



The Child Care Conundrum

Exploring solutions to the child care shortage in Greater Minnesota



Ask almost any working parent in Greater Minnesota about child care and you are bound to get an earful. With seemingly endless waiting lists, hour-long commutes to and from day care, having to rely on family and friends until a spot opens up, it is no wonder many moms and dads opt to leave the workforce.

When there is a child care shortage, it is not only families who suffer.

Businesses and communities cannot grow and thrive unless they can attract new employees and residents, but business won't expand and families are reluctant to take a job if there is no child care available in the area. **This is not just a "family" issue, it is also an economic development issue.**

According to the Center for Rural Policy & Development, **every region in Minnesota has a shortfall** between the number of children potentially needing child care and the number of spaces available.

This disparity is especially acute in **Greater Minnesota, which saw a loss of 15,377** licensed child care spots between 2006 and 2015. In contrast, the **number of spots in the metro area grew by more than 3,200** over the same time period.

While there is no easy fix, there are proposals this legislative session to address this problem:

Funding for Initiative Funds to help expand access to quality childcare

HF2424 (Gunther) / SF2090 (Nelson) provides \$1.5 million for grants awarded to Initiative Foundations for the planning, coordination, training and education necessary to expand child care access. This proposal is based on a successful pilot program initiated by the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation which helped child care providers with business improvement planning and quality mentoring with an aim toward the goal of becoming rated under Minnesota's Parent Aware Quality Rating System.

Bonding & general fund appropriation for child care facilities

The Greater Minnesota Partnership (GMNP) and Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities (CGMC) are pursuing legislation (bill numbers TBD) that would provide \$5 million in bonding and \$5 million from the general fund to provide grants to local governments and non-profits in Greater Minnesota to cover up to 50% of the costs to build, upgrade or expand child care facilities to increase capacity and meet state requirements.

Grants to increase child care availability

The GMNP and CGMC recommend at least \$1 million in funding per year for four years for the Minnesota Child Care Grant Program. In 2017, this program received \$519,000 in funding which created more than 300 new child care slots.

