

# Child Care Survey Results

Spokane, 2019

The results from this survey of Spokane residents about child care access and barriers can help raise awareness about child care needs in the Spokane area, and inform programming decisions among child care providers.

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# A LETTER FROM THE AFTER HOURS CHILD CARE TASK FORCE

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For many of us who serve persons in poverty, the lack of opportunities to break the cycle of poverty seems overwhelming. Transportation, health care access, food insecurity, racial disparity and other challenges and inequities all play a part in keeping someone in a state of impoverishment. One challenge that is often overlooked has been access to quality, affordable child care -- but in Spokane, we have recently seen an urgency to look at this issue. For many of those we serve, the reality is that the cost of child care is a huge barrier to gaining, or staying in, employment status. Child care can cost more than a caregiver can earn, or at least use up so much of a paycheck that it is “cheaper” to stay at home. For those eligible for child care subsidies, even a small raise at work can push them over the eligibility limit, losing the financial aid and putting them in the position of paying full price for child care – which they cannot afford. On top of this, if any “unusual” situations should occur (such as a sick child, school closing for a day, or the caregiver is unexpectedly called in to work) there are few options for child care. This is the added stress for any parent who is anxious to find **any** child care to be able to maintain their job, thus their income and ability to provide for their child.

There are concerns around kindergarten readiness -- without access to care that provides appropriate developmental activities, a child may not receive all the preparation needed to be ready to learn upon entering school.

These concerns have converged in our community and called us to look at the issue more closely. From many threads came one cloth-- the After Hours Child Care Task Force. This group began with a focus on after 5 pm child care, but grew into a larger question: what do caregivers actually DO about child care when there are challenges? What are the actual arrangements people make for their children when they are trying to work, feed their family, and “get ahead”? This survey was conducted with an eye toward getting more insight into caregivers’ lived experience around finding child care.

Thank you to the many individuals from the many organizations that kept at this, signaling a need for a significant response to this child care crisis. We will make an impact.

*Edie Rice-Sauer*

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Convener, After Hours Child Care Task Force

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# INTRODUCTION

In 2018, The issue of child care, especially after-hours and night-time child care, emerged as a result of concerns repeatedly heard by providers and stakeholders in Spokane. Many different groups were raising the concern of availability of child care, some from the perspective of access and some from the perspective of child abuse concerns when appropriate care could not be found. The anecdotal evidence compiled by a range of stakeholders, as well as evidence from such groups as ChildCareAware, led to an interest in collecting more measurable data. Priority Spokane, Our Kids Our Business, and the Homeless Families Task Force of the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Continuum of Care were all focusing on this issue. Vanessa Behan Crisis Nursery was also interested in surveying parents' and caregivers' needs around child care as they began their capital campaign to build a new facility.

These parallel interested eventually led to the formation of the After-Hours Child Care Task Group (referred to as the Task Group). Organizations involved included Community Minded Enterprises, Department of Early Learning, Excelsior, Family Promise, Molina Healthcare, Naomi, Spokane Regional Health District (SRHD), Transitions and Vanessa Behan Crisis Nursery. All had participated in a HUD Continuum of Care public forum at the Spokane Homeless Coalition in 2018, where ***child care was identified as one of the top three issues impacting people trying to move out of poverty.***

The agencies involved had extensive knowledge of and interest in finding out more about the barriers to accessing child care faced by (primarily) low-income residents of Spokane; after all, they serve this population. There was also information available from The Quality of Life Survey of Spokane County in 2017, which contained a special module on child care. Over the course of survey development, it became clear that there was need for a deeper understanding of what challenges parents and other caregivers face in seeking out childcare besides "after hours". The survey (see Appendix A) was developed around areas identified as frequent needs of those seeking child care.

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## KEY FINDINGS

- ***50% of respondents reported being unable to access affordable child care for half the year or more.***
- ***Nearly half of respondents either stayed home or utilized family members as the primary source of childcare. 31% reported the same sources for secondary (back-up) child care.***
- ***About one-third of respondents had faced issues around finding child care that matched their schedule in one or more categories: general work schedule, weekends, and/or evenings.***
- ***One in five reported having challenges with trusting a child care provider.***
- ***Over half of those who had experienced an emergency child care situation simply had to take the child with them to work, to an interview, to an appointment, etc.***

## METHODOLOGY

The Task Group determined that conducting a survey targeted towards primarily low-income parents/caregivers could provide informative views and data from those perhaps most in need of childcare but with potentially more barriers. With the assistance of the Data Center at SRHD, a survey was developed based on input from members of the working group and a review of other assessment tools around child care needs. It was piloted for understanding and readability by a small group of individuals at Transitions' Transitional Living Center, as well as some participants in the Women, Infants, and Children Special Supplemental Nutrition Program (WIC) at the Spokane Regional Health District, who provided further feedback and insights around accessing child care. The survey was revised based on this feedback, and the final version was distributed in the summer and fall of 2018. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix A.

During summer and fall of 2018, paper surveys were distributed at a variety of locations chosen for convenience and reliable access by task group members and their networks (for a list of locations see Appendix B). The only requirements for participation were to be 18 or older and to have some experience with parenting or being a guardian of a child. Data collection concluded in late fall 2018, and data analysis was completed in 2019.

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## RESULTS

Although not necessarily representative of all Spokane County parents and caregivers, the results are reflective of some of the issues around childcare identified in other studies, as well as reflective of the barriers to accessing childcare. This report presents the findings of this survey; for purposes of alignment and validation, some of the data shown here is compared to Spokane Regional Health District's 2017 Quality of Life Survey, which contained a specific childcare module.<sup>1</sup>

A total of 253 surveys were received, of which 248 were suitable for analysis. Responses were entered into IBM SPSS v.25 and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Open-ended question responses were analyzed for common themes.

The organization of this report is unusual in that we present a later question FIRST - the more open "issues around childcare", presenting both the quantitative and the open-ended responses. In most results sections, the quantifiable data are presented first: the number of issues, the agreement level, etc., followed by the qualitative data (the open-ended responses written in by participants), that help "flesh out" the charts and graphs and provide more context. However, the most compelling findings were framed best by the open-ended questions, where respondents provided their lived experiences with child care issues. We have chosen to provide the "voice of the citizen" FIRST, to lay out the context in which everyday residents face barriers to accessing child care.

## ACCESSING CHILDCARE - ISSUES

Child care needs have long been an issue for parents and caregivers, no matter the age of their children. There is evidence that many people find child care unaffordable and unavailable. Quality of childcare is another consistently mentioned concern of caregivers, with clear evidence that there is a desire for more high-quality child care options.<sup>2</sup>

There are additional issues making access to child care challenging. Working swing shifts, weekends, and/or evenings creates a barrier as most child care providers are open only during “normal business hours” with perhaps a few “extended hours”. If one’s work schedule is sporadic, or prone to last-minute call-ins or changes, finding last-minute care can be difficult -- if not impossible. Sick child care is difficult to find -- sick children are not allowed into their usual childcare, but the parent/caregiver still needs to go to work. School breaks present a challenge for those trying to access care as well. And ultimately, how can one afford any of this if working in the service industry or at minimum wage?

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***If one’s work schedule is sporadic, or prone to last-minute changes, finding last-minute care can be difficult, if not impossible.***

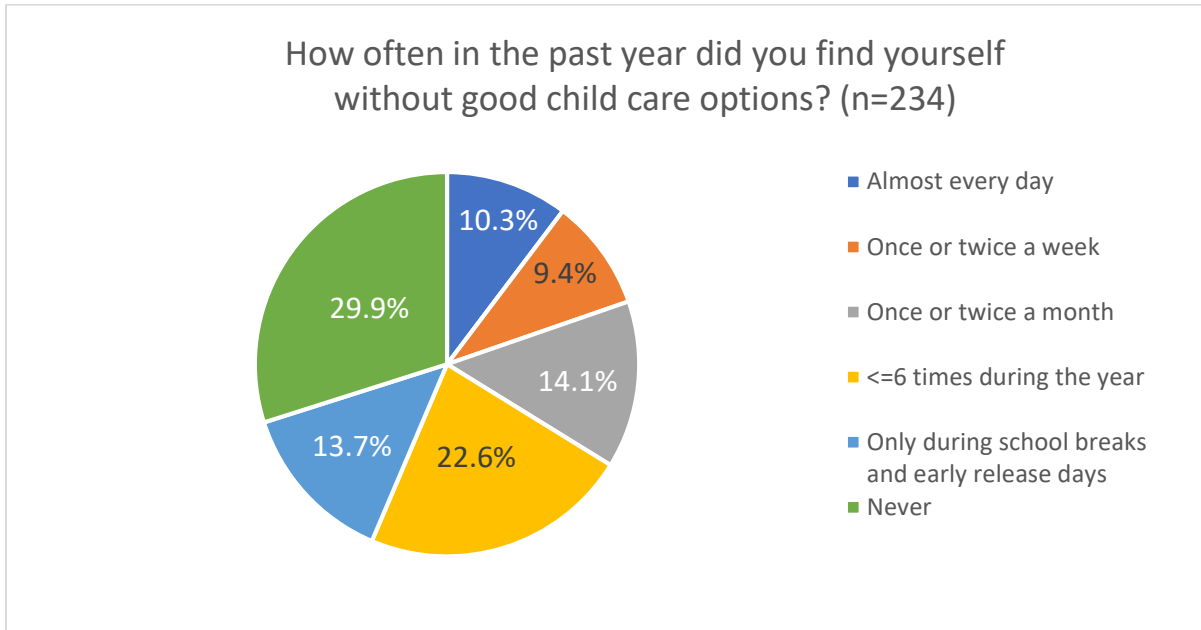
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The not-for-profits who joined together to commission this study all see challenges for the people they serve. These parents/caregivers want to get ahead and succeed, yet the path is laden with difficulty in accessing reliable, affordable, quality childcare.

The results of this survey indicate the main challenges for finding quality childcare revolved around availability, affordability and quality. Later in this report, there is a table showing that ***50% of respondents reported being unable to find affordable childcare for at least part of the year*** (see Table 5). Here we provide information about the challenges identified around accessing “good” childcare options.

Figure 1 shows respondents’ replies to how often they had difficulty accessing good childcare options.

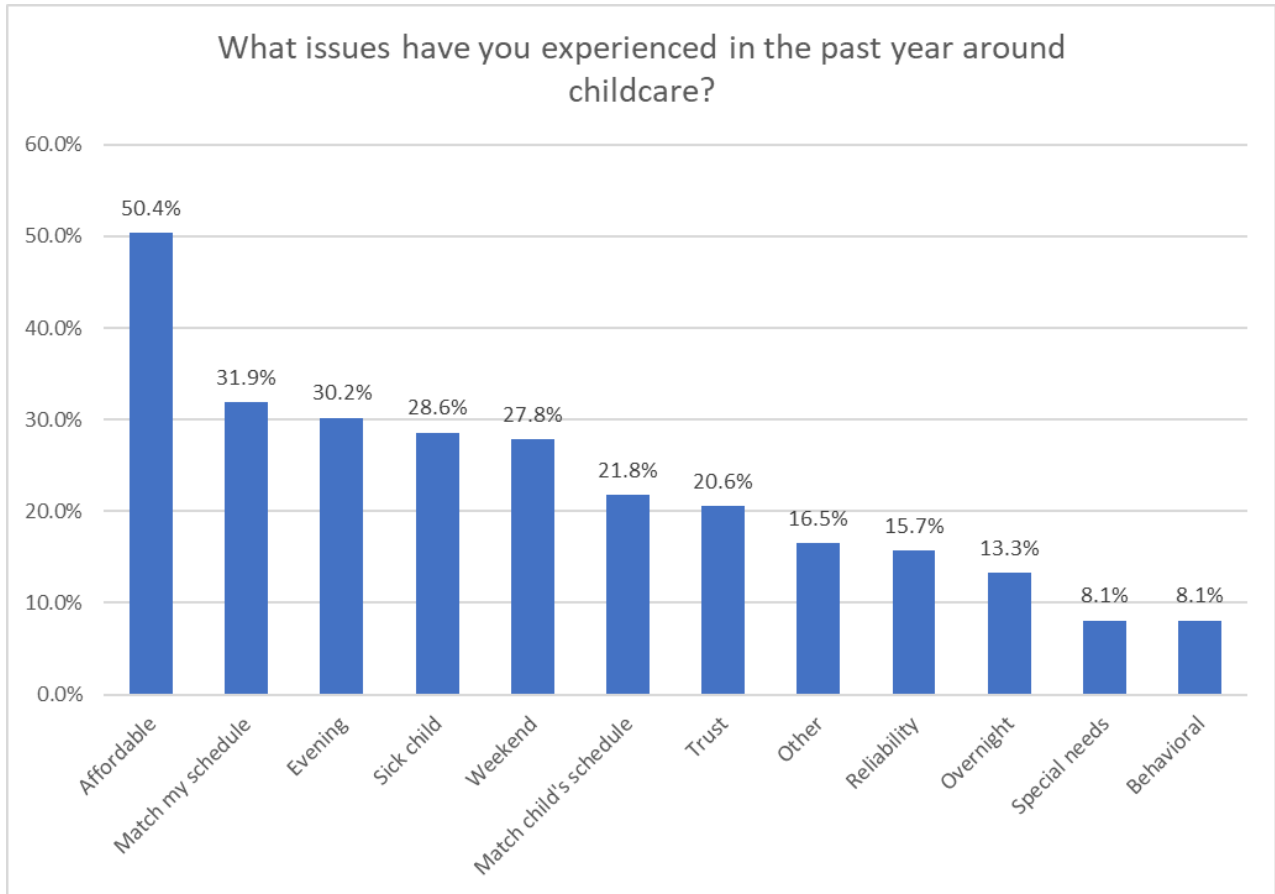
**Figure 1**



Just over one-third reported being without good options at least 1-2 times a month or more. Fourteen percent reported difficulties during school break/early release days.

Regarding other issues around childcare, participants were asked about any experience with affordability, sick child care, special needs care, evening care, and other circumstances. Figure 2 shows the responses.

**Figure 2**



In agreement with other results (see Table 5), ***about 50% cited facing issues around accessing affordable childcare.*** About 30% of respondents indicated difficulties in the past year with accessing childcare that matched their schedule, on evenings, for sick children, and/or for weekends.

Just over 20% of the respondents noted they had an issue with “trusting the person I left my child with.” This means 1 out of 5 respondents had issues at least part of the time around trusting caregivers. Fifteen percent had faced challenges with reliability of childcare. These factors all combine with affordability to paint a picture of the challenges in finding care that meets the needs of a family.

For comparison purposes, data from the 2017 Quality of Life survey of Spokane County are used. This survey contained a special module addressing child care. That survey had nearly 2,000 respondents and was weighted statistically to represent the county population. Participants were asked if they had faced any issues around childcare. The top six issues (by percent of respondents reporting them) are presented below for comparison.



**Table 1**

<b>Any issues experienced around child care in the past year? (Quality of Life Survey, 2017)</b>	
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Percent of respondents reporting the issue</b>
<b>Care for a sick child</b>	58%
<b>Affordability</b>	53%
<b>Match to work/school schedule</b>	45%
<b>Quality of child care</b>	44%
<b>Trust in provider</b>	41%
<b>Convenient location</b>	40%

It is notable that care for a sick child, affordability, matching to schedule, and trust were listed by many 2017 respondents, in alignment with the current survey.

## OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS – ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Respondents were asked to describe “issues around childcare” they might have experienced in an open-ended question (which followed the quantitative question about issues – see Figure 2). The intent was to give participants their own voice in expressing their experiences.

Thirty individuals wrote in answers for this open-ended question (12% of respondents). These answers were themed and fell into three categories:

- **Lack of availability**
- **Affordability**
- **Quality**

These categories were represented as options in the multiple-choice question (see Figure 2), but some respondents expanded upon and repeated these concerns. **Out of the thirty written answers, one-half reiterated the lack of available childcare around needed times, over one-quarter reiterated the lack of affordability, and over one-quarter reiterated a lack of quality/meeting needs.** Some notable comments are provided below.

*“State won’t pay for childcare because I’m self-employed.”*

*“If my husband’s work schedule [were] less flexible we would be seriously hurting. Almost all childcare centers require you to pick up by 6. But I get off at 6. Also, I work late one day and don’t get off until 9.”*

*“Trying to find early morning childcare, I need 5:30 am.”*

*“I left my part time job because it didn't pay enough to pay for anything but daycare.”*

*“I have to work from home or bring my kid because of school schedule and illness and it severely hinders my income. I skip childcare because I absolutely can't afford it.”*

*“I would like to go back to work but childcare does not match my 10-12 hours 3 days per week. the only options are daily and don't match the times I need, so for the cost and the fact that it does not even cover the times I need I am relying on family which will not last forever and I feel bad every time I ask because they work too.”*

*“Availability of ANY childcare.”*

*Note: the quotes provided were edited only for spelling, capitalization, and grammar to enhance clarity.*

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***“I am not able to get child care until I find a job, but I am not able to find a job if I have no child care.”***

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**Another question asked if there were any other specific childcare needs respondents would like to share.**

Fifty-one respondents (21%) wrote in responses. Many tied the concept of affordable, available childcare to the ability to work at a paying job. Others addressed issues around quality and special needs. **The primary themes for this broad question were:**

- ***Affordability***
- ***Lack of availability***
- ***Quality***
- ***Needs***

Note that the same three themes are repeated here, with the addition of a new category called “needs”. Availability included extended hours, schedule matching and drop-in care. The “needs” category encompassed comments around special needs children, sick child care, and behavioral issues. Notable comments in each category are provided below.

### ***Affordability***

*“Childcare is ridiculously expensive for the middle class. I am receiving a “good deal” at \$600 a month but that's still hard for my husband and I to afford.”*

*“A lot of moms want to work part time because we find it a good balance between working and being there for our kids but there are no affordable part time options. You must work full time or not at all.”*

*“Difficult to afford childcare if you are middle income. Can't afford it out of pocket, but make too much to qualify for assistance. Not enough variance in available childcare and government requirements are driving up the prices.”*

*“Frequently childcare costs almost what I make per hour so my spouse & I work opposite schedules & rarely see each other.”*

*“I am not able to get childcare until I find a job but I am not able to find a job if I have no child care.”*

### **Lack of availability**

*“Being open early enough for both parents' early schedules.”*

*“Evening childcare covered by the state (not everyone works 9-5).”*

*“Having drop-in that I can afford. We aren't considered low-income enough for help w/it, but most of our money goes toward debt.”*

*“Long school commutes and late start days make working as a single parent or having access to before or after school programs impossible.”*

*“When my kids were younger it was really hard to find good part-time daycare options and also childcare that would work with schedules that change a lot. We've just gotten used to trying to schedule our work around each other whenever possible and my kids often go to work with my husband. He's worked with the kids with him approximately 15-20 hours a week this summer. He's just gotten creative and figured out how to take them with him.”*

### **Quality**

*“I would like to have more than one option for childcare, and have that option be well recommended. The only childcare facility in my area has a bad reputation, is expensive, and does not take children under 1 year of age.”*

*“That children need to be met where they are at - and that a developmental approach to child rearing/childcare needs to be used (as opposed to a behavioral approach).”*

### **Needs**

*“There is a lack of quality, affordable childcare for not only the poor, but also the working class, such as myself. I think we should support more parents bringing their young infants (6 months and younger) to work with them or finding alternatives, so they can work from home with their infants. It is difficult to find childcare for a child with special needs. The 4:1 infant to caregiver ratio is inadequate much of the time. Young Children are often sick in childcare settings. It is one of my highest stressors and impacts my daily life.”*

*“My children are over the age of typical child care. One son has behavioral issues and the other is ADD. I pay out of pocket for care in my home because there are no child cares that would care for this age of children or their needs.”*

*“Child care for a sick child is needed in order to keep a job for single mothers.”*

*With the context provided above, we ask the reader to keep in mind these identified needs as the rest of the findings are presented. The quantifiable data now follows to “fill out” the “story” told above.*

## DEMOGRAPHICS – WHO ANSWERED THE QUESTIONS?

The only requirements for taking the survey were that the individual be 18 or older, and the parent or guardian of one or more children. The only demographic questions asked were race/ethnicity, hours per week of paid work, hours per week of school, monthly rent/house payment, annual income, and zip code. Respondents were also asked number of children and adults in the household.

### RACE/ETHNICITY

Eighty-two percent of respondents identified as white, similar to the overall population of Spokane.<sup>3</sup> Just under 5% identified as Hispanic.

**Table 2**

Race/Ethnicity	
Race	Percent
American Indian or Alaska Native (AIAN)	4.0%
Black	2.8%
White	82.3%
Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander (NHOPI)	0.4%
Some other race	0.4%
Multiracial	9.3%
Did not answer	0.8%
Are You Hispanic?	
Yes	4.4%
No	89.5%
Did not answer	6.0%

### HOURS WORKED/HOURS AT SCHOOL

The respondents reported hours worked ranging from 0 per week to over 60. While hours worked per week are utilized in later figures to demonstrate need for child care referenced against hours worked, the highlights were as follows:

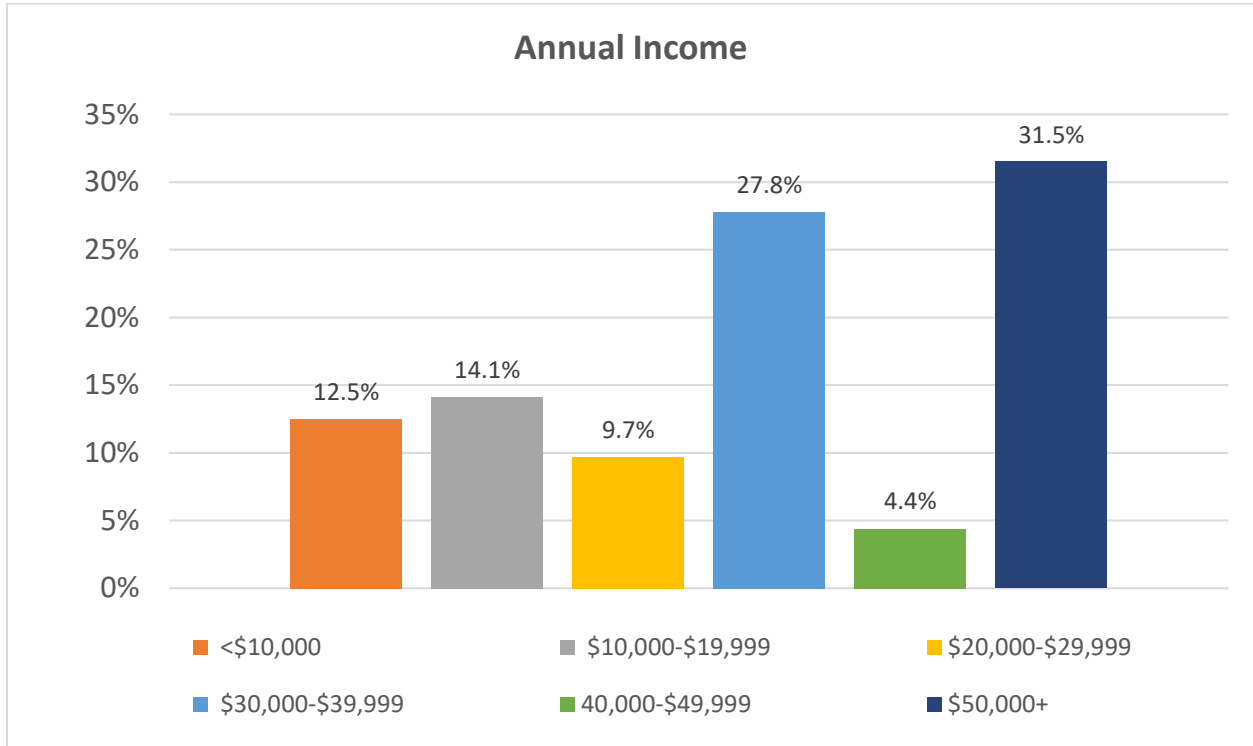
- 39.1% reported working 40 hours or more.
- 29.5% worked part-time (<40 hours per week).
- 26.2% of respondents reported working 0 hours per week for pay.
- 5.2% did not answer.

About 11% reported attending some school (in classroom or virtual) each week.

## INCOME

Respondents were asked their annual household income from all sources. In order to better capture the entire set of respondents, income was imputed per best practices to resolve inconsistent or illogical numbers, and to retain the data for 13 who did not answer this question. For any surveys with missing or inconsistent responses, they were assigned the median value (calculated from all other responses) of \$32,000. This median household income of participants is significantly less than the reported median household income of \$52,000 for Spokane County.<sup>3</sup>

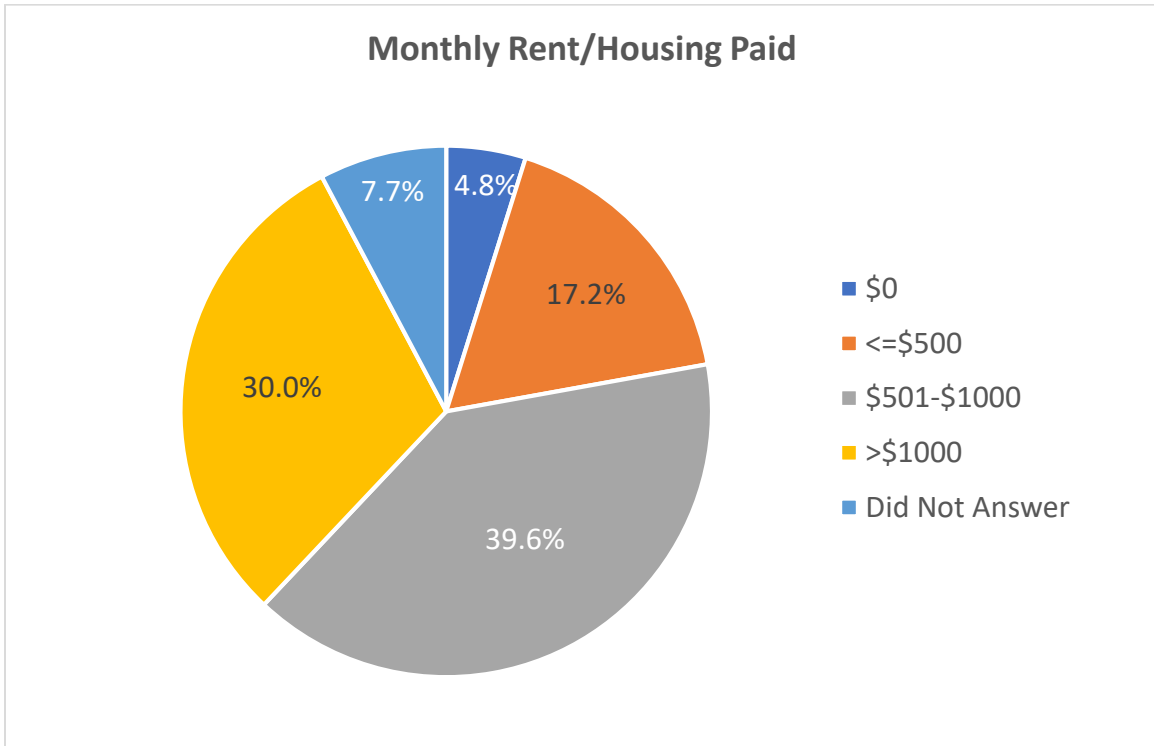
**Figure 3**



## RENT/HOUSING

Nearly 40% of respondents reported paying between \$501-\$1000 monthly for housing, while 30% reported paying over \$1000 per month. Just under 5% reported paying \$0 for housing. The 2017 median monthly housing cost in Spokane County is reported as \$942.<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 4**



**NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND HOUSEHOLD TYPE**

Respondents were asked to report the number of children in each age group in the home. The working group was primarily interested in the following groups: infants (age 0-11 months), preschoolers (ages 1-5 years, broadly defined for the purposes of this survey), young school-age children (ages 6-10 years) and older school-age children (ages 11-15 years). Table 3 shows the percent of respondents with children in each age group, as well as the numbers of children in each household.

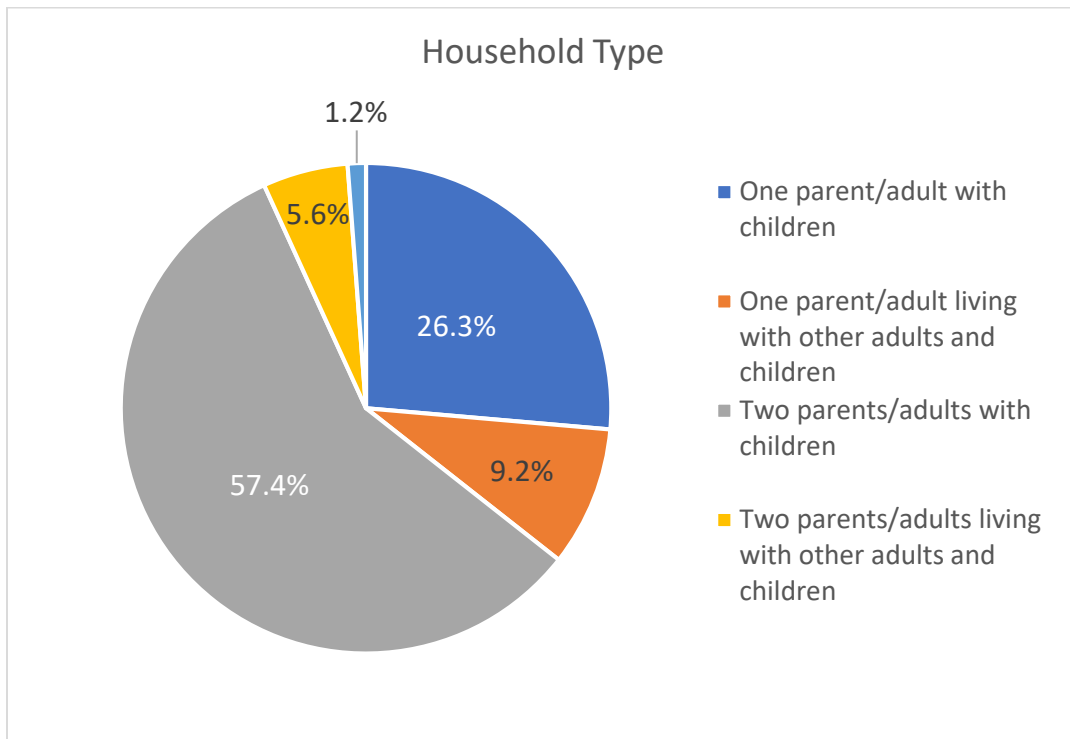
**Table 3**

Percent of Respondents with:					
Infant(s) in household	Preschooler(s)	Children 6-10	Children 11-15		
20.6%	71.0%	39.5%	21.4%		
Percent of Respondents by Number of Children in Household					
1	2	3	4	5	6
40.3%	37.1%	13.7%	5.6%	1.6%	1.6%

To better understand possible financial burdens of households with one income, respondents were divided into one parent/adult households and two -parent/adult households. Marital status was not

asked, as the interest lay more in whether respondents identified as a single-caregiver (alone or with other adults identified in household) or two-caregiver (identifying as 2-adult households with or without other adults). Over half of respondents identified as two-parent/adult households. Over one third identified as single parent/adult households, although about one-quarter of these had “other adults” in the household as well.

**Figure 5**



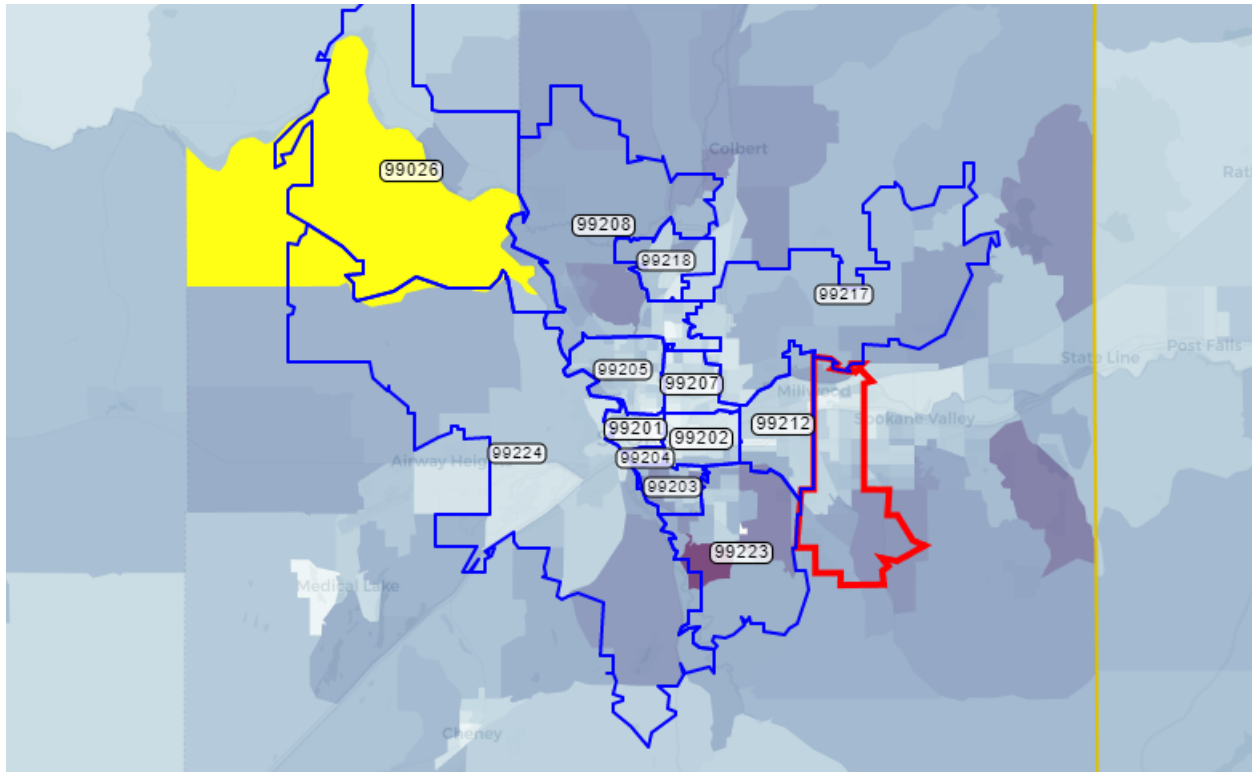
### ZIP CODE

A total of 28 zip codes were provided from 248 of the respondents. There were not enough from any one zip code area to characterize a neighborhood, so this information was not included in this analysis. It may be helpful to know that 63.3% of the respondents came from 8 zip codes:

99201, 99202, 99205, 99206, 99207, 99208, 99217, 99223.

While 99206 and 99217 are east of the city (Valley), 99223 is South Hill, and 99208 is north, the remaining four are all central city codes. These are all visible in the map below (99206 is not labelled but outlined in red).

**Figure 6**



Source: [www.city-data.com/zipmaps/Spokane-Washington.html](http://www.city-data.com/zipmaps/Spokane-Washington.html)

## SOCIAL CAPITAL/SUPPORT

Social Capital is the connection between people that is based on trust, cooperation and mutual good. In the scope of creating healthy communities, families and individuals, social capital plays a critical role in outcomes. There is a direct link between quality social capital and increased health, satisfaction and success.<sup>4</sup>

With this in mind, it was no surprise that most respondents reported their strongest connections with family, friends and neighbors. Just over 75% of respondents listed family, friends and neighbors as their most important source of connection to their community.



**Table 4**

<b>Which group is your most important source of connection to your community?</b>	
<b>Family</b>	56.0%
<b>Friends/neighbors</b>	16.1%
<b>School</b>	7.7%
<b>Church/religious institution</b>	4.8%
<b>Social club/community center</b>	0.8%
<b>Treatment center</b>	0.4%
<b>Work</b>	8.9%
<b>None</b>	1.2%
<b>Did not answer</b>	4.0%

*Note-Respondents were intended to check only one option as most important. Many respondents checked more than 1- we counted the first one checked (almost always "family") as the "most important source". Any other checked options were included in the "other, describe" box.*

Social support has more to do with the quality of one’s connections rather than quantity. Relationships that go deeper, involving people one can rely on in times of need, are one measure of social support. Having close friends is another measure of social capital and support. <sup>4</sup> Respondents were asked how many close friends (not counting relatives) they had that they could call on for help or talk to about what was on their minds. Over 90% reported one or more such friends; **however, almost 9% reported zero close friends.**

- 80.2% of respondents had 1-5 close friends
- 7.6% reported 6 or more close friends
- **8.8% reported 0 close friends**
- 3.6% did not answer

***When a family has adequate social capital and social supports, it creates a buffer against the stressful situations a family might experience.***

To gain better insight into stressors and support, respondents were asked about whether they had basic needs met, such as a safe place to live, enough food, etc., as well as about support systems and stress in the past year. Table 5 shows the responses as to whether they felt safe, fed, and supported for most of the year.

**Table 5**

<b>During the past year, have you had:</b>					
	<b>Most/all of year</b>	<b>More than half the year</b>	<b>Less than half the year</b>	<b>Rarely/never</b>	<b>Did not respond</b>
<b>A safe place to live?</b>	89.1%	5.2%	4.0%	0.4%	1.2%
<b>Enough food to feed your household?</b>	76.2%	17.7%	4.0%	0.8%	1.2%
<b>Reliable transportation?</b>	72.6%	14.9%	6.0%	5.2%	1.2%
<b>Access to affordable childcare?</b>	36.3%	13.7%	16.1%	27.0%	6.9%
<b>An adequate supply of diapers? (n=161)</b>	70.8%*	21.1%*	5.6%*	2.5%*	35.1%
<b>A support system of family/friends?</b>	63.7%	21.4%	8.5%	4.4%	2.0%
<b>Concerns about your or your children's safety?</b>	10.5%	6.9%	11.3%	69.8%	1.6%
<b>Too much stress/ worry?</b>	29.4%	25.8%	26.2%	17.7%	0.8%

*\*Calculated after removing those who did not respond to the diaper supply question, as it did not apply.*

Regarding social capital, 85% felt they had a support system of family/friends for more than half the year. Given that the majority identified family as their most important connection to community, and that the majority identified having one or more close friends, this is not surprising. When a family has adequate social capital and social supports, it creates a buffer against the stressful situations a family might experience.<sup>5</sup>

Other areas where respondents reported higher support levels were in housing, food security, and transportation. Just under 90% reported having safe housing most or all of the year. Over 70% of respondents reported enough food and reliable transportation most or all of the year.

Regarding stressors, 17% reported having concerns about their own or their children's safety for more than half the year. Over half (55.2%) reported too much stress/worry for more than half the year.

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***Only half of respondents reported having access to affordable childcare for more than half the year.***

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Pertaining to the primary focus of this report, **only half reported having access to affordable childcare for more than half the year.** However, 92% of those who needed diapers reported having an adequate supply of them for more than half the year.

*In upcoming sections, there will be more information around the issues of accessible and affordable child care.*

When a person is experiencing a significant amount of stress, she/he may have difficulty accessing coping strategies and has limited frustration tolerance. Such situations may lead to a caregiver unable to parent in the capacity he/she would want and could end up as abuse or neglect situations.<sup>5</sup> The buffering effect of social capital and social supports mitigates the stress and increases the ability of the parent to effectively parent in a healthy manner. For example, when a parent faces limiting diaper changes because there are not enough diapers, it affects the child adversely. The child is more susceptible to rash and may have physical pain. As the child expresses his/her discomfort through crying, the parent may experience guilt of not being able to care for the child in the best possible manner, which can lead to frustration. As the emotions of the child and parent increase, the chances of the parent reacting in a manner less than nurturing also increases.<sup>6</sup>

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## CHILDCARE COSTS -- AND WHO TAKES CARE OF THE CHILDREN?

This report resulted from a survey initially developed around repeated reports of lack of adequate childcare. As noted in the section above, ***the most reported need was access to affordable childcare.***

To examine this need in a quantitative manner, respondents were first asked how much childcare was used and how much it cost. Tables 6 and 7 show how they responded.

**Table 6**

<b>In a typical week, how many hours of childcare do you use?</b>	
<b>0</b>	31.9%
<b>1-10</b>	10.9%
<b>15-20</b>	7.7%
<b>22-30</b>	15.7%
<b>35-40</b>	14.5%
<b>&gt;40</b>	11.7%
<b>Did not answer</b>	7.7%

**Table 7**

<b>In a typical week, how much do you pay for childcare?</b>	
<b>\$0</b>	48.4%
<b>&lt;\$100</b>	15.7%
<b>\$100--\$280</b>	19.0%
<b>\$300- \$500</b>	4.4%
<b>&gt;\$500</b>	2.8%
<b>Did not answer</b>	9.7%

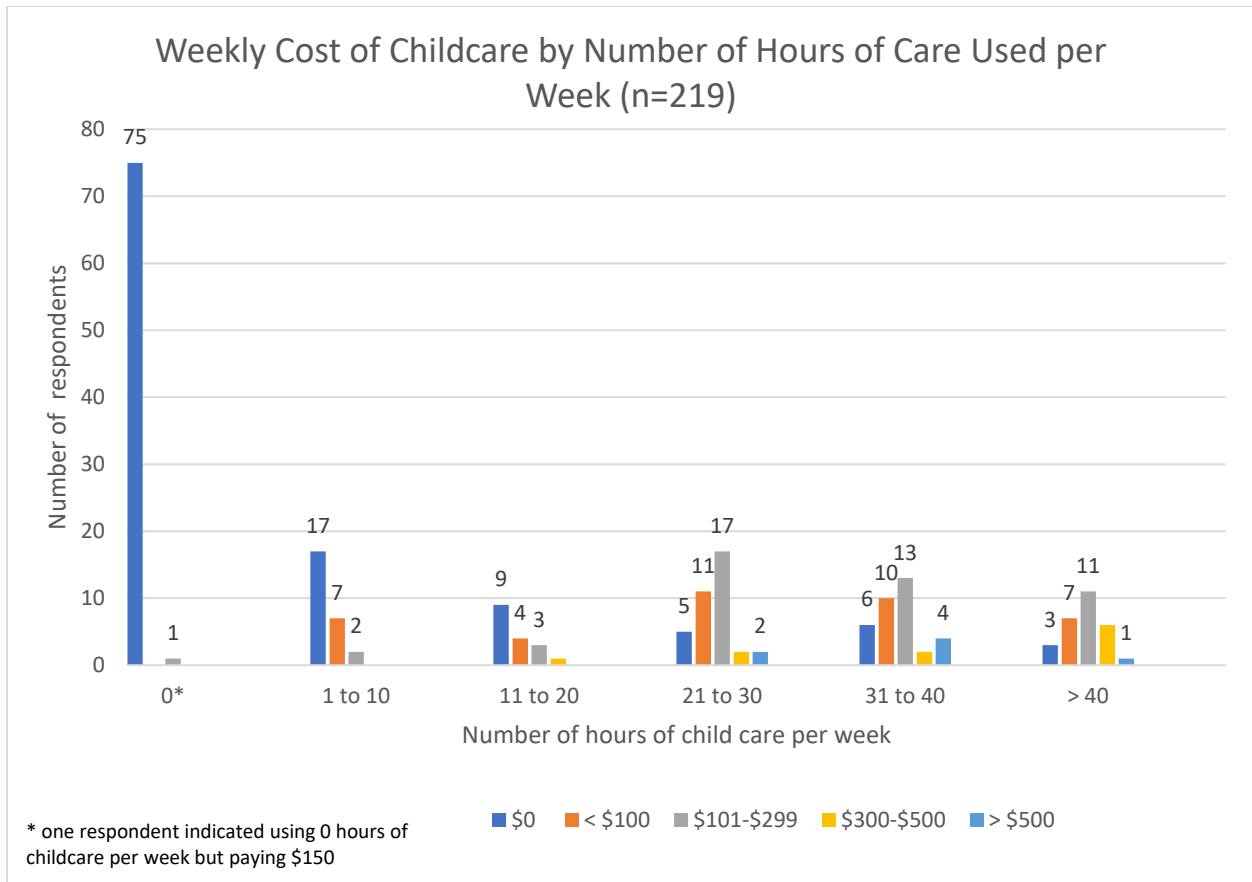
It is notable that nearly one-third reported using 0 hours of childcare in a typical week, while 51% reported using more than 20 hours a week. Furthermore, ***nearly half report paying \$0 for childcare*** weekly, while another 16% pay less than \$100 a week (< \$400 a month).

For comparison purposes, data from the 2017 Quality of Life survey of Spokane County was used. This survey contained a special module addressing child care. That survey had nearly 2,000 respondents and was weighted statistically to represent the county population. Notably, in that survey only 33% of those with children under the age of 13 reported using some hours of child care per week. The average number of hours used per week was about 25.

The breakdown for the Quality of Life survey also indicated that 53% of residents with children under the age of 13 reported paying \$0 for childcare- very close to the above reported figure of 48.4%. Additionally, 54% of those who DID pay something for child care reported paying \$100 or less per week...but 18% reported paying \$150 or more per week (useful to compare to the 26.2% in this survey who paid \$100-\$500+).

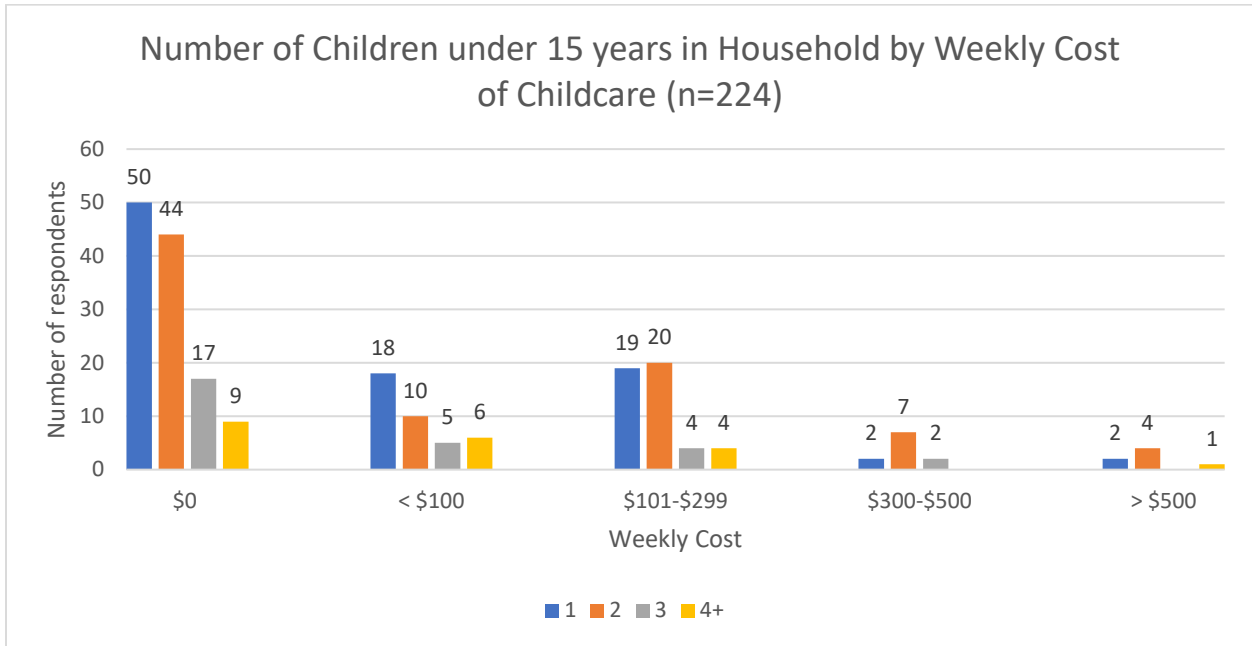
At first glance, this would appear at odds with issues around lack of affordable childcare -- paying no money weekly would seem to be very affordable. A further look was warranted. Figure 7 shows the weekly cost of child care by number of hours of care used per week for the survey respondents.

**Figure 7**



Not surprisingly, those reporting 0 hours of child care used reported paying \$0 (with one outlier). It is notable that across all ranges of hours of childcare used, some number of caregivers reported paying \$0. To see if there were any differences by number of children in the household, cost was cross-tabulated with number of children, shown in Figure 8.

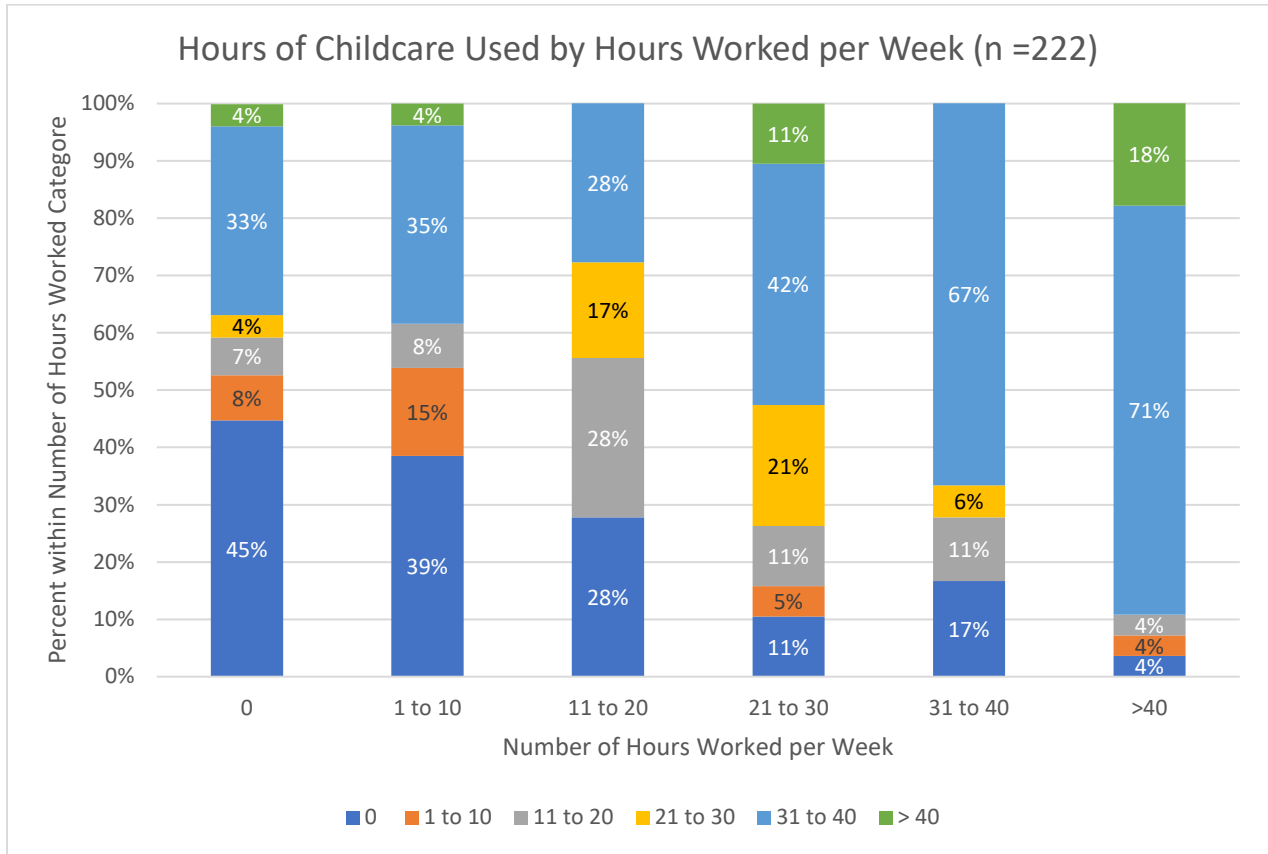
**Figure 8**



As seen in the figure, number of children did not correlate with reported costs of childcare. Indeed, even some with 4 or more children reported paying \$0 weekly.

The next calculation involved looking at hours of childcare used by hours worked per week, with the results shown in Figure 9. As stated in the demographic section, 26% reported working 0 hours per week, while just under 30% worked part-time (<40 hours per week). Thirty-nine percent reported working 40 hours or more per week.

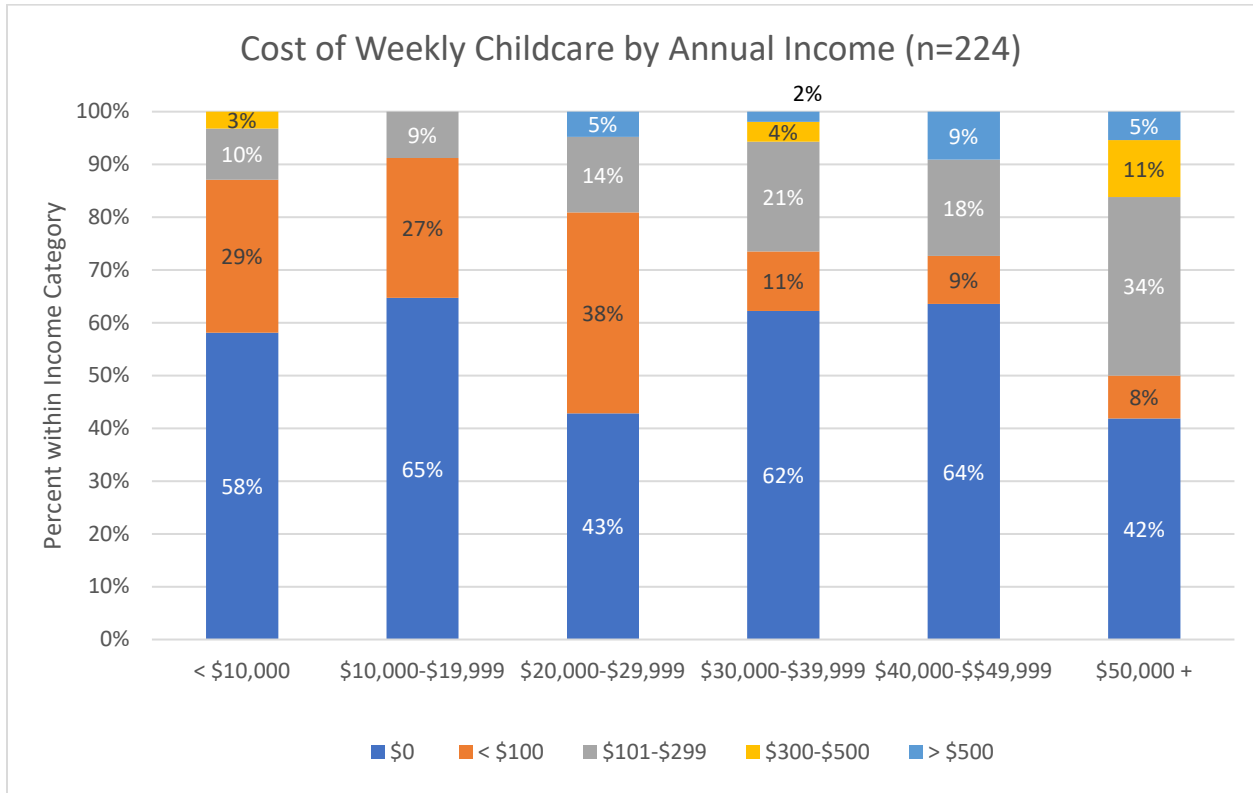
**Figure 9**



Interestingly, some who report working 0 hours per week report using 1 to more than 40 hours a week of childcare. Since only 11% reported attending some school (in classroom or virtual) each week, this factor was not related to hours of childcare used. Additionally, even some who worked over 10 hours (including some reporting working over 40 hours) per week reported using 0 hours of childcare.

Finally, the cost of child care was cross-tabulated with annual income, seen in Figure 10.

**Figure 10**



A large portion of respondents from each income category reported paying \$0 weekly for childcare. For every income category, at least 42% (up to 65%) reported paying \$0 weekly for childcare. When combining all who paid less than \$100 weekly (including \$0), 50% up to 92% paid less than \$100 weekly for childcare.

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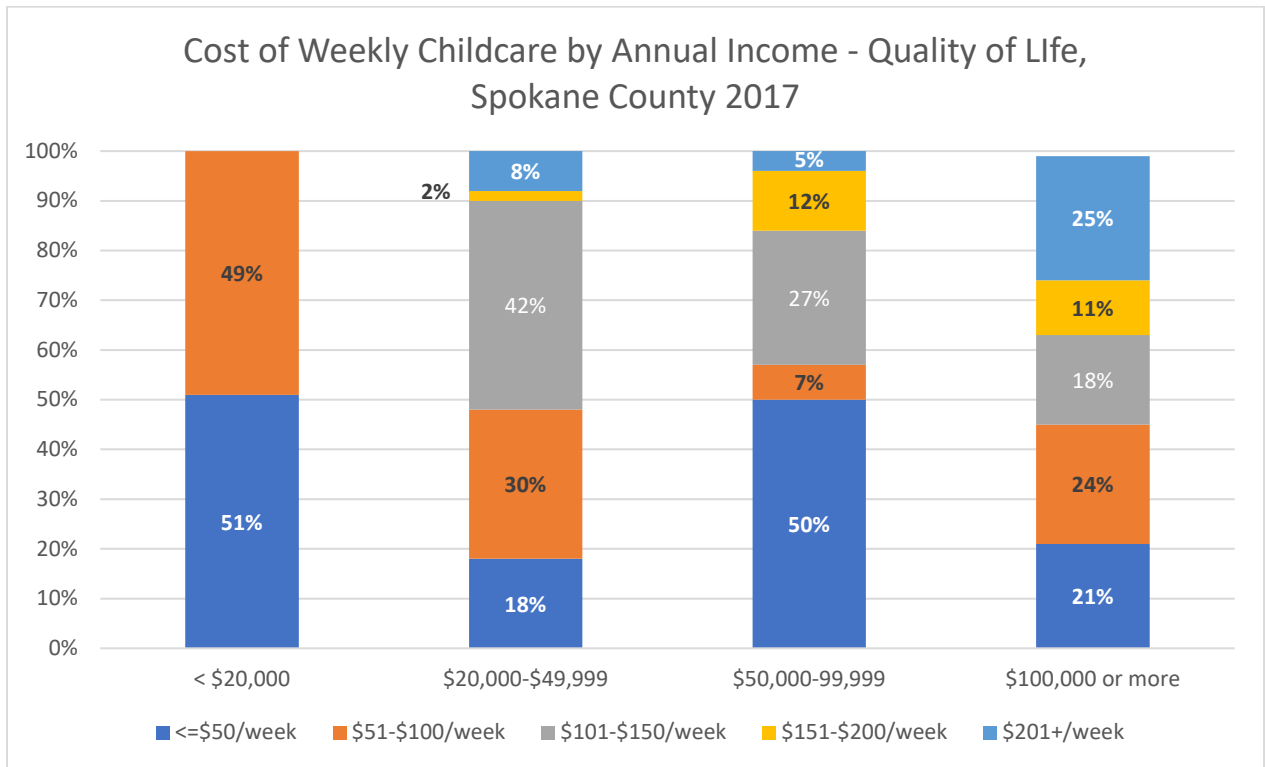
***In every income category, 50% or more of respondents reported paying \$0 - \$99 weekly for childcare.***

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To cross-check and compare data, similar data from the 2017 Spokane County Quality of Life Survey were utilized. Figure 11 shows the 2017 results for cost of weekly childcare by annual income. While the income and cost categories were slightly different, it is still useful a useful comparison.



**Figure 11**



Note that 51% of those with income under \$20,000 report paying \$50 or less per week (this includes those reporting paying \$0). Even for those with incomes from \$20,000 to more than \$100,000 annually, a notable proportion pay very little weekly, if anything. In sum, this figure shows similar information to the current After - Hours Child Care Survey- **a significant proportion of parents/caregivers pay \$0-\$400 per month for childcare.**

***Hence, the question remains: if so many report paying \$0 - or less than \$400 a month - for childcare, why the complaints about access to affordable childcare?***

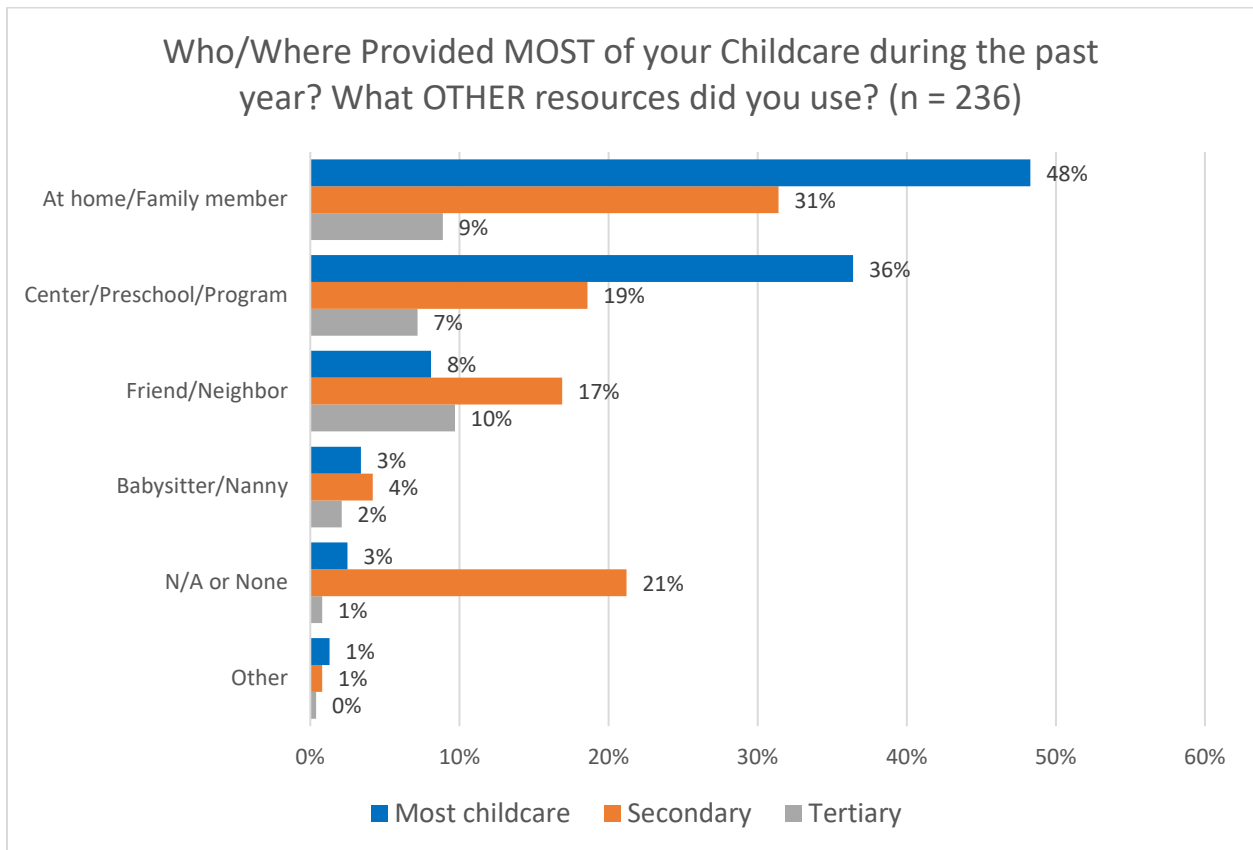
The next figures are more revealing about possible answers to this question. Participants were asked **who provided most of their childcare** during the past year, followed by their “next-most-used” (secondary) and “third-most-used” (tertiary). Respondents were allowed to write in their answers, which were then themed into the following categories:

- At home/family member
- Center/Preschool/Program
- Friend/Neighbor
- Babysitter/Nanny
- Not applicable/None\*
- Other

\*Not applicable/none was not defined or explained by most respondents, but from explanations that were offered and from answers to other open-ended questions, it appeared that the caregiver was

staying at home, OR the children were deemed old enough to care for themselves. Figure 10 shows who/where was reported for MOST childcare, followed by any secondary and tertiary providers. Note that 236 respondents answered the “most childcare” question, with 220 and 69 respectively providing answers for secondary and tertiary childcare providers. The responses in the Figure 12 are calculated as a proportion of the 236 who answered the “most” question. The percentages are grouped by provider type.

**Figure 12**



*\*Note: A respondent could report the same category for most, secondary and tertiary. For example, they might indicate “stay home” as primary, then “my mom” for secondary, and “my sister” for tertiary.*

***Nearly half of respondents either stayed home or utilized family members as the primary source of childcare. 31% reported the same source for secondary childcare.***

Nearly half of the respondents either stayed home or utilized family members as the primary source of childcare, with 31% reporting the same for secondary childcare provision. In all, about 84% of respondents stayed at home, utilized family members, or used preschools/programs/child care centers

for their primary child care needs. Given that many respondents reported at home/family member for **both** primary and secondary, if not tertiary, care-giving, it is safe to say that the majority of respondents utilize this type of child care.

The second-most utilized category for “most” child care included preschools, childcare centers, and programs including after school/other school provided programs, YMCA, ECEAP, HeadStart, summer camps, and other programs; these may or may not cost money.

Friends and neighbors included roommates and ex-boyfriends/girlfriends, and may or may not have incurred costs. Babysitters/nannies most likely did incur childcare costs.

Overall, about 84% of respondents stayed at home, utilized family members, or preschools/programs/child care centers for their primary child care needs.

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***It is possible, if not probable, that high utilization of family (including stay-at-home caregivers) explains some of the reported \$0/low-cost child care.***

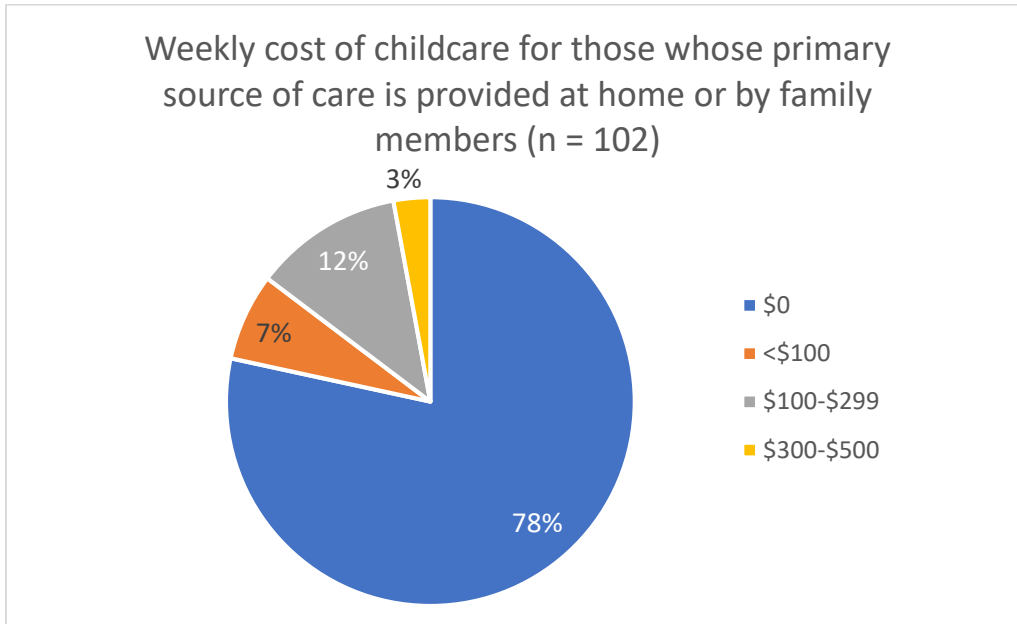
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Notably 21% of respondents indicated that secondary child-care options were “not applicable” or “none”.

From the 2017 Quality of Life survey, 44% of respondents reported that a parent/guardian stayed home as primary caregiver, and 38% reported “other family members” as primary caregivers. This indicates that about 82% of county residents with children under 13 in 2017 reported either staying home or using family members as primary child care providers, similar to the 84% in the current survey.

To look more closely at any relationship between WHO provided childcare and the COST, crosstabulations were run between those two factors, separated by WHO. Figure 13 shows the weekly cost of childcare for ***those whose primary source of care is provided at home (stay-at-home caregiver) or by a family member.***

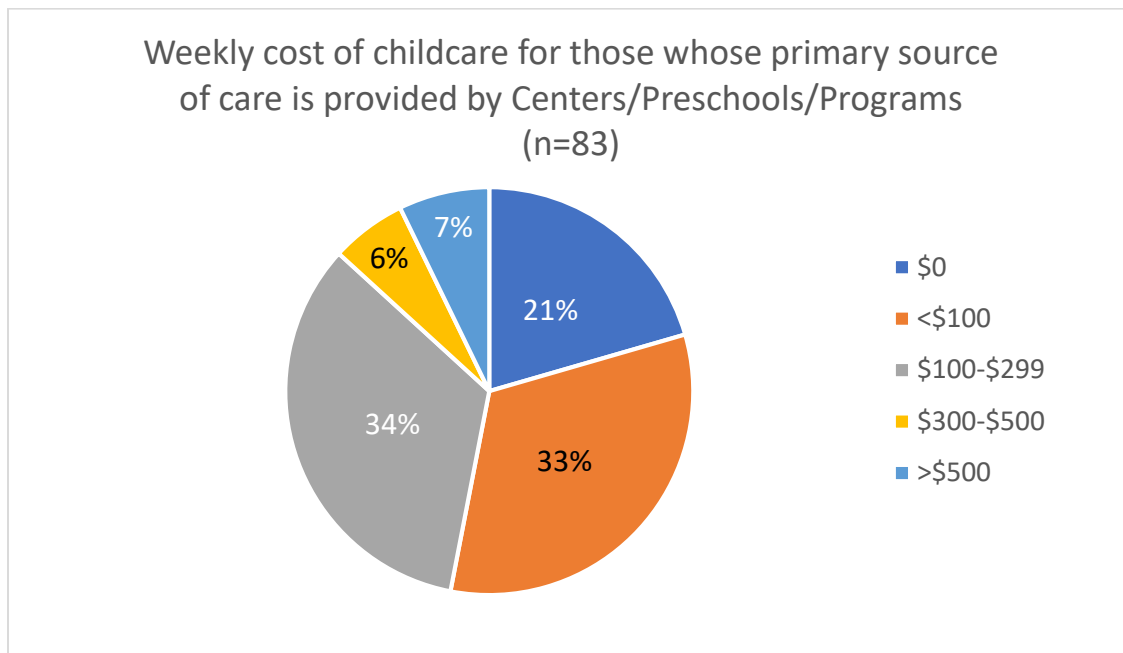
**Figure 13**



Over three-quarters of these respondents report paying \$0, with only 15% reporting paying \$100 or more per week. For comparison, in the 2017 Quality of Life report, 80% of those who used a stay-at-home parent/guardian reported paying \$0 for child care weekly, as well as 68% of those who reported using other family members.

Figure 14 shows the cost of childcare as reported by those **who primarily use centers, preschools, or programs.**

**Figure 14**

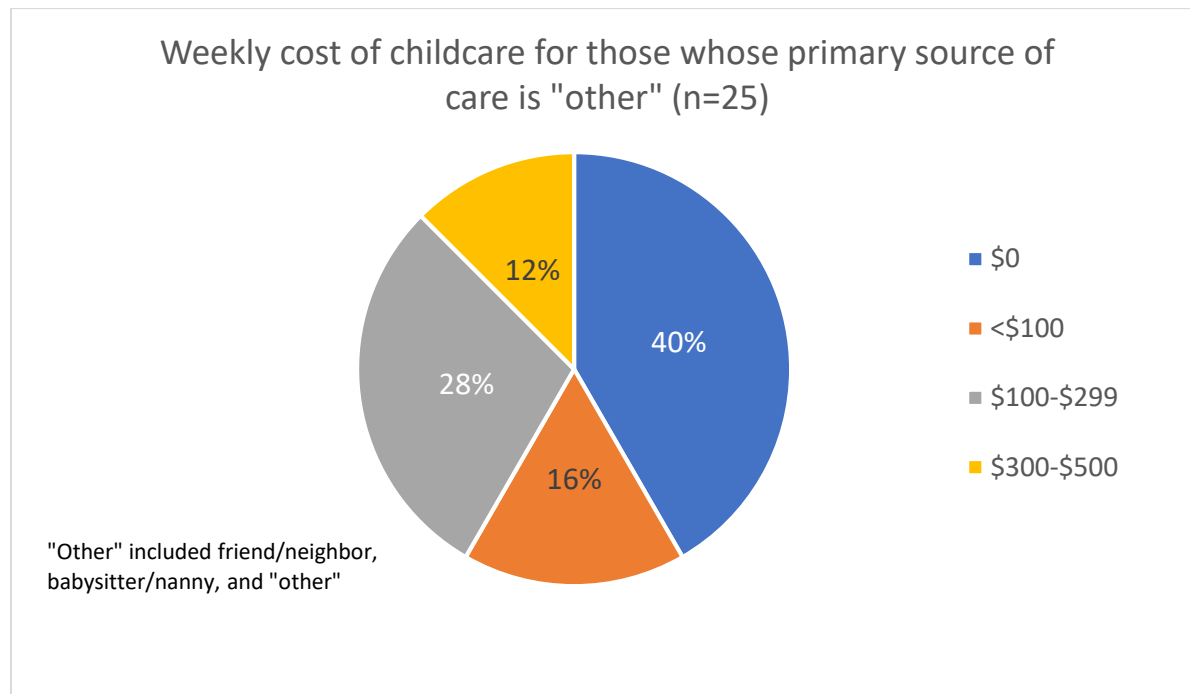


Twenty-one percent of these respondents still report paying \$0. It is possible that some may receive subsidies, scholarships, or other forms of assistance, while others may utilize free school-provided programs.

**Notably, this category of child care providers was the ONLY category where any respondents reported paying over \$500 per week.**

Friends/neighbors, babysitter/nanny, and “other” were all collapsed, as only 25 respondents cited one of these categories as **primary caregivers**.

**Figure 15**



**Even in this category, 40% report paying \$0 weekly for care.** It is possible that some friends/neighbors may not be receiving payment.

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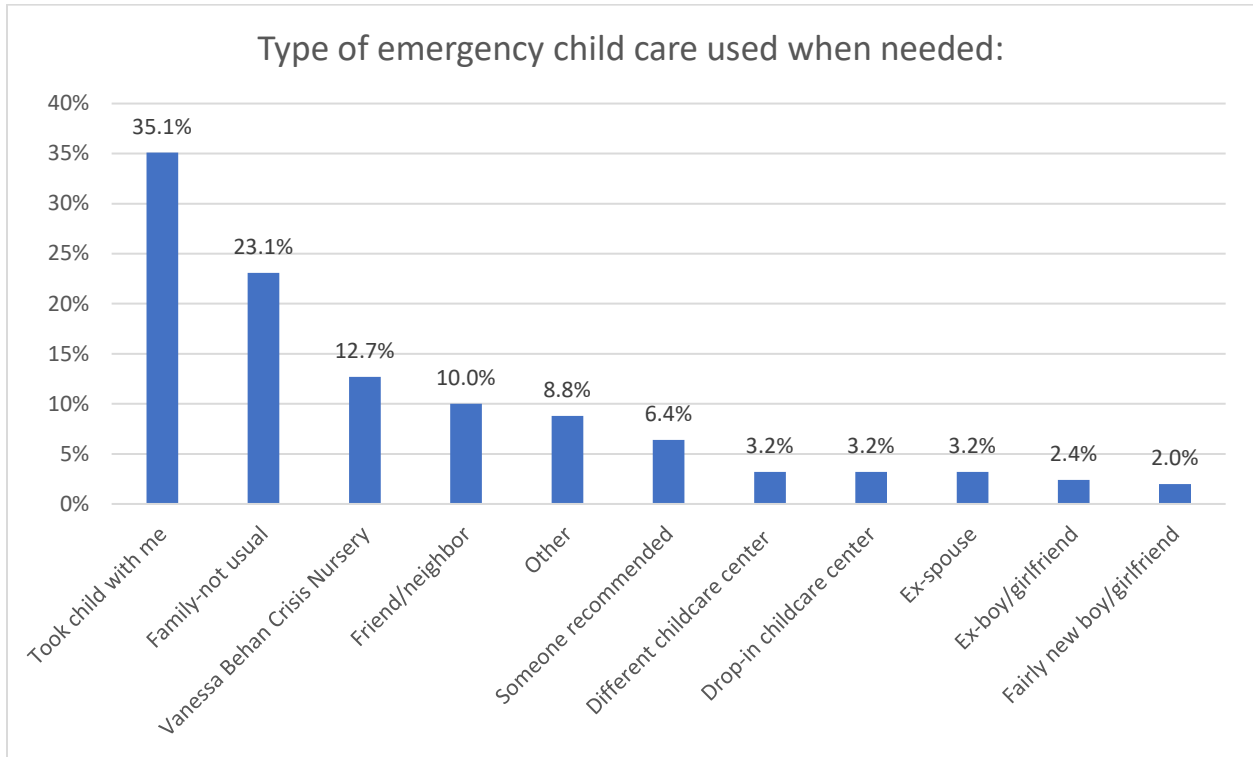
## EMERGENCY CHILDCARE

The unexpected can always happen, and when emergencies arise, parents and caregivers are often hard-pressed to find childcare. Participants were asked if they had experienced any emergencies in the past year and had to leave their child with a different-than-usual childcare situation. They could check more than one option, so that they could indicate any options they had used. Table 8 and Figure 16 both show the results: 63% of respondents had experienced such a situation and had to choose a different provider—or, in over half of those cases, they simply had to take the child with them.

**Table 8**

<b>During the past year, have you had an emergency or unexpected event and had to leave your child with:</b>	
Different childcare center than you normally use	3.2%
A drop-in childcare center	3.2%
Vanessa Behan Crisis Nursery	12.7%
Friend or neighbor you did not know very well	10.0%
Someone a friend/neighbor recommended to you	6.4%
Family member that usually does not care for the children	23.1%
Ex-spouse that usually does not care for the children	3.2%
Fairly new boyfriend or girlfriend	2.0%
Ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend	2.4%
Just had to take the children with you	35.1%
Did not have any emergencies/unexpected events	36.7%
Other	8.8%
<i>Known (trusted) person</i>	4.4%
<i>Expensive/can't afford</i>	1.6%
<i>Changed schedule/lost job/called out of work</i>	1.6%
<i>other</i>	1.2%

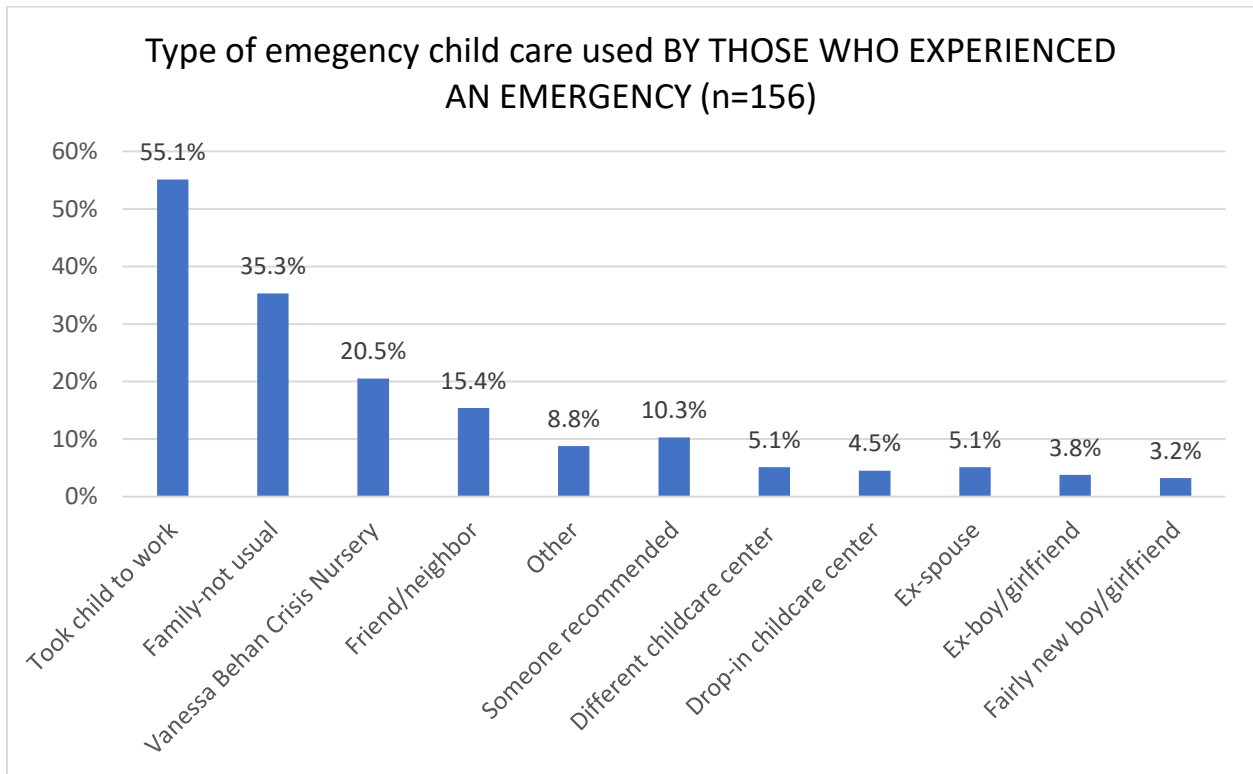
**Figure 16**



35% of respondents had to “just take the children with them”, while 23% had located a family member that did not usually care for the children. Vanessa Behan Crisis Nursery had been used by 13% of the respondents.

***While it is important to note that over one-third of the respondents were fortunate to not have to face any unforeseen child care emergencies, nearly two-thirds DID.*** When one looks at just those who had emergencies they had to deal with (n=156), the chart is more revealing. Perhaps employers, healthcare providers, service agencies, and other institutions should be aware that over half of those who experience unexpected childcare emergencies simply have to “take the child with me”. Figure 17 shows this revised chart **based on only those who reported experiencing an emergency.**

**Figure 17**



**Respondents were given the option of describing “other childcare situations” under the emergency/unexpected event question.**

As indicated in the table, many of these identified known people as their emergency option, but others explained that they had to leave work, rearrange schedules, or leave the children on their own for periods of time. Some notable responses were as follows:

*“Family came from out of town when I had a medical emergency because I didn’t have anywhere to send my kid.”*

*“Having child sent home for every fever or loose stool- which resulted in loss of job.”*

*“I usually end up having to call out of work.”*

*“I was forced to take my child everywhere, even in emergency situations.”*

*“My husband had to take them to work.”*

*“Financially it makes more sense to have a single income and a stay at home parent. This prevents our financial situation from improving but keeps us afloat. Even in calculating the child care subsidy program, we cannot afford for both of us to work.”*



## CONCLUSION

Child care needs have long been an issue for parents and caregivers, whatever the age of their young children. Additional issues make access to child care even more challenging. What if one works a swing shift, weekends, or evenings? What if a child is sick? What if work schedules are seasonal, sporadic, or subject to short notification to report in? What about school breaks or holidays? And how can one afford it at minimum wage, when even two-income families face challenges?

While these findings can not be generalized to the population of Spokane County, the findings clearly reflect a repeated and common theme among parents and others who are responsible for the care of children: there is a lack of affordable and available childcare for many, perhaps even a majority, of parents. Despite the reported number of those who report paying \$0 for childcare, their choices to forgo income, give up jobs, and/or rely on a fragile network of available family or friends to care for their children tells the tale of a large group of residents in need of accessible, affordable, quality childcare....just as current research shows across the nation.<sup>7</sup>

The not for profits who joined together to commission this study see the challenges for the people they serve, including the need for child care. Parents and caregivers want to get ahead, succeed -- yet the challenge of affordable, accessible childcare becomes a barrier to getting, and keeping a job. Even a much-deserved raise can be just enough money to push one off child care assistance, resulting in an actual LOSS of income as the cost for childcare now rises.

Based on this survey, the main challenges for finding quality childcare revolved around availability, affordability and quality. Almost half of the respondents couldn't find affordable childcare for most or all of the year... and the vast majority were relying on staying at home or family/friends to provide the bulk of child care. About one-third of respondents reported challenges finding alternate care to cover evenings, weekends, sick children, and school schedules.

And despite using family, friends, neighbors, and centers/programs, just over 20% of the respondents noted they had an issue with "trusting the person I left my child with." This represents one out of five of this group. Combined with alternate schedules and affordability, it paints a picture of the concerns and challenges in finding care.

The call for quality, available and affordable child care is clear.

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## CALL TO ACTION

Our hope is that after reading this report, the reader had a better understanding of the need for accessible, affordable, and quality childcare in the Spokane area. Investment in our community's children is an investment in our future.

Keeping children safe, healthy and secure are the most important tasks of child care providers. Providing appropriate learning environments as they grow is critical as well. Research shows that children who have spent time in care environments with age-appropriate learning receive lasting benefits such as better math, language, and social skills as they enter school. Additionally, children who receive age-appropriate learning in early childhood progress further in school and have higher earnings as adults, as well as fewer interactions with the justice system.<sup>8</sup>

Quality child care can take place in the home or in a child care provider setting. However, resources for those who provide child care must be made available if all children are to achieve equity, particularly if parents/caregivers can not afford, or gain access to, established child care centers.

As for consequences for the parent/caregiver regarding a lack of accessible child care, parents may not be able to advance or even stay in the workforce if finding outside-the-home child care is unaffordable or inaccessible. This can impact their future through reduced income.

From a community/business standpoint, employers would benefit from employees who are not faced with barriers to consistent, affordable child care – they could have less concerns about employees calling in to have to stay home with sick children, or unable to take night or weekend shifts due to lack of child care. In addition, deserving employees would more readily be able to take raises or promotions, without fear that the extra income would make them ineligible for child care assistance.

Child care deserves investment and attention from every member of the community.

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### *What you can do:*

- Increase the availability of child development information and age-appropriate educational teaching materials for parents and others who care for children.
- Educate friends, family and policy makers on the importance of increasing the availability of safe, quality, flexible and affordable childcare options in Spokane.
- Increase the capacity of emergency, nontraditional shift and drop-in childcare options to meet the needs of parents.
- Support a more in-depth needs assessment of childcare options in Spokane.

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## ***For Further Information and Resources:***

*ChildCare Aware: Helping find child care referrals, resources, and information where you live.*

[Childcareawarewa.org](http://Childcareawarewa.org)

**253-383-1735**

*Vanessa Behan Crisis Nursery: Offers free childcare to child 24 hours a day and distributes diapers and formula.*

[Vanessabehan.org](http://Vanessabehan.org)

**509-535-3155**

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# Appendix A: Survey Instrument

# Childcare Survey

We would like to learn more about childcare needs and parenting from our community members. This information will help raise awareness about childcare needs in the Spokane area, and inform programming decisions among childcare providers. We appreciate your help!

You must be at least 18 years old, and the parent or guardian of one or more children, to participate in this survey. This survey is anonymous, and all information collected will be combined to create a snapshot of childcare needs in the community. It should take about 10 minutes to complete. Participation is completely voluntary.

1. Please tell us how many children in each age category are in your household.

Infants ages 0-11 months

Children ages 6-10 years

Preschoolers ages 1-5 years

Children ages 11-15 years

2. Is your household made up of

- One parent/adult living with child/children
- One parent/adult living with other adults as well as child/children
- Two parents/adults living with child/children
- Two parents/adults living with other adults as well as child/children

Other, please describe:

3. Which group or place is the most important source of your connection to your community?

- Family
- Friends/neighbors
- School
- Church/religious institution
- Social club/community center
- Treatment center (inpatient or outpatient)
- Work
- Military
- None

Other, please describe:

4. How many close friends do you have (not counting your relatives) who you can talk to about what is on your mind, or can call on for help?

Close friends

5. During the past year, have you had:

	Most or all of the year	More than half the year	Less than half the year	Rarely or never
A safe place to live?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enough food to feed your household?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reliable transportation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Access to affordable childcare?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
An adequate supply of diapers? (if not applicable, please leave blank)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A support system of family/friends?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Concerns about your or your children's safety?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Too much stress/worry?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. In a typical week, how many hours of childcare do you use?

Hours

7. In a typical week, how much do you pay for childcare? (please round to nearest whole dollar)

Dollars

8. During the past year, who or where did you use for MOST childcare when you were not at home? (for example: spouse, child care center, preschool, family member, school program, friend/neighbor, etc.)

9. During the past year, what OTHER types of childcare did you use?

10. In the last 12 months, have you ever had an emergency, unexpected event or schedule change, and had to leave your children with any of the following? (check all that apply).

- |                                                                             |                                                                                      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Did not have any emergencies or unexpected events  | <input type="checkbox"/> A family member that usually does not care for the children |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A different childcare center than you normally use | <input type="checkbox"/> An ex-spouse that usually does not care for the children    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A drop-in childcare center                         | <input type="checkbox"/> A fairly new boyfriend or girlfriend                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vanessa Behan Crisis Nursery                       | <input type="checkbox"/> An ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A friend or neighbor you did not know very well    | <input type="checkbox"/> You just had to take the children with you                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Someone that a friend/neighbor recommended to you  |                                                                                      |

Any other childcare situations you would like to describe?

11. During the past year, about how often did you find yourself without good childcare options?

- |                                                |                                                                                     |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Almost every day      | <input type="checkbox"/> Six or fewer times during the year                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Once or twice a week  | <input type="checkbox"/> Only during school breaks, holidays and early release days |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Once or twice a month | <input type="checkbox"/> Never                                                      |

12. Have you experienced any of the following issues around childcare this past year? (check any that apply).

- Finding affordable childcare
- Finding care for a sick child
- Finding care for a child with special needs
- Finding evening childcare (after 6 pm)
- Finding overnight childcare
- Finding weekend childcare
- Having to change childcare due to child's behavioral issues
- Scheduling childcare to match my work/school schedule
- Scheduling childcare to match child's school schedule (summers, breaks, early release days, etc.)
- Trusting the person I left my child with
- Reliability of childcare provider

Other, please describe:

13. Are there any other specific childcare needs you would like to tell us about?

14. Do you consider yourself...?

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- White
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- Some other race
- Multi-racial

15. Are you Hispanic, Spanish, or Latino/a?

- Yes
- No

16. In a typical week, how many hours do you work for pay?

 Hours

17. In a typical week, how many hours do you go to school?

 Hours

18. What is your monthly rent or house payment?

 Dollars

19. What is your annual household income from all sources?

 Dollars

20. What is the zip code where you live?

**Thank you for your responses!**

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## Appendix B: Survey Distribution Sites

Children’s Home Society of Washington (Spokane)  
Family Promise  
NAOMI  
Perry Street Farmers’ Market  
Pioneer Treatment Services  
Salvation Army Housing Services  
Southwest Community Center Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP)  
St. Margaret’s Continuum of Care Family Sub-Committee meeting  
St. Margaret’s Transitional Housing Programs  
St. Margaret’s Shelter  
Summit Ridge Apartments  
Transitions – Educare  
Transitions – Transitional Living Center  
Vanessa Behan Crisis Nursery  
Women, Infant & Children (WIC) Nutrition Program offices (SRHD, all sites)

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