

Sonoma County

Sonoma County has seen its supply of family child care homes steadily decrease as housing costs rise: The median price for an existing single-family home in the county exceeded \$400,000 in 2003. This has caused many child care providers to seek higher-paying professions, or to move out of the county altogether. Although demand for child care remains relatively flat – partly due to a slight drop in the population of young children – diminishing supply of licensed care and the lack of affordable housing has created a supply gap. In areas with low-income and Spanish-speaking families – often one and the same in some communities – demand for subsidized care far outweighs available funds. Finding care for infants and toddlers, for non-traditional hours, or for children with special needs, is challenging throughout the county. Just 4 percent of slots at centers, which make up the majority of licensed care in the county, available for children under two. And only 1 percent of centers and 13 percent of family child care homes offer care during evenings and weekends. In parts of the county’s northern coastal areas, there is no licensed care available.

Collaborations help child care supply

Building the supply of care where the need is greatest is a priority for the two resource and referral (R&R) agencies that serve Sonoma County: 4Cs (Community Child Care Council) and River Child Care Services. Both are working closely with the Local Planning Council to increase the number of providers who care for children with special needs using SB1703 funds.

Through the statewide Child Care Initiative Project, more than 100 new providers have received training in Sonoma County and several have already been licensed, including Spanish-speaking caregivers (the number of Spanish-speaking households grew 91 percent since 1990). From 2000 to 2003, more than 300 licensed child care providers received stipends through the First 5-funded Provider Retention Program, one of many programs designed to increase provider education.

“We’re seeing a diminishing supply of child care providers because of our county’s high cost of living. Providers don’t earn enough money to live in Sonoma.”

– R&R Counselor

The People ¹	1990	2000	Change
Total number of residents	388,222	458,614	18%
Total number of employed residents		224,947	
Percent working outside the county		18%	
Percent working non-traditional hours		19%	
Total number of households	149,382	172,690	16%
Speaking English	126,888	138,730	9%
Speaking Spanish	10,269	19,608	91%
Speaking an Asian language	2,389	3,835	61%

The Children ¹	2000
Total number of children (0–13 years)	85,803

Under 2	2	3	4	5	6–11	12	13
10,646	5,449	5,710	5,792	5,933	39,312	6,468	6,493

Children 0–5 living in poverty (% of total) 3,282 (10%)
 Children 0–5 living in single parent household (% of total) 5,228 (18%)

Total number of children (0–13) with parents in the labor force² 51,465

Under 2	2	3	4	5	6–13
5,415	2,745	2,980	3,345	3,300	33,680

Child Care Cost and Family Income	2002
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Average annual cost of full-time licensed care for a preschooler, 2–5 years old, in a center ³	\$7,050
Annual minimum wage of a full-time worker ⁴	\$14,040
Care for a preschooler as a percent of income of a single parent household at minimum wage	50%
Annual median family income ⁵	\$61,921
Annual fair market rent for a two-bedroom unit ⁵	\$12,240
Salary of entry-level public school teacher ⁶	\$33,090

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 Sonoma County, call:

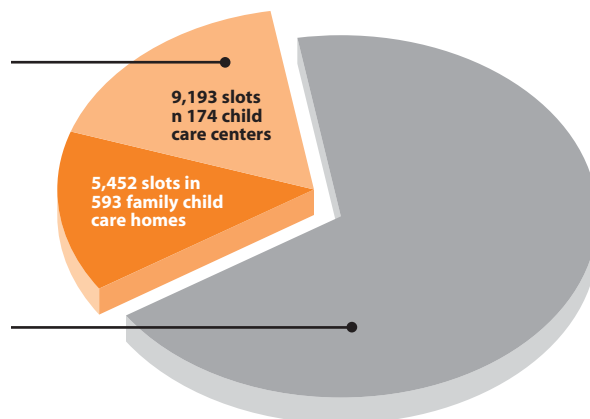
The Community Child Care Council of Sonoma County (4Cs)
 707-544-3077

River Child Care Services
 707-869-3613

Child Care Supply in Sonoma County

Licensed Child Care Supply 14,645 slots

Total number of licensed slots	14,645
Percent of slots in child care centers	63%
% of slots for infants (under 2 years old)	4%
% of slots for preschoolers (2–5 years old)	60%
% of slots for school-age children (6 years and older)	36%
Percent of slots in family child care homes ¹	37%



Children with Parents in the Labor Force² 51,465

Licensed child care is only available for 28% of children with parents in the labor force².

- Licensed center-based care available for 7% of infants¹
- Licensed center-based care available for 44% of preschoolers¹

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

		Child Care Centers	Family Child Care Homes
Facilities	Total number of sites	174	593
	Total number of slots	9,193	5,452 ¹
	Infant slots	361	
	Preschool slots	5,496	
	School-age slots	3,336	
Schedules³	Full-time and part-time	88%	86%
	Only full-time available	0%	9%
	Only part-time available	12%	5%
	Care available during non-traditional hours	1%	13%

Parent Requests to the R&R⁴

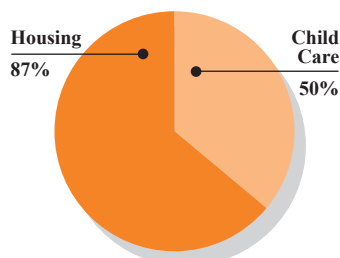
Type of care: 21% infant/toddler; 47% preschool; 31% school-age

Type of facility: 94% family child care homes; 43% child care centers

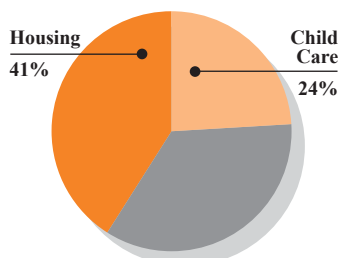
Schedule of care: 69% full-time care (0–5 years); 40% part-time care (0–5 years)

Reasons for needing child care: 88% employment; 11% school/training; 7% looking for work

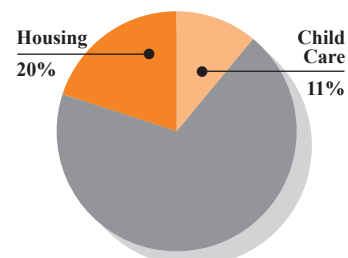
Portion of Income Needed to Pay for Basic Family Needs: Housing and One Preschooler in a Licensed Center



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



For a Family Earning
\$30,000 / year



For a Family at County Median Income
\$61,921 / year

- 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.
- Children (0–13 years old) living with two parents or with a single parent in the labor force. 2000 U.S. Census.
- 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.
- 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.