

2026

First Children's Finance

# CHILD CARE NEEDS SUMMARY


*Northeast Minnesota*

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# How First Children's Finance measures the gap between child care supply and demand

Each year, First Children's Finance completes an analysis of child care supply and demand in Minnesota. This analysis can be used to inform strategic supply building efforts and to track year-over-year progress on the availability of full-day, full-year care that supports working families.

To prepare the statewide and regional reports, FCF analyzes population-level data and child care licensing data to estimate both the full-day, full-year child care supply and demand. FCF focuses solely on full-day, full-year care to understand the supply of available care that supports parent and caregiver participation in the workforce and the number of children that are likely to need this kind of regulated child care.

The methodology outlined here is utilized to prepare the statewide Supply Demand Gap Analysis. When working with individual communities through our community consultation processes, FCF utilizes a more targeted methodology that also incorporates data on both the supply of part-day, part-year child care and on parent workforce participation.

## How FCF Estimates Child Care Demand

Recognizing that not all children under age 5 need formal child care, FCF uses zip code data from the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau on the number of children under age six with all available parents in the workforce who are likely to need child care. FCF reduces this number by 15% to estimate the number of children aged five and under with all available parents in the workforce.

## How FCF Estimates Child Care Supply

To determine the supply of child care, FCF exports data on currently active child care licenses (including both child care centers and licensed family child care) as of June 1 of each year. While many families utilize part-time child care, or even multiple sources of part-time child care, working families generally need child care options that offer full-day, full-year care to support their participation in the labor force. FCF reviews available licensing data to identify and remove those programs that do not offer full-day, full-year care to better assess the gap in supply that meets the needs of working families.


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While FCF does receive funding from the Minnesota Department of Children, Youth and Families, because FCF is an independent nonprofit organization and not a state agency, FCF does not have access to data that is not publicly available. In Minnesota, the capacity of certified child care centers is not publicly available, and thus certified child care centers are not included in the supply estimates. Capacity data for tribally licensed child care programs within the geography of Minnesota is also not public and is similarly not included in FCF's supply data. FCF also removes programs that are designated as offering only school year or summer-only programs. Finally, as this report is designed to estimate the gap in licensed child care, non-licensed or unlicensed programs, such as family, friend and neighbor care (FFN) and unlicensed pre-school or school-based programs are not considered in FCF's determination of child care supply.

To refine the estimate of child care supply, FCF makes a further adjustment to licensed capacity. It is not feasible for a child care program to always operate at 100% of licensed capacity. Unlike schools, where grade level is determined by children being of a certain age at the beginning of the school year, in licensed child care, whether a child is considered an infant, toddler, preschooler or school-aged is determined by their birthday. Thus, child care programs have children moving between age categories/classrooms throughout the year, creating temporarily open slots across the program. Because of this, as a best practice, FCF considers that 85% of licensed capacity is the functional equivalent of full enrollment. For purposes of these reports, licensed capacity of child care programs is likewise reduced from 100% to 85% to determine child care supply.



# Background Information

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES

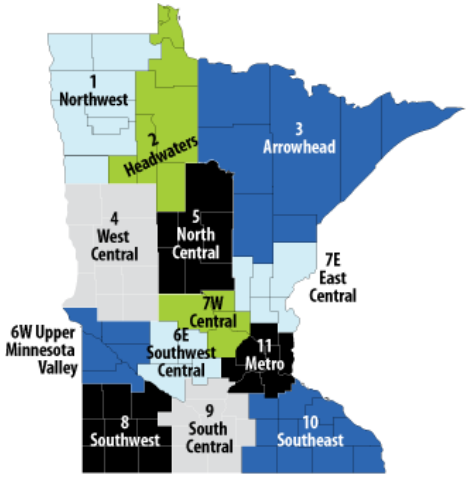
*This report was prepared by First Children's Finance through generous funding from the Minnesota Department of Children, Youth, and Families.*

**This report covers the following geographic area:**

MN Economic Development Region 3 sorted by county

**Northeast Minnesota Counties:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Aitkin | Koochiching |
| Carlton | Lake |
| Cook | St. Louis |
| Itasca | |




**Data Sources:**

2020-2024 U.S. Census American Community Survey, 5-year estimates
Minnesota Department of Human Services
Minnesota Department of Health
Minnesota Department of Education
U.S. Postal Service

**Assumptions**

1. If a zip code falls in more than one city and/or county, data was placed in the primary city and/or county as determined by the U.S. Postal Service.
2. All programs offering less than all day, every-day child care were excluded.
3. Due to lack of publicly available capacity data, all certified and non-certified programs (generally school-based programs) were excluded.
4. Due to lack of publicly available Tribal licensing data, all tribally licensed child care programs are excluded

**Capacity is an internal calculation of First Children's Finance based upon historical data collection*

***Children under 5 is an adjusted calculation from 2020-2024 U.S. Census American Community Survey, 5-year estimates*



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# Northeast Minnesota Child Care Needs Summary by County
June 2026

**Totals:**

| Child Care Centers | CCC Capacity | Family Child Care | FCC Capacity | Total Capacity | Capacity* | Under '6' Working | Children Under 5** | Child Care Need |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 67 | 4,951 | 244 | 2,935 | 7,886 | 6,703 | 12,637 | 10,741 | (4,038) |

| Zip Code | City | County | CCC # | CCC Capacity | FCC # | FCC Capacity | Total Capacity | Capacity* | Under '6' Working | Children Under 5** | Child Care Need |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **56431** | Aitkin | Aitkin | 1 | 50 | 11 | 136 | 186 | 158 | 285 | 242 | **-84** |
| **55748** | Hill City | Aitkin | 0 | 0 | 2 | 26 | 26 | 22 | 57 | 48 | **-26** |
| **56350** | Mc Grath | Aitkin | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 15 | 13 | **-13** |
| **55760** | Mcgregor | Aitkin | 1 | 42 | 2 | 22 | 64 | 54 | 90 | 77 | **-22** |
| **56469** | Palisade | Aitkin | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 9 | **-9** |
| **55787** | Tamarack | Aitkin | 1 | 47 | 1 | 14 | 61 | 52 | 3 | 3 | **49** |
| **55707** | Barnum | Carlton | 1 | 73 | 1 | 14 | 87 | 74 | 154 | 131 | **-57** |
| **55718** | Carlton | Carlton | 0 | 0 | 2 | 26 | 26 | 22 | 240 | 204 | **-182** |
| **55720** | Cloquet | Carlton | 6 | 323 | 20 | 240 | 563 | 479 | 833 | 708 | **-230** |
| **55726** | Cromwell | Carlton | 0 | 0 | 1 | 14 | 14 | 12 | 44 | 37 | **-26** |
| **55733** | Esko | Carlton | 2 | 171 | 6 | 72 | 243 | 207 | 257 | 218 | **-12** |
| **55749** | Holyoke | Carlton | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 9 | **-9** |
| **55757** | Kettle River | Carlton | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 35 | 30 | **-30** |
| **55767** | Moose Lake | Carlton | 1 | 22 | 0 | 0 | 22 | 19 | 127 | 108 | **-89** |
| **55780** | Sawyer | Carlton | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 6 | **-6** |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **55797** | Wrenshall | Carlton | 0 | 0 | 4 | 48 | 48 | 41 | 64 | 54 | **-14** |
| **55798** | Wright | Carlton | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 42 | 36 | **-36** |
| **55604** | Grand Marais | Cook | 1 | 42 | 4 | 46 | 88 | 75 | 134 | 114 | **-39** |
| **55605** | Grand Portage | Cook | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 21 | 18 | **-18** |
| **55606** | Hovland | Cook | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | **0** |
| **55612** | Lutsen | Cook | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 18 | 15 | **-15** |
| **55613** | Schroeder | Cook | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 21 | 18 | **-18** |
| **55615** | Tofte | Cook | 0 | 0 | 2 | 24 | 24 | 20 | 42 | 36 | **-15** |
| **56628** | Bigfork | Itasca | 0 | 0 | 2 | 26 | 26 | 22 | 69 | 59 | **-37** |
| **55709** | Bovey | Itasca | 0 | 0 | 10 | 120 | 120 | 102 | 128 | 109 | **-7** |
| **55716** | Calumet | Itasca | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 25 | 21 | **-21** |
| **55721** | Cohasset | Itasca | 1 | 84 | 2 | 22 | 106 | 90 | 248 | 211 | **-121** |
| **55722** | Coleraine | Itasca | 0 | 0 | 1 | 10 | 10 | 9 | 17 | 14 | **-6** |
| **56636** | Deer River | Itasca | 1 | 94 | 1 | 14 | 108 | 92 | 227 | 193 | **-101** |
| **56639** | Effie | Itasca | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 5 | **-5** |
| **55742** | Goodland | Itasca | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 7 | **-7** |
| **55744** | Grand Rapids | Itasca | 7 | 553 | 32 | 383 | 936 | 796 | 554 | 471 | **325** |
| **55752** | Jacobson | Itasca | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 5 | **-5** |
| **55753** | Keewatin | Itasca | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 66 | 56 | **-56** |
| **55764** | Marble | Itasca | 0 | 0 | 1 | 14 | 14 | 12 | 37 | 31 | **-20** |
| **56657** | Marcell | Itasca | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | **0** |
| **56659** | Max | Itasca | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | **0** |
| **55769** | Nashwauk | Itasca | 1 | 40 | 3 | 36 | 76 | 65 | 118 | 100 | **-36** |
| **55775** | Pengilly | Itasca | 0 | 0 | 1 | 12 | 12 | 10 | 33 | 28 | **-18** |
| **56680** | Spring Lake | Itasca | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | **-3** |
| **56681** | Squaw Lake | Itasca | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | **-1** |
| **55784** | Swan River | Itasca | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | **-2** |


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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **55786** | Taconite | Itasca | 0 | 0 | 1 | 12 | 12 | 10 | 0 | 0 | **10** |
| **56637** | Talmoon | Itasca | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | **0** |
| **55793** | Warba | Itasca | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 56 | 48 | **-48** |
| **56688** | Wirt | Itasca | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | **-3** |
| **56627** | Big Falls | Koochiching | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 8 | **-8** |
| **56629** | Birchdale | Koochiching | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 10 | **-10** |
| **56649** | International Falls | Koochiching | 2 | 98 | 11 | 130 | 228 | 194 | 368 | 313 | **-119** |
| **56669** | Kabetogama | Koochiching | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | **-2** |
| **56653** | Littlefork | Koochiching | 0 | 0 | 2 | 28 | 28 | 24 | 41 | 35 | **-11** |
| **56654** | Loman | Koochiching | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | **0** |
| **56658** | Margie | Koochiching | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | **0** |
| **56660** | Mizpah | Koochiching | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 7 | **-7** |
| **56661** | Northome | Koochiching | 0 | 0 | 2 | 20 | 20 | 17 | 8 | 7 | **10** |
| **56668** | Ranier | Koochiching | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | **-3** |
| **55601** | Beaver Bay | Lake | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | **-2** |
| **55603** | Finland | Lake | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 9 | **-9** |
| **55607** | Isabella | Lake | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | **0** |
| **55609** | Knife River | Lake | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | **0** |
| **55614** | Silver Bay | Lake | 1 | 52 | 1 | 12 | 64 | 54 | 122 | 104 | **-49** |
| **55616** | Two Harbors | Lake | 1 | 62 | 5 | 58 | 120 | 102 | 319 | 271 | **-169** |
| **55702** | Alborn | Saint Louis | 0 | 0 | 1 | 10 | 10 | 9 | 7 | 6 | **3** |
| **55703** | Angora | Saint Louis | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 21 | 18 | **-18** |
| **55705** | Aurora | Saint Louis | 0 | 0 | 1 | 14 | 14 | 12 | 126 | 107 | **-95** |
| **55706** | Babbitt | Saint Louis | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 19 | 16 | **-16** |
| **55708** | Biwabik | Saint Louis | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 56 | 48 | **-48** |
| **55602** | Brimson | Saint Louis | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | **0** |
| **55710** | Britt | Saint Louis | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 8 | **-8** |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **55711** | Brookston | Saint Louis | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 43 | 37 | **-37** |
| **55713** | Buhl | Saint Louis | 0 | 0 | 1 | 12 | 12 | 10 | 41 | 35 | **-25** |
| **55717** | Canyon | Saint Louis | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 14 | 12 | **-12** |
| **55719** | Chisholm | Saint Louis | 0 | 0 | 6 | 72 | 72 | 61 | 182 | 155 | **-94** |
| **55723** | Cook | Saint Louis | 0 | 0 | 2 | 26 | 26 | 22 | 80 | 68 | **-46** |
| **55724** | Cotton | Saint Louis | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 28 | 24 | **-24** |
| **55725** | Crane Lake | Saint Louis | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | **0** |
| **55802** | Duluth | Saint Louis | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 35 | 30 | **-30** |
| **55803** | Duluth | Saint Louis | 5 | 459 | 10 | 118 | 577 | 490 | 645 | 548 | **-58** |
| **55804** | Duluth | Saint Louis | 2 | 246 | 16 | 192 | 438 | 372 | 793 | 674 | **-302** |
| **55805** | Duluth | Saint Louis | 4 | 414 | 0 | 0 | 414 | 352 | 546 | 464 | **-112** |
| **55806** | Duluth | Saint Louis | 2 | 130 | 4 | 50 | 180 | 153 | 469 | 399 | **-246** |
| **55807** | Duluth | Saint Louis | 2 | 50 | 9 | 98 | 148 | 126 | 339 | 288 | **-162** |
| **55808** | Duluth | Saint Louis | 0 | 0 | 3 | 34 | 34 | 29 | 164 | 139 | **-111** |
| **55810** | Duluth | Saint Louis | 0 | 0 | 9 | 110 | 110 | 94 | 409 | 348 | **-254** |
| **55811** | Duluth | Saint Louis | 12 | 1072 | 19 | 228 | 1300 | 1105 | 1163 | 989 | **116** |
| **55812** | Duluth | Saint Louis | 2 | 66 | 1 | 12 | 78 | 66 | 336 | 286 | **-219** |
| **55814** | Duluth | Saint Louis | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | **0** |
| **55731** | Ely | Saint Louis | 2 | 66 | 3 | 38 | 104 | 88 | 113 | 96 | **-8** |
| **55732** | Embarrass | Saint Louis | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 48 | 41 | **-41** |
| **55734** | Eveleth | Saint Louis | 1 | 149 | 5 | 62 | 211 | 179 | 313 | 266 | **-87** |
| **55736** | Floodwood | Saint Louis | 1 | 48 | 1 | 14 | 62 | 53 | 42 | 36 | **17** |
| **55738** | Forbes | Saint Louis | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 17 | **-17** |
| **55741** | Gilbert | Saint Louis | 0 | 0 | 1 | 10 | 10 | 9 | 127 | 108 | **-99** |
| **55746** | Hibbing | Saint Louis | 4 | 295 | 9 | 108 | 403 | 343 | 590 | 502 | **-159** |
| **55750** | Hoyt Lakes | Saint Louis | 0 | 0 | 2 | 22 | 22 | 19 | 32 | 27 | **-9** |
| **55751** | Iron | Saint Louis | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 64 | 54 | **-54** |


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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **55758** | Kinney | Saint Louis | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | **-2** |
| **55763** | Makinen | Saint Louis | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 7 | **-7** |
| **55765** | Meadowlands | Saint Louis | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 10 | **-10** |
| **55768** | Mountain Iron | Saint Louis | 1 | 100 | 2 | 24 | 124 | 105 | 132 | 112 | **-7** |
| **55772** | Nett Lake | Saint Louis | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | **-3** |
| **55771** | Orr | Saint Louis | 0 | 0 | 1 | 14 | 14 | 12 | 42 | 36 | **-24** |
| **55779** | Saginaw | Saint Louis | 0 | 0 | 2 | 26 | 26 | 22 | 218 | 185 | **-163** |
| **55781** | Side Lake | Saint Louis | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 10 | **-10** |
| **55782** | Soudan | Saint Louis | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 23 | 20 | **-20** |
| **55790** | Tower | Saint Louis | 0 | 0 | 1 | 12 | 12 | 10 | 57 | 48 | **-38** |
| **55792** | Virginia | Saint Louis | 1 | 103 | 4 | 50 | 153 | 130 | 233 | 198 | **-68** |
| **55796** | Winton | Saint Louis | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | **0** |
| | **Totals** | | **67** | **4,951** | **244** | **2,935** | **7,886** | **6,703** | **12,637** | **10,741** | **(4,038)** |

