

2026

First Children's Finance

CHILD CARE NEEDS SUMMARY

Northwest 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

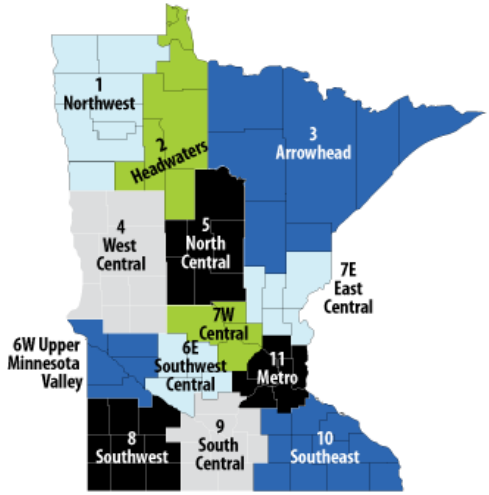
This report was prepared by First Children's Finance through generous funding from the Minnesota Department of Children, Youth, and Families.

This report covers the following geographic area:

MN Economic Development Regions 1 & 2 sorted by county

Northwest Minnesota Counties:

Beltrami	Lake of the Woods	Pennington
Clearwater	Mahnomen	Polk
Hubbard	Marshall	Red Lake
Kittson	Norman	Roseau



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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Northwest 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
20	1,240	319	3,842	5,082	4,320	8,327	7,078	(2,758)

Zip Code	City	County	CCC #	CCC Capacity	FCC #	FCC Capacity	Total Capacity	Capacity*	Under '6' Working	Children Under 5**	Child Care Need
56601	Bemidji	Beltrami	5	288	63	766	1054	896	1785	1517	-621
56630	Blackduck	Beltrami	0	0	3	34	34	29	58	49	-20
56647	Hines	Beltrami	0	0	0	0	0	0	27	23	-23
56650	Kelliher	Beltrami	1	66	0	0	66	56	35	30	26
56663	Pennington	Beltrami	0	0	0	0	0	0	46	39	-39
56666	Ponemah	Beltrami	0	0	0	0	0	0	26	22	-22
56667	Puposky	Beltrami	0	0	0	0	0	0	27	23	-23
56670	Redby	Beltrami	0	0	0	0	0	0	52	44	-44
56671	Redlake	Beltrami	0	0	0	0	0	0	163	139	-139
56678	Solway	Beltrami	0	0	0	0	0	0	142	121	-121
56683	Tenstrike	Beltrami	0	0	1	14	14	12	24	20	-9
56685	Waskish	Beltrami	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
56621	Bagley	Clearwater	0	0	10	120	120	102	204	173	-71
56634	Clearbrook	Clearwater	0	0	1	12	12	10	56	48	-37
56644	Gonvick	Clearwater	0	0	1	12	12	10	30	26	-15

56652	Leonard	Clearwater	0	0	2	26	26	22	15	13	**9**
56676	Shevlin	Clearwater	0	0	2	22	22	19	81	69	**-50**
56433	Akeley	Hubbard	0	0	2	24	24	20	48	41	**-20**
56458	Lake George	Hubbard	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	12	**-12**
56461	Laporte	Hubbard	0	0	4	44	44	37	121	103	**-65**
56467	Nevis	Hubbard	0	0	2	26	26	22	68	58	**-36**
56470	Park Rapids	Hubbard	1	46	28	342	388	330	564	479	**-150**
56720	Donaldson	Kittson	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
56728	Hallock	Kittson	1	35	4	50	85	72	96	82	**-9**
56729	Halma	Kittson	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	8	**-8**
56731	Humboldt	Kittson	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	8	**-8**
56732	Karlstad	Kittson	0	0	4	48	48	41	37	31	**9**
56733	Kennedy	Kittson	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	8	**-8**
56734	Lake Bronson	Kittson	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	7	**-7**
56735	Lancaster	Kittson	0	0	2	26	26	22	34	29	**-7**
56755	Saint Vincent	Kittson	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
56711	Angle Inlet	Lake Of The Woods	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
56623	Baudette	Lake Of The Woods	0	0	9	106	106	90	152	129	**-39**
56686	Williams	Lake Of The Woods	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	85	**-85**
56516	Bejou	Mahnomen	0	0	0	0	0	0	38	32	**-32**
56651	Lengby	Mahnomen	0	0	1	14	14	12	57	48	**-37**
56557	Mahnomen	Mahnomen	0	0	1	12	12	10	188	160	**-150**
56566	Naytahwaush	Mahnomen	0	0	0	0	0	0	29	25	**-25**
56710	Alvarado	Marshall	0	0	1	10	10	9	31	26	**-18**

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56713	Argyle	Marshall	0	0	4	46	46	39	34	29	**10**
56724	Gatzke	Marshall	0	0	1	10	10	9	2	2	**7**
56727	Grygla	Marshall	0	0	1	10	10	9	47	40	**-31**
56737	Middle River	Marshall	0	0	1	12	12	10	37	31	**-21**
56738	Newfolden	Marshall	0	0	2	22	22	19	75	64	**-45**
56744	Oslo	Marshall	0	0	0	0	0	0	48	41	**-41**
56757	Stephen	Marshall	0	0	1	10	10	9	47	40	**-31**
56758	Strandquist	Marshall	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	**-2**
56760	Viking	Marshall	0	0	2	24	24	20	24	20	**0**
56762	Warren	Marshall	1	92	5	52	144	122	126	107	**15**
56510	Ada	Norman	2	58	5	56	114	97	68	58	**39**
56519	Borup	Norman	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	3	**-3**
56541	Flom	Norman	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
56545	Gary	Norman	0	0	1	14	14	12	49	42	**-30**
56548	Halstad	Norman	1	50	1	10	60	51	46	39	**12**
56550	Hendrum	Norman	0	0	1	10	10	9	8	7	**2**
56574	Perley	Norman	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	11	**-11**
56581	Shelly	Norman	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	9	**-9**
56584	Twin Valley	Norman	0	0	2	24	24	20	51	43	**-23**
56725	Goodridge	Pennington	0	0	1	12	12	10	54	46	**-36**
56754	Saint Hilaire	Pennington	0	0	1	12	12	10	6	5	**5**
56701	Thief River Falls	Pennington	1	126	35	422	548	466	591	502	**-37**
56517	Beltrami	Polk	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	14	**-14**
56523	Climax	Polk	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	12	**-12**
56716	Crookston	Polk	1	43	20	252	295	251	369	314	**-63**
56721	East Grand Forks	Polk	2	117	32	390	507	431	681	579	**-148**

56535	Erskine	Polk	0	0	5	62	62	53	90	77	**-24**
56722	Euclid	Polk	0	0	0	0	0	0	17	14	**-14**
56540	Fertile	Polk	0	0	8	104	104	88	93	79	**9**
56723	Fisher	Polk	0	0	1	12	12	10	54	46	**-36**
56542	Fosston	Polk	1	72	5	64	136	116	114	97	**19**
56646	Gully	Polk	0	0	0	0	0	0	19	16	**-16**
56556	Mcintosh	Polk	1	94	0	0	94	80	133	113	**-33**
56736	Mentor	Polk	0	0	0	0	0	0	25	21	**-21**
56568	Nielsville	Polk	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	**-2**
56684	Trail	Polk	0	0	1	12	12	10	10	9	**2**
56592	Winger	Polk	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	8	**-8**
56715	Brooks	Red Lake	0	0	0	0	0	0	24	20	**-20**
56742	Oklee	Red Lake	0	0	1	12	12	10	52	44	**-34**
56748	Plummer	Red Lake	0	0	2	22	22	19	21	18	**1**
56750	Red Lake Falls	Red Lake	1	39	5	60	99	84	118	100	**-16**
56714	Badger	Roseau	0	0	1	14	14	12	25	21	**-9**
56726	Greenbush	Roseau	0	0	5	54	54	46	79	67	**-21**
56673	Roosevelt	Roseau	0	0	0	0	0	0	19	16	**-16**
56751	Roseau	Roseau	0	0	18	208	208	177	422	359	**-182**
56756	Salol	Roseau	0	0	2	26	26	22	21	18	**4**
56759	Strathcona	Roseau	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	10	**-10**
56761	Wannaska	Roseau	0	0	1	12	12	10	5	4	**6**
56763	Warroad	Roseau	1	114	7	84	198	168	158	134	**34**
Totals			**20**	**1,240**	**319**	**3,842**	**5,082**	**4,320**	**8,327**	**7,078**	**(2,758)**



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