



How did we get here?

CandL (Care and Learning)



CANDL
CARE AND LEARNING

What is CandL?



CANDL

CARE AND LEARNING

Care and Learning

Long Term Early Childhood Education Campaign

GOAL = To move towards a publicly funded Early Childhood Education System in North Carolina.

Five Phases of CandL Initiative



CANDL

CARE AND LEARNING

- Phase 1 - Intense Data Collection ... “9 Month Listening Tour” (Originally Jan 2022-Sept 2022, Extended through April 2023) Family/Community Engagement Team
- Phase 2 - Completing the vision for the campaign (Approx. 4 Months, Starting May 2023) Leadership Team
- Phase 3 – Policy Analysis/Policy Gap Analysis (Approx. 4 Months, Starting August 2023) Policy Team
- Phase 4 – Priorities (Approx. 5 Months, Starting Jan 2024) Leadership Team
- Phase 5 – Launch the CandL Campaign (Years) All CandL Stakeholders



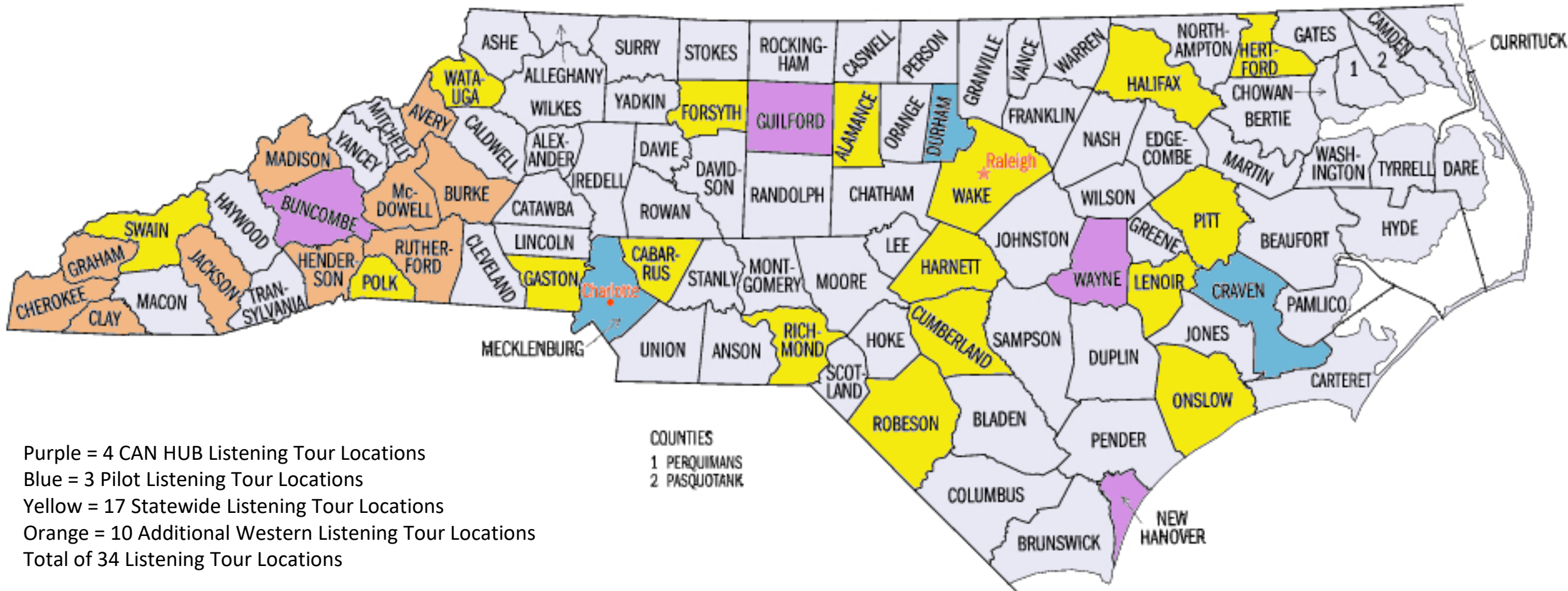
It's Time To...STOP

SIT

& LISTEN

**We visited 34
of NC's 100
Counties**

Listening Tour



Purple = 4 CAN HUB Listening Tour Locations
Blue = 3 Pilot Listening Tour Locations
Yellow = 17 Statewide Listening Tour Locations
Orange = 10 Additional Western Listening Tour Locations
Total of 34 Listening Tour Locations

1**Avery**

Blue Ridge
Partnership for
Children

2**Buncombe**

Western CAN Hub -
YWCA of Asheville, Verner
Learning Center, PODER
Emma

3**Burke**

The Industrial Commons

4**Cherokee**

Region A Partnership
For Children

5**Clay**

Hinton Rural Life Center
Inc.

6**Graham**

Four Square Community
Action, Head Start

7**Henderson**

Children First/Communities in Schools of
Buncombe County - Children and Family
Resource Center of Henderson County

8**Jackson**

Big Brothers Big Sisters of
Jackson County

9**Madison**

Madison County Partnership for
Children and Families, Inc

10**McDowell**

Loving Hearts For Christ Bear
Closet

11**Polk**

WNCSource

12**Rutherford**

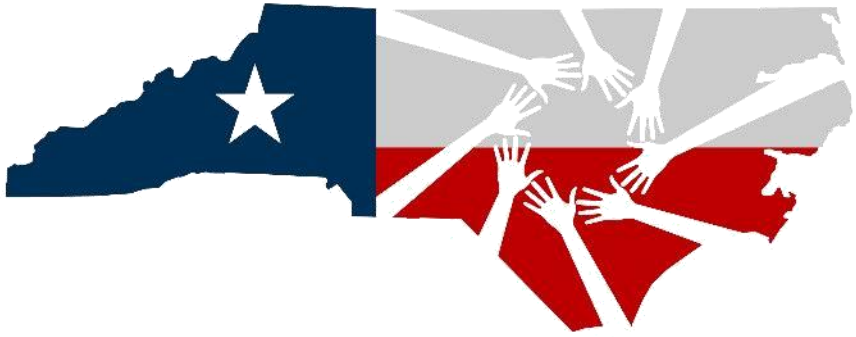
WNCSource

13**Swain**

Southwestern Child
Development Commission

What did we hear?





NC Listening Tour Data Release

Amplifying the voices of Western NC's parents and
childcare providers

NC Child, CANDL, & TLG | September 2023



Program Objective:

CANDL and NC Child would like to move towards a publicly funded system in NC, where early childhood education (ECE) is a public good and is equitable, culturally responsive, and relevant to parents, teachers, and providers.

To ensure that the voices and needs of parents, teachers, and providers are heard, a listening tour was conducted among these stakeholders across the state to more fully understand the wants and needs of stakeholders when it comes to ECE.

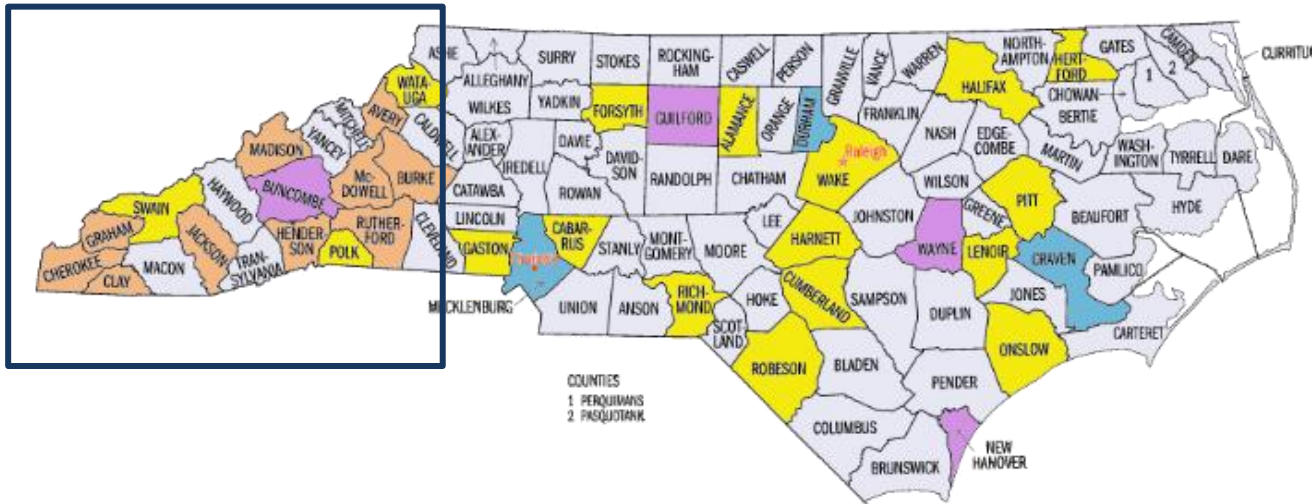
Methodology

Six Pilot Sessions Across 3 counties:
February 2022

33 Listening Sessions across
21 counties:
March 2022-January 2023

18 Listening Sessions across
13 western counties:
August 2022-April 2023

- Gather preliminary findings
- Optimize discussion and logistics
- Each session facilitated by experienced facilitator from community
- Discussion tailored based on needs of group
- Each participant received an honorarium and typically provided a meal in appreciation for their time and perspective



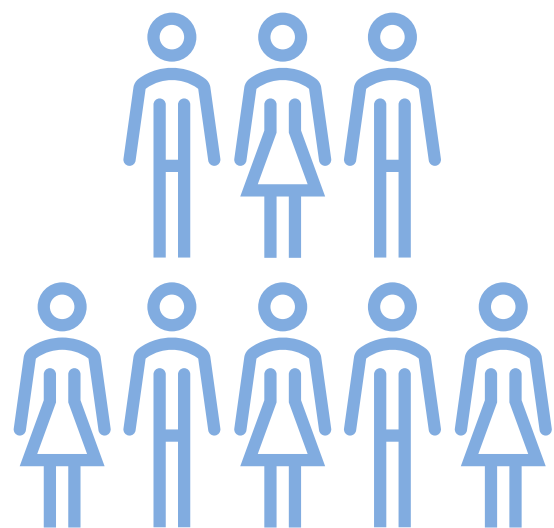
Western Counties include:

- | | |
|------------|--------------|
| • Avery | • Henderson |
| • Buncombe | • Jackson |
| • Burke | • Madison |
| • Cherokee | • McDowell |
| • Clay | • Polk |
| • Graham | • Rutherford |
| | • Swain |



Number of Respondents

| Respondent Type | Base Size |
|----------------------|-----------|
| Parents / Caregivers | 114 |
| Childcare Providers | 85 |
| Total | 199 |



| Race | Base Size |
|---|-----------|
| Asian | 1 |
| Black / African-American | 11 |
| Indigenous | 1 |
| Latinx / Hispanic | 43 |
| Multiracial / Multicultural | 3 |
| Person of Color | 8 |
| Not part of the BIPOC community / White | 82 |

Number of respondents by race does not equal total number of respondents; some counties were missing demographic information on all or some of their respondents, so those numbers are not included in this chart. Identity is recorded as respondent recorded it, either as a write-in or a drop-down box in the respondent form.

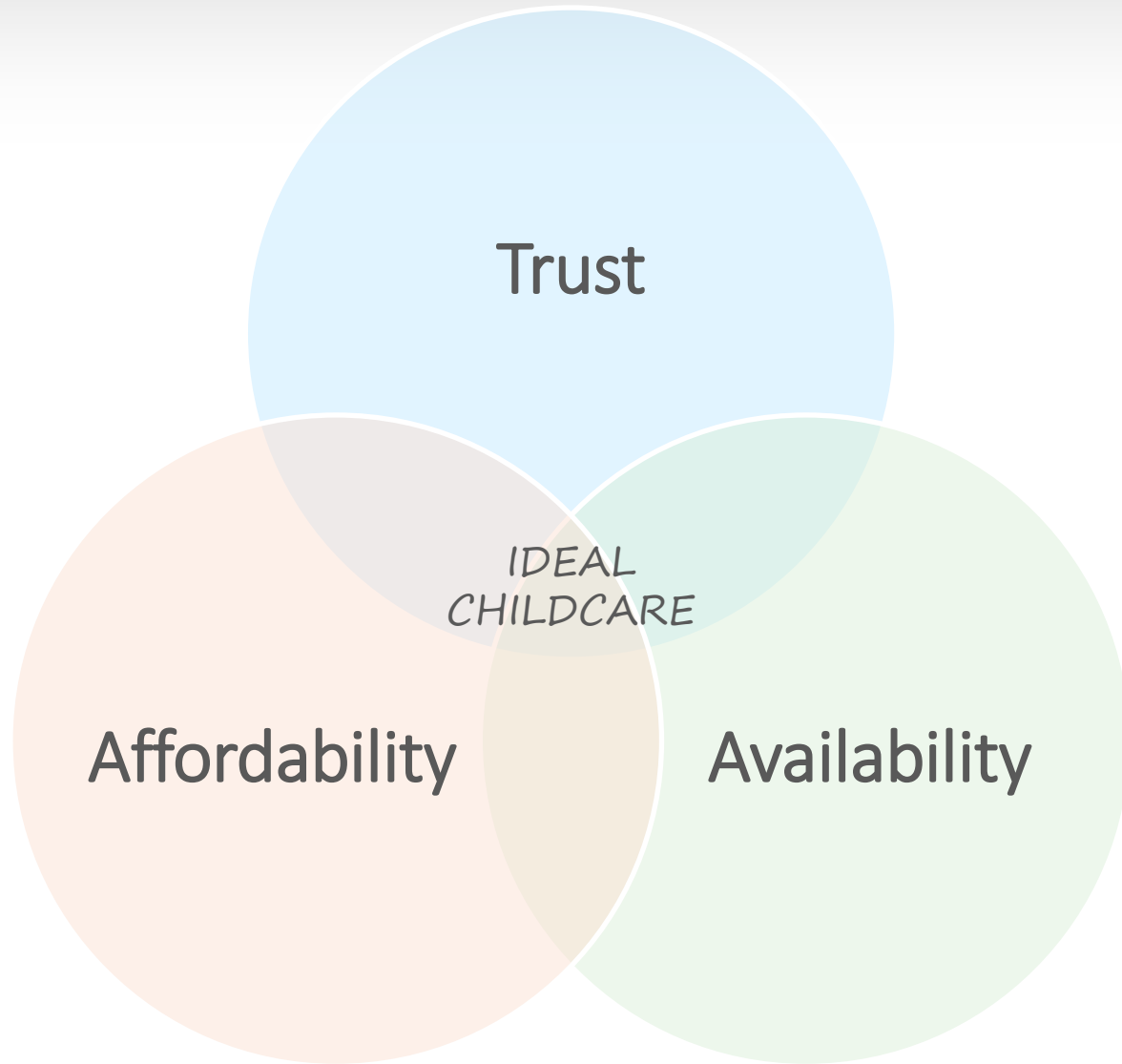
Overall Findings in Western NC



“It's incredibly sad to live in an area that feels forgotten. I would try and pay a little more attention to the small counties.

There are families here that matter.”

- Parent, McDowell County



Parents and providers define QUALITY CHILDCARE as a three-legged stool.

Without one of these legs, childcare is closed off to parents, or parents must settle or make hard sacrifices.

Western counties feel overlooked or forgotten, leading to frustration.



Trust

Passionate, loving teachers

Well-trained providers

Provider reputation

Childcare reliability

Representation & Diversity



Affordability

Free or low-cost childcare options

Vouchers

Provider grants and funding



Availability

Well cared for providers

No wait lists

Short transportation times

Accommodating childcare hours

Resources in multiple languages

Centralized information



“I would like to see facilities provide confidence, comfort, and security for families, so they are comfortable to leave their children.”

- Provider, Burke County

Parents want to know that their child will be safe, well-cared for, and learn new things.

Passionate, loving teachers



Well-trained providers

Provider reputation

Childcare reliability

Representation & Diversity

- Parents want providers who love what they do and want to be there for children.
- **Many parents and providers think of each other as family** because of the close bonds they form with one another and with the child.
- **Providers recognize that you must love this profession in order to stick with it for so many years.** One of the challenges with staffing is the lack of providers who are passionate about this calling.

Parents want teachers who are properly trained in ECE and can teach appropriate social, emotional, and behavioral skills.

Passionate, loving teachers

Well-trained providers

Provider reputation

Childcare reliability

Representation & Diversity

- **More than a babysitter.** Parents want to know that providers are properly trained in ECE and providers want to be seen as more than a babysitter; they both want children to create a solid foundation for life-long learning.

- **Parents want to be sure that providers are able to deal with children with special needs and abilities,** such as autism and Down's Syndrome. Those providers who care for children with special needs also want more training in this area to be the best teacher they can be for these children.

Provider reputation plays a big role in finding and trusting a facility to leave a child.

Passionate, loving teachers

Well-trained providers

Provider reputation

Childcare reliability

Representation & Diversity

- Many parents rely on the word of mouth and recommendations from family and friends to find a provider, because:
 - They trust first-hand accounts more
 - Most don't know where to access information about providers
- Providers understand how important that word of mouth reputation is, which is why they spend so much time looking for the right staffing needs for their center or home.
- Many wish there was a centralized location where they could find information about the providers.

Greater reliability of childcare facilities and providers creates more trust.

Passionate, loving teachers

Well-trained providers

Provider reputation

Childcare reliability

Representation & Diversity

- Consistency of hours and consistency of staffing.
- **Staffing turnover erodes trust** because it means parents have to start over in building and establishing a relationship with the provider.
- **Many in-home providers often forgo their own medical needs because it would otherwise mean having to close for the day,** which would impact their reliability and parent trust.

Parents want to see themselves and their child represented by the provider.

Passionate, loving teachers

Well-trained providers

Provider reputation

Childcare reliability

Representation & Diversity

This looks like the provider:

Speaking the same language: parents and providers want to be able to communicate with one another and to preserve language fluency in children.

Respecting diversity: parents want their child (and themselves) to be respected no matter their language, background, or skin color, adding to safety and trust.

Celebrating diversity: parents would like providers to celebrate different holidays and customs.

Trust is often strongest in the in-home or kin care setting.



Strong bond among parent, child and provider creates more trust.

Settings often have fewer children, more attention paid to the child, and more flexibility for parents.

"I wish I had the opportunity to drop my kid off with a friend or other kids they know in a safe home."

– Parent, Madison County

"I have good family support with my mom and dad, but I don't want to be a burden with them in their older years."

– Parent, Avery County

Star ratings do not translate to trust and are often a barrier to childcare.



Vast majority of parents are either not aware of star ratings or find them meaningless when there are already few childcare options.

Some see stars as inequitable because providers with more stars are more expensive and not all providers have opportunity to earn stars.

“The more stars the more expensive. I know someone who provides in-home didn't have the time or money to get the five-star rating. We don't care about stars anymore.

You're talking about families who don't have the financial resources and then you're saying in order to get quality you have to pay way more.”

– Parent, Polk County

Ways to address TRUST in childcare



Increase availability and accessibility of in-home and kin care



Create star rating system that speaks to parent and providers' values



Ensure children from all backgrounds are represented, seen, and valued in the classroom



Create / educate on a centralized portal with information about childcare and parent resources



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Affordability

Free or low-cost childcare options

Vouchers

Provider grants and funding



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**“Why would I work full time to
give all my money to day care?**

**I’ll just stay home with my child
and be broke.”**

– Parent, McDowell County

Childcare costs mean parents often sacrifice bills or dreams / careers to keep their job that pays the childcare bills.

Free or low-cost childcare options



Vouchers

Provider grants and funding

The high cost of childcare means that parents often **decide not to work in order to provide their own childcare**. Some parents are proud of this decision, as they want to be in control of their child's experiences, education, and exposure.

However, many parents feel they don't have a choice: they would prefer to work and provide better financial stability for their family, but the cost of childcare means most of their paycheck would go towards childcare.

Some trade off duties with the other parent or partner. This can create significant mental and emotional strain.



Childcare costs mean parents often sacrifice bills or dreams / careers to keep their job that pays the childcare bills.

Free or low-cost childcare options



Vouchers

Provider grants and funding

Those who do work find that the cost of childcare significantly cuts into their paycheck, meaning they cannot be as financial independent as they would like.

They must keep a close eye on the budget or forgo medical needs in order to afford childcare.

Those with inconsistent income struggle to piece together childcare so they can look for work. This can be expensive and add to financial strain.



Childcare subsidies (vouchers) do not adequately meet parents' needs and some feel they are discriminatory.

Free or low-cost childcare options

Vouchers

Provider grants and funding




- Many families struggle to pay the parent fee, especially when they have to account for other family expenses. And some make just over the threshold to qualify for vouchers.
- Many find it difficult to qualify for vouchers.
- Vouchers create a social stigma.
- There is a lag in voucher reimbursement, which exacerbates issues when providers struggle to keep up with their own funding and cannot increase prices.

Providers also feel the strain of childcare costs.

Free or low-cost childcare options

Vouchers

*Provider grants and
funding*



Many providers worry about the future, once COVID grant money **runs out**. Providers often need additional funding or grant money to pay for expenses and staff and rely on funds to stay open. Some use grant money to help parents with their parent fees (those on vouchers).

Qualifying for grants is an ongoing burden for providers and directors. This adds to their mental strain and burnout, especially as they feel an obligation to be open for parents and children.

Star ratings contribute to the high cost, discriminating against lower-income families and putting providers at a disadvantage.



Some providers strive to keep prices low to cater to parents of all income levels.

However, this impacts their ability to receive stars and impacts perceived quality of childcare.



Staffing shortages impact star rating.

Providers struggle to keep up funding and may not have enough funding to pay staff more, which impacts star ratings.



Providers feel the state caters more to those centers who have 4 and 5 star ratings.

Providers want more equity among providers and work as an industry to lower childcare costs.

"If you can't get four or five stars you can't get the money to pay the staff.

But if you don't have educated staff, you can't get the high STAR ratings."

— Provider, Clay County

"It's an excellent goal and I understand the quality drivers that encourage it.

But if you're going to require it you need to accommodate funding for the groups who don't have the ability to get the education for their staff."

— Provider, Graham County



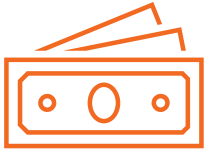
Ways to address AFFORDABILITY in childcare



Create an updated and more effective voucher systems



Reevaluate the use of star ratings to allocate funding to providers or set childcare pricing



Lower the cost of childcare across the board, enabling more families to work if they choose to



Ensure providers have the funding they need for staffing and to stay open



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Resources in multiple languages

Centralized information



“Every childcare provider I know has a second job, so they aren't getting paid enough. Our society is missing the public investment in ECE. If our society valued it and made the investment like they do in K-12. ECE doesn't have that at all. They think it's a babysitter.

But they are teachers, they are educators. It is a school.”

– Parent, Buncombe County

"We have childcare deserts in the eastern part of the county. We had a big center that closed recently. We really, really, really need childcare here."

— Provider, Burke County

"It feels like we are cobbling together care out of scraps. The elephant in the room is the economy."

— Parent, Madison County



Childcare barriers are more pronounced in the western counties due to provider shortages and high industry turnover.

Well cared-for providers



No wait lists

Short transportation times

Accommodating childcare hours

Resources in multiple languages

Centralized information

There is high turnover in the industry because providers are burned out and undervalued.

Providers feel underappreciated by the community, state, and some parents.

Providers are overwhelmed because they don't have all the resources and trainings to help them succeed in their role. They need mental health resources, which are scarce.

Providers are undervalued and are not paid according to the value they provide.



Staffing shortages and limited childcare options in some counties create extremely long waiting lists.

Well cared for providers

No wait lists

Short transportation times

Accommodating childcare hours

Resources in multiple languages

Centralized information



Waiting lists create stress and frustration for parents, as it limits employment opportunities and contribute to inequities in access.

Some feel the difficulty in opening in-home centers contributes to childcare shortages in their county.

In those counties with fewer childcare options, the distance between home, work, and childcare can be a burden and deter parents from seeking outside childcare options.

Well cared for providers

No wait lists

Short transportation times

Accommodating childcare hours

Resources in multiple languages

Centralized information

Parents often drive up to 30 minutes to access childcare, impacting finances (gas money) and work hours.

Issue is worse when childcare has limited hours or is a NC Pre-K classroom that follows school hours. This shortened day, impacted by long travel times, means parents are limited in their job opportunities.



More flexible and non-traditional childcare hours are needed to service a wider parent population.

Well cared for providers

No wait lists

Short transportation times

Accommodating childcare hours

Resources in multiple languages

Centralized information

There is a large population of parents who just need part-time care or care that is available outside of 7:00am-6:00pm. This includes parents who work in the service industry, who have third shift jobs, or work in the gig economy.

Without flexible or non-traditional hours available, parents often rely on drop-in centers and family / kin care, which may be expensive and places additional burden on family and friends.



Immigrant parents, or those parents who do not speak English fluently, often feel that options resources are not available to them.

Well cared for providers

No wait lists

Short transportation times

Accommodating childcare hours

Resources in multiple languages

Centralized information

- Parents struggle to find information about childcare options and resources about financial assistance for childcare in Spanish.

- Most providers in centers do not speak Spanish (or other languages) fluently. Relying on children, Google Translate, or a single translator in the facility doesn't create trust, inclusion or belonging.



Western counties lack a centralized location to access information about childcare and childcare assistance resources.

Well cared for providers

No wait lists

Short transportation times

Accommodating childcare hours

Resources in multiple languages

Centralized information

Parents wish there was a place to find information about childcare options and parents resources. They currently rely on word of mouth or do their own research.

Providers also wish they had a centralized location of information to assist parents. They often do their own searches or pull together information based on their own networks.



Parents highly value Head Start and Early Head Start, but access is limited in this part of the state.



Parents feel Head Start provides a solid ECE foundation and creates lifelong social skills and love that it's a free quality program.

However, options are limited, parents don't qualify, or parents are unsure of eligibility or are unaware of the program.

“I use early Head Start and have used it for all our children. It has been very helpful. It gives the kids social skills and language skills. It helps us (parents) so we can work and provide for our family.”

– Parent, Rutherford County

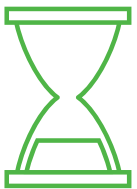
Ways to address **AVAILABILITY** in childcare



Increase number of childcare centers in the western part of the state



Address staffing shortages and high turnover within the industry



Decrease length of waiting lists, which adds to parent stress and limits their employment options



Decrease distances to / from centers, thereby reducing transportation time



Incentivize centers to provide flexible and / or non-traditional hours for parents who need it



Our state's childcare crisis is a crisis among women and contributes to female burnout.

When a parent must sacrifice not working, that responsibility almost always falls on the mother. This holds women back economically.

Almost all of the providers who participated were female. Some feel the lack of respect and devaluation of their worth is because they are not seen as the heads of households and so their contribution to the family income is deprioritized.

"Childcare work is emotionally taxing. It's historically been 'woman's work' and underpaid."

— Provider, Cherokee County

THANK YOU