

Press Release

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Child Care Subsidies Decline in Monroe County and Statewide

Yet Monroe outpaces similar counties in reaching potentially eligible children

Rochester, N.Y., November 7, 2014 — The availability of child care subsidies in Monroe County has declined over the past 7 years and meets about one-fifth of the potential need, but Monroe outpaces similar counties in providing this support to low-income working families, a new CGR study reports.

From 2007 to 2013, the number of subsidies provided in Monroe County decreased by 17% to just over 6,400. Subsidies declined in 38 of 57 counties outside New York City, and the average decrease was 27%. This occurred as families were struggling to make ends meet through the economic recession that began in 2008.

Yet Monroe County served a higher share of potentially eligible children (those in families with income at 200% of the federal poverty level or below) than many other counties. Monroe served 22% of children who might benefit, compared to 20% statewide, and higher than similar counties (Erie served 13% and Onondaga 18%).

Child care is an enormous expense for families with working parents, especially those with young children not yet in school and low incomes. For example, according to New York State, a family needing full-time care for an infant under 18 months that selects a day care center can expect to pay \$246 a week, or nearly \$12,800 a year. That comes close to consuming the entire paycheck of a minimum-wage worker, who will earn (before taxes) \$16,640 in a year.

The child care subsidy program operated by counties in New York State and largely federally funded aims to ease that burden, helping to keep parents in the workforce and provide access to high-quality care for their children.

CGR and the League of Women Voters of the Rochester Metropolitan Area chose child care subsidies as the focus of our research effort in 2014, funded out of the Beatrice Bibby Endowment. The League, CGR and the Children's Agenda are sponsoring a forum to discuss the report's findings at 7 p.m. Nov. 13 at Asbury First United Methodist Church, 1050 East Ave.

"The League of Women Voters of the Rochester Metropolitan Area is pleased the Bee Bibby Endowment is providing this report to the Rochester community on this most important issue for all citizens in Monroe County. We look forward to the November forum where everyone can continue to contribute to this public discourse," said Katherine Smith of the League.

This study examines availability, need, funding and policies related to child care subsidies in Monroe County, similar counties and in New York State as a whole. Other findings include:

- Adjusted for inflation, funding for subsidies has declined since 2007. Federal and state funding declined 2% and local funding 5%.
- The need for subsidies in Monroe County is largest in the City of Rochester but growing fastest in some suburbs. The number of children potentially eligible grew 52% in Irondequoit, 31% in Henrietta and 17% in Greece from 2000 to 2008-12.
- Statewide, the subsidy program lacks consistency and the ability to analyze and monitor trends and need. Among local areas we studied, the share of eligible children receiving subsidies ranged from 6% to 25%, and federal and state funding per eligible child varied from less than \$350 to nearly \$2,000.
- Serving all eligible families would be very expensive, but targeting low-income families with children of particular ages may be more feasible. National research has shown that only 50% of those eligible for subsidies are likely to apply for assistance, potentially making it possible to make progress closing the gap between need and availability of subsidies.

"We applaud the League of Women Voters and CGR for prioritizing this issue. A key finding learned is that paying for early education is not just a city problem - nearly half of the children that are eligible for child care subsidies are living in Monroe County's towns and suburbs. Like looming college tuition costs, families all over need help paying for early education to get their kids ready for school and life. Subsidies, like a scholarship, can open the door to a high quality learning environment for children while their parents work." said Carolyn Lee-Davis, Policy Director for The Children's Agenda.

To access the full report, visit www.cgr.org.

About CGR

Founded in 1915, CGR is an independent, nonprofit management consulting organization with significant experience in government management, public safety, public finance, economics, education, and health and human services. To learn more about CGR, visit www.cgr.org.

About the League

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. Voter education is one of the League's most important functions, and the League encourages all citizens to register and to cast an informed vote. The League does not support political parties or candidates, but does take stands on important issues after careful study and research. Membership in the League is open to all citizens of voting age.