

2026

First Children's Finance

CHILD CARE NEEDS SUMMARY

Southwest 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

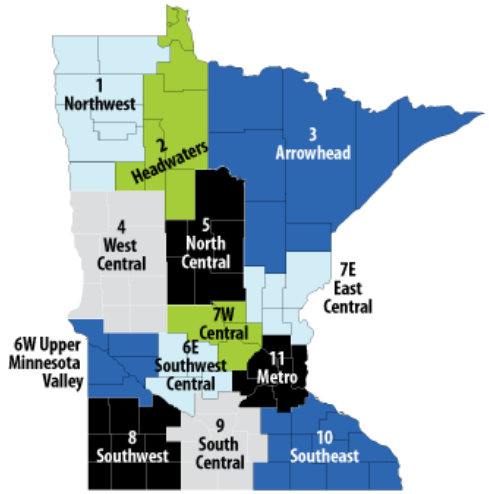
This report was prepared by First Children's Finance through generous funding from the Minnesota Department of Children, Youth, and Families.

This report covers the following geographic area:

MN Economic Development Regions 6E, 6W & 8 sorted by county

Southwest Minnesota Counties:

Big Stone	Lac Qui Parle	Murray	Rock
Chippewa	Lincoln	Nobles	Swift
Cottonwood	Lyon	Pipestone	Yellow Medicine
Jackson	McLeod	Redwood	
Kandiyohi	Meeker	Renville	



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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Southwest 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
42	2,963	536	6,360	9,323	7,925	14,722	12,514	(4,589)

Zip Code	City	County	CCC #	CCC Capacity	FCC #	FCC Capacity	Total Capacity	Capacity*	Under '6' Working	Children Under 5**	Child Care Need
56210	Barry	Big Stone	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	**-3**
56211	Beardsley	Big Stone	0	0	1	12	12	10	36	31	**-20**
56225	Clinton	Big Stone	0	0	2	24	24	20	31	26	**-6**
56227	Correll	Big Stone	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	12	**-12**
56240	Graceville	Big Stone	0	0	3	38	38	32	39	33	**-1**
56276	Odessa	Big Stone	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	11	**-11**
56278	Ortonville	Big Stone	0	0	7	86	86	73	88	75	**-2**
56222	Clara City	Chippewa	0	0	7	84	84	71	94	80	**-9**
56260	Maynard	Chippewa	0	0	0	0	0	0	39	33	**-33**
56262	Milan	Chippewa	0	0	0	0	0	0	56	48	**-48**
56265	Montevideo	Chippewa	2	128	18	218	346	294	378	321	**-27**
56295	Watson	Chippewa	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	3	**-3**
56118	Bingham Lake	Cottonwood	0	0	0	0	0	0	41	35	**-35**
56145	Jeffers	Cottonwood	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	8	**-8**
56159	Mountain Lake	Cottonwood	1	40	2	20	60	51	161	137	**-86**

56174	Storden	Cottonwood	0	0	0	0	0	0	17	14	**-14**
56183	Westbrook	Cottonwood	1	56	1	12	68	58	58	49	**9**
56101	Windom	Cottonwood	0	0	13	164	164	139	352	299	**-160**
56111	Alpha	Jackson	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	9	**-9**
56137	Heron Lake	Jackson	0	0	3	38	38	32	31	26	**6**
56143	Jackson	Jackson	1	95	7	82	177	150	236	201	**-50**
56150	Lakefield	Jackson	0	0	6	70	70	60	146	124	**-65**
56161	Okabena	Jackson	0	0	1	12	12	10	18	15	**-5**
56209	Atwater	Kandiyohi	0	0	7	76	76	65	209	178	**-113**
56216	Blomkest	Kandiyohi	0	0	2	18	18	15	15	13	**3**
56251	Kandiyohi	Kandiyohi	0	0	1	12	12	10	62	53	**-43**
56253	Lake Lillian	Kandiyohi	0	0	1	12	12	10	39	33	**-23**
56273	New London	Kandiyohi	0	0	10	116	116	99	301	256	**-157**
56279	Pennock	Kandiyohi	0	0	0	0	0	0	59	50	**-50**
56281	Prinsburg	Kandiyohi	0	0	1	12	12	10	51	43	**-33**
56282	Raymond	Kandiyohi	0	0	4	46	46	39	56	48	**-9**
56288	Spicer	Kandiyohi	2	108	7	74	182	155	168	143	**12**
56289	Sunburg	Kandiyohi	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	18	**-18**
56201	Willmar	Kandiyohi	5	388	34	406	794	675	1192	1013	**-338**
56212	Bellingham	Lac Qui Parle	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	12	**-12**
56218	Boyd	Lac Qui Parle	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	9	**-9**
56232	Dawson	Lac Qui Parle	1	41	3	36	77	65	122	104	**-38**
56256	Madison	Lac Qui Parle	1	75	6	72	147	125	139	118	**7**
56257	Marietta	Lac Qui Parle	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	15	**-15**
56113	Arco	Lincoln	0	0	1	12	12	10	14	12	**-2**
56136	Hendricks	Lincoln	0	0	4	42	42	36	48	41	**-5**
56142	Ivanhoe	Lincoln	0	0	3	36	36	31	54	46	**-15**

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56149	Lake Benton	Lincoln	0	0	4	48	48	41	94	80	**-39**
56178	Tyler	Lincoln	0	0	3	36	36	31	89	76	**-45**
56115	Balaton	Lyon	0	0	2	24	24	20	62	53	**-32**
56229	Cottonwood	Lyon	0	0	6	74	74	63	116	99	**-36**
56132	Garvin	Lyon	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	9	**-9**
56239	Ghent	Lyon	1	62	0	0	62	53	31	26	**26**
56157	Lynd	Lyon	0	0	3	34	34	29	18	15	**14**
56258	Marshall	Lyon	4	208	31	370	578	491	840	714	**-223**
56264	Minneota	Lyon	0	0	7	88	88	75	217	184	**-110**
56169	Russell	Lyon	0	0	6	74	74	63	64	54	**9**
56291	Taunton	Lyon	0	0	0	0	0	0	28	24	**-24**
56175	Tracy	Lyon	1	67	2	24	91	77	82	70	**8**
55312	Brownton	Mcleod	0	0	4	50	50	43	73	62	**-20**
55336	Glencoe	Mcleod	1	58	9	108	166	141	192	163	**-22**
55350	Hutchinson	Mcleod	7	405	30	362	767	652	872	741	**-89**
55354	Lester Prairie	Mcleod	0	0	7	84	84	71	213	181	**-110**
55370	Plato	Mcleod	0	0	2	24	24	20	12	10	**10**
55381	Silver Lake	Mcleod	0	0	4	48	48	41	97	82	**-42**
55385	Stewart	Mcleod	0	0	1	10	10	9	55	47	**-38**
55395	Winsted	Mcleod	0	0	6	72	72	61	131	111	**-50**
56228	Cosmos	Meeker	0	0	0	0	0	0	45	38	**-38**
55324	Darwin	Meeker	0	0	1	12	12	10	64	54	**-44**
55325	Dassel	Meeker	0	0	3	34	34	29	200	170	**-141**
55329	Eden Valley	Meeker	0	0	8	90	90	77	110	94	**-17**
56243	Grove City	Meeker	0	0	1	12	12	10	111	94	**-84**
55355	Litchfield	Meeker	2	291	13	156	447	380	486	413	**-33**
55389	Watkins	Meeker	0	0	6	72	72	61	101	86	**-25**

56114	Avoca	Murray	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	14	**-14**
56122	Chandler	Murray	0	0	2	24	24	20	18	15	**5**
56123	Currie	Murray	0	0	0	0	0	0	34	29	**-29**
56125	Dovray	Murray	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
56131	Fulda	Murray	0	0	6	76	76	65	112	95	**-31**
56141	Iona	Murray	0	0	0	0	0	0	31	26	**-26**
56151	Lake Wilson	Murray	0	0	2	24	24	20	23	20	**1**
56172	Slayton	Murray	1	76	10	120	196	167	103	88	**79**
56110	Adrian	Nobles	0	0	8	94	94	80	108	92	**-12**
56117	Bigelow	Nobles	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	15	**-15**
56119	Brewster	Nobles	0	0	3	36	36	31	89	76	**-45**
56129	Ellsworth	Nobles	0	0	2	22	22	19	86	73	**-54**
56146	Kanaranzi	Nobles	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	**-1**
56153	Leota	Nobles	0	0	1	10	10	9	24	20	**-12**
56155	Lismore	Nobles	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	18	**-18**
56165	Reading	Nobles	0	0	3	34	34	29	6	5	**24**
56167	Round Lake	Nobles	0	0	0	0	0	0	31	26	**-26**
56168	Rushmore	Nobles	0	0	3	30	30	26	64	54	**-29**
56185	Wilmont	Nobles	0	0	1	10	10	9	12	10	**-2**
56187	Worthington	Nobles	1	107	14	164	271	230	1362	1158	**-927**
56128	Edgerton	Pipestone	0	0	9	106	106	90	96	82	**9**
56139	Holland	Pipestone	0	0	0	0	0	0	78	66	**-66**
56140	Ihlen	Pipestone	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	11	**-11**
56164	Pipestone	Pipestone	1	53	19	234	287	244	243	207	**37**
56170	Ruthton	Pipestone	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	20	**-20**
56186	Woodstock	Pipestone	0	0	1	12	12	10	41	35	**-25**
56214	Belview	Redwood	0	0	1	14	14	12	41	35	**-23**

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56224	Clements	Redwood	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	8	**-8**
56152	Lamberton	Redwood	0	0	2	20	20	17	90	77	**-60**
56255	Lucan	Redwood	0	0	2	24	24	20	27	23	**-3**
56263	Milroy	Redwood	0	0	2	22	22	19	40	34	**-15**
56266	Morgan	Redwood	0	0	5	58	58	49	87	74	**-25**
56283	Redwood Falls	Redwood	1	79	17	200	279	237	331	281	**-44**
56166	Revere	Redwood	0	0	2	20	20	17	22	19	**-2**
56083	Sanborn	Redwood	0	0	2	22	22	19	25	21	**-3**
56287	Seaforth	Redwood	0	0	1	12	12	10	16	14	**-3**
56292	Vesta	Redwood	0	0	3	36	36	31	19	16	**14**
56293	Wabasso	Redwood	0	0	3	36	36	31	67	57	**-26**
56180	Walnut Grove	Redwood	0	0	1	12	12	10	105	89	**-79**
56294	Wanda	Redwood	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	**-3**
55310	Bird Island	Renville	1	78	4	48	126	107	86	73	**34**
55314	Buffalo Lake	Renville	1	42	1	14	56	48	104	88	**-41**
56230	Danube	Renville	0	0	0	0	0	0	71	60	**-60**
55332	Fairfax	Renville	0	0	2	24	24	20	30	26	**-5**
55333	Franklin	Renville	1	50	2	24	74	63	11	9	**54**
55342	Hector	Renville	0	0	2	24	24	20	78	66	**-46**
56270	Morton	Renville	0	0	0	0	0	0	34	29	**-29**
56277	Olivia	Renville	0	0	11	132	132	112	124	105	**7**
56284	Renville	Renville	0	0	7	80	80	68	215	183	**-115**
56285	Sacred Heart	Renville	0	0	0	0	0	0	61	52	**-52**
56116	Beaver Creek	Rock	1	43	0	0	43	37	36	31	**6**
56134	Hardwick	Rock	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	18	**-18**
56138	Hills	Rock	0	0	6	70	70	60	55	47	**13**
56144	Jasper	Rock	0	0	2	24	24	20	54	46	**-26**

56147	Kenneth	Rock	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
56156	Luverne	Rock	1	186	14	172	358	304	322	274	**31**
56158	Magnolia	Rock	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	8	**-8**
56173	Steen	Rock	0	0	2	24	24	20	22	19	**2**
56208	Appleton	Swift	1	119	1	12	131	111	47	40	**71**
56215	Benson	Swift	1	42	13	150	192	163	188	160	**3**
56226	Clontarf	Swift	0	0	1	12	12	10	9	8	**3**
56231	Danvers	Swift	0	0	1	12	12	10	42	36	**-26**
56249	Holloway	Swift	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	7	**-7**
56252	Kerkhoven	Swift	0	0	2	24	24	20	56	48	**-27**
56271	Murdock	Swift	0	0	3	34	34	29	53	45	**-16**
56220	Canby	Yellow Medicine	0	0	10	116	116	99	141	120	**-21**
56223	Clarkfield	Yellow Medicine	0	0	2	24	24	20	60	51	**-31**
56237	Echo	Yellow Medicine	0	0	1	12	12	10	50	43	**-32**
56241	Granite Falls	Yellow Medicine	1	66	5	62	128	109	231	196	**-88**
56245	Hanley Falls	Yellow Medicine	0	0	2	24	24	20	17	14	**6**
56280	Porter	Yellow Medicine	0	0	2	24	24	20	30	26	**-5**
56297	Wood Lake	Yellow Medicine	0	0	1	10	10	9	42	36	**-27**
Totals			**42**	**2,963**	**536**	**6,360**	**9,323**	**7,925**	**14,722**	**12,514**	**(4,589)**





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