

2022 San Mateo County Child Care Needs Assessment

Family Child Care Brief



About the 2022 San Mateo County Child Care Needs Assessment

The Child Care Partnership Council and the San Mateo County Office of Education retained Brion Economics, Inc. in 2022 to conduct a Countywide Child Care Needs Assessment, which will be used for a variety of purposes. The needs assessment included estimates of child care supply and demand over time, a parent survey, a workforce survey, and economic analyses related to increasing the child care workforce and raising wages for child care workers. The full needs assessment can be viewed at <https://www.smcoe.org/about/child-care-partnership-council/needs-assessment.html>. This issue brief summarizes the needs assessment findings related to Family Child Care Homes.

About Family Child Care Homes

Family child care homes are licensed by the State’s Community Care Licensing Division to provide care in the caregiver’s residence for periods of less than 24 hours per day while parents are away. Family child care homes are allowed by right in any residence. Family child care providers with a “small” license can care for up to 8 children, and those with a “large license” can care for up to 14 children with an assistant.

Family child care providers are an asset to our county’s system of child care. They often reflect the demographics of the families they serve in terms of language, ethnicity, and culture. They offer smaller, home-based settings for early learning and care. They may have the flexibility to offer evening and weekend care for families working nontraditional schedules.

Family child care providers are regulated in regard to the number and ages of children they can serve as shown in the following table:

Adult to Child Ratio in Licensed Family Child Care Homes	
Small License	Large License
1 adult: 4 infants (considered children under the age of 2)	2 adults: 12 children (may include up to 4 infants)
1 adult: 6 children (may include up to 3 infants)	
1 adult: 8 children (may include up to 2 infants and must include at least 2 children over the age of six)	2 adults: 14 children (may include up to 3 infants and must include at least 2 children over the age of six)

A special feature of family child care is the ability to care for mixed ages of children. Families can enjoy continuity of care for all of their children from birth through school age. Family child care providers may focus their programs on one age group or serve a range of ages.

While the only education or training requirement for becoming a licensed family child care home is 15 hours of Health and Safety training, approximately one third of family child care providers have an Associate’s Degree or higher in Early Childhood Education.¹

¹ Estimated based findings of the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/education-and-experience-of-the-california-ece-workforce/>

Supply of Family Child Care in San Mateo County – 2017–2022

Change in FCCHs since 2017

The number of FCCH spaces in 2022 was 5,766, down 897 spaces, or 13 percent, from 2017. The number of FCCHs dropped from 626 in 2017 to 525 in 2022, a reduction of 101 providers. This loss is likely associated with the impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic, which started in early 2020, as well as the high cost of living in San Mateo County. It should be noted that not all licensed FCCHs are in operation; they may have closed temporarily and are holding onto their license.

2017 to 2022 Change in Supply of FCCHs – San Mateo County				
	2017	2022	Net Change	% Change
Number of Spaces	6,663	5,766	(897)	-13%
Number of Providers	626	525	(101)	-16%

Child Care Supply in 2022

There are approximately 41,350 child care spaces in San Mateo County for children from 0 to 12 years old. Of these, about 5,800 (14 percent) are associated with Family Child Care Homes (FCCHs). The following table summarizes the existing supply by age group and provider type.

San Mateo County Supply of Child Care Spaces - 2022				
Age of Children	FCCH Spaces	Center Spaces	Total Spaces	% of Supply
Infants	1,334	1,591	2,925	7%
Preschool	2,669	16,071	18,740	45%
School Age	1,763	17,919	19,682	48%
Total Supply	5,766	35,581	41,347	100%
Share of Supply	14%	86%	100%	

Total Child Care Providers

In 2022, there were 1,009 child care providers in the county. Of those, 484 were Centers and 525 were FCCH Providers (252 with a small license to care for up to 8 children, and 273 with a large license to care for up to 14 children).

Percentage of Child Care Supply in Family Child Care Settings by City ²			
City/Area	Percentage of Child Care Supply in Family Child Care Homes	Number of Child Care Spaces in Family Child Care Homes	Number of Family Child Care Providers
San Mateo	24%	1298	113
South San Francisco	16%	596	53
Half Moon Bay Region	16%	136	14
Redwood City	15%	1050	98
Daly City/Colma	15%	614	63
Pacifica	15%	238	22
Millbrae	15%	122	11
San Mateo County	14%	5766	525
Brisbane	14%	14	1
East Palo Alto	13%	338	28
San Bruno	12%	326	31
Foster City	12%	280	25
Burlingame	11%	196	18
San Carlos	9%	148	12
Hillsborough	9%	14	1
Menlo Park	8%	246	22
Woodside	8%	12	1
Belmont	7%	124	11
Atherton	2%	14	1
Portola Valley	0%	0	0
South Coast	0%	0	0

² Child Care Needs Assessment Profiles for each city in San Mateo County can be found at <https://www.smcoe.org/about/child-care-partnership-council/needs-assessment.html>

Family Child Care Can Meet Specific Parent Needs

Infant Care Shortage – 2022

In San Mateo County, there is currently a shortage of about 5,800 infant (under 2 years old) spaces with 34 percent of demand currently met. The shortage varies significantly by city/area. Family Child Care Homes are a significant provider of infant/toddler care, providing 43 percent of the existing spaces for this age group. In some communities they are the only providers of licensed infant care (Brisbane, East Palo Alto, Hillsborough, Millbrae, Woodside).

Non-Traditional Hours and Requests for Care

According to 2021-2022 data from 4Cs, there were 186 requests for non-traditional hours of care including evening, overnight, weekends, rotating, and drop-in care. This is about 27 percent higher than 2019-2020. Sixty-four percent of the requests were for family child care. Only one center in San Mateo County provided evening, overnight or weekend care. Some Family Child Care providers offer nontraditional hours of care either by regularly extending their business hours, or on an as-needed basis for children in their care, however this may entail working significant overtime and hiring additional staff. The existing supply of Family Child Care will not be able to support the growing demand for nontraditional care. Other types of child care providers, such as family, friend and neighbor care and nannies, also meet families' needs for nontraditional hours of care.³

Estimating the Size of the Family Child Care Workforce:

Current Workforce Estimate

San Mateo County's child care workforce is estimated at 5,331 workers based on current teacher-to-child ratio requirements. This represents 1.3 percent of the county's total employment base or the number of jobs in the county in 2022. Approximately 797 of these staff work in Family Child Care Homes.

Current Shortfall Workforce Needs – 2022

Based on the estimated shortfall of 17,157 child care spaces, another 2,829 workers are needed to address current shortages. This represents a 53 percent increase in the size of the workforce, which includes aides, teachers, and directors or owners of FCCHs. A 53 percent increase to the Family Child Care field would equate to 423 new FCCH directors and aides.

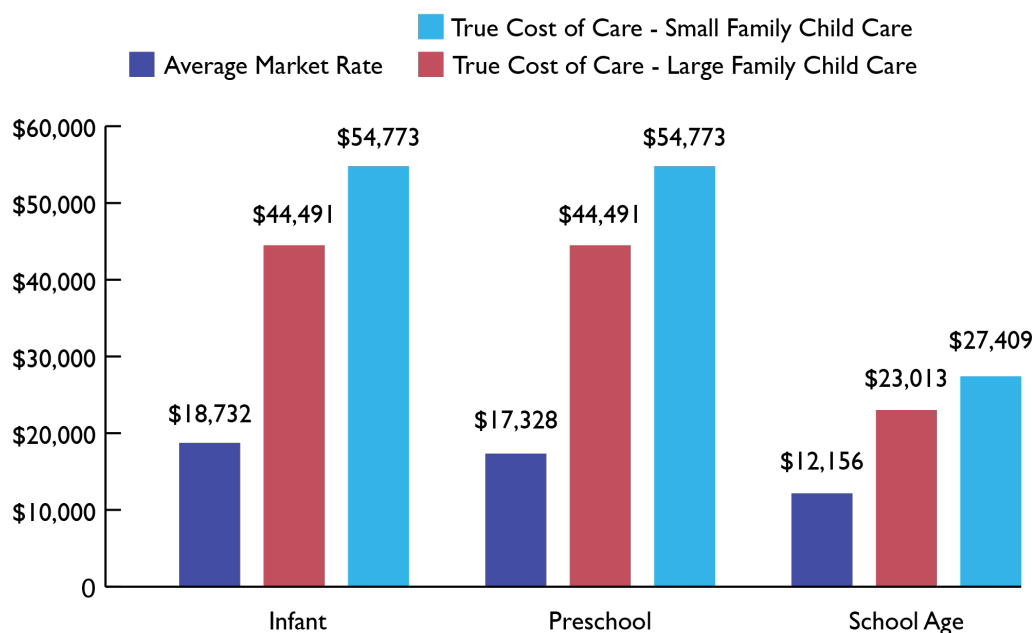
³ As part of the San Mateo County Child Care Needs Assessment, the Institute for Families and Nannies (TIFFAN) conducted a survey of nannies to understand their demographics and education and development needs. To learn more about efforts to build the supply of quality informal care, visit the needs assessment webpage to find TIFFAN's report, <https://www.smcoe.org/about/child-care-partnership-council/needs-assessment.html>

The Economics of Family Child Care:

True Cost of Care

Adjusting for living wages and other appropriate expenses for providers, the annual true cost of care per child in a Small FCCH is \$27,409 for school age and \$54,773 for preschool and infant care. For large FCCHs, the annual true cost of care per child is \$23,013 for school age and \$44,491 for preschool and infant care. In contrast, average market rate tuition for FCCHs ranges from \$12,156 to \$18,732 for full-time care; part-time rates are less.

Comparison of Market Rates to True Cost of Care



The current market-based system for child care tuition is fundamentally broken – families cannot afford to pay more and child care programs cannot afford to pay living wages. Families’ child care costs average 25% or more of household income. However, child care programs are charging far below what it costs to provide quality care with living wages for staff. Current family child care owner wages are estimated at \$22.9 million per year. Bringing these workers up to a living wage (addressing the wage gap) would cost an additional \$29.2 million per year, a cost that is difficult to pass on to families.

2021 Provider COVID-19 Survey

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the precarious economics for FCCHs. In March 2021, 161 providers responded to a county survey about the impacts they were experiencing from COVID-19. About 58 percent of FCCHs reported they had one month or less cash on hand. Of the FCCH respondents, 47 percent said they have incurred debt due to COVID-19. Only 39 percent of FCCHs felt confident they would remain open throughout 2021.