

Solving the systemic problem of Availability and Accessibility of Infant and Toddler Care in Leelanau County



Shortage of Care

We know there is a critical shortage of infant and toddler childcare in Leelanau County. There are only 4 home-based providers listed on the Great Start to Quality website and/or found through a google search. Center based program closures in both Northport and Suttons Bay illustrate that center-based care for the infant to two year old population is simply cost prohibitive.

Collaboration is Crucial

We know there are a number of organizations and committees in Leelanau County working independently on solutions to problems associated with provision of childcare services. A recent meeting held with key stake-holders in the community confirmed that these local community members and organizations are ready to work together as a collaborative to find a solution.

Need for more Providers

As we look to finding a solution, there was consensus among the group that capacity can be increased through an organized solution that recruits, trains, and supports home-based providers. Partnering with existing providers to ensure quality programming and monitor availability also plays a part in the collaborative solution.

Lack of Childcare is both a social and economic issue

We know the lack of childcare in our region is both an economic issue and a social issue that hurts businesses. If we are unsuccessful in creating more available childcare, we will lose talented young families to other areas of the region that have adequate childcare. Increasing capacity will allow businesses to hire the necessary workforce needed to continue operations and we will allow us to attract new, clean industry to the area.

Local Funding Possibilities

We plan to partner with local economic nonprofit corporations and county businesses to help provide seed money for new provider start up. We will continue to solicit additional private funding to ensure care is accessible to families who cannot afford services. Providing a channel for businesses to donate to an organization such as Leelanau Early Childhood Development Corporation (LECDC), who could serve as fiduciary distributing fund to providers for at need families will ensure a steady stream of revenue to providers. Utilizing existing business corporations, such as the Leelanau Peninsula Economic Foundation (LPEF), to help create a program designed for businesses to fund in part of full, care for their workers as well as the communities' children will help provide needed funds to help home-providers remain financially profitable.

Conclusion

The lack of quality childcare was listed as a top three concern of the Leelanau business owners in a countywide survey conducted by the LPEF, behind affordable housing and sufficient quality workforce. We must find a solution that empowers individuals, organizations and businesses to work together collaboratively. An immediate solution is not only necessary for families in our county, but also for maintaining economic vitality and growth of the area.

Supporting Narrative

Benefits of Funding Early Childhood Care/Experience

- Increases workforce by providing care so parents can enter/re-enter workforce
- Increases family earnings allowing them to afford housing and stay in the area
- Increased the ability for our community to attract talented workers for all industries in the county
- Increases mental health of mothers who tend to be the primary caregivers by supporting the care of their children
- Increases the school readiness of children in the community giving them the best chance for learning throughout their life

Short Term investment leading to Long Term Community Viability

- This is a one time investment that will help the pilot move to a tri-share funding model that includes businesses, parents and providers. It does NOT rely on any additional government funding

Funding request

\$50,000 which will be used to either increase capacity through starting additional home based business offering childcare to our youngest or if capacity is met in pilot, monies will be used to as tuition aid supplementing the cost of care versus tuition most families are able to afford.