



# Child Care Market Analysis and Strategic Plan Summary for Melcher-Dallas, IA

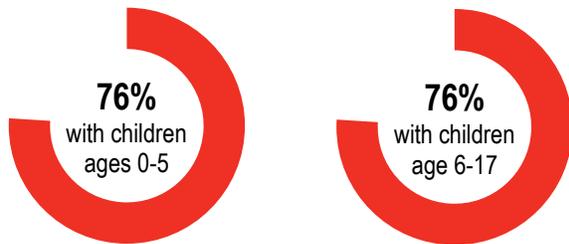
## Eight Key Findings

### 1. Population Ages 0 to 9 is Increasing

254 children ages 0 to 9 living in the Melcher-Dallas area in 2000  
275 children ages 0 to 9 living in the Melcher-Dallas area in 2017

### 2. Melcher-Dallas Area Parents are in the Labor Force and Need Child Care

*Melcher-Dallas Area Families with All Parents in the Labor Force*



### 3. Parents Prefer Regulated Child Care Settings

According to a 2018 child care needs survey conducted by First Children’s Finance, Melcher-Dallas area parents that would use “outside” child care prefer DHS regulated settings. Overall, 33% would prefer a DHS licensed center and 33% prefer a DHS regulated home, while 33% prefer themselves or their spouse/partner care for their children.

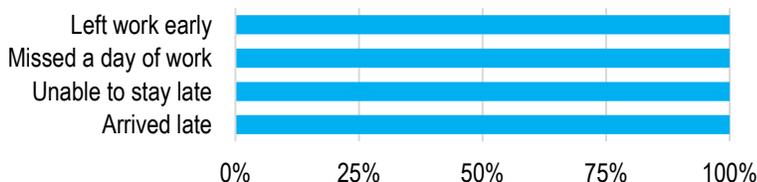
### 4. Median Family Incomes are Higher than the Child Care Assistance Threshold

The median annual income for families in the Melcher-Dallas area is \$71,931, and the average family size is 2.76, according to the US Census Bureau. To be eligible for the Iowa Child Care Assistance program under the 2019 eligibility criteria, a family of 3 must have an annual household income below \$30,928.

### 5. Child Care is Affecting the Labor Force

Parents in the Melcher-Dallas area that participated in the 2018 child care needs survey indicated they had their jobs affected because of child care challenges during the prior 12 months. Of those whose jobs were affected, 100% left work early, 100% missed a day of work, 100% were unable to stay late, and 100% arrived late.

*Labor Force Affects Due to Child Care Challenges*



### About this Analysis

For working parents, choosing child care may be one of the most critical decisions they make. According to longitudinal research, the child care environment they choose will have lasting effects on their child. When there are not enough child care spaces in a community, finding *any* care is a challenge; and options for *quality* child care that meets the needs and preferences of families can be even more challenging.

In 2018, a study was commissioned by Marion County Development Commission and community partners to help better understand the supply and demand for child care across Marion County, and to gain insight to any child care challenges experienced by the residents and workforce. This document is a summary of the full *Child Care Gap Analysis and Strategic Plan for Marion County* report, which was completed in March 2019. For a copy of the full report contact Carla at [carla@redrockarea.com](mailto:carla@redrockarea.com).

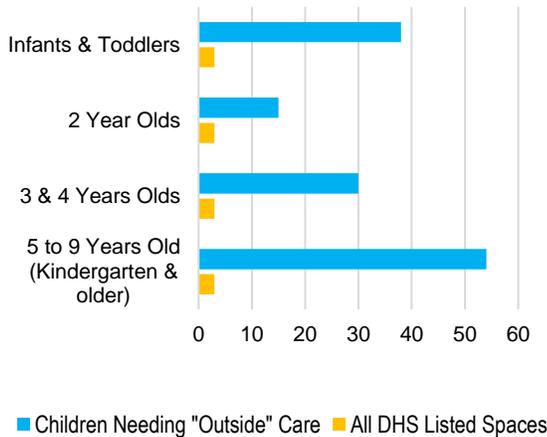
To better identify child care gaps and needs, the county was divided into five markets. The Melcher-Dallas market reflects the townships of Dallas and Franklin, including the community of Melcher-Dallas.

## 6. Finding Child Care is Difficult

The child care needs survey conducted in conjunction with this study, indicates that 100% of Melcher-Dallas area parents found it difficult to find child care. Obstacles named by Melcher-Dallas parents included lack of openings within existing programs and limited number of regulated providers within the community.



*Children Needing "Outside" Care vs. DHS Listed Spaces in Melcher-Dallas*



## 7. Marion County's Child Care Supply is Declining

According to Iowa Child Care Resource and Referral data, as of July 2018 there were 1,438 spaces within DHS Licensed Child Care Centers, Department of Education Preschools, Registered Child Development Homes, and Child Care Homes in Marion County. This is down from 1,512 spaces reported in July 2013.

## 8. Shortage of Child Care Spaces

There are 193 children ages 0 to 9 in the Melcher-Dallas area that have all parents working. Based on parent preferences, First Children's Finance estimates 137 children need some type of "outside" child care. With only 12 spaces, (enough to serve 9%), there is a gap of 125 spaces. There is a gap among each age group, with the largest gaps among ages 5 to 9 and infants and toddlers (up to age 2).

## Melcher-Dallas Child Care Initiatives

The Marion County Child Care Steering Committee will make the *Child Care Gap Analysis and Strategic Plan* available to all communities throughout Marion County. The report will provide community leaders, child care providers, and those interested in becoming a provider, data on which to base future decisions related to expanding child care. Community leaders, business owners, the school district, and child care providers are encouraged to review and discuss the results of this study and determine the best next steps, if any, for the Melcher-Dallas community to take to address the child care gap.

*This project was made possible through funding received from the Marion County Development Commission, PACE Alliance, Pella Corporation and Weiler Corporation.*

First Children's Finance, a national nonprofit organization, believes access to quality early care and education is essential for all communities, and that early care and education is the foundation of individual success and the engine of regional economic growth. First Children's Finance provides financing, training and business-development assistance to child care businesses. First Children's Finance also provides consulting and planning assistance to government agencies, intermediaries and regional child care organizations.

For more information on these and other topics, contact Heidi Schlueter, Regional Director [Heidi@FirstChildrensFinance.org](mailto:Heidi@FirstChildrensFinance.org).