

# Child Care in North Dakota: Providers and Capacity

In 2000, 81% of North Dakota women with children under 18 years of age were in the workforce. In fact, North Dakota has the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest proportion in the nation of women with young children (ages 0 to 5) in the workforce, at 77%. The child care industry is critical to the well-being of North Dakota's



*It's about kids.*

children and plays a crucial role in the state's economy. Some critical points about child care which emphasize the need for family and community support and the need for quality child care businesses include:

- The child care industry allows parents to enter the labor force and contribute more productively to the economy.
- If parents feel confident in their child care decisions, they are more likely to retain their job and more able to work consistent hours.
- The proportion of single-parent families with children under 18 years of age in North Dakota has increased, from 17.5% in 1990 to 22.9% in 2000.
- The demand for child care *directly* creates jobs in the industry and *indirectly* supports jobs, goods, and services in other related industries.
- North Dakota's child care industry is substantial in size and is made up of many small, community- and home-based businesses.
- Policy leaders are beginning to re-frame the public investment in early childhood care and education as economic development, rather than social policy.

## Categories of Providers

### 1. Licensed

Licensed care in North Dakota is state-approved and reviewed yearly, with the license being granted by county social services. Types of licenses include:

- family (four infants or up to seven children at any one time);
- group (eight to 18 children);
- center (19 or more children);
- preschool (up to 3 hours per day);
- school age (providing before and after school care - may be licensed or legally exempt)
- multiple licensed (facilities with more than one type of license)

### 2. Self-certified/registered

A legally unlicensed provider has no more than five children, including their own, and no more than three children under the age of two. Self-certification/registration allows participation in government-funded programs such as food programs and child care assistance.

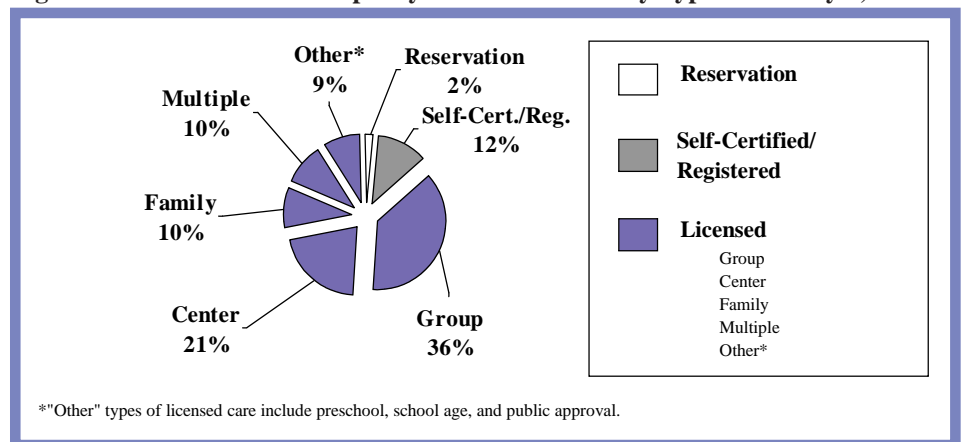
### 3. Reservation child care

Tribal child care providers and tribally owned child care centers have authority to provide care granted by the Tribal Council or designated Tribal Agency. Not all regulated facilities are in the state system.

### 4. Unlicensed child care

Not included in reported child care capacity, an informal, unlicensed provider represents a "kith and kin" network of neighbors, friends, and/or relatives who may or may not receive monetary reimbursement.

Figure 1. Total Child Care Capacity in North Dakota by Type: February 1, 2003



## How else are North Dakota's children being cared for?

The state's reported capacity does not include all avenues in which care to North Dakota children is provided. Often parents use a combination of different types of care to meet their needs.

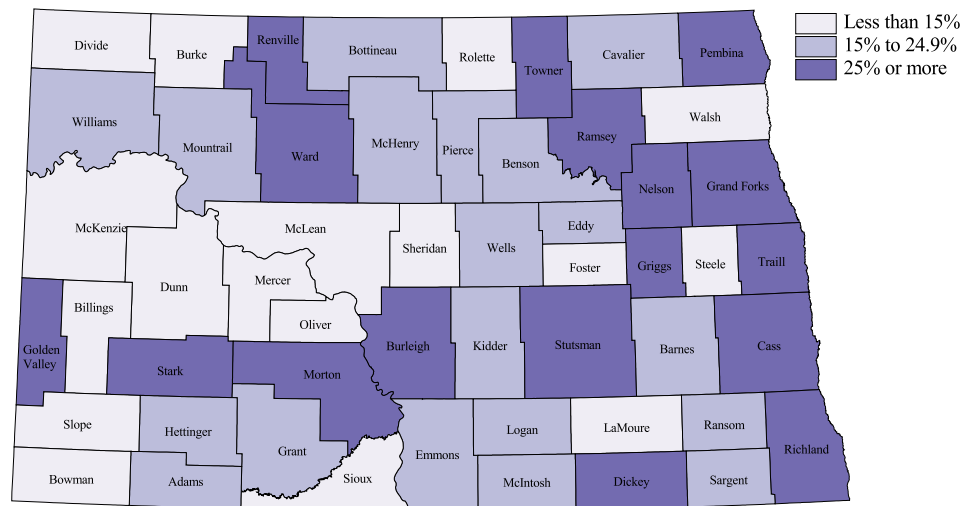
For example, the reported capacity does not include the many informal "kith and kin" networks of relatives, friends, and neighbors, nor does it include 23 air force base, 116 out-of-state, and 861 approved relative providers.

In addition, reported capacity does not include the contributions to care provided by the Head Start and Early Head Start comprehensive child development programs. Head Start and Early Head Start serve young children (birth to age five) and their families, 5,176 people in 2001-2002. The overall goal of this federally regulated program is to "increase the social competence of children in low-income families and children with disabilities, and improve the chances of success in school."

**Additional child care data and definitions available at [www.ndkidscount.org](http://www.ndkidscount.org):**

*Child Care Providers and Capacity by Type of Provider and North Dakota County: February 1, 2003 and Definitions of Types of Child Care in North Dakota*

**Figure 2. Percent of North Dakota Children Ages 0 to 13 For Whom Licensed Child Care Would be Available if Needed, by County: February 1, 2003**



With these points in mind, a discussion of child care providers and capacity provides an understanding of one aspect of the child care industry in North Dakota. The child care industry includes for-profit and non-profit establishments such as family child care providers, child care centers, and preschools. Typically, more than half of North Dakota child care businesses are home-based (either licensed or unlicensed).

Reports of child care capacity refer to the number of children who may be cared for by providers who are licensed (required if care is provided to six or more children, or four or more infants, at any one time), self-certified/registered, or provide care on reservations. Of the state's 2,780 providers (as of February 1, 2003), 1,626 are licensed and 841 are self-certified/registered. Not all the regulated facilities on the reservations are in the state system, but 313 reservation child care providers are included, contributing to the total state child care capacity of 34,577 children. The percent each type of care represents of the total child care capacity is shown in Figure 1.

In 2000, North Dakota children ages 0 to 13 totaled 119,805 (down 14% from 139,413 in 1990). The majority of the state's child care capacity is accounted for by licensed providers (86%), but licensed child care is available to only one-fourth of children who are of age for care in North Dakota (ages 0 to 13). North Dakota Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R), [www.ndchildcare.org](http://www.ndchildcare.org), is a statewide program which offers information and referrals for parents who are looking for child care as well as training and resources for child care providers. Because North Dakota has a tight child care market, "Finding good child care is a challenge for many North Dakota families, especially those with infants," says Linda Lembke, Director of CCR&R in southeast North Dakota. As Figure 2 depicts, one-third (17) of North Dakota's 53 counties have licensed child care capacity for less than 15% of all children ages 0 to 13 (the age group potentially in need of care). The availability of child care is concentrated in the eastern half of the state and larger population centers.