



**FIRST 5 SANTA BARBARA COUNTY
EARLY CARE & EDUCATION DIVISION**

Downtown Santa Barbara Employee Child Care Study

{ High Quality Child Care }

All children deserve the best start in life. In the first years of a child's life, critical connections are made in the brain that affect lifelong learning. How we nurture and support our children today will impact their success in school and in life. Research demonstrates that high quality early care and education environments that offer safe, stable and developmentally appropriate care in a stimulating environment can dramatically influence a child's future health and success. Early experiences directly impact the way a child's brain circuitry is "wired" which provides the foundation for future cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development. For this reason, high-quality early care and education is critical to a child's healthy growth and development.

From Survey Respondents:

Even though I don't have any young children, I am strongly supportive of employer supported child care.

If my children are in a safe place while I'm working, my performance at work is above and beyond what is expected. I can focus without a worry while my children are learning.

I wish there were more child care centers available nearby work for mid-low income earners on a sliding scale or scholarship basis with the opportunity for parents to volunteer. This would invest in our new generation to be well prepared and ready for pre-school with social / interactive skills.

**Child Care is like Roads –
Parents need both to get to work**

{ Purpose of the Study }

Throughout the United States, child care is a part of millions of families' daily lives. When working parents face challenges with child care it can affect children's health and development, the home, and the work place. This study looks at the impact that the current child care supply, and parents' child care responsibilities have on employees and businesses. The geographic focus of this study was the downtown Santa Barbara area (zip codes 93101-93110) and all County of Santa Barbara work sites.

Business and government leaders responded to parents' reports about the difficulties finding high quality child care by establishing a public-private partnership of downtown Santa Barbara employers. The Partnership was convened to explore the issue and to determine what they could do together to address workforce child care. The first step was to conduct a study in which employees –both parents and non-parents – could weigh in on the child care issue and provide specific information to help the Partnership identify key strategies and next steps.

First 5 Santa Barbara County and the County of Santa Barbara have led this effort through this first study phase, and will continue to do so as the project moves forward. It is the intention of First 5 Santa Barbara County to conduct similar studies throughout the County.

{ The Survey }

The Downtown Employee Child Care Survey was distributed to 9,041 employees (in English and Spanish, electronically and in print) through 23 participating employers representing diverse industries. Three parent focus groups were also held.

The study was conducted by Summa Associates, a Work-life Effectiveness firm with extensive experience in employee child care needs assessment, corporate child care and elder care referrals. Additional data was layered over the survey results, including Census, federal salary information, and the results of a local child care center capacity study.



The Survey Respondents

- 2,015 work in downtown Santa Barbara
- 51% of respondents both live and work in downtown Santa Barbara
- Over half of the respondents work in zip code area 93101
- 697 respondents are parents who have a total of 1,202 children (626 children are age 5 or younger and 576 children are age 6 to 12)
- 363 respondents are either currently pregnant or adopting, or expect to have children in the next 5 years.
- 38% of respondents have employment positions in either office and administrative support or management
- 149 respondents have elder/adult care responsibilities and an additional 443 expect to have these responsibilities in the next 5 years





Lack of Quality Child Care Impacts Parents

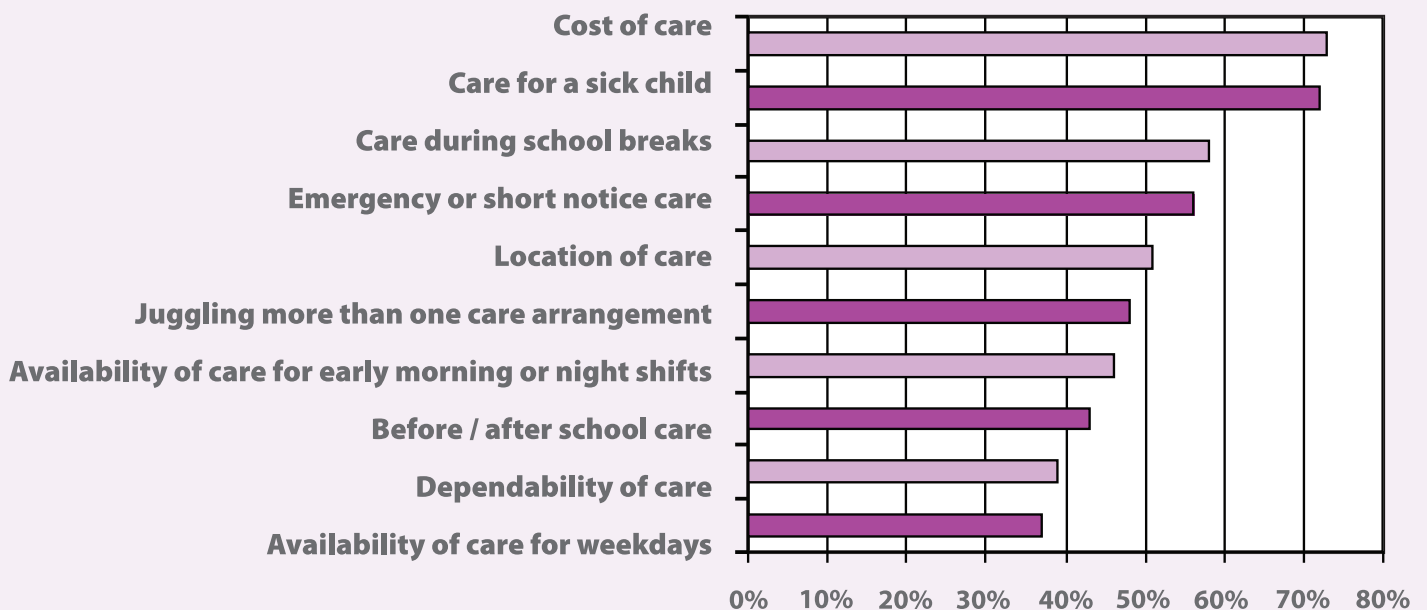
In focus groups and within the survey, parents reported a number of challenges related to child care

- Child care availability is the number one challenge focus group participants face.
- 74% of parents report a shortage of child care within downtown Santa Barbara.
- Many focus group parents are dissatisfied with current child care arrangements.

The chart below shows other primary child care challenges parents report in relationship to work.



Top 10 Child Care Challenges Parents Report Related to Work





Lack of Quality Child Care Impacts Business



The study shows that in downtown Santa Barbara the workplace is affected by these child care related issues:

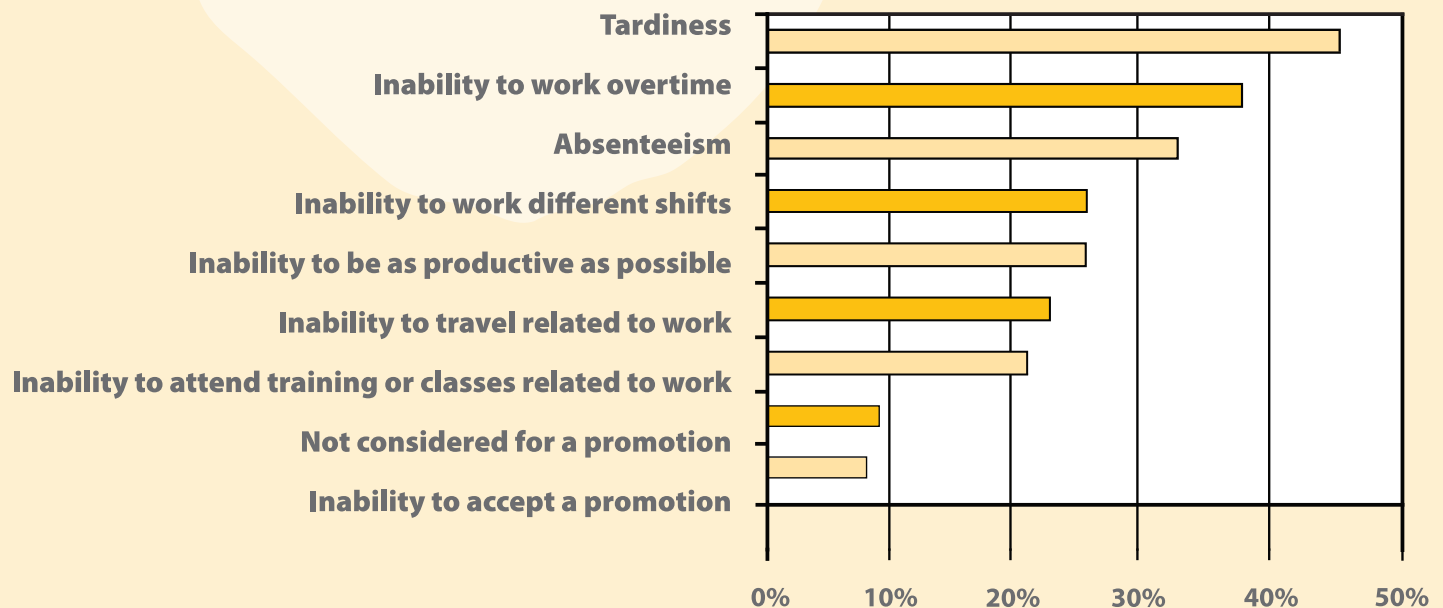
Absenteeism Working parents reported missing an average of 4.06 days last year due to a breakdown in child care arrangements (for a total of 374 weeks or 7 years collectively). This translates into \$335,000 in lost productivity in just one year for the employers who participated in the study.

Turnover Over a third of all surveyed parents have seriously considered quitting their jobs due to child care issues. If these employees actually did quit, Summa Associates (the consulting firm who conducted the study) estimates the turnover cost to employers would be over \$6 million.

Stress Parent employees report increased personal stress and tension with co-workers resulting from child care issues.

Loss of Productivity Child care costs and challenges can affect employee work performance. Parents associated child care challenges with missed opportunities for promotion, increased tardiness, and inability to work overtime.

Greatest Difficulties Parents Experience as a Result of Child Care Responsibilities





Improving Workforce Child Care

Study findings, along with child care capacity data, confirm that there is a critical shortage of available, high quality, affordable child care in Santa Barbara. When asked specifically what would help resolve this issue, parents offered a number of suggestions.

More affordable, high quality child care:

- **A near-site child care center or centers** 60% of surveyed parents reported they would use a quality child care center in a convenient location at a fair market rate (parents of 724 children).
- **Back-up/Drop-in child care options** 62% of surveyed parents said they would use a back-up/drop-in child care services (parents of 712 children).
- **Family child care network** A third of parents indicated they would use a family child care system (parents of 413 children).
- **Mildly ill child care options** A third of parents would use a mildly-ill child care program (parents of 388 children).

Financial assistance:

Parents report that there is help for low income parents but nothing for middle income parents to support the high cost of child care.

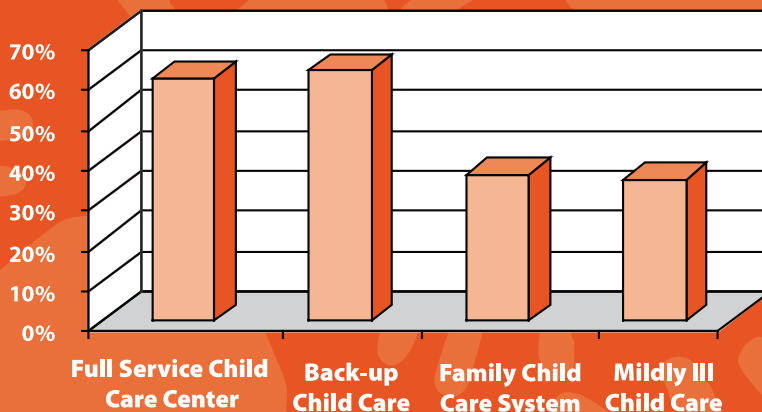
Work-life effectiveness policies:

Parents report that flexible work schedules, lactation support services, child care and elder care referral and resource services, and pre-parenting education programs would help reduce workforce child care challenges.

{ Next Steps }

The Downtown Santa Barbara Employer Child Care Partnership’s next steps include the development of an action plan based on the study’s key findings that integrates a combination of strategies to address workforce child care.

{ Child Care Services Parents Would Use }



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Noemi Vazquez

Sonos*

Valerie Janssens

Zona Seca

Diana Banales

* Partnership Steering Committee Members



www.first5santabarbaracounty.org

Santa Barbara Office:

1 East Anapamu Street, Suite 200, Santa Barbara, CA 93101
Tel: (805) 884-8085 Fax: (805) 564-8586

Santa Maria Office:

218 Carmen Lane, Suite 111, Santa Maria, CA 93458
Tel: (805) 739-8740 Fax: (805) 739-8747

For more information about the Downtown Santa Barbara Employee Child Care Study project, Partnership and next steps go to:

www.countyofsb.org/ceo/ece/survey

