

COMMUNITY CHILD CARE SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Service Area/ County: Niagara

The purpose of the Child Care Community Needs Assessment is to create a snapshot of child care demand/supply in the service area/county. Part of this assessment was achieved through utilization surveys of registered or licensed providers/programs rates and referral follow-up data.

The needs assessment will be used to identify the types of child care that is needed and/or the locations within the service area that are in most need of care. In addition, this assessment will be useful for the setting of target numbers for subsequent CCR&R contracts.

Outline of Assessment

- Part I** What is the supply of regulated child care? What is the estimated utilization of this regulated care? What are the other forms of care that are available?
- Part II** Based on Population statistics, what is the potential demand of child care?
- Part III** What does client follow-up information reveal?
- Part IV** Conclusion

PART I - SUPPLY OF CHILD CARE

Regulated Child Care

The following captures the number of regulated child care programs/providers and slots for each age group (as reported in the Child Care Facilities System) and the approximate utilization rate. This rate was achieved by a random survey of programs and providers as the number of slots filled for each age group.

Survey Area: Niagara County

Date: 08/30/2025

A) Center Based Programs (operating full time/full day)

Number of Licensed Centers running full time/full day: 20	Number of Potential Slots (as reported in CCFS)	# of Potential slots Available	Utilization Rate (as determined by random sample*)
Infant Slots	252	15	94
Toddler Slots	404	18	92
Preschool Slots	840	42	90
School Age Slots	452	89	80
TOTAL SLOTS	1948	164	90

*Number of Licensed Day Care Providers surveyed: 15

B) Other types of care available for preschool children.

Type of Program	# of Programs	Number of Slots	Number of Slots Offering "Wrap around" arrangements
Head Start Pre-K	3	334	0
Early Head Start	1	46	0
NYSED UPK (community based)	10	639	342
NYSED UPK (District run)	29	609	0

C) Family Child Care

Number of Registered Family Child Care Homes: 26	Number of Potential Slots (as reported in CCFS)	Utilization Rate (as determined by random sample*)
Ages 0-2 only total slots	52	95
Ages 2-12 total slots	156	85
School-Age only total slots	52	78

*Number of Registered Family Child Care Providers surveyed: 19

D) Group Family Child Care

Number of Licensed Group Family Child Care Homes: 21	Number of Potential Slots (as reported in CCFS)	Utilization Rate (as determined by random sample*)
Ages 0-2 only total Slots	84	90
Ages 2-12 only total slots	166	90
School-Age only total slots	84	75

*Number of Licensed Group Family Child Care Providers surveyed: 13

E) School- Age Child Care

Number of Registered School Age Programs: 30 (excludes middle school only programs)	Number of potential slots (as reported in CCFS)	Utilization Rate (as determined by random sample*)
TOTAL SLOTS K-6 grade	1758	82
TOTAL SLOTS (Holiday care)	170	85

*Number of Registered School Age Programs surveyed: 26

Rural care available; 5 DCC, 2 FDC, 2 GFDC and 3 SACC programs.

F) Other types of non-regulated care available.

Type of Program	# of Programs	TOTAL SLOTS
Nursery (running less than 3 hours per child)	2	unknown
Drop-In School-age Programs	4	unknown

PART II - POTENTIAL DEMAND OF CHILD CARE

DEMOGRAPHICS OF CHILDREN IN Niagara County

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2020 and NYSED Data 2020 and Niagara County birth rates 2020

Age of Children	Number of Children
Under 2	4253
2 to 5	6572
Children enrolled in NYSED UPK	1217 (FT)
Children enrolled in Head Start	334
Children enrolled in kindergarten (full day)	1818
Children enrolled in elementary school (grades 1-3))	5717
Children enrolled in elementary school (grades 4-6)	5790

METHODOLOGY FOR CALCULATING THE POTENTIAL DEMAND FOR CHILD CARE

One methodology for calculating the potential number of children who are likely to need childcare is based upon the number of parents who are in the labor force. Per Estimated U.S. Census Profile estimated 2023, **60% of children under 2 years old, 68% of children under 6 and 78% of children over 6 years old have all parents in the labor force in Niagara County. (It is noted, however, that only 46% of families with children under 12 years old have both parents working full-time)**

Simple multiplication can produce a potential demand for each age group (see formulas below).

Total # of children aged 0-2 $\boxed{4452} \times 60\% = \boxed{2671}$ potential demand for infant/toddler care.

Total # of children aged 3-5 not enrolled in a full time Pre-K program $\boxed{5021} \times 68\% = \boxed{3414}$ potential demand for full time care.

Total# of children aged 3-5 enrolled in a full-time Pre-K program $\boxed{1551} \times 68\% = \boxed{1055}$ potential demand for b/a, holiday and vacation care

AND

Total # of children grades K-6 $\boxed{13325} \times 78\% = \boxed{10393}$ potential demand for b/a, holiday and vacation care

PART III - RESULTS OF FOLLOW-UP INFORMATION

Follow- up information from 01/01/2025-6/30/2025

Number of children referred: 222

54% were under 2 years of age

58% were 2-4 years of age

42% were school-aged children

Number of families referred: 143

Follow-up information obtained for 47 families

As reported in follow-up, the total number of families who did not find care: 8

Report the reasons why care was not located:

No openings: 5

Location of care: 0

No transportation: 2

No response:1

Referrals per family requesting evening care: 8

Referrals per family requesting weekend care: 10

Referrals per family requesting overnight care: 4

Referrals per family requesting holiday care: 5

Referrals per child with special needs: 20

CONCLUSION:

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The United States bureau of labor 2025 Statistics indicate that 68% of children under 6 years of age and 78% of children over 6 years of age have parents in the labor force. This percentage has held fairly steady since 2017 with the exception of the 2020-2021 Covid 19 pandemic timeframe. It is estimated that this figure will continue to hold steady. Due to rise in cost of living, it is becoming increasingly common for mothers to work full time. 2025 Census data shows that over 50% of mothers who work do so full-time. With mothers as the primary caregiver of children, the demand for quality and affordable child care can be predicted to increase.

According to birth rate Niagara County there is potential for 2,671 infants aged 6 weeks through 2 years of age who will need child care. With the total number of slots in Day Care Centers being only 9% of this potential need, it is clear that there is shortage of 2,419 slots available for infant and toddler care in licensed Day Care programs.

According to the child care providers surveyed, infant slots in Niagara County are Utilized at 94% for Day Care Centers. Family Day Care and Group Family Day Care respondents indicated no to very few vacancies for children 6 weeks to 2 years old. Eight home-based programs stated they are not accepting infants. Some respondents stated they are not accepting infants due to the amount of specialized care that a young infant requires such as diapering, napping, and feeding schedules. Others stated that non-walkers need a separate area to explore safely, and their program cannot accommodate this need. A couple of the Family Day Care providers surveyed stated they are not comfortable caring for infants alone and would accept infants if they could afford to hire an assistant. Other Family Day Care providers indicated they were heading to retirement and were not currently enrolling any additional children. If all home-based providers were willing and able to enroll children under 2 old, this would account for an additional 130 Slots available. There are still nearly 2,289 children in Niagara County under 3 years old without regulated care available.

According to the Economic Hardship Reporting an increase in quality and affordable infant and toddler programs available is directly related to an increase in the economic mobility of single mothers by allowing them to pursue higher education and employment, thus reducing their need for welfare programs and lifting the family out of poverty. The National Institute of Health reports a direct correlation between children growing up in poverty and future involvement in criminal activity and generational poverty. The NIH also reports that quality infant and toddler programs who use written observation and preliminary screening methods are able to identify potential disabilities, support and refer parents to Early Intervention Programs which have been shown to increase socio-economic adjustment,

physical development and educational success in children. The Community Childcare Clearinghouse of Niagara offers training and mentoring through the Infant Toddler Program. Such Training and support may help providers feel more comfortable with providing infant care. There is a need for investment from both public and private stakeholders to provide an increase in funding to support both parents and childcare providers who care for infants and toddlers.

Currently there are nearly 2409 children ages 3 and 4 who do not attend a formal Universal Preschool or Head Start program. Potentially 2,000 of these children will require full-time care. If Day Care Centers and Home-Based providers utilized all 1162 slots available for children age 3 and 4 years old there remains a shortage of 838 full-time slots available.

All ten school districts in Niagara County offer at least one full school day universal preschool program and there are 639 available slots in community based universal preschool programs. According to NYSED and Head Start Statistics, a total of 1,551 children are enrolled in school based and Head Start Pre-School programs. Only 342 of these children attending either of these programs have a wrap-around option available, leaving parents to find other arrangements for before and after care for almost 1200 preschoolers 3 and 4 years of age.

Kids Count 2025 reports that only 59% of preschool age children are enrolled in state funded universal preschool and only 33% of eligible families participate in Head Start programs. Head Start programs do not offer transportation nor a wrap-around program and run their programs from 8:00am-4:30PM, making it difficult for participating parents to work full-time. It is one of the Head Start's missions to alleviate poverty, yet without transportation or extended hours, most eligible families may decline to enroll their children. According to the child care programs surveyed, no Daycare providers offer transportation at this time. In addition, it was noted in the survey that home-based providers do not usually hold slots for before and after school care for pre-school aged children because those part-time slots are better utilized as full time. Because pre-school aged children count toward the maximum capacity for non-school aged children in New York State licensed and registered home-based programs holding before and after school slots for preschool children will limit slots available for full-time enrolled children.

Presently seven out of the ten Niagara County school districts have New York State registered school-age child care programs located in schools. Of these, only the registered school age programs in Royalton Hartland school district and DeSales Catholic School in Lockport currently offer before and after school care for pre-school children. New York State regulations require school-age child care programs to obtain an approved waiver in order to enroll universal preschool children in the program. One of the requirements for the

waiver to be approved by the office of children and Family Services are the qualifications for UPK head of group to meet the same qualifications for a Pre-school lead teacher in a licensed day care center. Registered school-age programs reported that this requirement is difficult to fulfill due to a lack of qualified current and potential employees. School-age child care programs report that qualified candidates for both the lead UPK teacher and program directors often turn down the position because of the split-shift scheduling and/or inadequate pay and benefits. According to a study by the National Institute of Health children who participate in high quality preschool programs were 70% less likely to be arrested for violent crime by the age of 18. High quality programs require high quality staff who deserve pay that reflects their importance in the life of a child. School districts along with other community stakeholders need to reflect on the need to increase preschool enrollment. Federal, State and local budgets need to commit to developing a dedicated funding source for full day pre-school programs that offer wrap-around care.

There were 13,325 children enrolled in grades kindergarten through 6th grade in Niagara County during the 2023-2024 school year. Of these, 10,393 of these children potentially need some form of before and/or after-school, school holiday and vacation care. Currently there are 1,758 potential slots available in registered school-age child care, 452 slots are potentially available in Day Care Center, and 136 slots are potentially available in home-based programs for a total of 2,346 slots available in regulated care, accommodating only approximately 20% of the potential demand. In addition, only 758 of these regulated slots are open for holiday and/or vacation care. For parents who both work and single parents who work outside the home, this shortage of care results in parents finding alternate arrangements (reducing work hours, babysitters, relative or neighbor care) or allowing children to stay home at their home without parental supervision.

Access to out-of-school programs for children is an essential support for not only parents, but also for students themselves. Out-of-school programs provide a supportive environment for children through educational enrichment, physical activity, informal social interaction and healthy snacks and/or meals. With the availability of extended day programs, parents are able to maintain employment, work hours providing increased opportunities for financial stability, further their education and connect with community resources. According to a survey by Afterschool Alliance, 82% of parents agree that the afterschool programs keep their children safe and out of trouble. Law enforcement leaders have found that the hours between 2:00 and 6:00PM, when parents are less likely to be home to supervise children, is prime time for juvenile crime. Studies conducted by the Council for a Strong America show that there is a 70% decrease in juvenile arrests across the nation due to increased access to high-quality after-school programs. Vacation, holidays and summer care also provide access to supervised activities for children and

youth, thus decreasing the opportunities for juvenile criminal activity. “Out of Time (OST) programs not only provide academic support but also offer various services on youth development, character building, social-emotional learning, civic engagement, and physical and nutritional health in safe spaces with a caring mentor. These programs help students develop important life skills, such as communication, problem-solving, and teamwork while also promoting positive behaviors such as respect, responsibility, and empathy.

In addition, these programs offer activities that keep children socializing and learning with their peers. Students can participate in sports teams, clubs, and other extracurricular activities that allow them to explore their interests and develop new skills. Research has shown that OTS programs can lead to improved academic performance, increased school attendance, and decreased behavioral problems.

OTS programs are important not only for working families and those who need childcare when school is not in session, but research has also shown that they benefit children’s continued health and learning. Students who participate in these programs have been shown to have improved physical fitness, healthier food choices, and a reduced risk of obesity and chronic diseases. Starting Point.Org.

The number of slots available in Niagara County School-age Child Care Programs do not meet the potential demand by nearly 80% (Nationally it is at 50%). Providers of School-age programs expressed concerns about maintaining qualified staff due to the increase in the cost of running the programs. Staff in School-age programs often state that pay, benefits and hours do not meet their needs. New York State has provided grant opportunities to increase the number of available slots in School-age Child Care programs, but these grants are not long term and often are unsustainable.

In conclusion, the need for quality childcare is shown to supersede the availability of childcare in Niagara County. Without investment from local, state and federal government, this shortage will continue. As Vernan Stanforth, Sheriff stated in Fight Crime: “Investment in early childhood education and care is an investment in public safety. We pay for those programs now, or we pay for the consequences later.” This is further emphasized in the Afterschool Alliance’s survey which also states that more than 8 in 10 parents agree that all young people deserve access to an out of school program and favor public funding. All across the nation, communities must step up and find a way to support these programs. In Niagara County the need is evident.