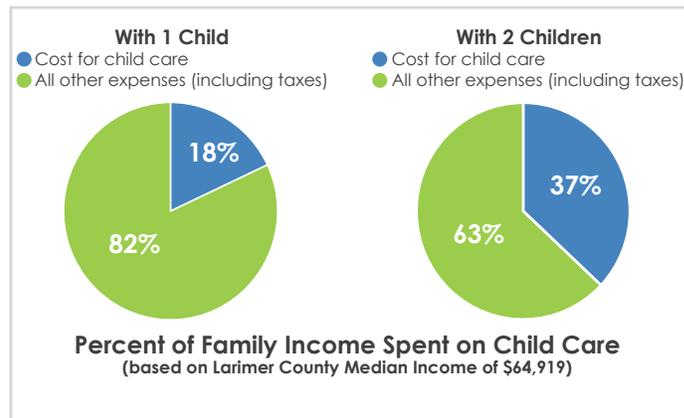
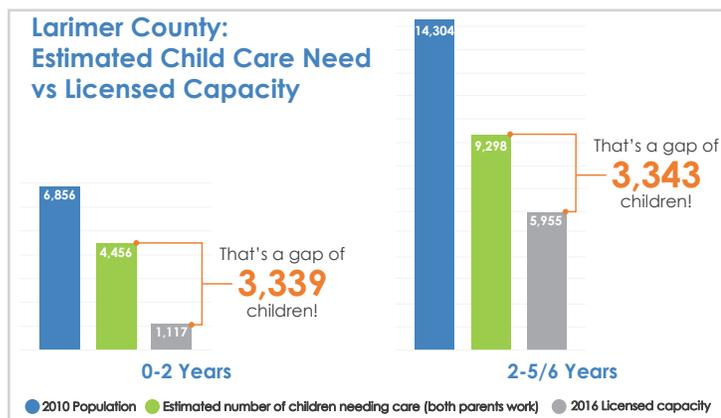


Through the Give 10 Interest Profiles we received, Early Care and Education (ECE) was identified as a commonly shared interest among Give 10 members. This Focus on Giving explores a local challenge and ECE issue - access to high quality and affordable child care.

**? WHAT'S THE CHALLENGE?**

**SUPPLY AND DEMAND.** One key driver is a basic supply and demand equation. Quite simply, demand for child care outstrips supply, especially for infant care. Currently, licensed child care providers can only serve 25% of the infants (0-2 years old) needing child care. For children 2-6 years old, approximately 60% of the demand can be met via licensed child care providers.<sup>1</sup> Many local licensed child care providers have waitlists of hundreds of children. In some cases, child care providers have closed the waitlists because they don't want to give families false hope.

**COST.** For families that can secure a space in a licensed child care facility, the costs are often burdensome. Infant care in a licensed center can exceed \$16,000 annually. As a comparison, resident tuition at Colorado State University is just under \$12,000.<sup>1</sup> These costs represent a large share of total household expenses. The illustration below demonstrates this burden for households with median incomes. Keep in mind the high cost of housing and, as you can imagine, households with young children can be financially strained.



1. Be Ready, Directing Change, ECCLC, A Workforce Strategy and Major Economic Driver: Child Care in Larimer County, January 2018.

**? HOW DOES THE CHILD CARE CHALLENGE IMPACT THE COMMUNITY?**

The child care crisis disproportionately impacts children from low-income households. Children who don't have access to high quality ECE experiences will have lasting impacts across a range of developmental and educational outcomes.

Parents with lower incomes who can't find licensed care are often forced to either find unlicensed and informal care (which typically have lower quality standards and outcomes than licensed centers) or drop out of the workforce, often perpetuating the poverty cycle. Single parents may qualify for government subsidies to help with costs, but demand outpaces supply for these benefits as well so they are often unavailable to lower income households.

At the community level, employers are starting to see the impact on their businesses as they either lose employees who can't find care or have trouble recruiting new younger employees from out of town because they won't relocate to the community without accessible and affordable child care options.

## ? WHAT ARE THE VARIABLES MAKING THIS ISSUE WORSE?

Unfortunately, the child care problem can't be solved simply by building new child care facilities. The sector is experiencing an extreme ECE teacher shortage that must be addressed. In some cases, additional children could be enrolled in existing child care facilities now if the center could recruit qualified staff.

There are several issues impacting the ECE workforce. First, there is a long history of under-valuing early childhood educators. For many reasons, the workforce is often under-qualified and overburdened. Many young people who start out in the ECE field change paths or focus ultimately on K-12, where pay, benefits, and schedules are better. And, while ECE costs are high for parents, wages remain very low for ECE teachers with nearly half of teachers collecting public subsidies to make ends meet.

## ? WHAT IS HAPPENING LOCALLY TO ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES?

Below are a few examples of current local responses to these challenges.

1. The Early Childhood Council of Larimer County (ECCLC) recently received one of six grants awarded by Early Milestones Colorado to address ECE workforce challenges. The grant will fund collaborative efforts that:
  - Provide required certification for new and early career ECE teachers.
  - Create credit earning apprentice programs with local high schools and colleges.
  - Train a cohort of teachers to mentor new staff and improve retention.
2. Talent 2.0 Workforce Strategy - ECE Task Force. Responding to employers' challenge of recruiting and retaining employees on account of child care barriers, a new task force was formed to address the lack of child care options across Larimer County. Partners include the Chambers of Fort Collins and Loveland; Economic Development Departments of Fort Collins and Loveland and Larimer County; Larimer County Workforce Center; Northern Colorado Economic Alliance; and United Way of Larimer County have recently formed a special task force to focus on the ECE access issue and its implications for the local economy.
3. Local organizations are also leading change by increasing fundraising efforts to raise salaries of ECE staff and/or provide health insurance. Other organizations are exploring creative solutions to increase the number of licensed child care spaces in the near term.



**Bright Ideas** – Here are a couple of local organizations working to address the child care challenge:

- Early Childhood Council of Larimer County
- Teaching Tree Early Childhood Learning Center
- The Family Center / La Familia
- CSU's Early Childhood Center

### FEEDBACK?

We hope you found this issue of Focus on Giving informative. As always, we'd love your feedback. Don't hesitate to reach out to Sara Maranowicz, Community Programs Director, at [sara@bohemianfoundation.org](mailto:sara@bohemianfoundation.org) to share your thoughts or recommendations for future newsletters.

### Related Research and Policy Priorities:



- Colorado Children's Campaign – ECE Policy Priorities
- Bell Policy Center – ECE Policy Priorities
- Early Milestones Colorado – Bearing the Cost of ECE in Colorado
- Early Milestones Colorado – Workforce Survey 2017
- Be Ready, Directing Change, and ECCLC – Workforce Strategy and Economic Driver
- Fort Collins Chamber of Commerce – TALENT 2.0 Regional Workforce Strategy