

## Child Care Needs in Rolette

### Executive summary

With funding from the USDA Rural Development awarded to the Rural Economic Area Partnership Investments (REAP) and the North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Co-ops (NDAREC<sup>1</sup>), a task group calling itself the Co-op Child Care Team has been meeting regularly to figure out if, and how, cooperative models of child care might be used to address the unmet needs for child care in Hettinger (Adams county) and in Rolette counties. The Co-op Child Care Team includes Shirley Brentrup (REAP), Lori Capouch and Mary Stumpf (NDAREC), Earleen Friez (Hettinger) and SyAnn Graber (Rolette and Rugby). E. Kim Coontz from the California Center for Cooperative Development was invited to participate because of her expertise in child care cooperatives. Earleen and SyAnn are facilitating local activities in their respective communities. Experiences with these programs will be used to help fuel similar efforts in other North Dakota communities.

### Focus on Rolette

With the goal of accurately assessing the need for child care in Rolette we gathered the most recent census data for the community and conducted a survey. We are grateful to local employers who helped in sending out the survey and to the parents who responded.

Based on a review of census data and the findings of a parent survey, there is a need for child care in Rolette. The survey found that parents currently use child care, but the arrangements they have tend to be unreliable, which influences their labor participation in ways that are problematic to both parents and their employers, such as absence or tardiness, or needing to leave work early.

Child care costs are among the major household expenses for families, and can be among the highest expenses in a family's budget.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, some of the primary ways to keep the costs of child care low can also erode the quality of care that children receive. For example, the biggest way to reduce the cost of child care is to reduce staffing costs by hiring fewer staff members (thus decreasing the ratio of caregiver to children) and by paying low wages (which can make it difficult to recruit and retain caregivers). These methods of lowering the costs for child care can be problematic since they affect the characteristics of caregiving that are core measures of quality of care: low child-to-caregiver ratio, continuity of care, and caregiver characteristics such as education, experience and training.

While findings indicated needs for school-age care, the respondent pool and responses point to a crucial need for care for preschool and children age 13-24 months.

Cooperative models of child care can address issues of both cost and quality (see "Co-op Child Care" attachment). For this reason, the team of this project is turning to this model to address child care needs in Rolette.

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<sup>1</sup> NDAREC hosts a cooperative development center, the Rural Electric and Telecommunications Development Center, which is financially supported by North Dakota's electric and telecommunications cooperatives and through a grant from the United States Department of Agriculture.

<sup>2</sup> ChildCare Aware: Parents and the High Cost of Care, 2014 report pgs 22-23 (direct: 2012 report, p.23)

## Rolette Findings

### Profile of Rolette

According to US Census figures, the 2010 population of Rolette was 594; 48 of these individuals are children between the ages of 0-4 and 36 are aged 5-9. Labor force participation of parents in Rolette is high. More than eighty seven percent of Rolette's married couple families are dual earner households and 84% of single parents are in the labor force.

### Child Care Survey Results

In February and March of 2015, a survey of Rolette parents was conducted by the Co-op Child Care Team. Eighteen residents responded to an on-line child care needs survey. While the survey included mechanisms to prevent multiple responses from the same household, we can only estimate the response rate because the survey was open to those logging on using a provided link. Eleven respondents indicated that had children and 10 had at least one child who was five or younger and one has a child who is in kindergarten.

The response rate to this survey was low. We present the following findings with some hesitation, given the low number of responses.

### Findings:

- 55% of respondents have one or more children who need care
- 41% of respondents have used child care over the past 12 months and 64% anticipate needing care in the next 12 months.
- 58% of respondents need care for 31 or more hours per week.

Other findings suggested that some parents struggle to find child care arrangements that match their needs, such as licensing, flexibility or back up care when a primary provider is ill. Within the past six months 61% reported unexpected changes in their child care arrangements. These issues impacted a parent's ability to work. 50% of respondents missed one or more days of work, and 16% missed three or more days of work. Parents also reported that child care issues impacted their regular work schedule; one fifth report being late to work and 66% shared that they needed to leave work early one or more times because of child care issues. Respondents indicated that child care problems had impacted their work schedule, causing them to miss work days: 50% of respondents missed one or more days of work in the past six months.

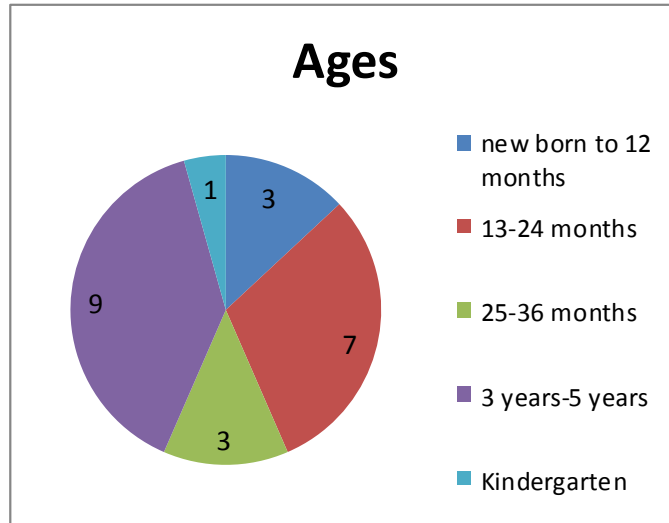
It can be costly to employers to have employees miss work, be late to work, or need to leave work early, and it is also costly to the employees. When parents are absent from work, 33% respondents who had it used their paid leave time, and 41% of them took unpaid time off to deal with child care issues.

Respondents are interested in additional child care services in their community. In fact, 58% felt that a community supported child care facility/program would be helpful. Respondents are also interested in having some flexibility in their work policies to meet their child care needs. Sixty six percent of respondents reported that it would be helpful if employers allowed flex time to meet the family's schedule, 50% of respondents felt it would be helpful if they were allowed to use paid sick leave to care for sick children, 33% thought it would be helpful to have on-site child care at their place of employment.

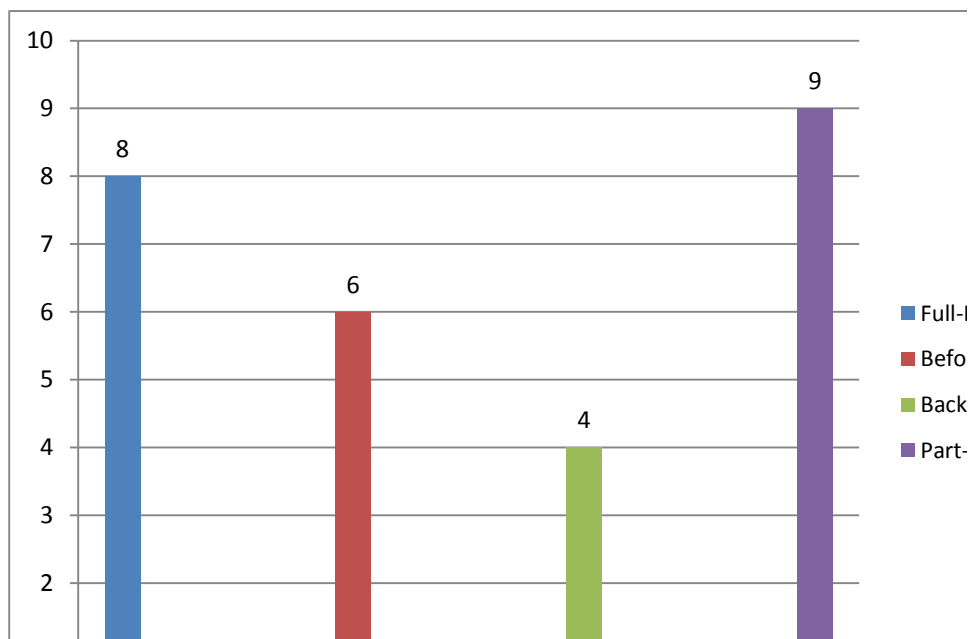
Twenty three children were represented in this survey, age newborn to grade 6. Out of those 23 children, survey findings indicate that Rolette currently has 20 children needing child care services. Rolette County currently has the licensed capacity to provide child care services for 170 children.

Children's ages:

- 3 age new born to 12 months
- 7 age 13-24 months
- 3 age 25-36 months
- 9 age 3 yrs-5 yrs
- 1 in Kindergarten
- TOTAL 23 children\*

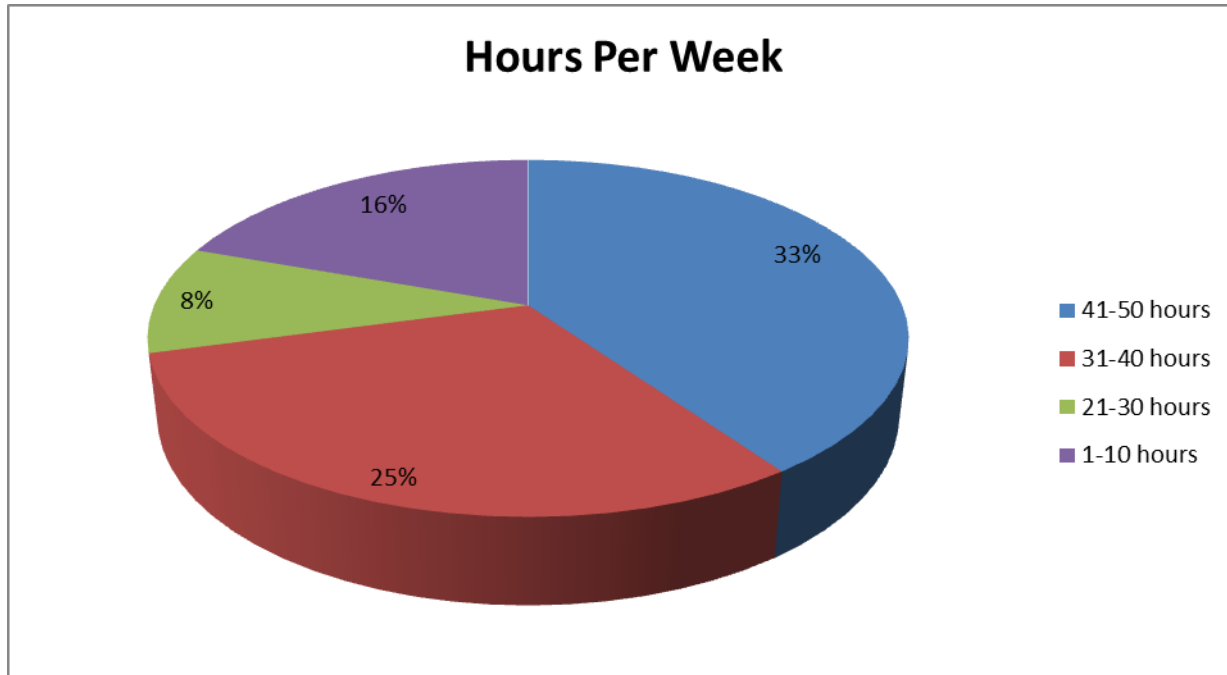


Most of these respondents need part-time care. Nine respondents have children who need part-time or non-traditional hours for child care (i.e.: full time care in summers; extended hours on weekends; shift work; seasonal hours; non-traditional work hours); 8 indicated they need full-day care; 6 need before and after school care; and 4 are in need of back-up or emergency care.



Hours per week needing care:

- 33% of respondents indicated 41-50 hrs
- 25% indicated 31-40 hrs
- 16% indicated 1-10 hrs
- 8% indicated 21-30 hrs



Respondents indicated needing flexibility from week to week, depending on their work schedule, and some indicated a certain amount of hours needed during the school year versus during the summer months.

Currently respondents use a variety of child care arrangements. Fifty eight percent of the respondents use family or group child care; 25% have a relative in their home to watch the child(ren); 25% of respondents use a relative or non-relative's home for their child care needs; 16% of respondents have a non-relative come to their home; 8% of respondents use an unlicensed family child care; and 8% of respondents use the before/after school program.

*A mother from Rolette moved to the area and has 2 children needing child care. She found child care by word-of-mouth. There is no advertising for what's available. It was very difficult to find something, and hard to find back-up care. There is no licensed group child care in Rolette, and no Head Start or Pre School program at all. The Ojibwa school in Belcourt has a Head Start program, but is a 15-20 minute bus ride away. Her children probably won't attend Pre School for this reason. She currently takes her children to a child care facility that is licensed, which is one of the only ones in town.*

Respondents indicate sometimes using a patchwork of methods to meet their child care needs. Different types of child care used per week; only 40% are able to use only one method of child care, the other 60% use two or more types of child care.

Respondents shared that the care they use can be unreliable, or are not their ideal arrangements. Fifteen percent of respondents have changed child care programs one time in the past year; 15% have changed twice. The most cited reason for the change was due to loss of the child care provider.

In the event that their child care arrangements fall through, 91% of respondents indicated that they or a family member stayed home; 50% of respondents left work early/went to work late; 33% found someone to care for their children; and 25% brought their child to work.

One respondent commented that many employers do not have lenient personnel policies. Two or three absences will more than likely result in termination of employment.

Missed work in the past 6 months:

- 50% of respondents have missed 1-2 days
- 16% of respondents have missed 3-4 days

When an employee is absent from work to handle child care situations, 41% of respondents used vacation/paid time off; 33% used paid sick time; 25% used personal time; and 25% used time without pay.

When asked to select any issues that have been a problem for respondents during the past year:

- 45% of respondents indicated care during the summer, holiday, and non-school days
- 36% indicated drop-in or back-up care
- 36% indicated finding care for infants (0-2 years)
- 27% indicated dependability of caregiver
- 27% indicated finding care for preschool (3-5 years)
- 27% indicated scheduling to match needed hours
- 18% indicated finding before/after school care
- 18% indicated illness of caregiver
- 18% indicated transportation of children
- 18% indicated special needs of the child

## **Conclusions**

The Co-op Child Care team engaged in this project reviewed previous studies reporting the need in Rolette. We also spoke with people in the community who also shared that child care supply does not meet the needs of parents. Although the survey response rate was too low to be reliable, the responses are consistent with that of other studies.

The project we are undertaking is action-based. Our goal is to engage community members to help to address the child care shortage cooperatively. Attached to this report is a description of various cooperative models of child care. Each of the models has been used successfully in other communities. They can be used in combination or one model can be exclusively used.

We look forward to working with you on this project.

**Working Group members**

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