

# Merced County

**With hopes** for economic diversification hinging on the construction of a new University of California campus, Merced County remains dependent on agriculture and related industries such as food- and cotton-processing. People employed in these jobs work at low wages. With approximately 30 percent of children under five living in poverty, one of the highest rates in the state, most families with children in licensed care receive subsidies to help pay for the cost of care. But since child care subsidies are not available for middle-income families, finding affordable, quality care is a problem.

Finding care that meets the schedules of working families is a real challenge. About a quarter of all employed residents work outside the county, where they secure higher-paying jobs. But this often means long commutes and a need for child care during non-traditional hours. Only 2 percent of all centers, which comprise nearly half of all licensed care in the county, are open during non-traditional hours. Also, there is an overall lack of licensed care for newborns and toddlers.

## Incentives help build child care supply

The resource and referral (R&R) agency for Merced County, Children's Services Network, has helped increase the supply of child care by providing incentives to new family child care homes, such as scholarships for child development classes. The R&R offers monthly orientations in both English and Spanish to serve the area's Latino community, which grew by 60 percent over the last decade. Training in Spanish is also available to participants in the Child Care Initiative Project (CCIP), a statewide program which focuses on building the supply of family child care homes. Bilingual R&R staff also serve the region's growing Filipino and Southeast Asian immigrant communities.

The County's First 5 commission recently completed an impressive plan to implement Preschool for All, which will ensure three and four year olds are ready for kindergarten.

*"Most children in licensed child care facilities are fortunate to receive subsidies to cover the cost of care. But it is very difficult for middle-income families to find affordable, quality child care. Some say it's like finding a needle in a haystack."*  
 – R&R Counselor

The People <sup>1</sup>	1990	2000	Change
Total number of residents	178,403	210,554	18%
Total number of employed residents		73,346	
Percent working outside the county		25%	
Percent working non-traditional hours		23%	
Total number of households	55,548	63,933	15%
Speaking English	35,561	35,057	-1%
Speaking Spanish	13,637	21,875	60%
Speaking an Asian language	2,151	2,616	22%

## The Children<sup>1</sup> 2000

Total number of children (0–13 years) 56,488

Under 2	2	3	4	5	6–11	12	13
7,173	3,732	3,681	4,107	4,051	25,592	4,124	4,028

Children 0–5 living in poverty (% of total) 6,493 (30%)

Children 0–5 living in single parent household (% of total) 4,707 (25%)

Total number of children (0–13) with parents in the labor force<sup>2</sup> 28,950

Under 2	2	3	4	5	6–13
3,245	1,465	1,875	2,175	1,995	18,195

## Child Care Cost and Family Income 2002

Average annual cost of full-time licensed care for a preschooler, 2–5 years old, in a center<sup>3</sup> \$5,026

Annual minimum wage of a full-time worker<sup>4</sup> \$14,040

Care for a preschooler as a percent of income of a single parent household at minimum wage 36%

Annual median family income<sup>1</sup> \$38,009

Annual fair market rent for a two-bedroom unit<sup>5</sup> \$6,912

Salary of entry-level public school teacher<sup>6</sup> \$31,672

1. U.S. Census Bureau, 1990; 2000.
2. This number reflects children with either two parents or single head of household in the labor force.
3. 2002 Regional Market Rate Survey of California Child Care Providers.
4. California Department of Industrial Relations, Industrial Welfare Commission, 2002.
5. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2002.
6. California Department of Education, 2002-2003.

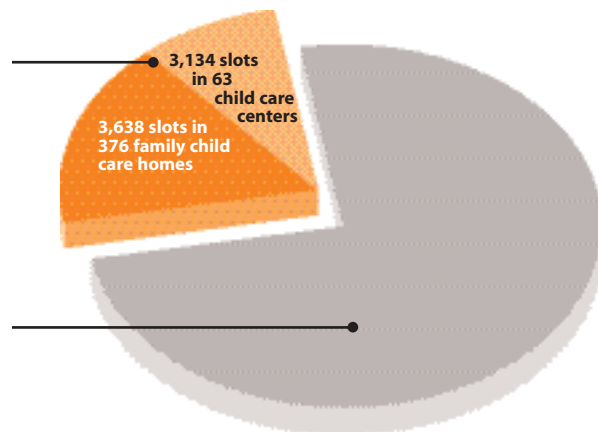
## For more information about child care in Merced County, call:

Children's Services Network  
 Resource and Referral Division 209-722-7147

# Child Care Supply in Merced County

## Licensed Child Care Supply 6,772 slots

Total number of licensed slots	6,772
Percent of slots in child care centers	46%
% of slots for infants (under 2 years old)	4%
% of slots for preschoolers (2–5 years old)	81%
% of slots for school-age children (6 years and older)	14%
Percent of slots in family child care homes <sup>1</sup>	54%



## Children with Parents in the Labor Force<sup>2</sup> 28,950

Licensed child care is only available for 23% of children with parents in the labor force<sup>2</sup>.

- Licensed center-based care available for 4% of infants<sup>1</sup>
- Licensed center-based care available for 34% of preschoolers<sup>1</sup>

## Supply of Licensed Child Care and Requests from Parents to the R&R

		Child Care Centers	Family Child Care Homes
<b>Facilities</b>	Total number of sites	63	376
	Total number of slots	3,134	3,638 <sup>1</sup>
	Infant slots	139	
	Preschool slots	2,554	
	School-age slots	441	
<b>Schedules<sup>3</sup></b>	Full-time and part-time	54%	96%
	Only full-time available	5%	4%
	Only part-time available	41%	0%
	Care available during non-traditional hours	2%	58%

### Parent Requests to the R&R<sup>4</sup>

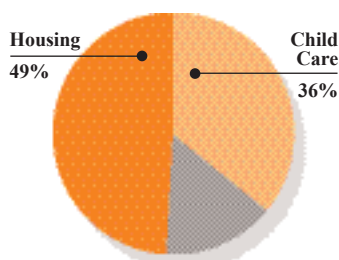
*Type of care:* 26% infant/toddler; 40% preschool; 34% school-age

*Type of facility:* 92% family child care homes; 11% child care centers

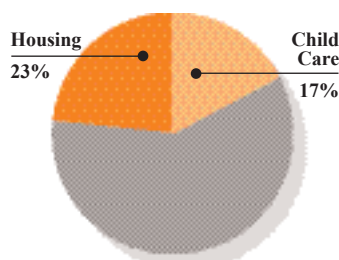
*Schedule of care:* 71% full-time care (0–5 years); 39% part-time care (0–5 years)

*Reasons for needing child care:* 88% employment; 14% school/training; 1% looking for work

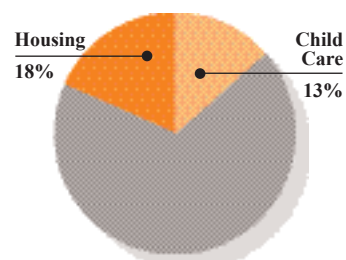
## Portion of Income Needed to Pay for Basic Family Needs: Housing and One Preschooler in a Licensed Center



**For a Family at Minimum Wage  
\$14,040 / year**



**For a Family Earning  
\$30,000 / year**



**For a Family at County Median Income  
\$38,009 / year**

1. A breakdown of slots by age is not available for family child care homes because they are licensed to care for children of all ages.
2. Children (0–13 years old) living with two parents or with a single parent in the labor force. 2000 U.S. Census.
3. Full-time and part-time schedules are percentages of total slots. Some centers that are exempt from licensing requirements are included in the percentages related to care during non-traditional hours (evening, weekend, or overnight.) Non-traditional schedules are percentages of total sites.
4. Since some parents find child care without using R&Rs, the calls recorded here do not necessarily represent total demand for child care, although they do reflect trends.