

June 2026

CHILD CARE STUDY REPORT SUMMARY

Study Purpose

To assess the current local child care landscape in Story County and develop practical, implementation-focused strategies to strengthen:

- Access and affordability
- Workforce stability
- Long-term economic vitality

PHASE 1: CURRENT STATE ASSESSMENT



4,374

licensed child care
spaces in Story County

150%

of income spent on infant care by
median income Story County
families compared to the federal
benchmark of 7%

WORKFORCE CAPACITY

is the primary challenge - not
physical space - combined
with growing affordability
pressures for working families

The most **critical**
gaps exist in infant
and **toddler care**

PHASE 2: NEEDS ASSESSMENT & DEMAND FINDINGS



4,130 : 5,360

Total Spaces listed
with CCR&R

Children ages 0-5

1.3

children for
every open spot

62%

of ISU respondents considered
reducing work hours due to child
care challenges

Primary Challenges
workforce shortages
limited infant/toddler capacity
affordability pressure

PHASE 3: STRATEGY, FUNDING, & ROADMAP

THREE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Workforce Stabilization

- Expand professional development opportunities
- Support participation in WAGE\$ and T.E.A.C.H.
- Develop substitute staffing supports
- Strengthen workforce pipeline partnerships

Capacity Expansion

- Align expansion with commute corridors
- Prioritize expansion within existing programs

Affordability & Funding

- Public and State Funding
 - CCA, WAGE\$, T.E.A.C.H., CCDF and stabilization grants, local government partnerships
- Philanthropic/Community
 - ASSET, Iowa Women's Foundation, community foundations
- Employer & Workforce Partnerships
 - Tri-share-style affordability pilots, recruitment and retention partnerships, regional cost-sharing initiatives

COORDINATED PATH FORWARD

Establish Child Care Leadership Collaborative

Align funding, employer, and community partnership strategies

Launch workforce stabilization and capacity-building initiatives

STUDY PARTNERS

United Way of Story County
Ames Regional Economic Alliance
Iowa State University
City of Ames
Story County Board of Supervisors
Story County Medical Center
Nevada Economic Development Council