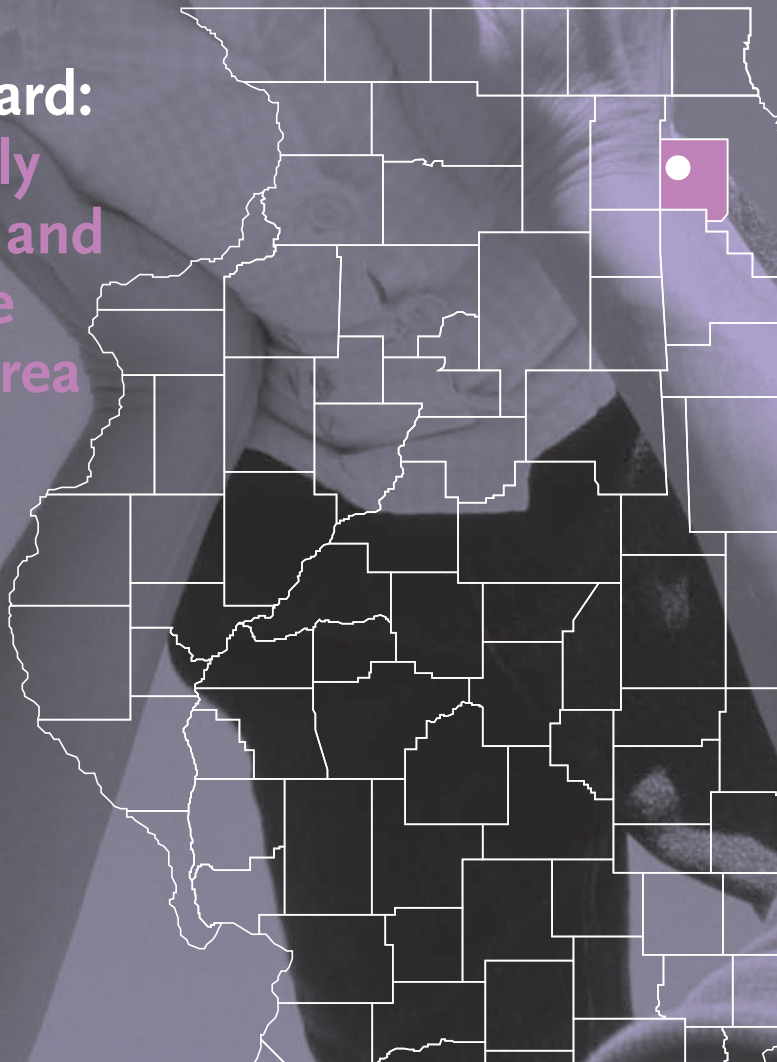


**Assets, Gaps,  
and a Way Forward:  
A Report on Early  
Childhood Care and  
Education in the  
West Chicago Area**





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.

### About IFF

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.

**GRAND VICTORIA**  
**FOUNDATION**

**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.

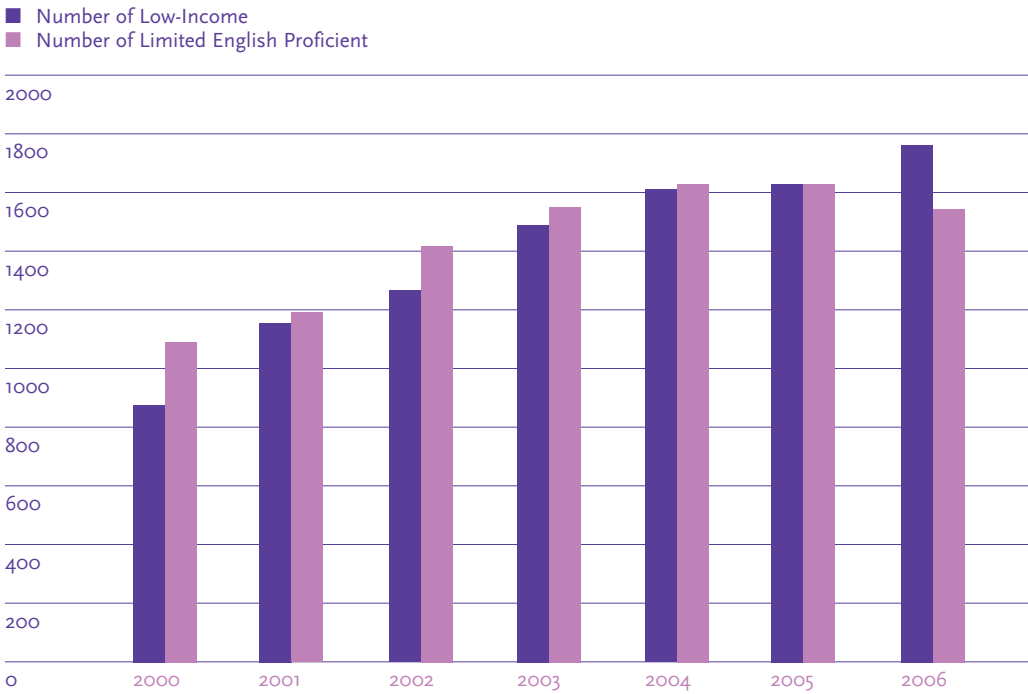
## **A Community Capacity Approach to Early Childhood Care and Education**

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.

*Chart 1*  
**Enrollment of Low-Income and Limited English Proficient Students in West Chicago Elementary School District 33, 2000-2006**



# The West Chicago 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. West Chicago, 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 45 percent of students in the West Chicago elementary schools are from low-income families, and over half of community residents speak a language other than English at home (mostly Spanish). Chart 1 shows the growth since 2000 in the number of low-income and Limited English Proficient students served by West Chicago School District 33.

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. WeGo Together for Kids, a community collaboration led by West Chicago School District 33 took the lead in forming an Early Learning Planning Initiative Task Force, and the Task Force began meeting in April 2007. The group included representatives from the West Chicago School District Early Childhood Program, Head Start, local child care and preschool providers, social service providers, the West Chicago Police Department Neighborhood Resource Centers, and other interested parties. The Task Force chose to focus its efforts on the area served by West Chicago School District 33.

## About Positive Parenting DuPage

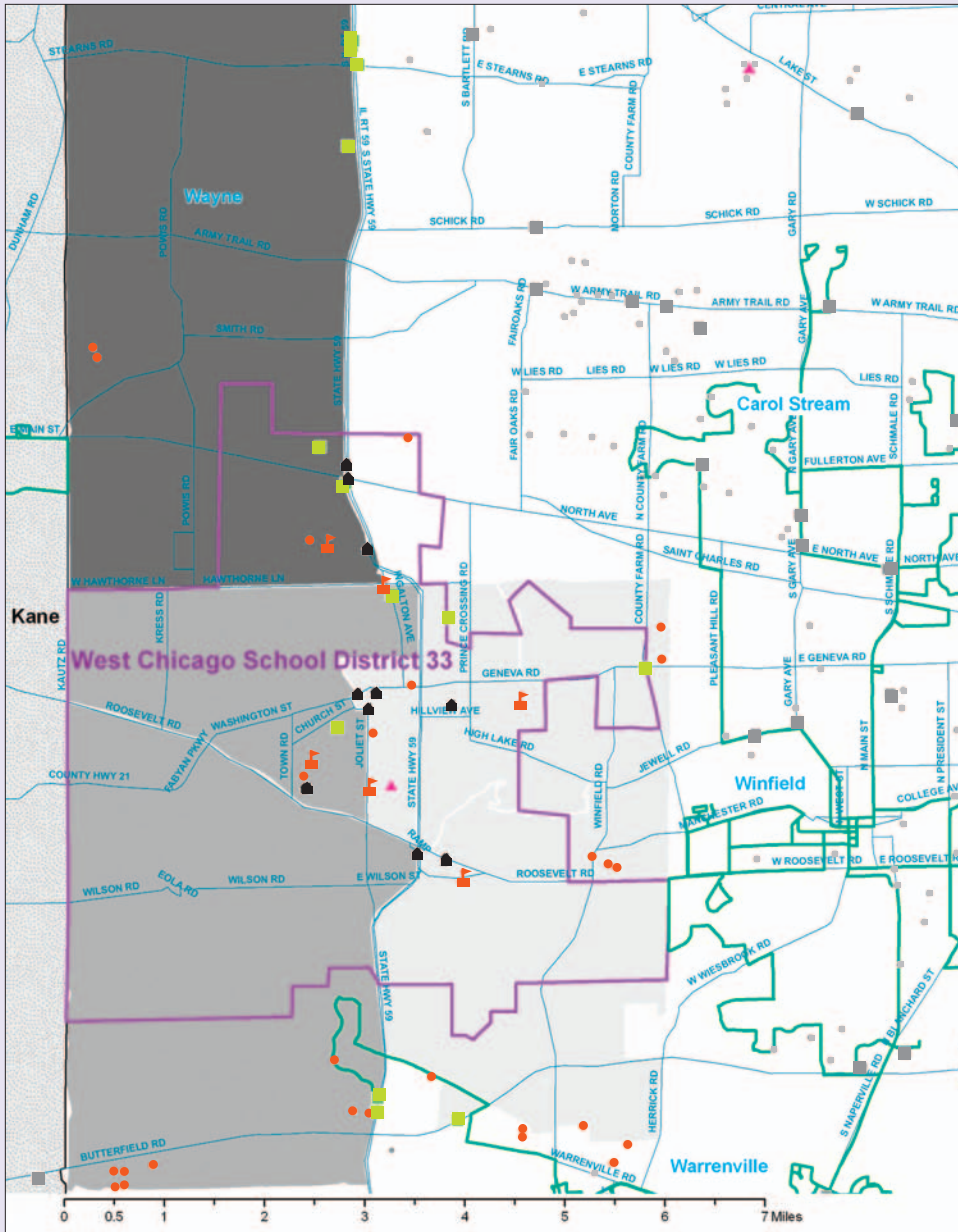
Positive Parenting DuPage is a multi-faceted, county-wide collaboration comprised of over 100 organizations that work with families during the first three years of a child's life. Positive Parenting DuPage seeks to change the culture of parenting and child development in DuPage County. By uniting organizations 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 Care 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 to five years whose families have low incomes.

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 West Chicago Area.

Figure 1  
 Child Care Supply and Demand in the West Chicago Area



**2005 Estimated Demand by Census Tracts for**

**Full-Day, Full-Year Child Care**

- 152 - 200 children
- 201 - 400 children
- 401 - 582 children

**Providers by Type**

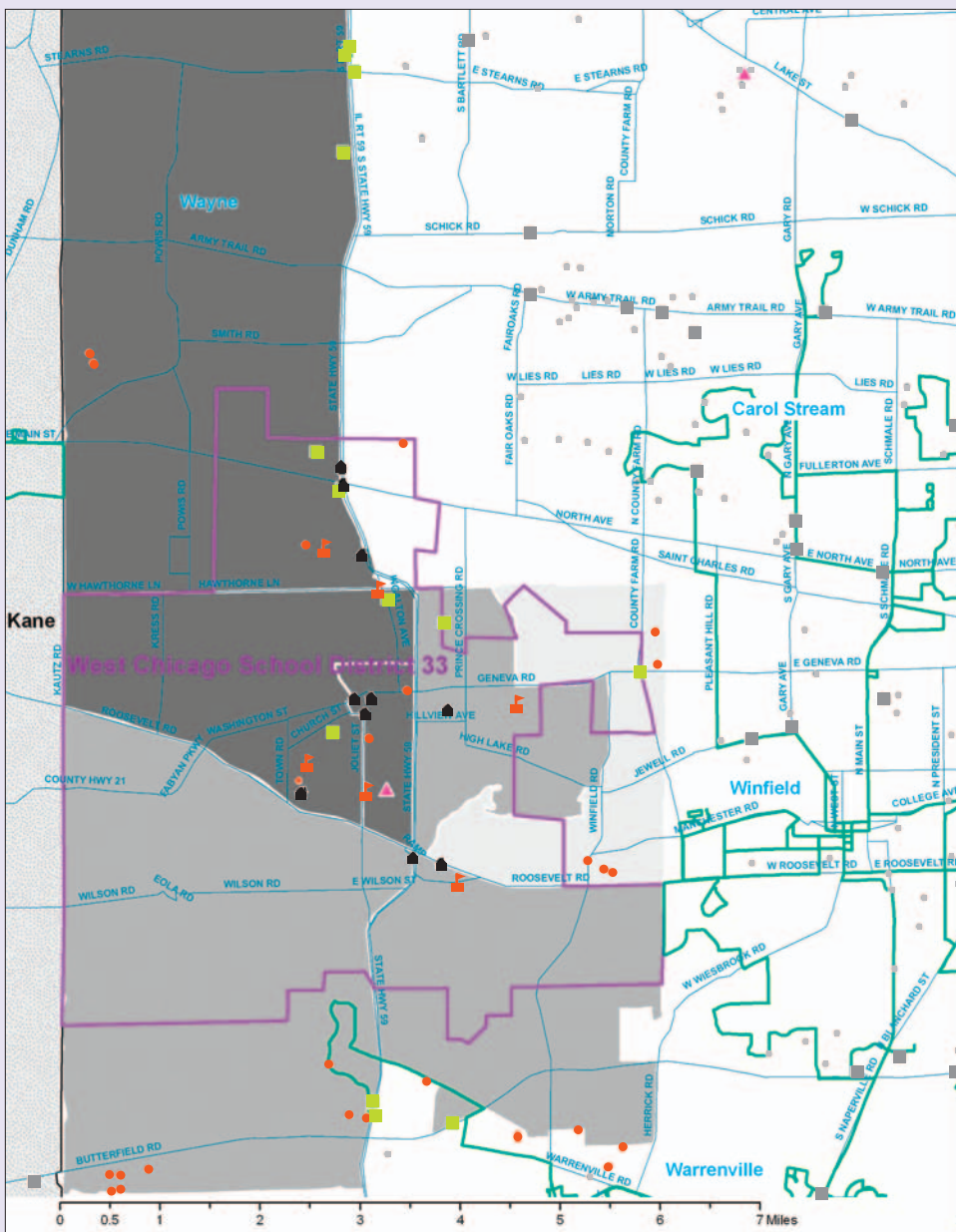
- Licensed, License-Exempt Center
- Licensed Child Care Home
- Preschool for All Grantee

**Providers Outside of Target Area by Type**

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

- Major Road
- Bus Route
- Elementary School
- Apartment Complex

Figure 2  
 Low-income Children in the West Chicago Area



# The Children of West Chicago and Their Families

The first step in any community planning initiative is to collect relevant data on the needs and available services in the community. This is often a challenging task, as data are often not available in the formats or by the community area breakdown that would be most useful. For this project, estimates of the number of children in need and the services available were calculated for the seven census tracts that intersect the West Chicago School District 33 boundaries. This area includes slightly more than twice the number of children in District 33 itself. Where possible, estimates of the number of children and services within District 33 boundaries are also provided.

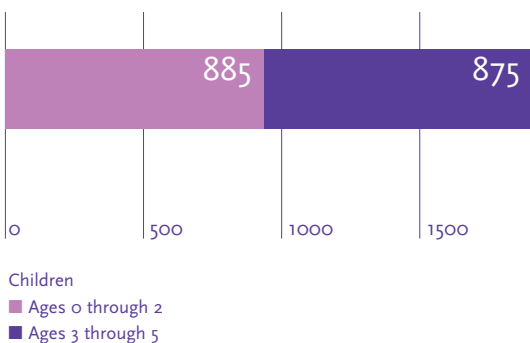
**Number of children:** Getting an accurate picture of young residents in a community can be difficult, especially more than six years after the last census. IFF took several steps to estimate the current population and its characteristics, including using 2005 population estimates from ESRI and school data on students' eligibility for Free and Reduced Price lunch. According to these updated data sources, the West Chicago area is home to approximately 5,760 children from birth through age five. This includes approximately 2,890 children birth to three and 2,870 children three through five. About half of all of these children live within the West Chicago School District 33 boundaries. The Methodology section on page 21 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 or friend available to provide care. In the West Chicago Area, there are approximately 1,760 children from birth through age five who need full-day, full-year child care. Of these, approximately 880 are infants through age two and 880 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 nontraditional 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:** At least 180 children from birth through age five in West Chicago 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 90 children from birth through age two and 90 children ages three through five (see Chart 3).

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





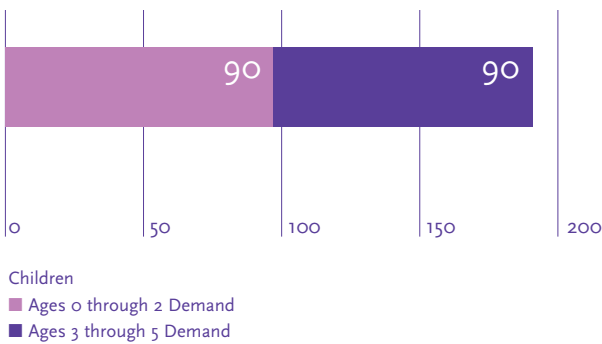
According to the Task Force members there are also a large number of children in West Chicago whose families need full-day, full-year care but do not qualify for CCAP. Because their income is slightly above the CCAP cut-off, these families face paying market rates of \$200 to 250 per week per child for 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. Undocumented families, though they qualify for CCAP, may be reluctant or unable to provide the income documentation required to prove eligibility and therefore also left without a good, affordable child care option.

**The need for Preschool for All and Head Start:** Of all the young children in the West Chicago Area (seven census tract areas), an estimated 18 percent live in families with low incomes, defined as below 185 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (the eligibility cut-off for Free and Reduced Price Lunch and Medicaid/WIC services). In West Chicago itself, over one-quarter of children under age five are in low-income families and nearly half of children enrolled in West Chicago District 33 are from low-income families. Of the 1,904 three- and four-year-old children in the area, approximately 350 qualify as high priority for Preschool for All based on their family income. Furthermore, approximately 160 three- and four-year-olds and 180 children from 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 West Chicago Area over the past decade or more. The majority of these families are from rural Mexico. This immigration pattern is reflected in the schools' high percentage of English Language Learning students (40 percent of all students). Many of these immigrant parents have very low education levels; approximately 92 percent of Spanish-speaking parents in the West Chicago preschool program do not have a high school diploma, and many have less than a sixth grade education. Many parents have extended family networks in the community to help them with child rearing, but these extended family members also have very low education levels.

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 West Chicago Area has a substantial base of licensed child care providers, including 15 child care centers and 27 licensed family child care homes. Together, these centers and homes can provide care for approximately 1,160 children from birth through five. However, this represents only two-thirds of the estimated need for full-day, full-year care. Furthermore, much of the licensed child care in the area is located more than three miles from the central West Chicago area apartment complexes where many low-income families with young children live. Approximately 270 of these available child care “slots” are in homes or centers in Warrenville near Butterfield Road, and an additional 410 slots are in centers in Bartlett near Stearns Rd, at the far northern end of the area studied (see Figure 1b). These distant providers comprise 59 percent of all the care provided in the West Chicago Area. According to Task Force participants, these centers and homes are not easily accessible to West Chicago families. Licensed child care providers within the District 33 boundaries can serve only about 445 children under age five in full-day, full-year care, far short of the need.

Child care centers in the community report vacancy rates of up to 50 percent, which indicates that the currently existing services are not being used by most families. In addition, all of the child care centers that responded to the survey indicated that they have additional space in their facility and could open additional classrooms if there were sufficient enrollment.

Family child care homes comprise about one-fourth of the total supply of licensed child care in the West Chicago Area. On average, these programs are about 65 percent full. Most of these licensed child care homes are in the area along Butterfield Road, south of West Chicago. There are only five licensed child care homes within the West Chicago School District 33 boundaries.

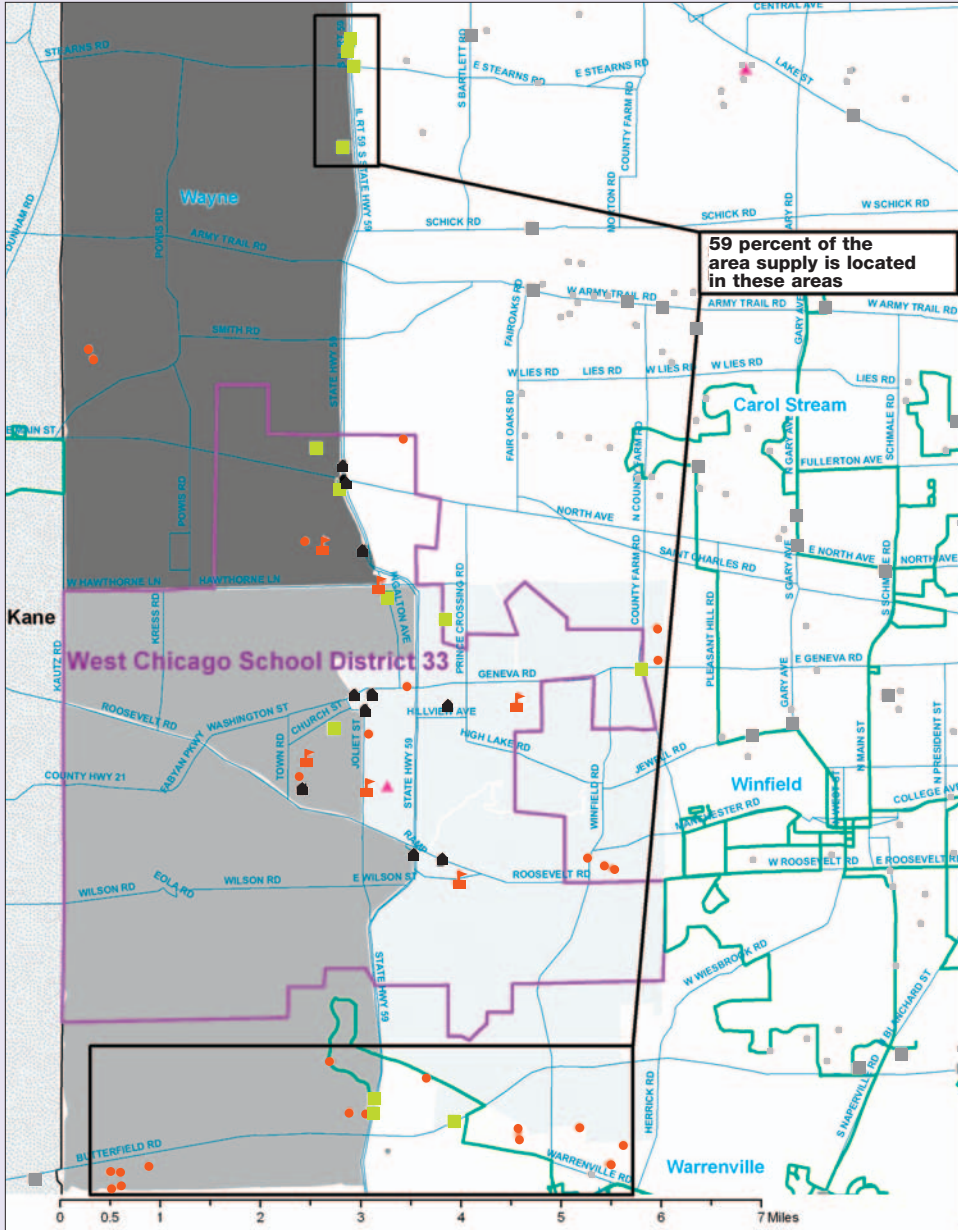
**Subsidized Child Care:** The majority of child care centers in the area accept Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) certificates as payment for child care, although most require parents to pay an additional \$20 or more per week per child above the state-required co-pay to partially offset the difference between the provider’s current market rates and the state reimbursement rate. Seventy-one certificates are currently in use in West Chicago.

**Preschool for All:** West Chicago School District 33 has a Preschool for All program that serves 260 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. An additional 100 children with special needs also attend District 33’s early childhood program.

**Head Start:** Lifelink Head Start serves West Chicago children through its center in Warrenville. Approximately 70 West Chicago children attended Head Start in 2006-07, and an additional 12 children participated in the home-based Early Head Start program.

The largest concentration of low-income children who may qualify for programs like Head Start, Preschool for All, and CCAP is in the northwestern portion of West Chicago District 33 (see Figure 2b).

Figure 1b  
 Child Care Supply and Demand in the West Chicago Area



**2005 Estimated Demand by Census Tracts for**

**Full-Day, Full-Year Child Care**

- 152 - 200 children
- 201 - 400 children
- 401 - 582 children

**Providers by Type**

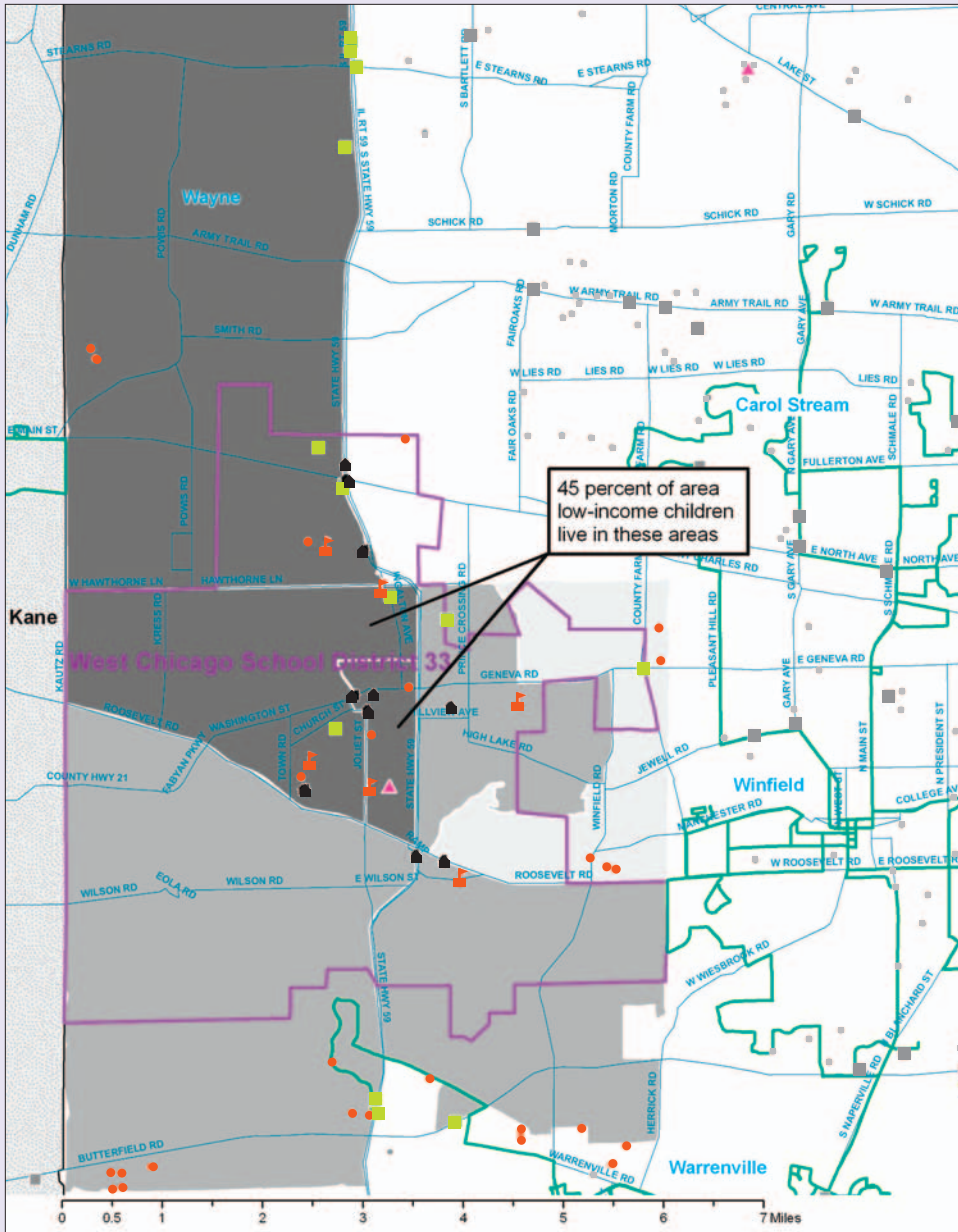
- Licensed, License-Exempt Center
- Licensed Child Care Home
- Preschool for All Grantee

**Providers Outside of Target Area by Type**

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

- Major Road
- Bus Route
- Elementary School
- Apartment Complex

Figure 2b  
 Low-income Children in the West Chicago Area



**Estimated Low-Income Children Under 6 in 2005**

- 11 - 50 children
- 51 - 150 children
- 151 - 252 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
- Bus Route
- ▲ Elementary School
- Apartment Complex

## Parents' Perspectives on Early Childhood Care and Education

The Task Force surveyed parents of young children participating in home visiting services such as Healthy Families and Early Head Start in West Chicago. Eighty-seven parents with children under age five responded to the survey. In 64 percent of the families, all parents were working or attending school; in 71 percent of these families the parents were working or in school full time. Among the 33 mothers who were not working, 79 percent said finding quality, affordable child care was a barrier to finding a job or pursuing education. This seemed to be particularly common among women who had school-age children in addition to their children under age five.

**Parents' reported sources of care:** In more than half of the families surveyed, relatives provide care for the children. In about 20 percent of families, the father cares for the children while the mother is at work or school, while in 33 percent of families another relative (usually a grandmother) cares for the children. In most cases, the parents do not pay their relatives for this care. Twenty-two percent of the survey respondents enrolled their children in a child care center, and 17 percent use a family child care home. In most cases the parents were satisfied with their child care arrangements, but one-third of respondents indicated that they would prefer a more formal child care setting that was reliable and “professional.”

**Use of CCAP:** Only 15 percent of the families surveyed indicated that they used the Child Care Assistance Program. Most of these parents have their child enrolled in a special program serving teen parents who are completing high school; however, a significant portion of respondents received the survey from a teen parent program. Several parents made comments that they were not aware of CCAP, or thought they would not be eligible because their mother provides child care.

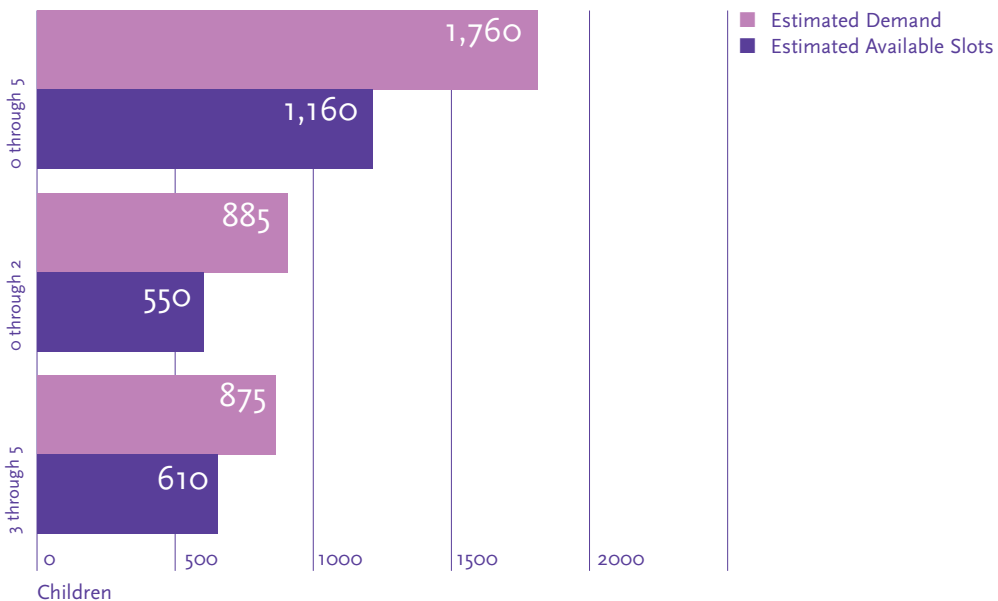
## Critical Service Gaps and Barriers

**Availability of full-day child care:** Only 1,160 children needing full-day child care can be served by existing community programs, leaving approximately 600 children without good options (see Chart 4). The unmet demand is not only for subsidized child care, but for all family income levels, and is most critical in central West Chicago as compared to Warrenville to the south or Bartlett to the north. The community needs approximately 335 more slots of licensed infant/toddler care and 265 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. Given the low utilization rates of currently available child care slots, any new slots created must also address accessibility barriers such as cost and transportation.

**Affordability of child care:** As previously noted above, the majority of families in the West Chicago 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 could 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 very 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:** West Chicago School District 33 has identified increasing children’s preparedness for kindergarten as a key strategy for ensuring their success in school. Currently there is not enough publicly-funded preschool education in the West Chicago Area to serve all of the preschool-age children. With about 340 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 West Chicago 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 West Chicago area has no public transportation, and it is often difficult for families to bring their children to early childhood programs. West Chicago School District and Head Start provide transportation for their part-day early childhood programs. However, additional transportation resources are needed, especially for families with infants and toddlers.

# Strategies for Meeting the Needs



The West Chicago 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 awareness and use of CCAP, Head Start, and early childhood services.**

- The YWCA Child Care Resource and Referral, together with WeGo Together for Kids and Positive Parenting DuPage, will conduct trainings for social service and child care providers in the community on how to effectively help parents apply for and receive CCAP.
- Positive Parenting DuPage and WeGo Together for Kids will work with local providers to create informational materials about the early childhood services available in the community and implement a plan to distribute them. These may include brochures, a video that could be broadcast on the local public access channel and “talking points” for local service providers who can help share information about these services with families. A resource directory with contact names and phone numbers for programs will be developed and distributed to a wide range of local service providers.
- Local service providers will learn about CCAP, Head Start, and the District 33 preschool programs, and will be prepared to assist families in completing their applications for the CCAP program.
- Local parent leaders will be invited to learn more about CCAP, Head Start, and the District 33 preschool program, and to assist with a “word of mouth” campaign about these programs and their eligibility requirements.
- The West Chicago School District 33 Early Childhood Program, Lifelink Head Start, and Positive Parenting DuPage will work together to develop a system to identify families applying for preschool, Head Start, child care, and other early education programs to ensure that families are directed to the resources and services that best meet their needs.



## **Increase the quality of early learning experiences in family, friend, and neighbor child care settings.**

- The West Chicago Police Department Resource Centers will identify community residents who are providing child care for their relatives and neighbors, and will hold focus groups with them to determine what types of information and training they would be interested in receiving.
- WeGo Together for Kids and the YWCA Child Care Resource and Referral will develop a plan for providing training to family, friend and neighbor child care providers through trusted sources, such as churches, Neighborhood Resource Centers, and the Health Department. The trainings will respond to providers' needs and interests, and will include first aid/CPR as well as basic child development information. A grant proposal to fund these trainings will be developed.
- 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 (including grandparents caring for children) to use early learning programs and support their young children's learning at home.

## **Increase transportation to and from early care and education programs.**

- Local municipal officials and regional transit officials will be asked to study how transportation needs for families with very young children in the West Chicago area might be met.

**To get involved with any of these initiatives, contact Positive Parenting DuPage at 1-877-411-PARENT or visit [positiveparentingdupage.org](http://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 care during non-traditional hours or with 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. 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 developmentally appropriate books and toys. 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 West Chicago 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 in funding 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, 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 West Chicago area. Providing this picture requires the assessment of the 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, including 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 ages birth through two and three through five, respectively, whose family income is at or below the federal poverty level.
- Pre-K demand includes three- and four-year-olds living in families with incomes below 185 percent of the federal poverty level. 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, the local Illinois Child Care Resource and Referral Agency, 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 seven census tracts that roughly approximate West Chicago School District 33. In order to include census tracts that comprise a significant portion of the West Chicago School District 33, two large census tracts that also include the villages of Wayne and Warrenville are included in the report. Providers located in the target census tracts and/or within .25 miles of the census tracts or the West Chicago School District 33 boundary are included in the analysis. Where possible, providers located in the large Wayne, Illinois and Warrenville, Illinois census tracts are analyzed separately.



## Glossary

<b>Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)</b>	Illinois Department of Human Services program that subsidizes child care for low-income working families.
<b>Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&amp;R)</b>	Illinois Department of Human Services-funded system for providing child care referrals to parents and training to child care providers.
<b>DCFS</b>	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.
<b>Early Childhood Block Grant</b>	Mechanism for funding Preschool for All, Parental Training, and Prevention Initiative programs.
<b>Early Childhood Care and Education</b>	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.
<b>Full-Day, Full-Year Child Care</b>	Child care that is available throughout normal business hours and is open all year long.
<b>Head Start</b>	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.
<b>Licensed child care</b>	Care provided by a center or home that has been licensed by DCFS.
<b>License-exempt care</b>	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.
<b>Home Child Care Provider</b>	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.
<b>Preschool for All</b>	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.
<b>West Chicago Area</b>	For this report, the West Chicago Area refers to the area served by West Chicago School District 33.
<b>Slots</b>	Number of spaces available, or the number of children a program or center can accommodate at full capacity.
<b>Subsidy</b>	Child care assistance for low-income working families.
<b>Task Force</b>	The group of individuals in each community who met regularly and contributed to the development of this report.



## Task Force Members

West Chicago Elementary School District 33, Lead Agency

YWCA Child Care Resource and Referral

Knowledge Learning Corporation

Lifelink Head Start

Metropolitan Family Services DuPage

West Chicago Police Department, Neighborhood Resource Center

Kiddyplace Learning Center

Moms in School

Carole Tadvich, Licensed Family Home Provider

Teen Parent Connection

Montessori Learning Tree

DuPage County Health Department



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