

Experiences and Needs of Underserved Groups in Wisconsin Early Care and Education

Read the full report in the [PDG Sandbox](#).

Rural White

As part of the Statewide Needs Assessment for the Preschool Development Grant (PDG), the University of Wisconsin-Madison Center for Community and Nonprofit Studies interviewed families (e.g. parents, grandparents, foster parents) and child care providers from Wisconsin's underserved populations. The interviews were conducted to better understand the specific context, needs, and challenges families and providers face when navigating Wisconsin's early childhood system.

Key Takeaways From the Interviews



- » Child care is unaffordable for families, but child care tuition is not enough to support child care providers.
- » Child care providers are often too few and too far from families. Families often must drive long distances to access the few options that exist, which is a significant challenge for families with unreliable or no transportation options.
- » Child care providers do not have the resources or time they need for professional development, building relationships with other professionals, and supporting each other.
- » Families lack access to information, resources, and high-quality child care for infants and children with disabilities.

11 Interviews Conducted with Rural White Community Members



Made possible through funding provided by Grant Number 90TP007601 from the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

*2019 Wisconsin Interactive Statistics on Health (WISH) Data Query System, with rural definition from the Wisconsin Office of Rural Health



Wisconsin Department of Children and Families



Center for Community and Nonprofit Studies
SCHOOL OF HUMAN ECOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Rural White Family and Provider Perspectives

Equity and inclusion are central to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) framework for evaluating and transforming early care and education. Questions were developed based on this framework and the core areas of access, affordability, quality, and workforce. Here is a summary of Rural White family and provider experiences and perceptions related to each of the four areas. For more information, visit [DCF's webpage](#).

- » Families have to face difficult decisions about child care and employment due to a lack of access to care in their communities.

"I had one parent that drove to my program, which is at least an hour away... she did that every single day, Monday through Thursday."

- » It can be difficult for child care businesses to stay financially afloat due to the funding model, staffing challenges, and the cost of care for parents.

"As far as the income, it isn't always stable. I mean, a parent can pull out – give you two weeks' notice – and they're gone. And that could be \$500 a month."

- » The high cost of child care impacts all aspects of life; family planning, mental health, housing choices or lack thereof, which living costs to cut, bills to pay, who stays home to care for the children, and who keeps their job.

"For me to go back to work full time, my son would have to be in daycare full time. And we don't qualify for child care assistance, because with our careers we make too much money. But it's just enough money to pay for child care."

- » High-quality care means a thriving environment for all children, including children with disabilities, and includes physical and social-emotional safety.

- » Child care should include building relationships with families.

- » Child care providers have little to no time to interact with other providers, develop peer relationships, or get professional development or required continuing education credits. Barriers include geographic distance, reliable transportation, expenses for gas, accommodations, and coursework fees, reliable or affordable internet, and lack of knowledge to access online professional development opportunities.

- » Child care providers can get easily overwhelmed with high child-staff ratios, low pay, and no benefits.

- » Child care providers have many systems to navigate in order to provide the best care for children, including local, city, county, and state agencies.

"The children that I have right now, their delays are significant enough that they qualify for the in-school programs. So from town, I've got a 40-minute drive to bring them to the school therapies if we want to do that."

