

Commentary: Child care in Greater Cincinnati is a critical resource for the region's workforce ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

If businesses in the Greater Cincinnati region want to thrive, they need access to high-quality talent. They need employees who are stable and focused on the job at hand.

Many of these workers are also parents of children under the age of 12. For these employees, their ability to work and earn income is closely tied to child care.

Survey examines number of kids in care; arrangements

The 2017 Child Well-Being Survey found that 45% of children age 0 to 2 and 52% of children age 3 to 5 in the Greater Cincinnati region are in some sort of child care arrangement. While school-age children are slightly less likely to need child care, those surveyed indicated that 28% of kids age 6 to 12 have an arrangement for their care outside of school hours.

The telephone survey of local parents and caregivers in a 22-county region surrounding Cincinnati is sponsored by Interact for Health and Cincinnati Children's with support from the United Way of Greater Cincinnati.

To better understand use of child care in the region, the Child Well-Being Survey asked parents and caregivers about what type of arrangements were in place. Respondents had 10 choices from which to choose, with care provided by a relative or friend being the most common among children of all ages. The number of children receiving care from child care centers, preschools, and other programs varied based on factors such as the child's age and family income.

Why quality child care is necessary for lifelong success

As the survey data demonstrate, there is a great need for child care in our region; however, it also shows that many families are faced with decisions about how to ensure their child is safe and healthy while the parents are at work.

In addition to children being kept safe while parents work, quality child care programs nurture and develop children in ways that prepare them for success in school and in life. Research shows that when children attend quality programs, they are better prepared intellectually, physically, socially and emotionally. In quality child care, teachers understand the key concepts and skills young children need to develop and are able to support this development to foster learning.

When childcare options are explored, it is important that visits to different types of programs such as centers or family child care homes be part of the discovery process as well as knowing if the programs are quality rated by a state quality rating system. Once some options are surfaced, parents should:

- **Schedule a tour** and plan to stay for at least one hour to see different activities
- **Ask to spend time** in the room where their child will be to observe how child care providers interact with the children
- **Ask to meet** all of the caregivers who might be working with their child

Child care is essential to supporting working families and it has a significant impact on children during the most important phase of their development—birth to age 5. Children in high-quality child care programs enter kindergarten with better math, language, and social skills. These skills not only help to support future academic success, but they also lay the groundwork for building tomorrow's workforce, which will be relied upon for decades to come.

Dr. O'dell Moreno Owens is the president and chief executive officer of Interact for Health and InterAct for Change. Dr. Owens is a reproductive endocrinologist. He earned an MD, an OB/GYN residency and a master's of public health degree from Yale University School of Medicine. He also obtained a fellowship in reproductive endocrinology at Harvard Medical School. In recent years, Dr. Owens has served as the Hamilton County Coroner, Cincinnati State Technical and Community College President, and Interim Health Commissioner and Medical Director of the Cincinnati Health Department.

Vanessa Freytag is president/CEO of 4C for Children. The agency is a leader in educating and supporting the adults who care for young children so that every child receives high-quality early education and care. Freytag served as the executive director of the Women's Fund of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation before coming to 4C. She published the Women's Business Cincinnati newspaper, owned a firm specializing in marketing to women and held positions in corporate banking. She has been named a finalist for both the ATHENA Award and the Cincinnati Regional Chamber's WE Celebrate Nonprofit Woman of the Year.

Region: United States ^[3]

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