A young child with dark hair, wearing a light-colored dress with polka dots and floral patterns, has their hands held up by two adults. The child has an open mouth, possibly crying or shouting. The background is a faded, light-colored image. Overlaid on the bottom right is a white outline map of Colorado, with a small orange square and a white dot indicating the location of the Woodridge area.

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



This report was completed by IFF's Building Blocks program. IFF developed Building Blocks 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 with community stakeholders, Building Blocks helps communities plan to address underlying gaps in the child care and early education service delivery system. Projects underway are building community networks, adding bricks and mortar capacity, and helping bring state-funded programs, including Preschool for All, to the areas where they are needed the most.

IFF is a nonprofit community development financial institution 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-rate financing for real estate acquisition, facility construction or renovation, equipment, vehicles and facility repairs. Additionally, IFF conducts research and evaluation for and about 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 has 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.

Yet most communities are not equipped to deliver comprehensive early education and care to children from birth to five years. In many, child care and other early learning programs cannot accommodate all of the children in the community who need these services. School districts and early childhood service providers struggle to ensure that parents are aware of and able to access the services they need, especially in communities where large numbers of new immigrant families arrive each year. 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.

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, nonprofit 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.

Building Blocks, through the Early Learning Planning Initiative, works with communities with 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. Building Blocks brings together 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 strategies and a plan to address their most pressing early childhood care and education needs. With a clear assessment of needs, an agreed upon set of strategies, and a concrete plan for moving forward, each community is equipped to make fundamental changes that will help to ensure that all children have access to the programs that prepare them for success in kindergarten and beyond.

The Woodridge Area Early Learning Planning Initiative

In early 2007, IFF began a collaboration with Positive Parenting DuPage to bring the Early Learning Planning Initiative to DuPage County. Woodridge, which has experienced significant growth in its low-income and immigrant population in recent years, was identified as an area of high unmet need. About 25 percent of students in the Woodridge elementary schools are from low-income families and a similar percentage of community residents speak a language other than English at home. Chart 1 shows the growth since 2000 in the number of low-income and Limited English Proficient students served by Woodridge School District 68.

In February 2007, IFF and Positive Parenting DuPage hosted an Early Learning Planning Initiative kick-off meeting to explain the Initiative's goals and planning process. IFF issued an informal request for proposals inviting targeted communities to apply for assistance in completing a detailed analysis of supply, demand, and barriers to quality early education and care and developing a community action plan to increase access. The Woodridge School District 68 Early Childhood Program principal formed the Woodridge Area Early Learning Planning Initiative Task Force and began meeting in April 2007. The group included representatives from the Woodridge School District Early Childhood Program, Head Start, local child care and preschool providers, social service providers, the Woodridge Police Department Resource Center, and other interested parties. The Task Force chose to focus its efforts on the area served by Woodridge School District 68.

About Positive Parenting DuPage

Positive Parenting DuPage is a multi-faceted, county-wide collaboration comprised of over 100 organizations that work with families during the first three years of a child's life. Positive Parenting DuPage seeks to change the culture of parenting and child development in DuPage County. By uniting organizations across the county with similar goals, Positive Parenting DuPage will coordinate and strengthen linkages, educational materials and access to support for all new families.

positive

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 they confirmed their knowledge and experience. IFF also gathered information from the YWCA Child Resource and Referral and Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) databases about the availability of center- and home-based child care and use of the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) in the area. Providers were surveyed to confirm the total number of children they can accommodate and the number of children currently enrolled in their programs. This information was mapped to provide the graphic presentation of the current need for and supply of early childhood care and education. Figure 1 shows the supply and demand for full-day child care provided to children of all income levels, while Figure 2 depicts the distribution of children from birth through five whose families have low incomes.

Finally, the Task Force conducted a focus group with several local family child care providers to gain their 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 developed a set of possible strategies for addressing them. This report represents the recommendations of the Task Force for continued capacity building for early childhood services in the Woodridge Area.

Chart 1

Growth in Low-Income and Limited English Proficient Students in Woodridge School District 68 2000-2006

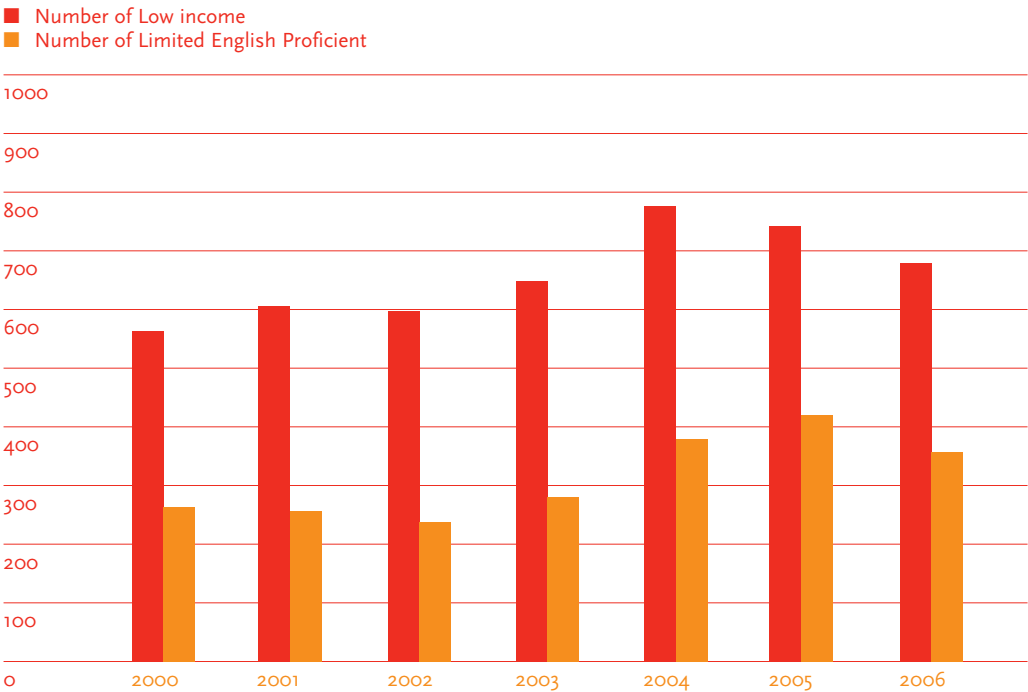
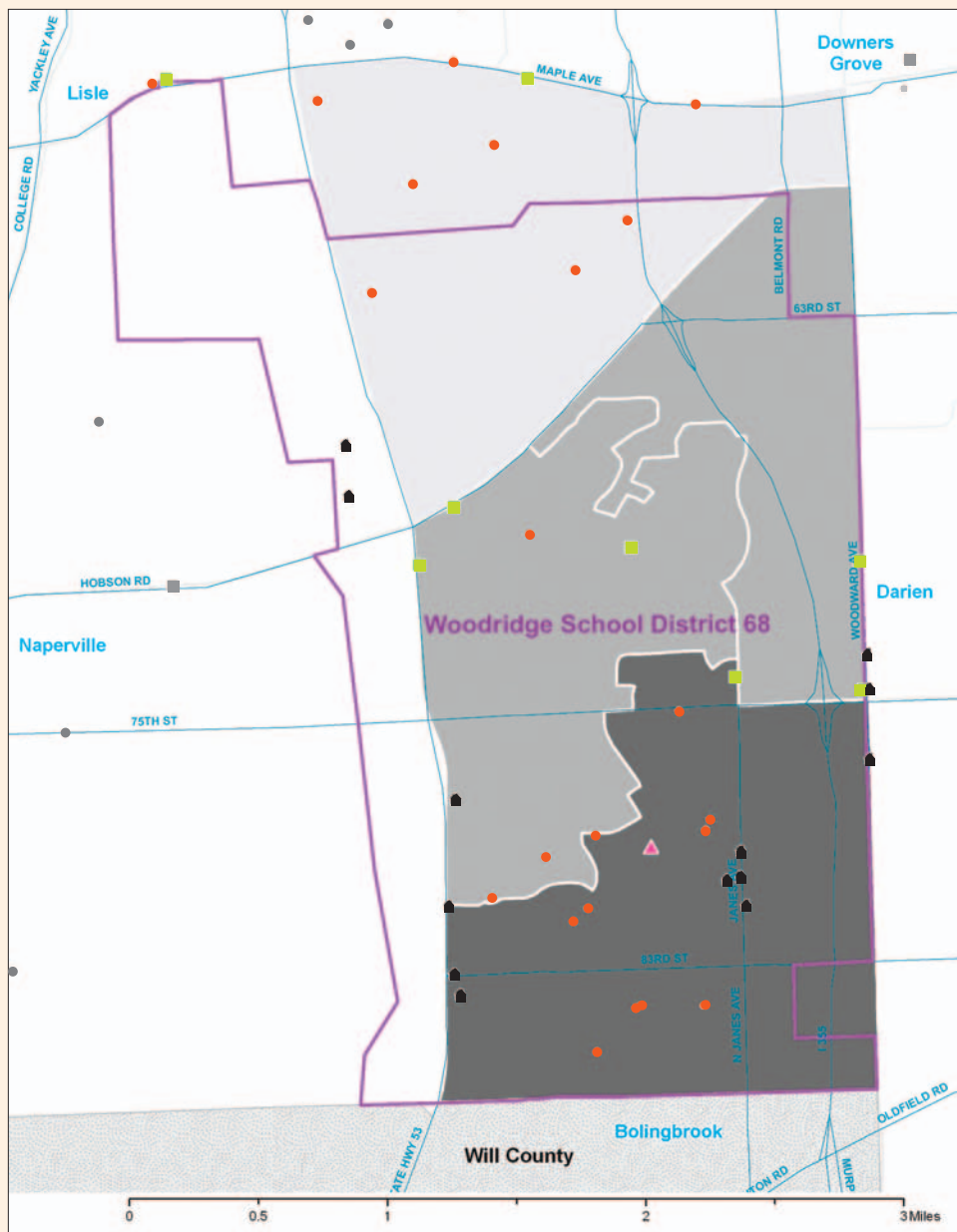


Figure 1
Child Care Supply and Demand in the Woodridge Area



2005 Estimated Demand by Census Tracts for

Full-Day, Full-Year Child Care

- 120 - 150 children
- 151 - 250 children
- 251 - 482 children

Providers by Type

- Licensed, License-Exempt Center
- Licensed Child Care Home
- Preschool for All Grantees

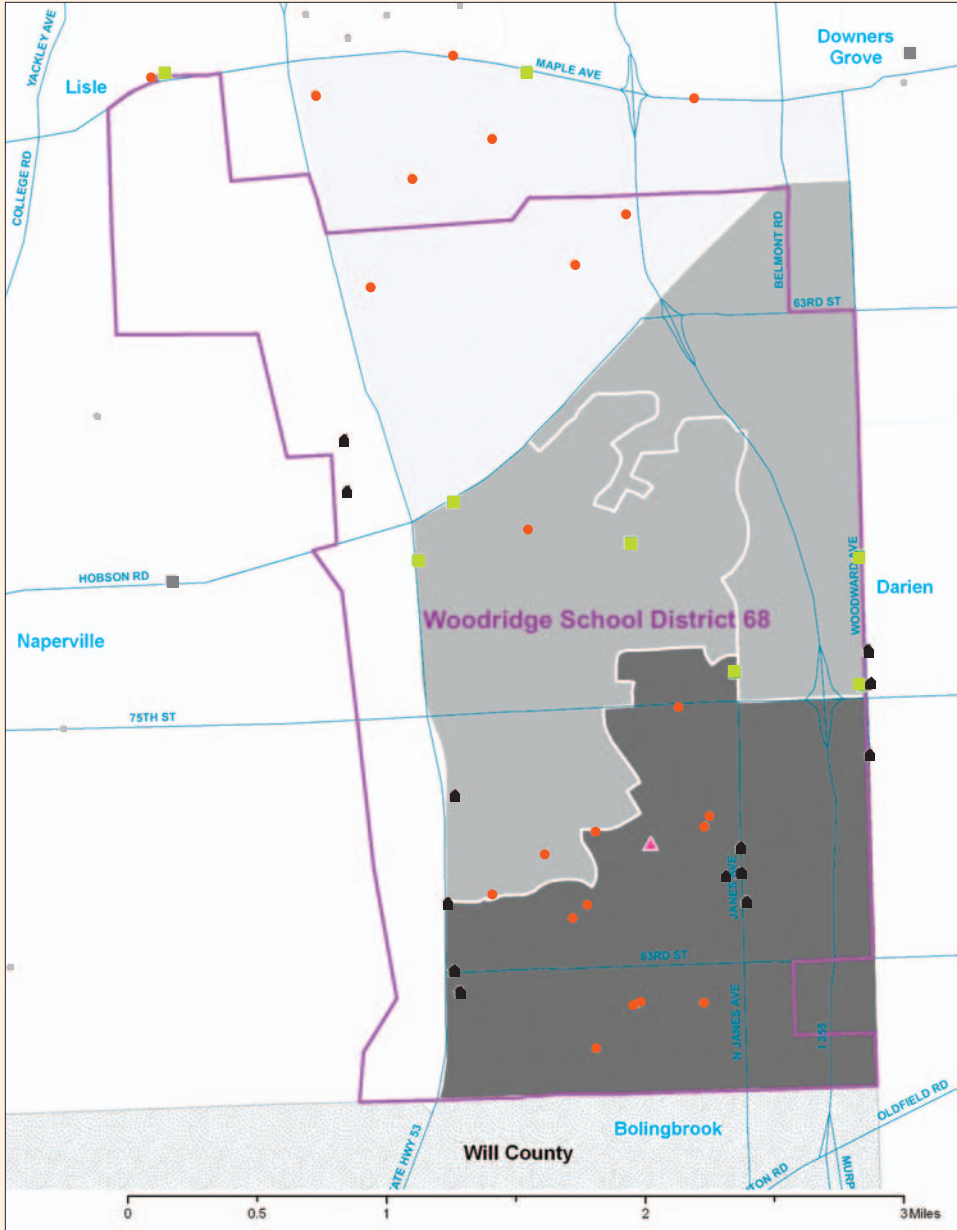
Providers Outside of Target Area by Type

- Licensed, License-Exempt Center
- Licensed Child Care Home

Major Road

- Apartment Complex

Figure 2
 Low-Income Children in the Woodridge Area



Estimated Low-Income Children Under 6 in 2005

- 0 - 100 children
- 101 - 150 children
- 151 - 228 children

Providers by Type

- Licensed, License-Exempt Center
- Licensed Child Care Home
- ▲ Preschool for All Grantee

Providers Outside of Target Area by Type

- Licensed, License-Exempt Center
- Licensed Child Care Home
- Major Road
- ▲ Apartment Complex

The Children of Woodridge and Their Families

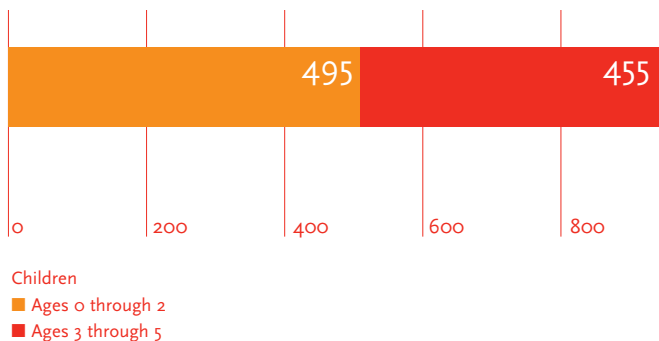
Number of children: Getting an accurate picture of young residents in a community can be difficult, especially more than six years after the last census. IFF took several steps to estimate the current population and its characteristics, including using 2005 population estimates from ESRI and school data on students' eligibility for free and reduced price lunch. According to these updated data sources, the Woodridge area is home to approximately 2,780 children from birth through age five. This includes approximately 1,440 children birth to three and 1,340 children three through five. The Methodology section on page 19 provides additional details on the methods used for all supply and demand estimates included in this report.

The need for child care: IFF estimated the number of children who, because of the work status of their parents, need full-day, full-year child care and do not have a relative, friend or neighbor available to provide care. In the Woodridge Area, there are approximately 950 children from birth through age five who need full-day, full-year child care. Of these, approximately 495 are infants through age two and 455 are age three through five (see Chart 2).

In addition, there are many families who need child care for their children on a part-time or episodic basis. Many parents work only a few months each year, and others work untraditional or highly varied work schedules. Center-based child care may not meet these families' needs; instead, they are more likely to rely on informal "family, friend and neighbor" care.

The need for subsidized child care: Approximately 80 children ages birth through five in Woodridge need full-day, full-year child care and would qualify for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP, see Early Childhood Care and Education Service Types and Funding Streams), including about 40 children from birth through two and 40 children age three through five (see Chart 3). These children are concentrated in the southern part of Woodridge School District 68, particularly in the apartment complexes along Route 53 and Janes Avenue.

Chart 2
Estimated Demand for Full-Day, Full-Year Child Care, 2005



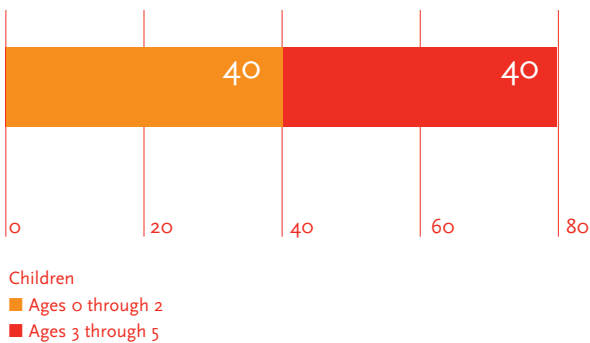
According to the Task Force members there are also a large number of children in Woodridge whose families need full-day, full-year care but do not qualify for CCAP. Because their income is slightly above the CCAP cut-off, these families face paying market rates of \$200 to 250 per week per child for center-based child care—rates that are often beyond their reach. For example, a single mother with a two-year-old and a four-year-old who earns \$18 per hour (\$37,440 per year) would have to pay about \$21,900 per year for full-time center-based care, which is 58 percent of her gross salary. She will be left with less than \$1,300 per month to cover rent, food, clothing, health care, and all other needs.

The need for Preschool for All and Head Start: Of all the young children in the Woodridge Area, an estimated 15 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 the 915 three- and four-year-old children in the area, approximately 140 qualify as high priority for Preschool for All based on their family income. Furthermore, approximately 75 three- and four-year-olds and 95 children birth to age three are in families with incomes low enough to qualify for Head Start or Early Head Start.

Other family characteristics: There has been a dramatic rise in the number of new immigrant families in the Woodridge Area over the past four years. While the largest number of these families are from Mexico, there are new immigrants from Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa. This linguistic and cultural diversity is reflected in the schools' high percentage of Limited English Proficient students (16 percent of all students). Many of these immigrant parents have very low education levels, and few have extended family networks in the community to help them with child rearing. Nearly 22 percent of the families in the community are headed by a single parent.

Task Force participants noted that newly arrived immigrant parents are often unaware of early learning opportunities for their young children. Enrolling children in early childhood education programs may take low priority, both because the family is concentrating on getting settled in their new home, and because the parents may not understand the importance of early learning. In many cases, parents are reluctant to apply for CCAP or other benefits because of their immigration status, and they may not have the documentation (e.g., paycheck stubs, etc.) needed to demonstrate their eligibility.

Chart 3
Estimated Demand for Subsidized Child Care, 2005



Current Programs and Services

Child Care: The Woodridge Area has a substantial base of licensed child care providers, including seven child care centers and 22 licensed family child care homes. Together, these centers and homes can provide care for approximately 575 children from birth through five. However, this represents only 60 percent of the estimated need for full-day, full-year care.

The majority of child care centers in the area accept Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) certificates as payment for child care, although most require parents to pay an additional \$20 or more per week per child above the state-required co-pay to partially offset the difference between the provider's current market rates and the state reimbursement rate. In the five centers that accept CCAP, over 60 percent of enrolled children receive this subsidy.

Child care centers in the community report an average vacancy rate of approximately 16 percent, which is considered fairly low. However, four of the centers indicated that they have additional space in their facility and could open additional classrooms if there were sufficient use. In most cases, they report that they have not opened these rooms because there are too few families who can afford to pay market rates for child care, and many families are either ineligible for or unaware of CCAP. Many low-income families who do seek care and CCAP at centers are unable to complete the cumbersome CCAP application process before the date they need to begin care. They are then forced to pay full market rate while waiting for their application approval, to make other child care arrangements, or to forego an employment or education opportunity.

Family child care homes comprise about 25 percent of the total supply of licensed child care in the Woodridge Area. On average, these programs are about 65 percent full. Many of the surveyed providers indicated that they primarily serve children who live outside of the Woodridge School District 68 boundaries. Like the center providers, the family child care providers noted that many families living in Woodridge were unable to pay the market rate for child care. While many family child care providers do accept subsidies, they noted that they can only afford to accept one or two children on CCAP at a time because the reimbursement rates are so low.

As noted above, a focus group with local licensed family child care providers was held to better understand this key resource for child care in the Woodridge 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. They stressed their efforts to provide a developmentally appropriate learning curriculum for the children in their care. Many home providers belong to the United Child Care Network where they share ideas with other providers, get training, and gain professional skills. The providers were also interested in forming closer working relationships with the school district's part-day preschool program, particularly if the district were to provide transportation to and from the preschool program.

Preschool for All: Woodridge School District 68 has a Preschool for All program that serves 120 three- and four-year-olds in a half-day program. This program has a waiting list of nearly 90 children who qualify for priority admission based on family income or risk factors.

Head Start: Head Start serves Woodridge children through its center in Downers Grove. Approximately 30 Woodridge children attended Head Start in 2006-07, accounting for the majority of children in the program.

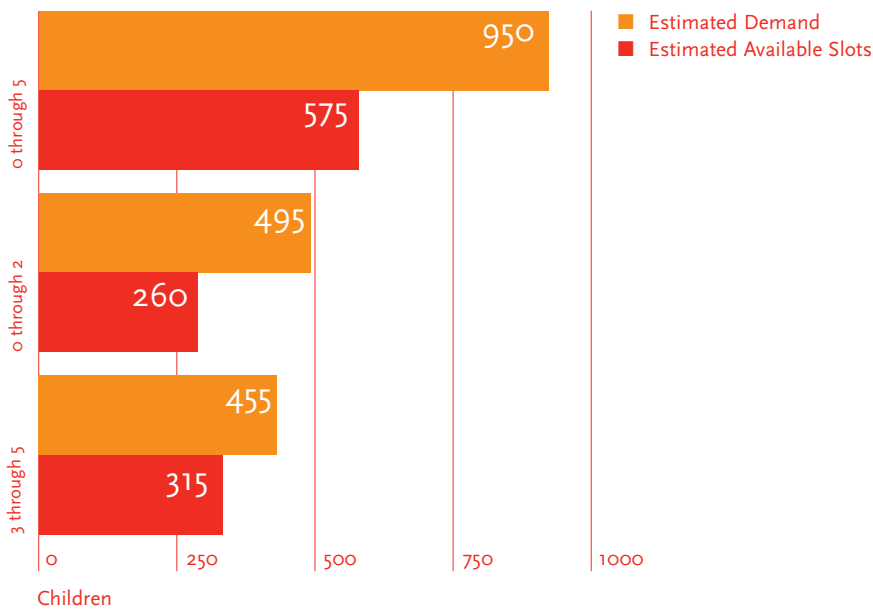
Critical Service Gaps and Barriers

Availability of full-day child care: Only 575 children needing full-day child care can be served by existing community programs, leaving approximately 375 children without good options (see Chart 4). The unmet demand is not only for subsidized child care, but for all family income levels. The community needs approximately 235 more slots of licensed infant/toddler care and 140 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.

Affordability of child care: As previously noted above, the majority of families in the Woodridge Area who need full-day, full-year care for their children cannot afford to pay the market rates for quality licensed care. For the many families who are over the income eligibility cut-off for CCAP, the cost of licensed child care would exceed half the families' income.

Awareness of and Access to Child Care Assistance: The Task Force noted that many families who qualify for CCAP are not aware of the program and do not know how to apply for this assistance. Social service providers in the community, including school social workers, have very limited knowledge about the program and its eligibility requirements. In addition, families frequently have difficulty accessing CCAP when they do attempt to apply for it. The application process is complicated, and according to the YWCA Child Care Resource and Referral, as many as 90 percent of first time applications are incomplete and must be returned to the applicant for additional information. Once fully completed, the application can take two to three weeks to be approved. As a result, families who urgently need child care typically face a long wait to receive CCAP. Child care providers are reluctant to allow families to enroll their child in care until the CCAP approval has been received, unless the family pays the market rate for care.

Chart 4
Estimated Demand vs Estimated Slots of Full-Day, Full-Year Child Care, 2005



Availability of Early Childhood Education: Woodridge School District 68 has identified increasing children’s preparedness for kindergarten as a key strategy for ensuring their success in school. Currently there are not enough publicly-funded preschool education slots located in Woodridge Area to serve all of the preschool age children. With about 140 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 Care and Formal Preschool: Currently there are no programs in the Woodridge 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 center, family child care provider, or a relative or neighbor to provide before and after preschool care, often including transportation to and from school.

A coordinated program between formal preschool and family child care (both licensed care and informal “family, friend and neighbor” care) would allow for greater learning opportunities for young children. Publicly-funded preschools typically provide only 2.5 to 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 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 Woodridge area has little public transportation other than the PACE routes that serve the Metra train station, and it is often difficult for families to bring their children to early childhood programs. Woodridge School District 68 will be expanding its transportation for its early childhood programs in the coming year, and will be able to transport children to and from the part-day program, including pick-ups or drop-offs at child care providers within the district boundaries. However, additional transportation resources are needed, especially for families with infants and toddlers.

Strategies for Meeting the Needs

The Woodridge Early Learning Planning Initiative Task Force identified four primary goals for strengthening the early education and care system in the community, as well as specific strategies for accomplishing each goal:

Increase the availability of high quality early care and education services.

- **Woodridge School District 68** will apply to expand its Preschool for All Program to reach an additional 80 children. The District will also work with child care centers who receive Preschool for All funding to create a community-wide, integrated screening process and referral system to ensure families and children receive the early childhood care and education services that best meet their needs.
- **Child care centers** will apply for Preschool for All funding to be integrated into their programs. With this additional funding source, centers may be able to afford to open additional rooms serving primarily families using CCAP.
- **The YWCA Child Care Resource and Referral**, together with the Illinois Department of Child and Family Services, will continue to recruit new licensed family child care providers.
- **The United Family Child Care Network** will also continue to recruit family child care providers (both licensed and license exempt) to join its organization and access its training and support. The Network will also encourage its members to work closely with the District's early childhood programs.
- **The Woodridge Park District** will open its after school program to preschool-aged children who participate in the afternoon part-day preschool. Combining these programs will provide up to six hours per day of care, and may meet many families child care needs.

Increase awareness and use of CCAP.

- **The YWCA Child Care Resource and Referral**, together with Woodridge School District 68, will conduct trainings for social service and child care providers in the community on how to effectively help parents apply for and receive CCAP.
- **Local service providers** will learn about CCAP and will be prepared to assist families in completing their applications for the program.

- **Local parent leaders** will be invited to learn more about CCAP and to assist with a “word of mouth” campaign about the program and its eligibility requirements.
- **Local benefactors**, including the Chamber of Commerce, will be solicited to help create a local child care assistance fund. This fund may focus on helping low-income parents begin child care before their eligibility determination for CCAP is completed, or on increasing child care affordability for families who are just over the CCAP income eligibility cut-off.

Increase transportation to and from early care and education programs.

- **Woodridge School District 68** will increase its bus routes for its part-day preschool programs, and will provide pick up and drop off at child care providers within the District limits.
- **Local municipal officials** will be asked to study how transportation needs for families with very young children might be met through PACE services or other means.

Increase awareness of the importance of early learning among parents and the community.

- **Woodridge School District 68** will (upon receipt of a Preschool for All expansion grant) expand its parent education program to include more intensive services with a full-time Parent Education Coordinator. The District will open its early childhood parent education programs to interested community members, and will make a special effort to provide information about supporting early learning to informal “family, friend and neighbor” child care providers.
- **Positive Parenting DuPage** will work with the School District, Head Start and other local early childhood education and care providers to develop community-specific information (in multiple languages) about available early childhood education and care programs, CCAP, All Kids health insurance, and the importance of early learning for children’s healthy development and readiness for school.
- **Local service providers** such as the Woodridge Community Pantry and the Woodridge Police Department Resource Centers will provide these materials to clients, and help them connect with these critical resources.

- **Area apartment complexes** will also provide this information about early childhood care and education programs and the importance of early learning to all new tenants who have young children.
- **Area faith communities and community organizations** will be asked to share information about the importance of early learning with everyone in the community, creating a “word of mouth” campaign that encourages families to use early learning programs and support their young children’s learning at home.

To get involved with any of these initiatives, contact Positive Parenting DuPage at 1-877-411-PARENT or visit positiveparentingdupage.org.

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 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, friend, 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 infants 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 its 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 off-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 nonprofit 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 Master’s 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, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (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 Woodridge area can find subsidized care through the Child Care Resource and Referral program administered by the YWCA. 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 DuPage 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).

Head Start: Head Start is a federally-funded program administered in DuPage County by Lifelink 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: Preschool for All is a state-funded program that grew out of a successful 20-year 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 program for children ages three and four. While funding priority is given to programs serving a majority of “at-risk” children, all children are eligible to participate in Preschool for All.

Preschool for All programs may be operated by school districts or a wide range of community-based organizations, including nonprofit and for-profit child care providers. While state funding provides for only 2.5 instructional hours 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

This report analyzes supply, demand, and geographical distribution of early childhood education and care resources in the Woodridge area. Providing this picture requires assessment of overall need for full-day, full-year child care for all children regardless of income, as well as the need for publicly-funded early childhood education and care programs. This includes the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP, both licensed and license-exempt), Head Start/Early Head Start, the Illinois Pre-K program, and the Illinois Preschool for All program.

IFF determines “demand” by combining updated 2005 population data acquired from ESRI with Census 2000 data on the work status of parents, family income, and other program-specific eligibility requirements, depending on the category of care or education.

- Full-day, full-year child care demand includes all children from birth through five in working families after removing a fraction to reflect families that work split shifts or have other family members care for their children based on estimates adapted from the Urban Institute’s *National Child Care Survey*.
- CCAP demand includes all children ages birth through five in working families with incomes at or below 50 percent of the state median income after removing a fraction to reflect families that work split shifts or have other family members care for their children.
- Head Start and Early Head Start demand include children from birth through two and three through five, respectively, whose family income is at or below the federal poverty level (FPL).
- Pre-K demand includes three- and four-year-olds living in families with incomes below 185 percent of the FPL. This estimate produces a quantifiable number of at-risk children based solely on income, but does not account for other determinants of Pre-K eligibility. This income threshold is used because it is a familiar benchmark in other school aid programs such as Title I and school lunch; however, IFF recognizes that school districts may set other admissions guidelines at their discretion.
- Preschool for All demand includes all three- and four-year-olds, reflecting the broad goal of the program.

“Supply,” for the purposes of this report, means the number of spaces or slots in the different types of care or education settings available to the target population of children, including licensed child care centers, licensed family child care homes, and license-exempt child care centers (schools, colleges and governmental facilities).

Data on slots were provided by the YWCA Child Care Resource and Referral in March 2007. IFF surveyed area providers in April 2007 to update and expand upon the data provided by the YWCA.

IFF analyzed the demand and supply information for the four census tracts that approximate Woodridge School District 68. Providers located in the target census tracts and/or within .25 miles of the census tracts or the Woodridge School District 68 boundary were included in the analysis.

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; license-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	A state-funded program that provides free preschool to children ages three and four with priority given to children who are at-risk for educational challenges. Administered through the Illinois State Board of Education Early Childhood Block Grant.
West Chicago Area	For this report, the Woodridge Area refers to the area served by Woodridge School District 68.
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	The group of individuals in each community who met regularly and contributed to the development of this report.

Task Force Members

Woodridge School District 68, Lead Agency

Knowledge Learning Corporation

Lifelink Head Start

Metropolitan Family Services

Positive Parenting DuPage

Small Miracles Preschool

St. Scholastica School

United Child Care Network

Woodridge Community Pantry

Woodridge Neighborhood Resource Center

Special thanks to Theresa Hawley, consultant, and Greg Wolcott, principal of Edgewood Elementary School, for their significant contributions to the development of this report.



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