

A close-up, grayscale photograph of a baby's face, smiling and looking slightly to the right. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.A map of the Zion Area, showing county boundaries in white. The map is overlaid on the baby's face. A small orange square with a white dot is located in the upper right corner of the map area.

**Assets, Gaps,
and a Way Forward:
A Report on Early
Childhood Care
and Education in
the Zion Area**



This report was completed under the auspices of the Illinois Facilities Fund's Building Blocks program. The Illinois Facilities Fund (IFF) developed the Building Blocks program together with funder the Grand Victoria Foundation (GVF) to build the capacity of high-need communities throughout Illinois to meet their child care and early education needs. Working together with community stakeholders, Building Blocks identifies and addresses underlying gaps in the child care and early education service delivery system. Funded by a \$3.5 million GVF grant, Building Blocks leverages both private and public sector resources to address these wide-ranging needs. Projects underway are building community networks, adding bricks and mortar capacity, and helping bring state-funded programs to the areas where they are needed the most.

About the IFF

The Illinois Facilities Fund (IFF) is a nonprofit community development corporation that assists nonprofits serving disadvantaged communities with real estate planning, development and finance. Real estate consulting and project management services help nonprofits evaluate their space needs as well as plan and implement facility projects. IFF provides below-market financing for real estate acquisition, facility construction or renovation, equipment, vehicles and facility repairs. Second position loans with another lender and leasehold mortgages are also available. Additionally, IFF conducts research and evaluation to help community stakeholders make informed public policy and resource allocation decisions that affect the nonprofit sector.

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Accessible, high quality early childhood care and education is a key component of a healthy and sustainable community. With the majority of mothers remaining in the workforce while their children are young, families need access to dependable, safe, and nurturing care for their children—sometimes for as many as 50 hours per week. This care needs to be affordable for working families of all incomes, and needs to fit families’ work schedules.

Equally important is ensuring that every child has access to quality early learning experiences. Decades of research have shown that children who participate in high quality educational programs from birth to five years enter school better prepared to succeed in kindergarten and beyond. This is especially true for children who are “at-risk” for future school difficulties due to low parental education, low family income, lack of English language skills, or other factors.¹

Yet most communities do not yet have a solid system of early education and care for children from birth to five years. In many communities, child care and other early learning programs cannot accommodate all of the children in the community who need these services. In transitional communities like those in the Zion Area, programs may be slow to respond to the changing needs of families and parents may not be aware of existing services. Moreover, service providers often work in isolation rather than in coordination, leaving parents to navigate a fragmented system by themselves. As a result, many children enter school without having had the early experiences that could have best prepared them for success.

1. See for example, Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development, Board on Children, Youth, and Families, National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2000). *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development*. Shonkoff, Jack P. and Deborah A. Phillips, Editors. National Academy Press, Washington, DC.

A Community Capacity Approach to Early Childhood Care and Education

In most communities, early childhood care and education is provided by a wide range of providers in an equally wide range of settings (see Early Childhood Care and Education Service Types and Funding Streams). In a single community, providers may include for-profit corporations, non-profit community-based agencies, faith-based groups, school districts, park districts, and individuals providing care in their own homes. This diversity of providers generally means that families have many different types of care and early education to choose from and programs are often able to flexibly respond to families' needs. In many cases, however, a child may benefit from more than one program but cannot access both or all of them as they are offered by different providers at different sites. Most communities lack an overarching planning body responsible for ensuring that enough services exist, that they are affordable for families, and that they meet families' needs. Even where these entities exist, resources are typically not available to assess the community's needs and identify critical shortages.

A growing number of communities have come together to create their own local collaborative groups to jointly review and plan for early childhood care and education services. These local task forces or collaborations assess community needs and current resources, and develop strategic plans for increasing their community's capacity to meet the needs of young children and their families.

With funding from the Grand Victoria Foundation, the Illinois Facilities Fund's (IFF) Building Blocks Initiative works with communities with especially large unmet needs for early childhood care and education to identify needs, develop collaborations, and set strategic plans. These communities include those identified through IFF's 2003 statewide needs assessment, *Moving Towards a System*, as well as additional communities that were not included in the 2003 assessment, but that county-level agencies identified as needing additional child care and early learning resources. The Building Blocks Initiative brings together a wide range of stakeholders in each community to examine the extent to which needed services are available, accessible, high quality, and efficiently distributed throughout the community, and the extent to which families, public officials, and other service providers know about these early childhood services. The collaborators then develop a plan to strengthen their community's capacity to meet their early childhood care and education needs.

The Zion Area Early Childhood Care and Education Task Force

In 2005, IFF partnered with United Way of Lake County, YWCA Lake County Child Care Resource and Referral, and Lake County Community Foundation to better understand the results of IFF's statewide needs assessment. The partnership identified the Zion Area, which has experienced significant economic decline in recent years, as an area of high unmet need. The majority of students in the Zion schools are from low-income families and only 57 percent of students met or exceeded standards on recent statewide tests.

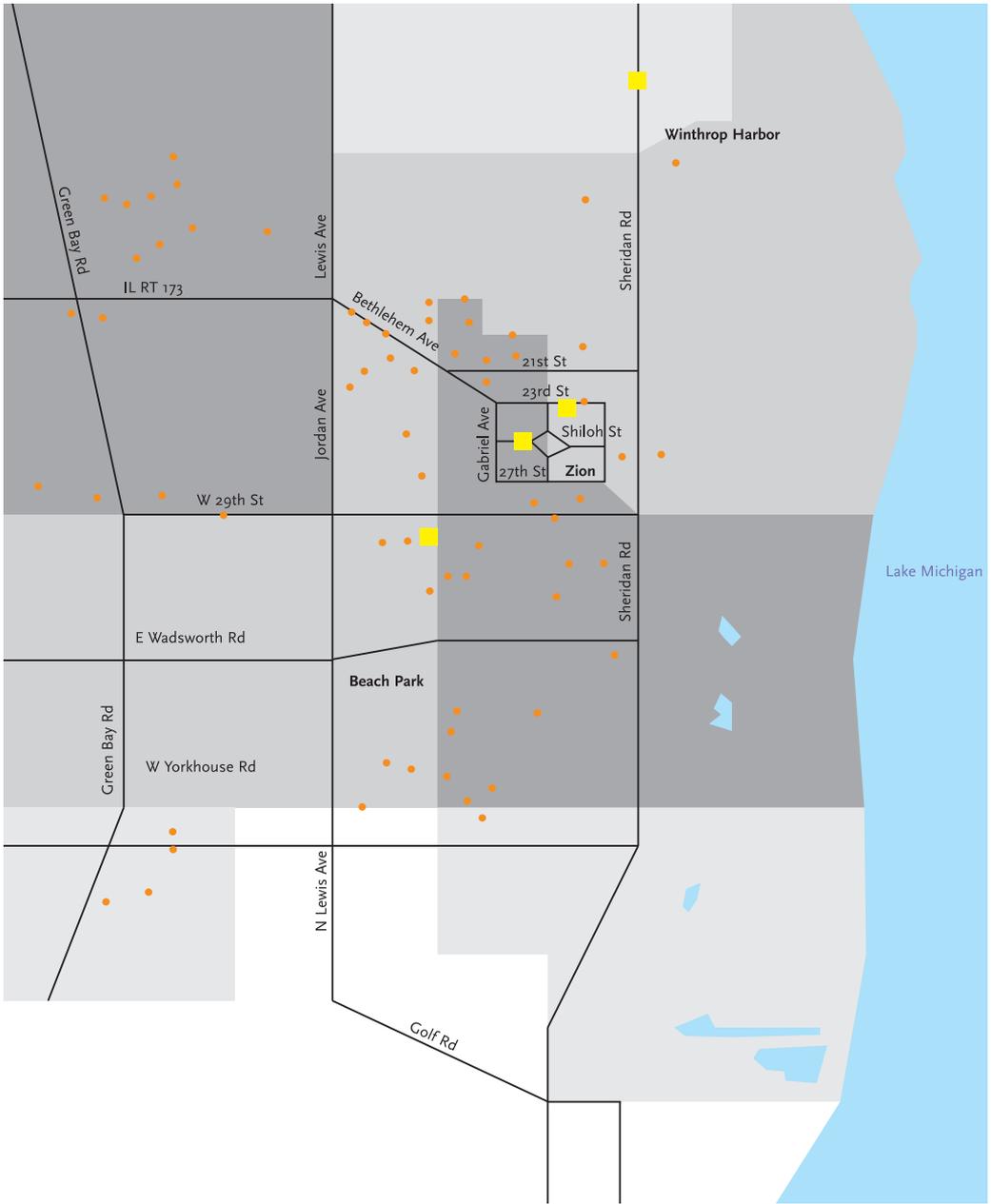
In May 2006, IFF and its Lake County partners hosted the Lake County Early Childhood Care and Education Summit to look at capacity and need for early childhood care and education in several communities in the county, including the Zion Area. In a breakout session specifically focused on Zion, participants identified the need for further analysis and strategic planning around community capacity. During the summer, IFF issued an informal request for proposals inviting targeted communities to apply for assistance in completing this analysis and community plan. The Zion Township supervisor, together with a retired Zion Elementary School District early childhood director, formed the Zion Area Task Force and began meeting in September 2006. The group included representatives from the Zion Elementary Schools Early Childhood Program, local child care providers, social service providers, and other interested parties. The Task Force chose to focus most of its efforts on the area served by the Zion Elementary School District, but also to assess needs in neighboring Beach Park and Winthrop Harbor.

IFF provided the Task Force with demographic data regarding the children in the community, including estimates of the number of children who need full-day, full-year child care and other early learning services. The Task Force analyzed these data and verified that it matched what they were seeing in the community. IFF also gathered information from the YWCA Lake County Child Resource and Referral and Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) databases about the availability of center- and home-based slots for child care and use of Child Care Assistance Program certificates in the area. This information was mapped to provide the graphic presentation of the current need for and supply of early childhood care and education. Figures 1-4 on pages 4-7 show supply and demand for four different services: full-day child care provided to children of all income levels, full-day child care provided to children qualifying for state-subsidized care, state-funded Preschool for All, and Head Start.

Finally, the Task Force conducted focus groups with Partners for an Enriched Community (a network of local social service providers) and several local family child care providers to gain additional perspectives on the early childhood care and education services families with young children want and need.

The Task Force identified several key community needs and brainstormed possible strategies for addressing these needs as detailed below. This report represents the recommendations of the Task Force for continued capacity building for early childhood services in the Zion Area.

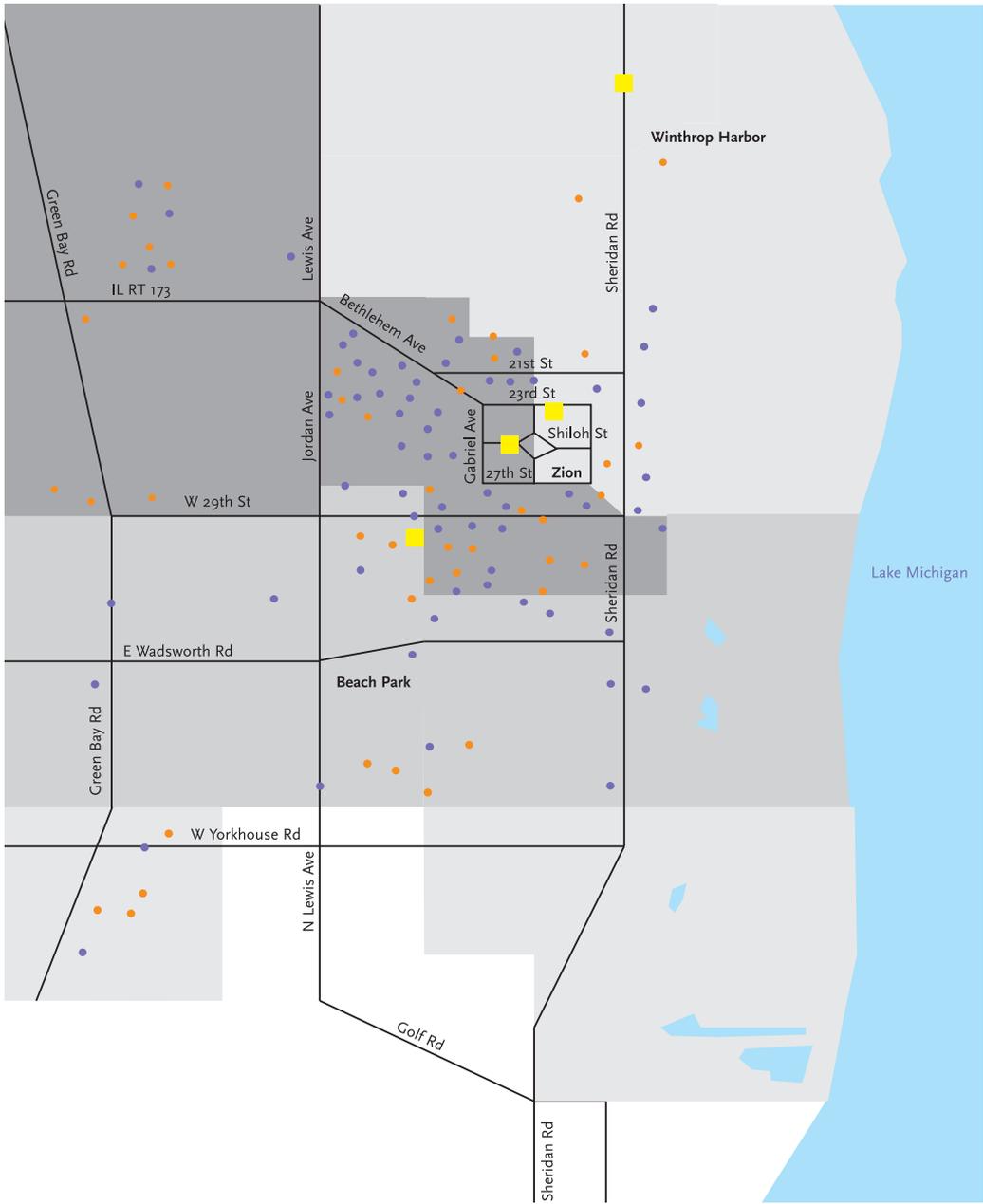
Figure 1
2005 Estimated Demand by Census Tracts
for Full-Day Child Care



- 129–150 children
- 151–250 children
- 251–319 children
- Licensed Child Care Center
- Licensed Home Child Care Provider

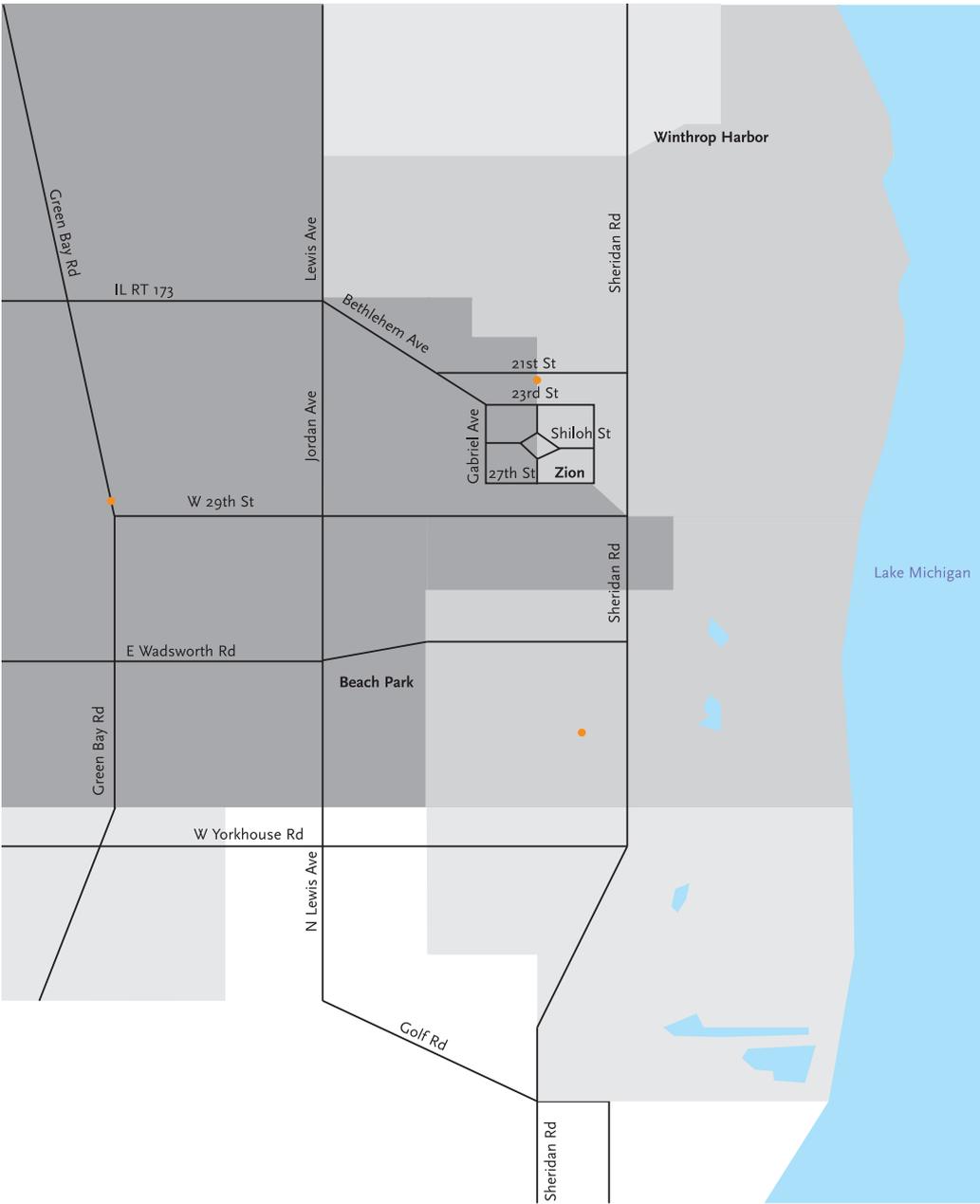
Figure 2

2005 Estimated Demand by Census Tracts for Full-Day Subsidized Child Care



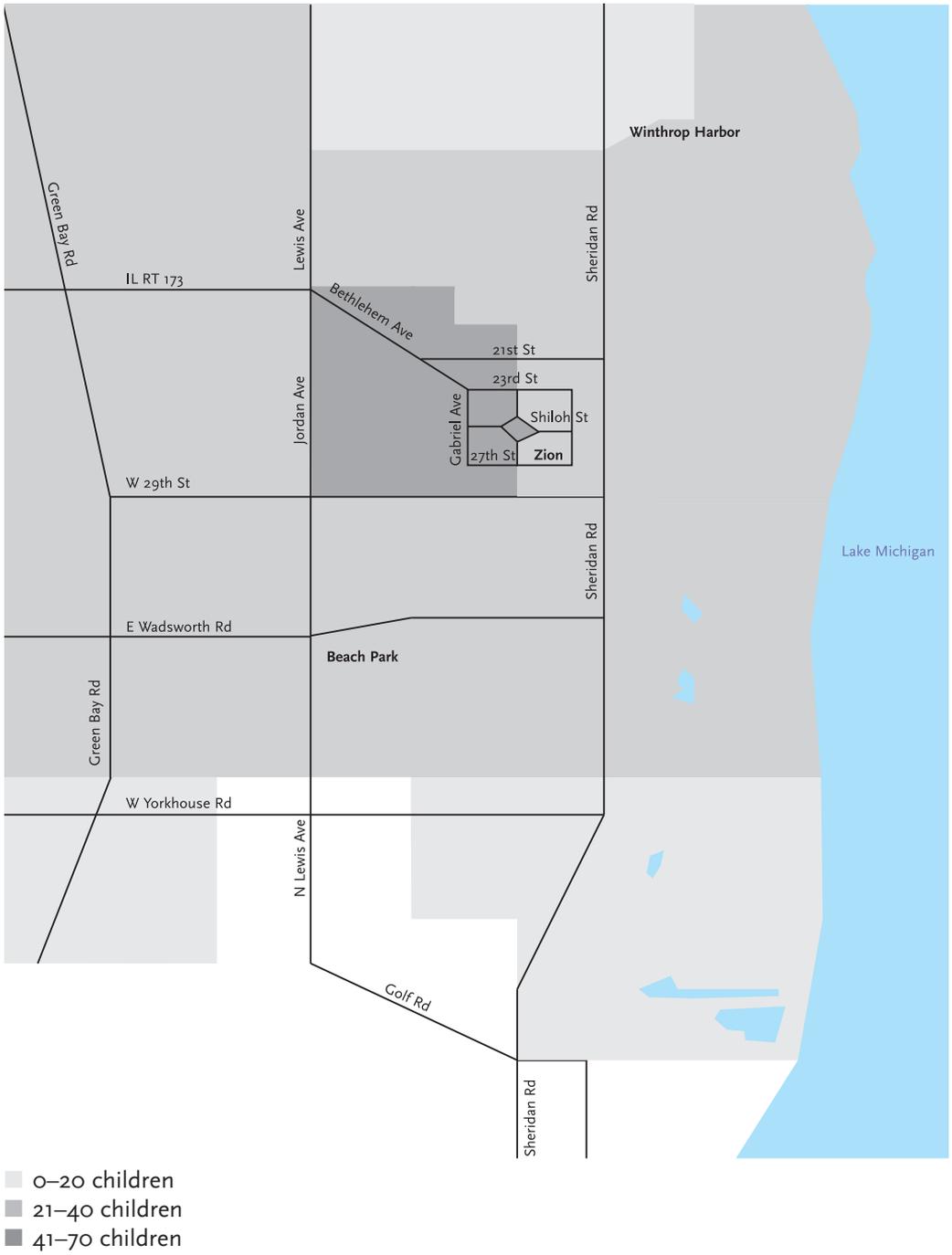
- 69–100 children
- 101–125 children
- 126–165 children
- Licensed Child Care Center
- Licensed Home Child Care Provider
- Licensed-Exempt Home Provider

Figure 3
2005 Estimated Number of Preschool
for All Priority Children



- 29–50 children
- 51–70 children
- 71–96 children
- Pre-Kindergarten Program

Figure 4
2005 Estimated Demand by Census Tracts
for Head Start



The Children of the Zion Area

Number of children: Getting an accurate picture of young residents in a community can be difficult, especially more than six years after the last census. Several steps were taken to estimate the current population and its characteristics, including using 2005 population estimates from ESRI and school data on students' eligibility for free and reduced price lunch (see Methodology on page 23). According to these updated data sources, the Zion-Winthrop Harbor-Beach Park area is home to approximately 4,610 children from birth through age five. This includes approximately 2,310 children from birth to age three and 2,300 children ages three through five.

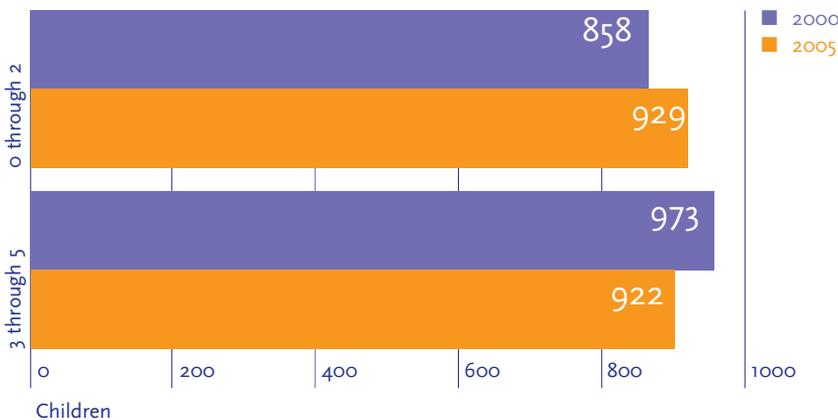
The need for child care: Estimates of the number of children needing of full-time, full-year child care were created using a formula developed by IFF for its recent statewide assessment of child care demand and supply. This formula incorporates census-tract-level data on the number of families with young children in which all parents work, as well as national estimates of the percentage of such families in which full-day, full-year care is needed.

In the Zion-Winthrop Harbor-Beach Park Area, there are approximately 1,850 children from birth through age five who are in need of full-day, full-year child care. Of these, approximately 930 are infants through age two and 920 are age three through five. This is a slight overall increase from 2000, and the data suggest that there has been increased need among infants and toddlers and a slight decrease in need among preschool-aged children (see Chart 1).

The need for subsidized child care: While overall demand for child care has not increased substantially, there has been a 23 percent growth in the demand for child care subsidized through the Child Care Assistance Program over the past five years in the Zion-Winthrop Harbor-Beach Park area. In 2005, approximately 445 children needed subsidized full-day, full-year child care, including about 225 children from birth through two and 220 children ages three through five (see Chart 2). This rise in demand for subsidized care may reflect changing community economic factors, with more working families having low incomes and qualifying for Child Care Assistance Program subsidies. As shown in Figure 2, the need for subsidized child care is concentrated in central Zion.

The need for Preschool for All and Head Start: Of all the children in the Zion-Winthrop Harbor-Beach Park Area, an estimated 19.6 percent live in families with low incomes, defined as below 185 percent of Federal Poverty Level (the eligibility cut-off for Free and Reduced Price Lunch and Medicaid services). Of these children, approximately 600 qualify as high priority for Preschool for All. Furthermore, among these low-income children, approximately 475 three- and four-year-olds and 450 children from birth to age three are in families with incomes low enough to qualify for Head Start or Early Head Start. These children are concentrated in central Zion (see Figure 4).

Chart 1
Estimated Demand for Full-Day, Full-Year Child Care 2000 & 2005



Current Programs and Services

Child Care: Zion has an unusual set of available child care services. Whereas in most of the state approximately 72 percent of licensed care is center-based, in Zion only 14 percent is center-based and fully 86 percent of licensed care is in family child care homes (see Chart 3). According to the YWCA Lake County Child Care Resource and Referral database, there are 105 “slots” of full-day, full-year center-based child care in the Zion-Winthrop Harbor-Beach Park Area. This includes slots in two child care centers located in or very near Round Lake, Zion-Winthrop Harbor-Beach Park.

Another 654 slots are available in licensed family child care homes in this area. A focus group with local licensed family child care providers was held to better understand this key resource for child care in the Zion Area. The providers who participated were committed to child care as a career and many had taken (or were taking) college-level courses in early childhood development.

Chart 2
Estimated Demand for Subsidized Child Care 2000 & 2005

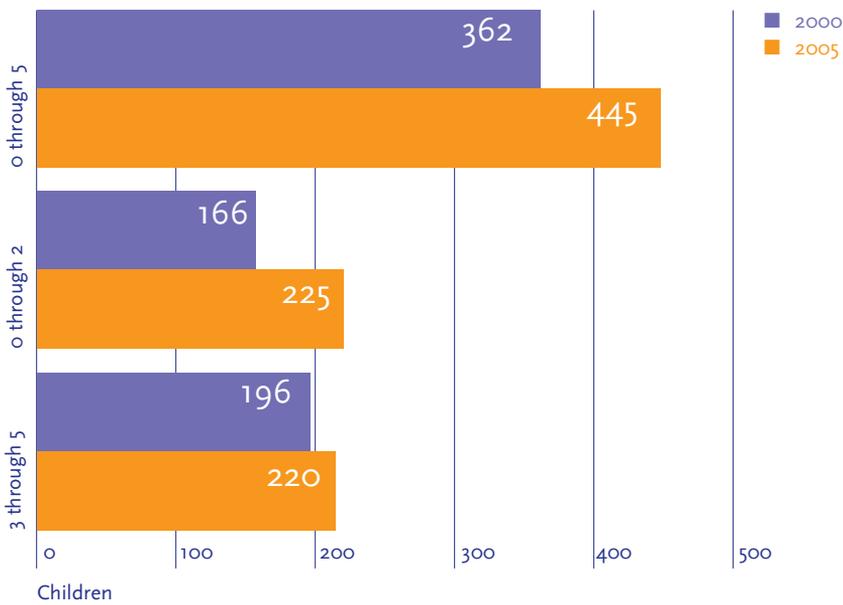
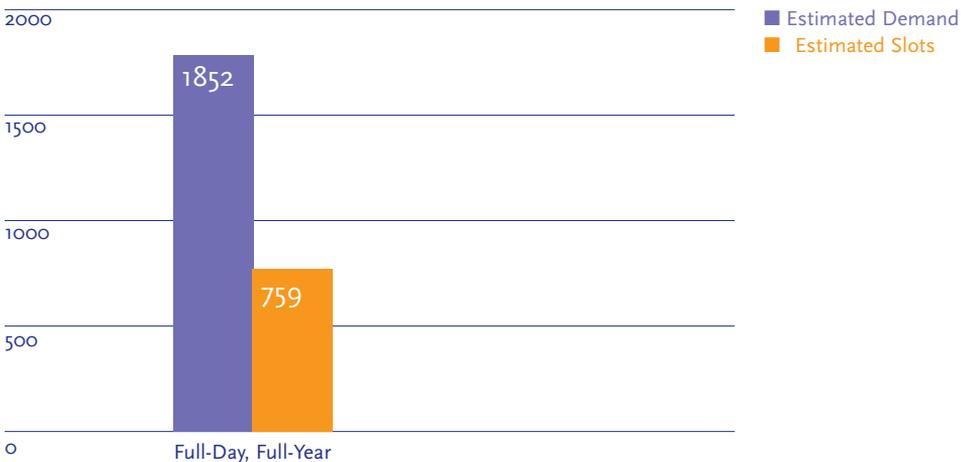


Chart 3
Estimated Demand vs. Estimated Slots, 2005



They stressed their efforts to provide a developmentally appropriate learning curriculum for the children in their care. Many home providers expressed an interest in networking with other providers, where they could share ideas, access training, and gain professional skills. The providers were also interested in forming closer working relationships with part-day preschool programs such as Preschool for All and Head Start. Currently, the providers noted that they had little communication or coordination of curriculum with the preschool teachers.

Access to subsidized child care does not seem to be especially difficult in the community. The majority of providers in the area accept Child Care Assistance Program certificates as payment for child care, although some providers require parents to pay the difference between their usual market rates and the state reimbursement rate.

Preschool for All: The Zion School District has a State Prekindergarten program (equivalent to Preschool for All) that serves 160 three- and four-year-olds in a half-day program. Beach Park School District also has a State Prekindergarten serving 79 three- and four-year-olds in a half-day program. In addition, the Zion and Beach Park districts serve approximately 40 and 35 children respectively each year through special education preschool funding.

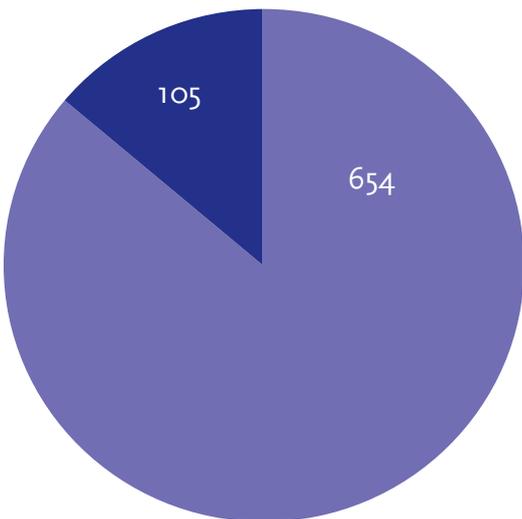
Head Start: Head Start does not provide any services in the Zion Area. No data on the numbers of children attending Head Start programs in other communities was available.

Critical Service Gaps

Full-day child care: There is a substantial gap (approximately 1,090) between the number of slots of licensed child care available in the community and the estimated demand (See Chart 4). This unmet demand is not only for subsidized child care, but for all family income levels. The community needs approximately 600 more slots of licensed infant-toddler care and 650 more slots of licensed care for children ages three through five. Ideally, these expanded child care services should be educationally enhanced and integrated with Preschool for All and/or Head Start services.

Chart 4

Estimated Slots of Full-Day, Full-Year Child Care by Type of Provider



■ Center-Based Care
 ■ Licensed Home Care

Some community stakeholders expressed a concern that center-based child care tends not to be successful in this community. This perception is likely driven by the closing of two child care centers within the past five years. Stakeholders discussed possible explanations such as changing community economics resulting in fewer parents who can afford private pay care, but remained inconclusive. Some centers have found relief from the financial pressures of operating only with Child Care Assistance Program funds and co-pays by incorporating Preschool for All programs and funding in their operating model. The community maintained that center-based child care is an important resource and option that should be available to area families.

Early Childhood Education: Area school districts have identified increasing children's preparedness for kindergarten as a key strategy for improving their success in school. Currently there are not enough publicly-funded preschool education slots located in the Zion-Winthrop Harbor-Beach Park area to serve all of the preschool-aged children. With about 600 preschoolers in low-income families, and many children with other risk factors such as low English proficiency, there is a substantial need for additional no-cost preschool. Both half-day programs and programs integrated with full-day child care are needed.

Coordination Between Early Childhood Education and Formal Preschool:

Currently there are no programs in the Zion Area that integrate Head Start or Preschool for All with full-day, full-year child care. Families that need full-day care but also want their child to participate in a formal preschool program must make arrangements with a family child care provider to provide before and after preschool care, often including transportation to and from school. While the school district will provide transportation to and from a caregiver's home, for budget reasons this is typically done from central bus stops in a neighborhood rather than door-to-door. Family child care providers report that it is difficult to use this transportation because it involves bringing all of the children in their care with them to the bus stop, which can be especially cumbersome in the winter. A coordinated program that assigned all children in a given child care home to the same preschool session might allow for cost-effective door-to-door transportation.

A coordinated program between formal preschool and family child care would also allow for greater learning opportunities for young children. Publicly-funded preschools typically provide only 2.5-3.5 hours per day of instruction, but research shows that more intensive services (six hours per day or more) are more effective at helping prepare children for success in school. Intentional linkages between the classroom and home child care providers, including shared curriculum and learning materials, training for child care providers, and ongoing communication, can extend children's learning throughout the hours they are in care. The Illinois State Board of Education encourages the development of these linkages in Prekindergarten, At-Risk and Preschool for All programs.

Transportation: Another key need identified by the Task Force was for transportation to and from early childhood education and care programs. The Zion-Winthrop Harbor-Beach Park area has little public transportation and it is often difficult for families to bring their children to early childhood programs. Programs that are located within walking distance of the highest concentration of at-risk children are especially needed, as are cost-effective strategies for providing transportation for those who live further away from needed services.

Glossary

Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)	Illinois Department of Human Services program that subsidizes child care for low-income working families
Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R)	Illinois Department of Human Services-funded system for providing child care referrals to parents and training to child care providers
DCFS	Department of Child and Family Services: state agency with primary mission of protecting children from abuse and neglect; responsible for licensing child care centers and family day care homes
Early Childhood Block Grant	Mechanism for funding Preschool for All, Parental Training, and Prevention Initiative programs
Early Childhood Care and Education	For this report, Early Childhood Care and Education refers to the system of programs that support children's early learning needs and includes full-day, full-year child care programs, preschool programs, and Head Start
Full-Day, Full-Year Child Care	Child care that is available throughout normal business hours and is open all year long
Head Start	US Department of Health and Human Services-funded program for children in poverty; provides education, health, nutrition, and social services to eligible children ages three through kindergarten entry and their families
Licensed child care	Care provided by a center or home that has been licensed by DCFS
License-exempt care	Care provided by a center or home that is legally exempt from DCFS licensure; Licensed-exempt home providers are typically relatives or close family friends who care for no more than three children
Home Child Care Provider	A child care provider who cares for children in a private home. Licensed home child care providers follow the regulations of DCFS and may care for only a limited number of children
Preschool for All	In 2006 the Preschool for All Program was created, expanding eligibility for state-funded preschool to all children. Programs that serve primarily at-risk populations receive priority in funding. Administered through the Illinois State Board of Education Early Childhood Block Grant
Zion Area	For this report, the Zion Area refers to all of the communities in Zion Township: Zion, Winthrop Harbor, and Beach Park
Slots	Number of spaces available, or, the number of children a program or center can accommodate at full capacity
Subsidy	Child care assistance for low-income working families
Task Force	For this report, the group of individuals in each community who met regularly and contributed to the development of this report

Strategies for Meeting the Needs in the Zion Area



To better meet the needs of children and families in the Zion Area, all stakeholders will need to act to increase the availability, quality, and accessibility of early childhood care and education services.

Municipal Officials: Local municipal officials can support the expansion or development of additional child care centers by:

- Providing leadership to keep early childhood education and care needs “front and center” in community development efforts
- Ensuring that zoning and building requirements are not putting undue burdens on those interested in opening or expanding a child care center
- Encouraging developers to include child care facilities in new commercial and planned developments
- Encouraging business to develop partnerships with early childhood programs to strengthen these programs
- Improving public transportation in the community so that families can better access early childhood care and education services
- Continuing to educate the whole community about the many needs of families with young children

Zion, Beach Park, and Winthrop Harbor Elementary Schools:

One key strategy to increase participation in formal early childhood education in the Zion Area is for area school districts to apply for Early Childhood Block Grant funding to expand their part-day pre-school program through Preschool for All. Ideally, this expanded pre-school program would be designed to work not only with children’s families, but also with any home child care providers that care for the children. Intentionally designed programs linking center-based pre-school with family child care can effectively meet both families’ needs for flexible care and children’s needs for high quality learning experiences both in school and throughout the day in the child care home.

Specifically, over the next several months the local elementary school districts can:

- Provide key leadership in developing partnerships that meet the needs of young children and their families
- Explore whether the local child care centers would be open to including a Preschool for All Program in their center in partnership with the district. The district could send a certified teacher to the center to teach half-day in each of two classrooms using the district curriculum.

- Identify other possible sites to expand the preschool program.
- Develop a process for assigning children who are cared for in a given family child care home to the same preschool session and location
- Apply for additional funding through the FY08 round of grants for Preschool for All

Through these new Preschool for All funds, develop a pilot program for creating stronger links between the preschool program and the family child care homes. This could include developing curriculum materials to loan out to the family child care homes, weekly curriculum newsletters, and possibly even bi-weekly or monthly visits to the family child care homes by classroom teachers. These services could be funded through the Community Services portion of the Preschool for All budget.

Zion-Benton Township High School District: The high school district clearly is an important community stakeholder, as the children currently in need of early childhood services will one day be their student body. It is important for the district to keep community early childhood needs as a key consideration as it develops its long range plans. Specifically, the high school district can:

- Identify space conducive to early childhood programming in its facilities
- Work collaboratively with other community organizations to effectively meet the needs of families, including teen parents with very young children

Park District: The Park District is an important provider of tuition-based preschool services and after-school child care in the community. It is critical that the Park District keep early childhood education and care as part of its focus as it develops its strategic plans for the coming years. Specifically, the Park District can:

- Maintain an openness to partnerships with other community organizations to address early childhood needs
- Look for space that could be used to house either part-day or full-day early childhood programs
- Encourage its preschool teaching staff to pursue Type 04 certification so that the Park District program might be able to participate in the Preschool for All program in the future

Head Start: Head Start has been seeking a location to provide services in the Zion-Winthrop Harbor-Beach Park area for several years. Partnerships with the schools, park district, or local community groups and churches should be pursued to create a program in the Zion-Winthrop Harbor-Beach Park Area. The Task Force could assist by surveying these organizations to determine whether they have vacant spaces that, for at least part of the day, would be appropriate for a Head Start site.

Child Care Providers: Many new slots of full-day, full-year center-based child care need to be created to fulfill the demand in the Zion Area. Current providers in the area should be encouraged to expand and/or open additional centers, targeting families who are eligible for Child Care Assistance Program subsidies. Programs should be designed to incorporate Preschool for All services in a full-day setting. Specifically, child care providers in the Zion Area and surrounding communities could:

- Explore feasibility of expanding existing facilities and programs
- Consider opening additional child care facilities in the Zion Area, especially in central Zion
- Apply for Preschool for All funding to ensure sufficient resources to provide high quality early education integrated with the full-day, full-year child care that centers provide
- Explore possible partnerships with Head Start, either allowing Head Start to use part of their facility (such as an after-school program room that is empty during mid-day) or integrating Head Start services into their full-day program

Lake County YWCA Child Care Resource & Referral:

The Child Care Resource & Referral should continue its efforts to recruit and support licensed family child care providers. Specifically, the Child Care Resource & Referral could:

- Work with family child care providers to help them form professional networks
- Help the school districts and Head Start to develop effective strategies for integrating part-day preschool with family child care
- Provide training to social service agencies in the Zion Area on how to help families access the Child Care Assistance Program
- Partner with community-based organizations and local churches to build awareness about the child care licensing process and the need for additional licensed child care providers in the community

Other Community Groups: Social service agencies, churches and faith based groups, parent organizations, and other community groups can help strengthen community capacity by:

- Spreading the word about the Child Care Assistance Program and helping families apply for this critical support
- Increasing awareness among parents of young children about the importance of a quality early learning experience
- Learning about the programs and resources available in the community and helping families connect to these services

State-level officials: The Zion-Winthrop Harbor-Beach Park area is clearly a high-need, underserved community. As programs like Preschool for All continue to expand, priority consideration should be given to expanding and creating new programs in this community. Specifically:

- The Illinois State Board of Education should strongly encourage applications for new and expanded Preschool for All and Prevention Initiative services in this community.
- The Illinois Department of Human Services Child Care Bureau should consider providing assistance for the creation of Family Child Care Networks in the Zion-Winthrop Harbor-Beach Park area.

Early Care and Education Services in Illinois

Early childhood care and education in Illinois is comprised of many parts, including for-profit and not-for-profit child care centers, public and private preschool programs, and both licensed and license-exempt home child care providers. Each of these has a unique role in ensuring that all families have access to high quality, enriching care and education for their young children.

License-exempt home care: Called “kith and kin care,” or “family-and-neighbor care,” this type of child care offers many benefits and fulfills an important need for many families. A license-exempt provider is typically a relative, neighbor, or family friend who cares for the child either in the child’s home or the provider’s home. No licensing is required to receive reimbursement through the Child Care Assistance Program as long as the provider cares for no more than three unrelated children at a time (including the provider’s own children) or cares only for children from one family. Providers are required only to pass a child abuse and neglect background check. Parents can arrange for care at odd hours, such as weekends or night shifts, and providers can accommodate the variable work schedules that are common among low-wage jobs. Many parents feel most comfortable leaving their children in the care of family and friends, particularly when their children are babies or toddlers. For non-English-speaking families, license-exempt care may be the only type of care available where the provider speaks the family’s language and shares their culture. License-exempt care can also be the most affordable for parents, as some license-exempt providers (especially family members) waive the parent’s co-pay and charge only the minimal funding provided by the IDHS subsidy program.

Licensed home care: Licensed family child care providers can legally care for up to eight children (or up to 12 with an assistant) in the provider’s home. They must meet requirements established by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), including passing a home safety inspection, keeping required records of children’s immunizations and physical exams, and receiving certification in first aid and CPR. In addition, licensed providers must complete at least 15 clock hours of professional development each year.

Like license-exempt providers, licensed family child care providers may be able to meet parents' need for odd-hour care or changing schedules, and may be conveniently located in the family's neighborhood. Licensed providers, however, do tend to be more formal than license-exempt providers, and may require parents to commit to a regular, full-time schedule. Licensed providers are not specifically required to engage in learning activities with children, though they must have developmentally appropriate toys and books available for children. Some licensed providers are part of networks that provide high-quality early learning materials and training for caregivers in how to effectively support children's development.

Licensed center-based care: Licensed child care centers are operated by a wide range of not-for-profit community organizations, faith-based organizations, and for-profit small businesses and large corporations. Like licensed home care providers, center-based programs must have available appropriate books and toys for children. Lead teachers are required to have at least one year of college including six semester hours in child development or early childhood education and one year of experience as a teacher's assistant (or a two-year college degree), and center directors must have at least 18 semester hours in child development or early education. Programs are not required to provide any health or social services for children and families, although often child care centers are linked with a parent organization that provides a wider range of social services and supports.

Center-based programs provide parents with a reliable source of child care, particularly for those parents who work a traditional full-time schedule. Program operators typically have rich, deep ties to the communities they serve, and are able to identify and respond to changing needs among families. However, center-based programs often have little flexibility to support the changeable and non-traditional work schedules associated with many low-income jobs.

Public and private part-day preschool: Traditional part-day preschool programs offer an educational experience to children ages three and four in a classroom setting. The qualifications of the teaching staff in private preschool programs (including many faith-based preschools) varies widely, with some staff having only a few courses in early childhood education and others possessing a Masters' Degree in Early Childhood. In publicly-funded preschool programs like Head Start and Preschool for All (see Key Funding Streams and Their Requirements), the requirements for teacher qualifications and program curriculum are typically more stringent.

Combined Program Models: Child care services and traditional preschool programs are increasingly being combined to offer the best in early childhood care and education for children and families. For example, child care centers can integrate either (or both) Head Start and Preschool for All into their full-day program

Key Funding Streams and Their Requirements

Child Care Assistance Program

The Illinois Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) was created to ensure that low-income parents have access to affordable child care so they can remain in the workforce and, ultimately, to ensure that young children have access to high quality early care and education, regardless of their family's income or geographic location. The program is administered by the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) and is funded through the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant, TANF funds, and State General Revenue. In order to qualify for assistance, a family must have an income below 50 percent of the State Median Income, or \$36,184 for a family of four in 2006, and be engaged in an allowable activity (such as work or certain education and training activities, including high school for teen parents). The subsidy will pay for care that is provided during the hours reasonably associated with the parent's work/school schedule, including transportation and study time. Reimbursement is made at a half-day rate for less than five hours per day of care, and at the full-day rate for

more than five hours. Thus, to qualify for a full-day center-based program, parents must be engaged in an allowable activity for at least five hours per day. Eligibility is typically re-determined every six months, and families can lose eligibility if their income rises above the income cut-off or if they lose their job. All families are required to contribute a co-payment for their child's care that is based on their income and the number of children they have in care who also receive a subsidy. This co-pay can be as high as 12 percent of the family's gross income; a single mother who earns \$1,850 per month and has two children in care would have to contribute a co-pay of \$234 each month.

Eligible families in the Zion-Winthrop Harbor-Beach Park area can access subsidized care through the Child Care Resource and Referral program administered by the YWCA of Lake County. Families receive a Child Care Assistance "certificate" and can choose from a wide range of child care services, including licensed center-based care, licensed family day care homes, or legally license-exempt care (usually care by a relative or care in the child's own home).

Providers must meet all state licensing standards, or in the case of license-exempt care, pass a child abuse and neglect-focused background check. IDHS pays a daily rate to child care providers that varies by the type and location of the providers. This ranges from a low of \$9.48 per day for license-exempt home providers to a high of \$24.34 per day for a center-based program serving preschoolers in Lake County. This rate is reduced by the amount of the required parent co-pay. Subsidies are provided only for those days children actually attend and parents are engaged in an allowable activity (centers are reimbursed for all days the child is eligible as long as the child maintains 80 percent attendance).

In 2006, approximately 425 children ages birth through five in the Zion-Winthrop Harbor-Beach Park area were receiving some type of subsidized child care, including approximately 50 children who received center-based care.

Head Start: Head Start is a federally-funded program administered by Lake County Community Action Agency that provides a comprehensive set of educational, health, and social services to children ages three to five and their families in an effort to “break the cycle of poverty” and improve children’s chances for success in school and later life. Participants’ household income must be below the poverty line (currently \$19,350 for a family of four) or they must be receiving TANF or SSI benefits to qualify for the program, although once a child is enrolled he or she can remain in the program until kindergarten entry even if the family’s income rises.

Head Start programs must comply with the Head Start Performance Standards, a set of federal regulations that require the provision of a wide range of health, nutrition, mental health, special needs, and social services to enrolled children and their families. The Head Start program employs several staff members in addition to classroom staff in order to provide these services. Federal funds cover the cost of a half-day (3.5 hour day, 4 day week) center-based program.

Preschool for All: Illinois’ Preschool for All program was created in 2006 and is the outgrowth of the successful 20-year-old State Prekindergarten program. Funded with General Revenue dollars and administered through the Illinois State Board of Education Early Childhood Block Grant, Preschool for All provides funding for a half-day, school year-long program for children ages three and four. While priority is given in funding to program serving a majority of “at-risk” children, all children are eligible to participate in Preschool for All programs.

Preschool for All programs may be operated by school districts or a wide range of community-based organizations, including not-for-profit and for-profit child care providers. While state funding provides for only 2.5 hours instruction per day, Preschool for All can be integrated into a full-day, full-year child care program. Programs must use a research-based curriculum, and must have Type-04 (Early Childhood) certified teachers.

Methodology

The population of low-income students enrolled in the Zion Elementary School District, the Beach Park School District, and the Winthrop Harbor School District was used to develop updated estimates of demand for subsidized child care, Head Start, Early Head Start, and Preschool for All based on an increase in poverty since the 2000 Census.

The number and percent of low-income students enrolled in each of the school districts in 1999 and 2005 was determined using the Illinois District Report Cards for each district.

The percent increase in low-income enrollment from 1999 to 2005 was calculated for each district, reflecting that 2000 Census poverty data is based on 1999 income. For the Zion Elementary School District, the low-income population increased from 52 percent to 73 percent – a 21 percent increase. For the Beach Park School District, the low-income population increased from 8 percent to 35.7 percent – a 27.7 percent increase. For the Winthrop Harbor School District, the low-income population increased from 4.9 percent to 14.9 percent – a 10 percent increase.

The estimated demand for subsidized child care, Head Start, Early Head Start, and Preschool for All based on 2005 population figures in each census tract was then increased by the percent increase in the low-income population of the district in which the census tract is located.

The 2000 low-income under six figures are based on multiplying the number of children under 6 by the percent of children under 6 below poverty for each census tract at the time of the 2000 Census. The 2005 low-income under 6 figures are based on multiplying the estimated number of children under 6 in 2005 by the percent of children under 6 below poverty in 2000 and increasing this figure by the school district increase in low-income student population for each census tract.



Task Force Participants

Zion Township, Lead Agency

Mt. Zion Sheila Day Care

Nicasa

Partners for an Enriched Community (PEC)

YWCA Lake County Child Care Resource and Referral

Zion Area home child care providers

Zion Elementary School District

Zion Park District

Special thanks to Julie Wendorf, former early childhood director for Zion Elementary School District, Cheri Ditzig, Zion Township Supervisor, and Theresa Hawley, consultant, all of whom made significant contributions to the development of this report.



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One North LaSalle
Suite 700
Chicago, Illinois 60602
Telephone 312 629 0060
Fax 312 629 0061
iff.org