

NH Research Finds Affordability and Lack of Openings Obstacles to Child Care

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DURHAM, N.H.—Three-quarters of survey respondents with children under age five had searched for childcare in the past 12 months and half of them reported the search was difficult, according to a [statewide family needs assessment survey](#). The [survey](#) was conducted and analyzed by the Carsey School of Public Policy at the University of New Hampshire as part of the statewide Preschool Development Grant.

The goal of the [grant](#) is to build New Hampshire's early childhood care and education system, better address the needs of vulnerable young children and their families and create a solid foundation to improve outcomes for N.H.'s children, families,



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schools and communities. It is a collaboration between UNH, the state departments of education and health and human services, the governor's early childhood council and early childhood advocates and practitioners.

"This family needs assessment identified childcare—both availability and affordability—as top concerns," said Jess Carson, research assistant professor of public policy. "Seventy-four percent of responding parents with young children used at least some nonparental care. However, 80% of those respondents rated their arrangement as less than ideal and identified affordability as especially important for moving from 'less than ideal' to 'ideal.' More broadly, though, families need diverse local childcare options that allow them to choose from different kinds of settings and that match their child's needs and fit their family's circumstances, including their income, work schedule and preferred language. Having access to the right kind of childcare—which may look different for different families—can set critical foundations for children's early learning and allow parents to fully engage in work."

In addition to childcare, the survey gathered information about other family needs.

"We're working to create a more comprehensive system for little kids and their families," said Kimberly Nesbitt, primary investigator of the early childhood initiative and associate professor of human development and family studies. "The information gathered through this survey will help to inform our planning, identify the programs we should invest in and create a network that better lets families know all of the programs that are available."

According to Carson, half of the respondents use at least one program meant to support their child's development and education or to help their family meet household food needs. Overall, respondents were generally aware of food assistance programs,

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but knowledge about child development programs was less widespread—especially among those with younger children.

“A lot of programs exist to help families get the resources they need, and it’s really important that state and nonprofit partners continue to recognize that people don’t know a lot about what exists,” said Nesbitt. “We need to continue to get the word out via word of mouth and trusted nonprofits.”

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funding in FY21 to further explore and define the frontiers of land, sea and space.

Media Contact

[Erika Mantz](#) | Communications and Public Affairs |

erika.mantz@unh.edu



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