

News Release
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New Report Looks at Child Care Challenges and Opportunities in Northern Michigan

TRAVERSE CITY, MI – A new report details the current state of child care in Northwest Lower Michigan, including needs and challenges for families and child care providers. The report also identifies specific, actionable recommendations to improve child care in the region. Networks Northwest partnered with Lansing-based Public Sector Consultants (PSC) to conduct the comprehensive review which focused on child care as an economic development issue.

The report indicates there are strengths in the current child care system, but it often fails to effectively serve families and support providers. Stakeholder interviews and available data suggest that the system also comes up short when meeting local business needs.

In Northwest Lower Michigan the cost of child care often exceeds families' budgets. The average cost of home based care in the region for an infant and a preschooler is nearly \$14,000 a year, which is more than the average mortgage payment and similar to tuition costs at an average public university.

"In addition to quality jobs, affordable housing, and reliable transportation, working families across the income spectrum need child care," said Matt McCauley, CEO of Networks Northwest. "However, this region has lost 30% of its child care providers in the last seven years, despite population growth over that same time period."

The report suggests there are opportunities for action that could improve child care access, affordability, and quality. Those opportunities include supporting small business owners, recruiting and supporting a skilled workforce, implementing family-friendly policies, increasing public investment in child care, and considering child care in all regional efforts.

(MORE)

"This report provided by Public Sector Consultants provides more information for discussion by public and private sector leadership to determine if there are actions that should be taken to address our child care shortage," said McCauley. "Moreover, I think it does a good job of framing the shortage as an economic development issue in an era where most communities are looking to attract and retain working families."

A full copy of the report is available at nwm.org/childcare.

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NOTE to Media: Images are oftentimes available upon request by e-mailing Dan Boss at dan.boss@networksnorthwest.org and stating preferences for resolution (300 dpi?), file format (.tif? .jpg?) and file size (1MB or less?). Or, phone (231) 929-5047. Check our online Media Room at: networksnorthwest.org/media

Founded in 1974, Networks Northwest facilitates and manages various programs and services for the 10 county region. These programs include Northwest Michigan Works, Small Business Development Center, Procurement Technical Assistance Center, various business services, and many different regional planning initiatives in response to our communities' requests and needs. You will see the broad spectrum of workforce, business and community services Networks Northwest offers if you visit our website, networksnorthwest.org. Networks Northwest's member counties are: Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, and Wexford.