

October-November 2000

**Volume II, Issue 7
Child Care**

Inside this Issue

1 Child Care in Colorado

Children without Adult Supervision When Not at School

2 After-school Care

3 Child Care Assessment Survey

4 Editorial Advisory Board and Staff

Invitation to Dialogue

Family and Youth Institute
201 Gibbons Building
Colorado State University
Fort Collins CO 80523-1501

970-491-6358 or 491-2292

Child Care in Colorado

Seventy percent of Colorado children under the age of 6 – nearly 250,000 children – live with parents who work outside the home. Over half of 6- to 12-year-olds also live with parents who work outside the home.

Child care is crucial to the well-being of families and all Coloradans. Studies show lasting positive effects of quality child care.

Different types of child care include child-care centers, family child-care homes, nannies, relatives, and baby-sitters. Colorado has over 2,500 licensed family child-care homes and over 8,300 child-care facilities. Parents may face greater difficulty finding child care depending on income, the area of the state and the child's special needs.

Critical issues facing parents, child-care providers and communities include:

- adequate pay for child-care workers,
- affordability of child care,
- availability of child care, including location and hours,
- before- and after-school care,
- care for children with special needs, including respite care,
- care for sick children,
- care for children whose parents are making the transition to work from welfare,
- children caring for themselves,
- infant care,
- quality, and
- safety.

These issues affect families of every income, but may be particularly significant for low-income families. A report from the Governor's Task Force on Welfare Reform (September 2000) indicates the need for parents on Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) to find child care in order to participate in work-focused programs.

Often, parents in low-wage jobs work evening or weekend shifts and have difficulty finding child care during those times. Other child-care gaps include care for children with disabilities, health problems or behavior problems.

This issue of the *Briefs* looks at a report of a national study on school-age children caring for themselves, options for after-school care, and a child-care assessment survey in Weld County, which could serve as a model for others in the state.

Children without Adult Supervision When Not at School

An estimated four million U.S. 6- to 12-year-olds with mothers who work outside the home are regularly without adult supervision when not at school, according to research from the Urban Institute's *Assessing the New Federalism* project. The report finds a greater incidence of self-care among 10- to 12-year-olds, particularly those in higher-income families, in families with mothers who work traditional hours, and in families who are white.

Child Care Patterns for School-Age Children with Employed Mothers, by Jeffrey Capizzano and Gina Adams of the Urban Institute and Kathryn Tout of Child Trends, looks at a variety of child-care arrangements, including the time children spend caring for themselves or staying with a sibling younger than 13 during the school year (self-care). Other arrangements studied include before- and after-school programs, non-relatives outside of the child's home, nannies or baby-sitters, relatives, and parents.

"We are particularly concerned about the younger children and children in low-income families who regularly spend time unsupervised each week," notes Capizzano. "These children face the greatest challenges while in self-care and may have the most to gain from structured, supervised activities."

The amount of time that school-age children whose mothers work outside the home spend in self-care varies significantly. While children in self-care spend an average of five hours unsupervised each week, 15 percent spend more than 10 hours in self-care each week. As children get older, they are more likely to care for themselves when not at school. While 10 percent (nearly 1.2 million children) of 6- to 9-year-olds regularly spend time in self-care when not in school, this rises to 35 percent (nearly 2.9 million children) for 10- to 12-year-olds and 44 percent (nearly 1.2 million children) for 12-year-olds.

In the report, child-care arrangements are examined along family characteristics, including income, race and ethnicity, parental work schedules, and parental availability (full- or part-time work status of single- or two-parent families). The research is based on the 1997 National Survey of America's Families, a 44,000-household survey.



Key Findings

- **Income:** Family income makes little difference in the use of self-care for 6- to 9-year-old children, but self-care is more often used by 10- to 12-year-olds in higher-income (more than twice the federal poverty level) families.
- **Race and Ethnicity:** Caucasian 10- to 12-year-olds are nearly twice as likely as their African-American and Hispanic peers to spend time in self-care regularly. Few differences were observed among racial and ethnic groups in the use of self-care for younger children.
- **Parental Work Schedules:** Ten- to 12-year-old children whose parents work traditional hours are more likely to be in self-care than those who work nontraditional hours.
- **State Variation:** Use of self-care varies significantly by state. The share of younger children in self-care whose mothers work outside the home varies from 17 percent in Minnesota to 5 percent in Michigan and 6 percent in Alabama, California, and Mississippi.

Research Implications

According to other research, under certain circumstances self-care may be associated with negative effects on children's social adjustment and school performance. "But self-care for school-age children is clearly a fact of life for millions of working families," concludes Adams. "It is important that policy makers examine why parents rely on self-care, in particular the affordability and availability of other child-care options. The answers can guide public and private efforts to help meet the needs of working families."

Adapted and reprinted with permission – <http://www.urban.org/news/pressrel/pr000911.html>. For the complete report, visit: <http://newfederalism.urban.org/html/op41/occa41.html>

After-school Care

Educational experts strongly encourage after-school programs to occupy and enrich students, especially those who are without supervision while their parents are at work. The Afterschool Action Kit helps parents evaluate after-school programs. It also includes:

- steps to start an after-school program in local communities, and
- a list of organizations that offer tools, resources and tips on how to start or fund after-school programs.

The Afterschool Action Kit was created by the Afterschool Alliance, a partnership of public, private, and nonprofit groups committed to raising awareness and expanding resources for after-school programs. The partnership was initiated by the Charles Stuart Mott Foundation and the U.S. Department of Education.

To order an Afterschool Action Kit, call 1-877-433-7827 during business hours, or check the web site <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/ACTIONKT.PDF>

Colorado has funding opportunities for after-school programs.

- The *Fund for Colorado's Future* will provide over a million dollars to fund after-school programs in middle schools. This grant project will provide the opportunity for a partnership between a school and a community organization. Governor Bill Owens' office recently contacted over 25 principals across the state to apply for up to \$100,000.

- *21st Century Community Learning Centers* provide school-community partnerships to keep schools open after-school and summers as safe havens for enhanced learning.

- *Colorado Trust After-School Initiative* will support up to 30 after-school programs throughout the state. See www.coloradotrust.org – Jan Carroll, Ph.D., is a Colorado State University Cooperative Extension 4-H Youth Development Specialist.

Child Care Assessment Survey

– Robbyn Wacker

Last summer, Carol Gosselink, my colleague at the University of Northern Colorado, and I conducted a study on behalf of the Weld County Commissioners, the Department of Social Services, and the Child Care and Youth Program Taskforce. This survey assessed the child care and youth supervision needs and difficulties of Weld County families with children age 5 and under, age 6 to 12, and age 13 to 17. Although most of the 386 families managed to obtain child care and youth supervision, many families reported concerns with regard to finding and utilizing child-care and youth supervision programs. Here are some key findings of the study.

Families with children age 5 and under used a variety of people to assist with child care, but some were hesitant to use licensed child care or child-care centers because of a personal philosophy, difficulty trusting strangers, or cost. One parent remarked, “I am staying at home with her because my income was too low to afford day care.”

In addition, many families in this age group reported difficulties finding and accessing child care services. “Finding responsible and caring providers is my biggest problem,” was the comment of one parent. Many parents with children in this age group expressed a need for infant care, drop-in care, and sick child care.

Families with children age 6 to 12 reported difficulties obtaining child supervision because of cost, a lack of programs near home or work, a lack of after-school programs, and a lack of age-appropriate social or recreational activities. One parent told us, “Most of the time his age is the bad thing. There are a lot of programs for young kids, not so many programs for older kids.”

Transportation to and from programs or services also emerged as a reason why families had difficulty accessing child care or child supervision. Rural families in this age group reported more difficulties obtaining child care and youth supervision services than urban families. A recurrent comment from families in this age group regarded the need for more non-athletic activities.



The most-often-mentioned youth supervision difficulties for families with youth age 13 to 17 were a lack of programs near home or work, a lack of organized social and recreational activities and a lack of after-school programs. Transporting their children to and from programs was also a problem for these families. We also discovered that families of teenagers had a number of social concerns. These included finding age-appropriate employment opportunities and finding social and recreational activities. Their child’s school performance, their child’s friends, sex education and drug/alcohol education were other prominent concerns. Parents of teens also felt that there was a need for a place where teens could get together in a safe, supervised environment.

In addition to the age-specific child-care and youth concerns mentioned by parents, two other concerns were of particular note. The first was that many parents reported not knowing whom to call to locate child-care services or youth programs. The second was the number of parents who had given up a job due to difficulties in locating child care. Six-

teen percent of families in this study reported that they had, at some point, given up a job because of child-care difficulties.

An outcome of this study was the creation of three task forces, corresponding to the different age groups used in the study. These task forces will further investigate how communities can better assist families with their child-care and youth supervision needs.

For further information about the study, contact Dr. Robbyn Wacker at rwacker@hhs.unco.edu or 970-351-1582.

– Robbyn Wacker, Ph.D., is associate dean of the College of Health and Human Sciences, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley.

Web sites on child care

<http://www.cdhs.state.co.us/childcare/default.htm> – Colorado Division of Child Care

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/hip/abc/abc.htm> – The ABCs of Safe and Healthy Child Care: An On-Line Handbook for Child Care Providers from the Department of Health and Human Services U.S. Public Health Service Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.nccic.org/> – National Child Care Information Center, a project of the Child Care Bureau, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

<http://www.nncc.org/> – Cooperative Extension System’s National Network for Child Care

<http://www.nccanet.org/> – National Child Care Association

Editorial Advisory Board

Colorado State University Cooperative Extension

Jan Carroll, Ph.D., 4-H Youth Development Specialist
Mary Ellen Fleming, San Luis Valley Area Agent
Gary Lancaster, Sedgwick County Director
Jan Miller-Heyl, DARE To Be You Director
Verla Noakes, Fremont County Agent
Nori Pearce, Rio Blanco County Agent
Debby Weitzel, Outreach Communications and Technology
Publications Specialist

FYI Staff

Coordinator

Cheryl Asmus, Ph.D.

Co-directors

Mary McPhail Gray, Ph.D., associate director, Colorado
State University Cooperative Extension
Bradford Sheafor, Ph.D., associate dean, College of Applied
Human Sciences, Colorado State University

Other staff

Elizabeth Garner, coordinator, County Information Services,
Colorado State University Cooperative Extension
Malcolm Scott, graduate research assistant
Sandy Tracy, *Briefs* editor

Invitation to dialogue

What issues and concerns would you like to see addressed?

Contact FYI at:

Family and Youth Institute
201 Gibbons Building
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO 80523-1501
Phone: 970-491-6358
Fax: 970-491-7859
E-mail: clasmus@lamar.colostate.edu



<http://www.caahs.colostate.edu/fyi/>

*Opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the
Family and Youth Institute staff.*

**Coming next:
Impact of Election Results on Families**