



Empowering Area Employers to Be Child Care Champions

Root Cause Addressed

Lack of community coordination and engagement

Challenges Addressed

- Child care is negatively impacting area employers
- The care families need is not available

Rationale

Not having access to child care that meets a family's needs results in caretakers facing challenges in their employment, ranging from struggling to be productive at work to needing to leave the workforce to focus on caregiving. In short, child care is greatly impacting local businesses' ability to thrive. While there are a number of actions that the state and local government, providers, and other partners can take to help improve child care in the region, employers have a unique opportunity to add significant value through partnership and collaboration.

Community Objectives

1. Develop a certification to recognize area employers that are child care friendly
2. Foster connections between local employers and child care providers

Develop a Certification to Recognize Area Employers That Are Child Care Friendly

Priority: Medium-low | Time frame: June 2024

Description

Employers indicated they were overwhelmingly open to sharing resources and better supporting their workers who have child care needs when responding to the coalition's employer survey. Developing a list of best practices that lead to an employer being child care friendly and offering a local certification that incentivizes employers to adopt these best practices can help area families continue their careers while bolstering employers' ability to recruit and retain high-quality employees.

Key Parties

- Ann Arbor SPARK
- Local business groups (e.g., business associations, chambers of commerce)
- Area employers
- Child care providers
- Public Sector Consultants

Potential Activities

- Host a series of meetings with key parties to identify how best to develop and maintain a certification
- Develop branding and communication materials related to the certification to increase visibility and understanding of what the certification entails
- Promote certification through local business groups to generate interest and buy-in

Opportunities for Statewide Coordination

While this could start as a locally recognized certification, a statewide certification could increase the likelihood of adoption by employers throughout the region. To that end, this coalition will share lessons learned locally from this process and participate in discussions about potential statewide certification to identify child care-friendly employers.

Examples of Potential Best Practices

- Help working families find child care by offering a list of nearby child care providers and potential resources to help afford child care
- Offer flexible scheduling to allow caretakers to work hours that make sense with their child care situation
- Offer financial support as a benefit for employees with child care needs (e.g., [Tri-Share program](#), onsite care, [dependent care spending accounts](#), sponsoring slots at a nearby provider to get discounted rates for employees)
- Join advocacy list to learn how employers can support policies and investments that improve regional child care
- Pulse at the [W.E. Upjohn Institute](#) has developed a [website](#) with many curated resources for employers that speak to other potential best practices and strategies.

Key Considerations

Achieving buy-in from well-known and respected groups will be paramount to creating a certification that employers will be likely to pursue. However, the maintenance and quality assurance of this certification will be needed, so this process will require a conversation around who will manage this objective moving forward.

Tracking Progress

Outputs

- The number of employers who are engaged and educated on child care-friendly policies and practices
- The number of employers who adopt child care-friendly policies and practices

Outcomes

- Decrease in the number of individuals leaving the workforce due to not having child care that meets their needs
- Reduction in the number of employers identifying child care-related issues negatively impacting their ability to recruit and retain employees



Foster Connections Between Local Employers and Child Care Providers

Priority: Medium-high | Time frame: Ongoing

Description

By fostering connections between local employers and child care providers, these parties can share resources and pursue activities that will improve the workforce access to child care.

Key Parties

- Ann Arbor SPARK (co-lead)
- Child Care Network (co-lead)
- Local business groups (e.g., business associations, chambers of commerce)
- Area employers
- Child care providers
- Public Sector Consultants

Potential Activities

- Host meeting(s) with key parties to identify strategies for fostering connections between providers and area employers
- Share information via local employer groups so these groups and their members know how to connect with providers through reaching out to a central, engaged entity, such as Ann Arbor SPARK or Child Care Network

Potential Partnership Model

An emerging model, where employers sponsor a handful of slots, or even a full center, is showing promise in addressing challenges faced by child care providers and employers. The employers pay a fee per slot to reserve them for current or prospective employees. The employee then gets access to that slot at a discounted rate. The combination of the sponsorship and employee fee provides adequate funding for providers and the reservation of the seat ensures employees have access to affordable, easy-to-find care should they need it.

Key Considerations

Fostering connections can happen as part of the development of the certification or outside of the certification. Much of this work can happen organically between providers and employers to identify how best to partner, and the work of Ann Arbor SPARK, Child Care Network, and local business groups will be more focused on facilitating those initial connections.

Tracking Progress

Outputs

- The number of partnerships between child care providers and area employers

Outcomes

- Decrease in the number of individuals leaving the workforce due to not having child care that meets their needs
- Reduction in the number of employers identifying child care-related issues as negatively impacting their ability to recruit and retain employees