(ren) stay(s) home alone and take care of themselves.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time preschool or nursery school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Start</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensed family child care home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensed child care center</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Care Ministry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Babysitter or unlicensed family child care provider</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business sponsored child care (on site or near business)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Please specify): ______________________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. How often do you need child care? (e.g., every day, 2 days/week, weekends, ...)

9. What hours do you need child care? (e.g., 9 am-5 pm, 12 noon-4 pm, ...)

10. Which of the following problems have you experienced in the past 12 months? (Check all that apply to you).

   ____ Cost is too high for the type of child care that I need. (If you check this item, please also indicate how much would you be willing to pay for child care $________ per child per week).
   ____ I do not know about child care that is available to me.
   ____ Transportation to or from child care is difficult or not available.
   ____ Location of child care is not convenient.
   ____ No care available during evening or night hours.
   ____ No after-school care available.
   ____ Child care is not available when my child is sick.
   ____ Child care I use is not safe.
   ____ Child care I use is low quality (e.g., doesn’t offer good experiences for kids, ...)
   ____ I can’t find care for my infant or toddler (i.e., birth to 3 years)
   ____ Child care is not available for my child with special needs.
   ____ Other problem(s). Please describe: __________________________________________

11. How do the child care problems above affect you? (Check all that apply)

   ____ Missed hours, days of work (If you check this item please indicate about how many days you have missed in the last year ____).
   ____ Had to leave work early
   ____ Couldn’t concentrate on my work.
   ____ Other. Please describe: __________________________________________

12. Please indicate which of the following statements are important to you in choosing a child care provider. (Circle your choice for each statement).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>No Opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) The provider offers many educational activities such as reading/stories, blocks, computers, etc...</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>N/I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) The provider offers snacks and/or meals.</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>N/I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) The number of children in the group is small enough so each receives attention.</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>N/I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) The provider is close to my home or work.</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>N/I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) The provider accepts children of different ages.</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>N/I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) The cost is reasonable.</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>N/I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) The provider has experience with children.</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>N/I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. What do you consider quality child care?

14. What changes would you like to see in your current child care arrangements?
Appendix C: Town Live and Work by Children and Family

- **Families:**
  - Kentland   L=11  W=11
  - Goodland   L=12  W=26
  - Brook      L=10  W=4
  - Morocco    L=13  W=27
  - Lincoln Twp L=23  W=8
  - Other      L=11  W=8
  - Unknown    L=28  W=19
  - Did Not Work  W=5
  - Total Families = 108

- **Children:**
  - Kentland   L=25  W=22
  - Goodland   L=22  W=59
  - Brook      L=25  W=9
  - Morocco    L=24  W=52
  - Lincoln Twp L=49  W=17
  - Other      L=28  W=23
  - Unknown    L=67  W=49
  - Did Not Work  W=9
  - Total Children = 240

L=Live  W=Work
Appendix D: Provider Focus Group Protocol

1999 Child Care Needs Assessment
Focus Group Protocol - Providers
(4/13/99)

Introduction:

Thank you for letting us talk to you tonight. As you know, our discussion will revolve around the issue of child care in Newton County.

We are particularly interested in your views because we want to hear the thoughts and experiences of as many voices as possible in the county. We will also be conducting focus groups with parents throughout the county.

The overall purpose of this discussion is to give you each the opportunity to express your views on the current status of child care in the county and to help us become aware of any unmet needs that you are experiencing. It might be helpful if we all work from the same definition of child care. For this discussion, child care includes any way in which children are cared for while their parents are at work or school.

We ask that you be as honest as possible in expressing your views. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers but rather there may be different experiences or differing points of view. Please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said. To ensure that people feel safe to share their views, we ask:

1. That people feel free to share their views while respecting other's views,
2. That only one person speak at a time,
3. That you speak up so that we can hear your experiences, and
4. That you feel free to "pass" on a subject that you do not feel comfortable discussing.

This discussion will be taped for our use in accessing the child care needs of the county in the future. No names will be directly linked to any comments made. If you will follow along on the handout, I will read to you the conditions of informed consent which ensures that you understand how our discussion will be used and what your rights are ...[read the informed consent form and collect signed forms]
**Opening Question**
Okay, let's begin by briefly getting to know each other. Why don't each of you tell us
1. Your name,
2. Where you live,
3. How long have you been a child care provider and how many children you
care for.
4. What hours do you care for children?
Would you begin? [start with someone in the room]

**Introductory Question**

Now that we know a little bit about each other, we will start our discussion.
1. Do you feel there is an adequate supply of quality child care for all families in Newton County?

Why is this?

**Provider Questions:**
Let's talk about some issues directly related to providers in the county.

2. What are some of the unmet needs Child care providers face in Newton County? (i.e., professionalism, payment, flexibility).

3. **Specific Provider Issues:**
   
   a. What kinds of calls do you get from parents? [What types of child care are parents asking for? e.g., hours/ages/cost ]
   
   b. How often do you take new children? How do you decide?
      -Do you have a waiting list?
   
   c. What happens when you take a vacation?
   
   d. What happens when you get sick or have a family emergency?
   
   e. Do you have problems with getting parents to pay their bills? How do you deal with these problems?
f. What kinds of operating costs do you have? (i.e., food, entertainment, equipment)

   - How do you charge parents (by day/week/per child/family)?

**Ending Questions**

Let's spend the remainder of our time thinking about what some of the unmet child care needs of Newton County are. I'd like you to consider the most critical unmet child care needs in the county.

4. What would you consider to be the most critical unmet needs? (i.e., infant care)

5. Considering these unmet needs, what could be done in Newton County over the next few years to solve these child care problems?

**Closing**

Well, our time is up. We would like to take the opportunity again to thank you for participating.