



2026 TULARE COUNTY EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The following organizations and agencies were vital in the 2024 Tulare County Early Care and Education Needs Assessment. We are grateful for their support and ongoing commitment to high-quality Early Care and Education.

Tulare County Council on Child & Youth Development

Tulare County Office of Education

First 5 Tulare County

Tulare County Head Start

Tulare County Board of Supervisors



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This report can be found online at www.tularecountykids.org.

The external evaluation and report preparation for this project was led by Stergios Roussos and Jarrod Gonzalez from the Community Initiatives for Collective Impact. www.ci4ci.org.

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REPORT SUMMARY

Early Care and Education (ECE) is a vital and impactful service for the health and development of our children, families, and communities. ECE – sometimes referred to as child care and early learning and care – is care for children from birth through 12 years old from someone other than a child's parent or primary caregiver. The 2024 Tulare County Early Care and Education Needs Assessment helps us understand what ECE our county needs so we can plan how to address these needs.

The Needs Assessment incorporates the best available information. This includes state-mandated monitoring data and special assessments specific to Tulare County, such as the Parent and Caregiver ECE Survey. Brief interpretations and reflections throughout the report help us make sense of the data analyses. How much ECE is needed? How can our county address its unmet ECE need? The graphs and findings in the report quickly summarize important points.

The report highlights some key ideas and lessons:

- 1.** Over 100,000 children need ECE county-wide
- 2.** Over 50% of children remain without ECE
 - Infants and toddlers have the most unmet need (94%)
 - Preschoolers have the best enrollment in ECE (with almost 50% enrolled in ECE)
 - School age children may enroll in after school care through the Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELO-P). California ELO-P enrollment statistics are forthcoming.
- 3.** Too many families are not enrolling their children in ECE because;
 - ECE is too expensive (costing over 20% of a household's income)
 - ECE is not located near parents' home or work
 - Too few ECE facilities exist to meet ECE demand
 - ECE options are not well understood by families, leaving them unused

We surveyed parents, caregivers, ECE providers, and other ECE stakeholders to hear their recommendations for addressing ECE needs in Tulare County. Parents and caregivers want ECE that helps their children develop socially and emotionally. They want ECE that is available in locations closer to their home and work and that is more affordable. Similarly, ECE providers asked for more locations to serve children and better pay and benefits. Parents, caregivers, and providers asked for increased awareness about ECE throughout Tulare County. To achieve these priorities, we must improve the networking of resources and collaboration across our community. Our collaboration must include community ECE providers, parents, schools, businesses, and civic and elected leaders. This is the best ECE for all children and families, and it is UPK the Tulare County way!

INTRODUCTION

Welcome!

The Tulare County Council on Child and Youth Development is pleased to provide you with the 2024 Tulare County Early Care and Education (ECE) Needs Assessment. We are a Local Child Care and Development Planning Council (LPC) established by the California legislature. LPCs exist in every county with the support of the Federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) initiated in 1991. The LPC works through a partnership with ECE stakeholders including providers, parents and other consumers, public and private agencies, and community representatives. The LPC promotes high quality ECE, provides training for ECE providers, assesses the need for ECE in Tulare County and informs the California Department of Education (CDE) and the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) on local priorities to guide state support and funding for ECE.

ECE includes children from birth through 12 years old. No other investment is more important than ECE to the success of our children during this developmental period. This Needs Assessment informs decisions we make about ECE as parents, educators, employers, civic and elected representatives, and other ways we serve Tulare County. These decisions are vital to the success of our county's most precious gift, our children. This report helps us learn what ECE our county needs and how we can ensure the best ECE for all children.

The Needs Assessment report comes at a time of change never seen in California's ECE system. We saw ECE's role in personal and community vitality during COVID-19's mass closure of ECE programs. Businesses came to a halt as parents left work to care for children at home. Losses in ECE during the pandemic were seen to thwart child development. In response, unrivaled government investments in ECE uplift Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK). UPK encompasses the expansion of Transitional Kindergarten (TK), another ECE option available to children and families. In 2024, mandated increases in California's hourly minimum wage (over \$16 for most workers, and \$20 for most fast food restaurant workers) are challenging long-standing poverty-level wages for many ECE workers. State investments of nearly \$4 billion in 2022-2023 in the Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELO-P) offer unprecedented availability to after school care. Today, we know ECE is essential for the success of children, families, businesses, and our community. The Council seeks to promote ECE that is available, of high quality, and affordable for all children!

We know you will enjoy the lessons learned about ECE in this report. We believe they will inspire you to see the role ECE plays in your life and in Tulare County. We invite you to join us as champions for our children's well-being. Through high quality ECE for all children, we can ensure the best possible Tulare County today and in the future!

Sincerely,

Tulare County Council on Child and Youth Development

Two Terms for Making Sense of the Report

Children

For the Needs Assessment, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) defines children as persons from birth through age 12. Children are categorized into three age groups defined by child development and ECE enrollment.

Infants and Toddlers (0 to 2 years old, or 35 months) are going through the fastest and greatest development of their lives. Children this age are highly vulnerable, requiring full attention from their caregivers. ECE for infants and toddlers costs more in resources and expenses than other age groups.

Preschoolers (3 to 5 years old, 71 months) continue their rapid growth, with brain growth reaching about 90% of its adult size by age five. The mental, physical, and social skills learned by age five shape their entire lives. For example, a child may learn more than five languages by age five (Okal, 2014). Children this age are more independent than infants and toddler, which allows for more ECE options.

School Age (6 to 12 years old) children in California are required to attend school at age 6. They may start in kindergarten or first grade (though kindergarten is not required). Children this age enjoy environments and activities that promote their curiosity, creativity, and establish lifelong habits for learning. ECE for school age children includes supervised, structured activities at school and community locations.

Early Care and Education or ECE

ECE is care provided by someone other than a child's parent or primary care giver. This includes various settings and types of providers.

Providers include two types.

- Unlicensed providers may include a child's relatives (e.g., siblings, aunts and uncles, grandparents), friends and neighbors, nannies, and some ECE at community centers (e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs).
- Licensed providers include Family Child Care Homes, providers meeting the Title 22 licensing requirements of the California Code of Regulations (e.g., licensed centers), providers meeting the Title 5 licensing requirements (e.g., Head Start, California State Preschool Program), and credentialed teachers for Transitional Kindergarten (TK).

Settings include homes, businesses, nonprofits, churches and schools (including charter schools and colleges).

Parents may rely on multiple ECE options to accommodate their family needs. For example, a child may be in a preschool at their local elementary school from 8 am to 2 pm, then after school at a licensed center until 5 pm, and then with their grandparent for dinner if their parents work late. In the 2023 policy report, *The Promise of a Mixed Delivery Early Learning and Care System*, ECE experts conclude that, “California can strengthen and expand availability to early learning opportunities by investing in and fully developing a mixed delivery system that prioritizes the unique needs and preferences of children and their families. These needs and preferences include non-traditional hours, multilingual environments, preferred learning settings, among others.” (Orbach-Mandel, Pryor, Saucedo, & Saucedo, 2023).

Assessment Approach

The LPC completed the Needs Assessment with the help of the Community Initiatives for Collective Impact (Ci4Ci). Ci4Ci has a strong experience in ECE and Needs Assessments. Dr. Stergios Roussos, PhD, MPH led the Needs Assessment as he worked with the LPC to complete the 2018 Tulare County ECE Needs Assessment. This prior history offered a chance to build on the methods and lessons from the earlier assessment.

The assessment was completed between 2022 and 2024 with two goals:

- Meet the requirements of the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) for LPC ECE Needs Assessments, and
- Support Tulare County to identify its ECE needs.

The assessment examined five questions. These questions are used to organize the report:

- How does our county's geography, industry, and population shape our ECE needs?
- How much ECE is available?
- How much ECE is used?
- How much unmet need exists?
- How can our county address its unmet ECE need?

Method 1. Organize Existing Data.

The Needs Assessment relied on data from other sources collected for purposes other than our assessment. CDSS requires county Needs Assessments to use data from the Early Learning Needs Assessment Tool (ELNAT). ELNAT data were drawn from the US Census, the California Resource and Referral Network, and local education agencies (LEAs, such as school districts). Other sources of existing data include the California Department of Finance and CDE's Data Quest. Data sources are indicated throughout the report. Please note that existing data is usually older than the time of the assessment. For examples, ELNAT uses data as old as 2018 to calculate estimates of need. COVID-19 disrupted the collection of public data.

Method 2. Use Local Data to Update Existing Data.

Where possible, local sources were used to update existing data. For example, Tulare County Office of Education (TCOE) staff provided some updated and more accurate information about how much ECE was available and how many children were enrolled in ECE. The Tulare County ECE Economics Benefits Study (Brion, 2024) was used to compare and refine some estimates of ECE availability. These refinements are noted throughout the report.

Method 3. Listen to Parent and Primary Caregivers.

A Parent Survey was conducted to understand the ECE experiences, needs, and recommendations from Tulare County parents and other primary caregivers. TCOE and consultant staff created and implemented the Parent Survey during May 2023. The survey was available online in English and Spanish. Of 771 completed surveys, 410 (53%) were included for analysis because the participants lived or worked in Tulare County and used ECE in Tulare County.

Method 4. Understand School ECE Plans.

In 2022, CDE required all Local Education Agencies (LEA), such as school districts and charter schools, to propose their plans for implementing Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK). UPK plans include Transitional Kindergarten (TK) and other ECE considered part of a mixed delivery system for children. Between August and November 2022, 47 Tulare County LEAs completed a CDE survey to describe their UPK plans. These plans were analyzed to understand needs and recommendations for ECE.

Method 5. Listen to ECE Stakeholders.

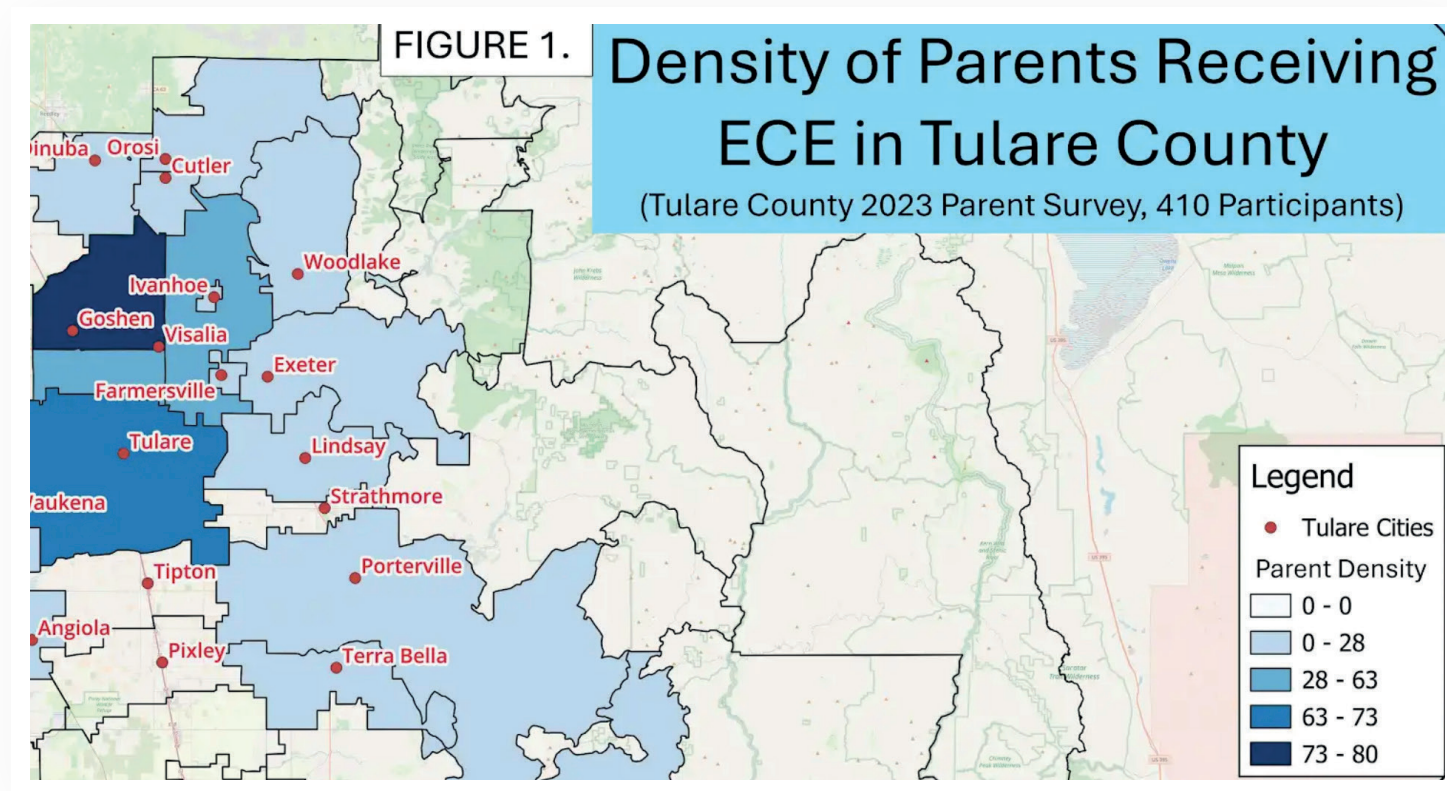
In October 2023, over 175 ECE stakeholders participated in the Tulare County Council on Child and Youth Development's 15th Annual Legislative Event. These participants included providers, administrators, policymakers, and other community members. The event examined ECE priorities and input from people directly invested in successful ECE. Participants were asked to complete a paper survey for their input and recommendations for ensuring high-quality ECE for all children. One hundred six participants completed a survey.

*** Please remember that this report examines a snapshot in time based on the best available data necessary for the Needs Assessment. Readers should consider how new information and conditions may affect this report's lessons. We point out such new conditions throughout the report.*

How Does Our County's Geography, Industry, and Population Shape Our ECE Needs?

Our County Requires Flexible ECE Options

Tulare County is the seventh largest county in California by total area, covering 4,824 square miles of land. Our county's footprint is larger than Los Angeles County (4,084 square miles) which has the largest population in California. Our ECE providers must be able to serve larger urban communities (e.g., Visalia, 141,859 population) and smaller rural communities (e.g., Yettem, 487 population). More than 50% of the population lives in three cities: Visalia, Tulare, and Porterville. The 2023 Tulare County Parent Survey found these three cities had among the highest density of parents receiving ECE (Figure 1). Parents living further away from the higher populated cities were more likely to report receiving care from family, friends, and neighbors (i.e., unlicensed ECE settings) compared to licensed ECE settings such as preschools and licensed family child care homes. ***Tulare County ECE must be flexible to reach families across its broad and varied landscape.***



Our Workforce Requires ECE During Non-Traditional Hours

Of 22 occupational sectors that define the Tulare County economy, five sectors employ about half of Tulare County's workforce.

Table 1. Top Five Occupation Sectors In Tulare County

	Percentage of Total Employment				
	2017		2022		%Change
Occupation Sectors	Tulare	US	Tulare	US	Tulare
Farming, Fishing and Forestry	17%	0.3%	14%	0.3%	-3%
Transportation and Material Moving	5%	4%	11%	9%	+6%
Educational Instruction and Library	10%	7%	8%	6%	-2%
Sales and Related	11%	10%	8%	9%	-3%
Food Preparation and Serving Related	7%	9%	8%	9%	-1%
Total Employed	50%	30%	49%	33%	

Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017 and 2022, Tulare County represented by Visalia metropolitan area. For Tulare County, Healthcare & Social Assistance was in top five in 2017 with 13% of all employment, and dropped to 5% in 2022

Some changes occurred between the previous Needs Assessment and this report. The increase of "Transportation and Material Moving" from 5% to 11% illustrates the growth of online industries requiring distribution services (e.g., Amazon).

Despite these changes, the five sectors are known for employing younger adults, often working parents. All industries (except for educational instruction) commonly require work after school hours and on weekends. As a result, ***a major proportion of Tulare's working parents must find ECE that is more difficult and more expensive to obtain.***

Tulare County ranks as one of the largest agricultural producing counties in the US. Table 1 shows that Tulare County's employment in this sector is 47 times that of the US. Agriculture is the largest private employer in the county. This work includes processing, manufacturing, agricultural service, and many other related jobs.

Families working in agriculture need ECE at times, for durations, and in locations quite different from jobs in more urban, less agricultural areas. Working early mornings, weekends, and moving locations with seasonal crops add challenges to finding ECE. For example, parents may require different ECE between January through June during the harvest for navel oranges (the 2nd highest crop produced in Tulare County) than between May through December during harvest for grapes (the 4th highest crop produced). Variations in the harvest times lead to variations in ECE needs for children of migrant families throughout the year. Dairy workers (milk being Tulare County's #1 product) often hold temporary and low-paying jobs that require night and weekend work when ECE is less available. ***Tulare County's large agricultural and service-focused workforce needs ECE during hours outside of school time, like evenings and weekends.***

Affordable ECE Is Essential for Our Large Lower-Wage Workforce

The type of work in Tulare County also influences wages, which affect a family's ability to pay for ECE. The average hourly wage of Tulare County workers (\$25.40) was 15 percent below the nationwide average (\$29.76; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022).

Occupational Sector	Average Hourly Wage
All sectors in Tulare County	\$25.40
Farming, fishing and forestry	\$16.78
Food preparation and service related	\$16.14
All education sectors	\$32.70
Special Education teachers (kindergarten and elementary school)	\$46.61
Elementary school teachers (except Special Education)	\$42.52
Child care providers	\$17.37

The average hourly wage for Tulare's dominant agricultural sector was \$16.78. This was the second lowest wage among all occupational sectors in Tulare County, next to the "food preparation and service related" workers earning \$16.14 per hour. Of the five occupational sectors employing 49% of the workforce (Table 1), only one (education) has hourly wages approaching a living wage.¹ However, the "Education" occupational sector only includes ECE in kindergarten and elementary school (e.g., TK teachers). "Child Care" as an occupational sector is separate from the ECE providers in the Education occupational sector. Employees in "child care" earn among the lowest average hourly wage across employment sectors (\$17.37).

Across occupational sectors, the average weekly wage of Tulare County workers was the seventh lowest in California, at \$963 per week. For just one child, families may pay 15% to 25% of their earnings for the least expensive ECE. Lower wages contribute to more children living in families that cannot afford to pay for ECE.

Two changes since the prior Needs Assessment may positively affect the ECE need for families with lower income. First, Tulare County's poverty level for families dropped from 33% (2016) to 15% (2023). Although this poverty rate is slightly higher than California's (13% in 2023), the reduction of the family poverty rate by 55% suggest improvements in upward mobility for Tulare County's working families. This may increase their capacity to afford ECE. The other important change was the state's increase in the number of families eligible for subsidized ECE following the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, CDE increased the eligibility level for family participation in the California State Preschool Program (CSPP) from 85% to 100% of the state median income. This expanded opportunities for families to get subsidized care from many ECE providers receiving funding from CSPP (e.g., school-based preschool programs, community-based organizations).

¹ For the Visalia-Porterville, California metropolitan area in May 2023, workers in the Educational Instruction and Library occupation sector earned an average hourly rate of \$36.23. This approximates the living wage for this regions which is \$36.39 for two adults, with one working, and one child.

While these changes may increase ECE availability for lower income families, their effects should be interpreted with caution. For example, wage increases may move a family out of the poverty level, but their higher income may disqualify them from eligibility for subsidized ECE. Increasing the income level necessary to qualify for subsidized care may increase ECE availability. However, increases in ECE demand exceed our county's limited supply of ECE providers and capacity in facilities, which may drive up the cost of ECE. Thus, lower income families may continue to lack ECE disproportionately to families with higher income.

We know all children, regardless of family income, benefit from ECE. However, the cost of ECE is known to be a greater obstacle to receiving ECE for children in lower income families (Cunha & Heckman, 2006). ***Making ECE more affordable for all families is important. Increasing ECE affordability for our large number of lower income working families may continue upward mobility for them and prosperity for our county.***

Our Population

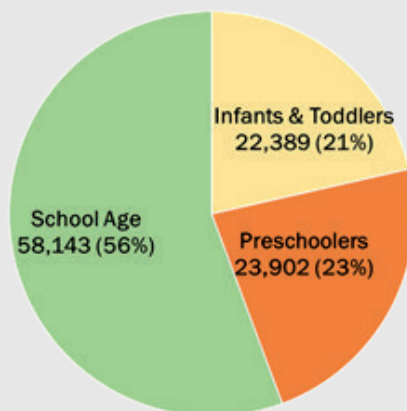
Tulare County has the highest Latino proportion of its population (67%) than all California counties except Imperial County, located next to the California-Mexico border. Of the 51% of families who speak a language other than English at home, 47% speak Spanish as their primary language (much higher than the state average of 28%) (US Census, 2022). Over 78% of students in TK through third grade are Latino (California Department of Education, Data Quest, 2023). Of English Learners² in kindergarten through third grade, 97% speak Spanish.

Approximately 100,000 Children Need ECE County-Wide

The number of children who need ECE is approximated as the total number of children in the population. All parents and primary caregivers need help from someone to care for a child at some time. Approximately 100,000 children ages 0-12 needed ECE in 2020 (Figure 2).

2 English Learners are students who do not speak English as their primary language at home and are learning English at school.

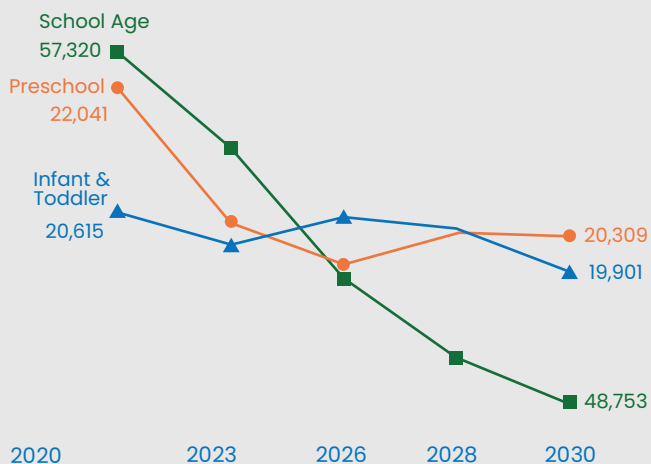
Figure 2. Tulare County Population for the ECE Age Groups



2020 pre-COVID estimates by AIR ELNAT using the US Census, 2019 America Community Survey 5-year estimates

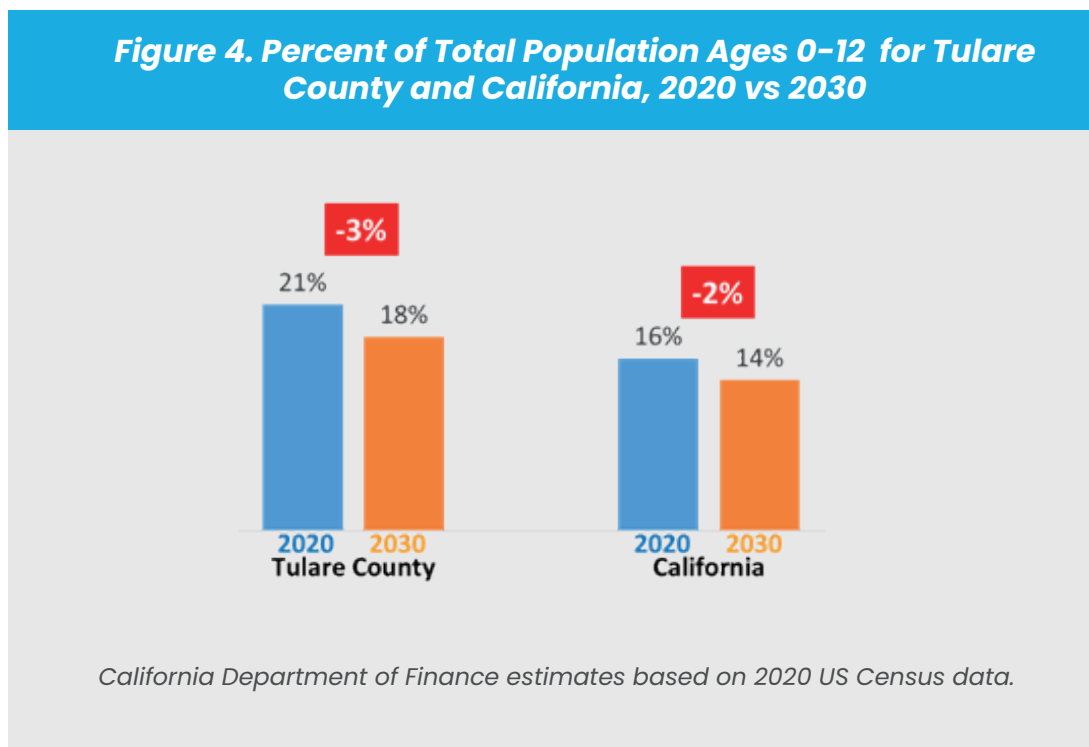
California Department of Finance (DOF) provides population projections between 2020 and 2030 (Figure 3). The substantial reduction in school age and preschool populations following the start of the COVID-19 pandemic may reflect a combination of fewer children and the impact of chronic absenteeism in school-related populations. These trends parallel California and the US, and are not unique to Tulare County. The infant and toddler population (whose counts are less affected by school-related absenteeism) is relatively stable with a slight reduction over the 10-year period.

Figure 3. Tulare County Population Projections Across Three ECE Age Groups, 2020 – 2030



California Department of Finance estimates based on 2020 US Census data.

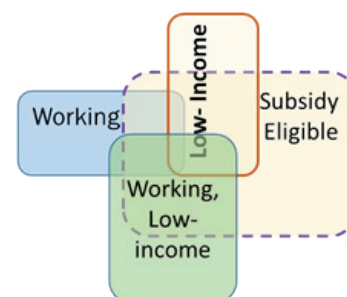
The 10-year average for each age group reflects the US Census 2020 estimates (Figure 2): 21%, 23%, and 56% for Infants and Toddlers, Preschoolers, and School Age children, respectively. The child population decreases by 3%, 8%, and 15% for Infants and Toddlers, Preschoolers, and School Age children, respectively. These decreases in Tulare County's population parallel those of California (Figure 4).



Despite decreases in the population, Figure 4 shows that Tulare County has a higher proportion of children than California. ***Tulare County has a higher need for ECE than California.***

A Large Number of Children in Low-Income Families Struggle to Afford ECE

As we discussed earlier, family income level is an important predictor of whether their family can afford ECE. Government-funded programs, like the California State Preschool Program and Head Start, use family income level and work status to determine if a child is eligible for subsidized ECE. Government programs that subsidize ECE influence whether children in low income families receive ECE. However, not all families who work and are low income are eligible for subsidized ECE.



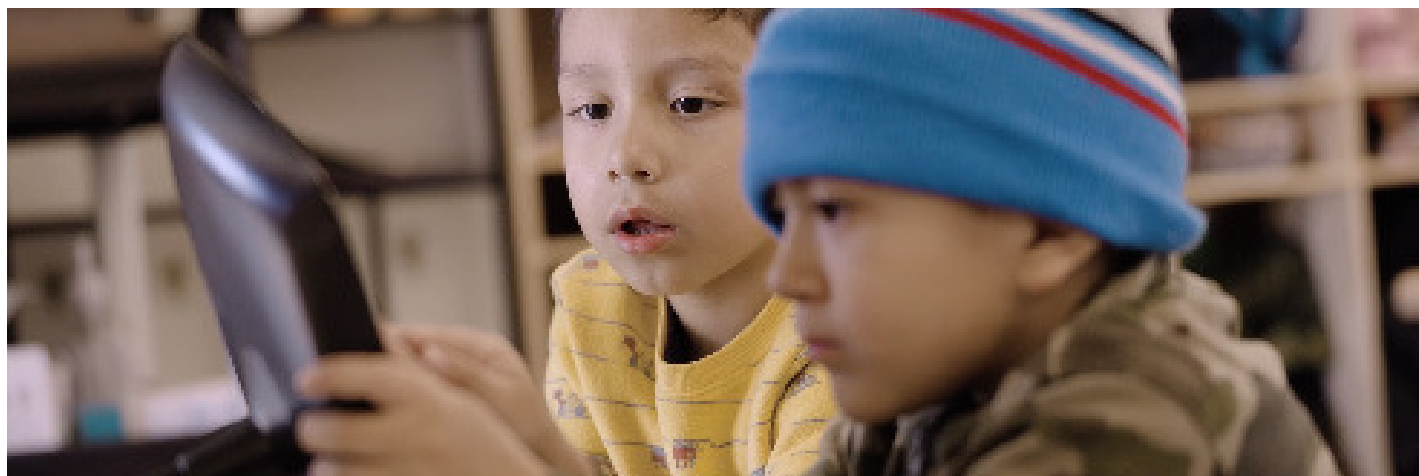
CDSS requires LPC Needs Assessments to examine ECE need for four groups based on work status and income level. A family may fit in more than one category. The definitions below align with the ELNAT data required for this Needs Assessment. The ELNAT data available at the time of this assessment determined subsidized ECE with the criterion of 85% of the state median income. In 2021, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, CDE increased the eligibility level to 100% of the state median income for participation in the California State Preschool Program. This expanded opportunities for families to get subsidized care from many ECE providers receiving funding from this program. Such ECE providers included school-based preschool programs, community-based licensed centers, and family child care homes.

1.) Low-income families where households earn under 85% of the state median income (SMI), or \$84,822 for a family of four.^{4,5}

2.) Working families (at all income levels) where one or more parent(s) works, goes to school or training or both.

3.) Working, low-income where parents work, and the household income is under 85% of SMI.

4.) Families eligible for subsidized ECE with an annual household income under 85% of SMI and meeting need and income criteria for full or partial subsidized ECE.



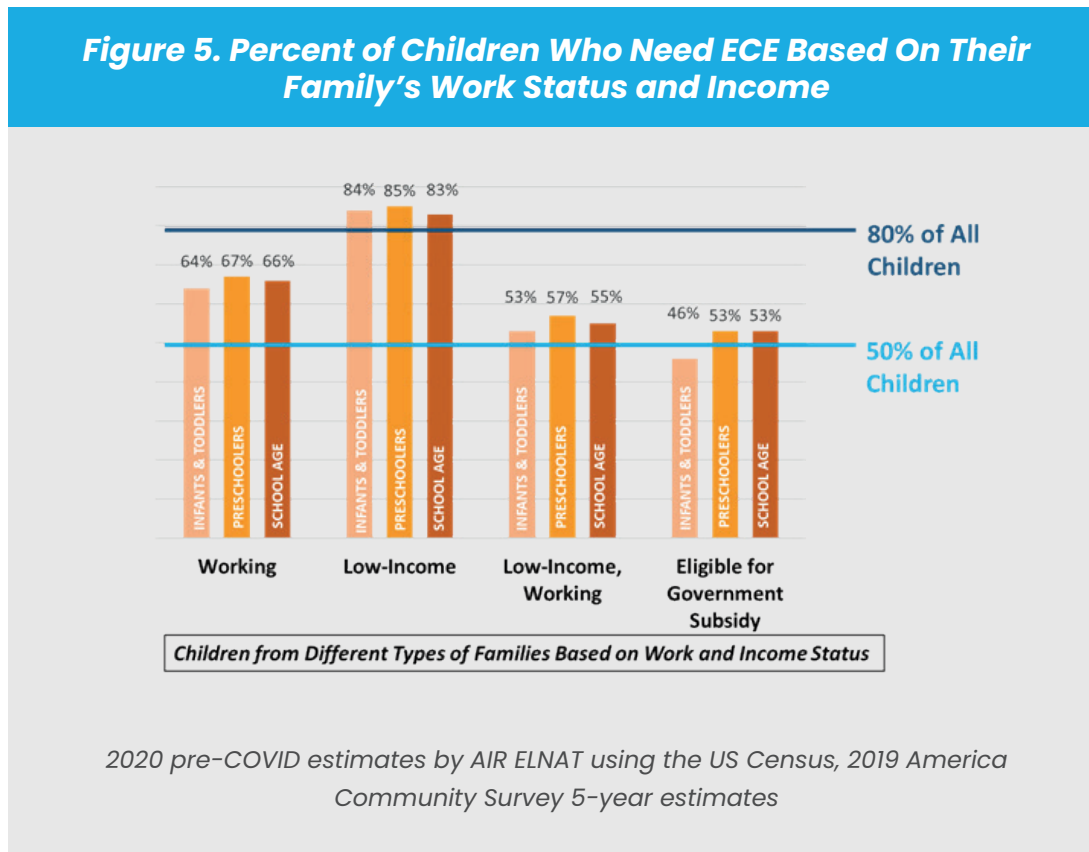
4 California Department of Education, Early Learning and Care Division. Revised State Median Income (SMI) Ceilings and Income Ranking Table for Fiscal Year 2020–21. Management Bulletin 20–12.
<https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/ci/mb2012.asp>

5 Please note that the data in this report are based on one point in time with data available for comparisons needed for the Needs Assessment. For example, the SMI for a family of four in 2024 increased to \$104,544. Increase in income are paralleled by higher cost of living.

6 A complete description of criteria for subsidized ECE is at <https://mychildcareplan.org/resource/child-care-subsidy-programs/>

We may be able to improve availability to ECE by knowing how many children live in working families, low-income families, and families eligible for an ECE subsidy. For example, we may call for more affordable ECE for low-income working families who are not eligible for governmental aid.

Across the three age groups who need ECE, most of the children live in families with low-income, where their household earns under 85% of the SMI or approximately \$85,000 in 2021 (Figure 5).⁷



The 2021 California Child Care Portfolio describes that a family earning the SMI with one infant or toddler and one preschooler would pay over 30% of their income on ECE (California Child Care Resource & Referral Network, 2021). This cost is higher than housing which is estimated at 20% of family income. ECE is not affordable for these families which represent over 80% of our county's children. Fortunately, many low-income families are also eligible for government assistance for ECE. Over 50% of children live in families eligible for subsidized ECE. With subsidized ECE, the cost of ECE for a family with one infant or toddler and one preschooler drops from 30% to 10% or less of their household income. **While most children's families may struggle to pay for ECE, more than half of them may meet criteria for subsidized ECE.**⁸

⁷ Calculations for the graph in Figure 5 are in the Appendices.

⁸ These estimates from 2020 precede the CDE increase in 2022 for ECE eligibility from 85% to 100% of the state median income. This change would increase eligibility in the Title 5 State Preschool Program (CSPP) and the Family Child Care Home Education Network, affecting primarily children ages 3-5, or preschoolers. Approximately 2,700 more children would be eligible for subsidized ECE.

How Much ECE Is Available?

The supply of ECE in Tulare County is estimated based on the number of ECE providers, and the number of children they can serve. State agencies authorize and regulate ECE providers based on different types of ECE. ECE providers are briefly described in Table 2 in order of the estimated number of children they serve in Tulare County.⁹

Table 2. Types of ECE Available in Tulare County^{1,2,3}
(ordered by the estimated percent of children served)

Type of ECE	State Requirements	% of Children Served
Licensed Child Care guided by Title 22 Regulations	ECE for children using different adult to child ratios depending on age groups. Examples include Family Child Care Homes, the California State Preschool Program, Head Start, and private preschools.	48%
Transitional Kindergarten (TK)	ECE at schools for age-eligible 4 and 5 year-olds before they start kindergarten.	22%
Licensed Child Care guided by Title 5 Regulations	ECE for children using different adult to child ratios depending on age groups. Examples include Head Start, Early Head Start, and the California State Preschool Program.	15%
License-Exempt Friends, Family, and Neighbors (FFN)	ECE provided for one family's children and those of one other family.	15%

1: This table includes ECE serving children not counting afterschool activities including license-exempt center (e.g., community recreation centers) due to the lack of participation data for that type of ECE.

2: Regulations of ECE involves different agencies and criteria (e.g. CDE, CDSS). The California Child Care Resource and Referral (R&R) Network is one resource that describes these regulations <https://rrnetwork.org/policy/subsidies-regulations> and <https://rrnetwork.org/family-services/childcare-glossary>

3: There may be some ECE in Tulare County that is license-exempt but guided by Title 5.

Quick Note: “ECE space” is counted as physical space and time. ECE providers use the word “space” to describe the number of children they can serve. Space has two meanings. One is the physical space one child can occupy. That physical space is available for a certain amount time, which may allow one space to serve multiple children over time.

⁹ Calculations of children served are based on the numbers and information in the Appendices.

Enough ECE Is Available for About 24% of Children Ages 0 – 5

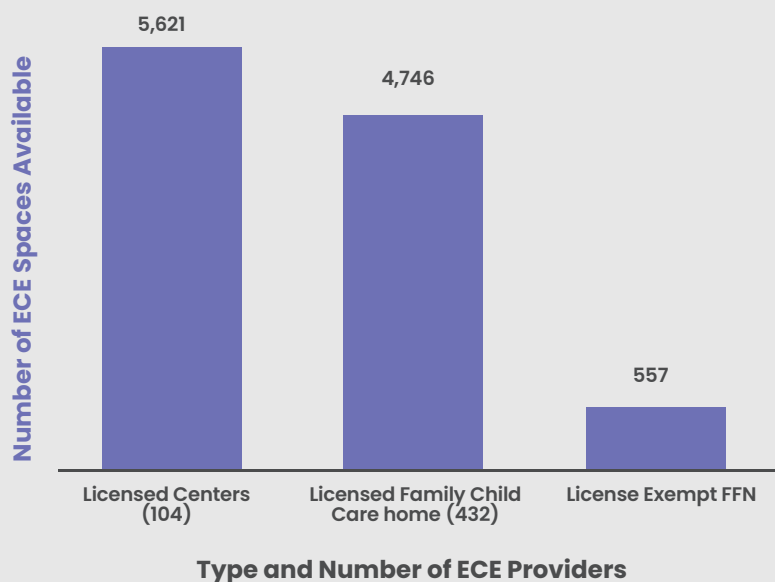
Tulare County Resource and Referral summarizes information on the spaces available across providers (Figure 6). These estimates are conservative because:

1. Each part-time space may serve multiple children.
2. Many more FFN are likely. The FFN represent only those known to receive a government subsidy (i.e., Alternative Payment).
3. No data were available for spaces at license-exempt centers (e.g., youth clubs, YMCA).¹⁰
4. Data available from the state for TK is for enrollment, not spaces.

Figure 6. ECE Spaces Available for Children Ages 0-5, Tulare County

24% of children have an available ECE Space

10,924 ECE Spaces are available for 46,000 eligible children



Data on licensed slots are from the California Child Care Resource and Referral Network 2021 Report. FFN data are from TCOE based on 2022 child enrollment.

The number of available spaces for each age group across each type of ECE provider is not available. The Tulare County Resource and Referral does report the number of spaces by age group but only for Licensed Centers. Of the 5,621 Licensed Centers spaces, 200 are for children under 2 years old (serving 1% of all children in this age group) and 5,094 spaces are for children ages 2-5 (serving 18% of all children in this age group).

¹⁰ The California Department of Education Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELO-P) was started during the 2021-2022 school year to fund afterschool and summer school enrichment programs for TK through sixth grade. School districts rely on ELO-P to combine with TK for full-day care required by CDE. Data on ELO-P were not available for this report.

Hard to Estimate Amount of ECE Available for School Age Children

California public schools are required to have space for all school age children (58,143 children ages 6 to 12).¹¹ While schools are not required to report the number of spaces available, we assume that all school age children have the option to receive care and education at local elementary schools, charter schools, and home schools.

School age children may need ECE after school and during non-school hours such as evenings and weekends. Therefore, the number of spaces was not available for the Needs Assessment. For school age children, the Resource and Referral Network reported 327 spaces at Licensed Centers.

Family Child Care Homes reported 4,746 spaces across all age groups, but the breakdown of these spaces is not available by age group. The ELNAT reports indicated that 1,144 school age children were enrolled in Family Child Care Homes. As discussed earlier, the state's ELO-P funds after school and summer school enrichment programs for TK through sixth grade. Data on ELO-P were not available for this report.

The lack of state requirements for schools to report ECE availability for school age children is a national problem. Limited data documentation makes it difficult to plan how ECE can best serve school age children.



¹¹ Please note that “school age” for the Needs Assessment is defined as children ages 6 to 12. However, the state expansion of Transitional Kindergarten (TK) added TK as a new grade to the public school system, making children as young as 4 years old to be “school age.” Starting in the fall of 2025, all children who turn 4 years old by September 1 of the school year will be allowed to enroll in TK.

How Much ECE Is Used?

Many more children need ECE than the number of spaces available to serve them. One would assume that all available spaces would be used, and families would be waiting to enroll their children in ECE as soon as spaces are available. Unfortunately, this is not what is happening.

40% of “All ECE Available for Ages 0 to 5” Is Used

Earlier we learned that, conservatively, 10,924 spaces were available to serve Infants and Toddlers and Preschoolers (Figure 6). Table 3 below shows that only 4,247 (39%) children are filling those spaces. This calculation does not include TK spaces because all students eligible for TK are guaranteed a space in a TK program. However, only 1,621 (22%) of five year-olds were enrolled in TK during the 2021–2022 school year.¹²

Table 3. Child Enrollment in Tulare County ECE Across Age Groups

	Infants & Toddlers	Preschool	School Age	All Ages
Children Enrolled in . . .				
Licensed Child Care Centers	135	1,974	65	2,174
Licensed Family Child Care Homes (FCCH)	369	655	1,144	2,168
License-Exempt Providers (FFN)	557	557	557	1,671
SUBTOTAL	1,061	3,186	1,766	6,013
Transitional Kindergarten (TK)	NA	1,621	NA	1,621
Elementary School After School Programs*	NA	NA	8,211	8,211
TOTAL ENROLLED	1,061	4,807	9,977	15,845

Licensed data are from AIR ELNAT pre-COVID 2019 estimates of CDE-administered licensed care. TCOE provided data on license-exempt, Transitional Kindergarten data, and after school data from ASES. NA – Not Applicable.

Many reasons may explain why available ECE spaces remain unused despite so many children needing ECE. Some of these include:

- ECE is not located near parents’ home or work.
- ECE staffing shortage prevent some spaces from being accessed.
- ECE options are not understood by families, leaving them unused.
- Too few ECE facilities exist to meet ECE demand.

These and other issues are examined in the later section “How can Tulare County address its unmet ECE need?”

¹² Please note that the percentage reported for this report is based on TK age-eligibility for the 2021–2022 school year. More children became eligible for TK as the age-eligibility expanded across school years. In 2021–2022, children turning 5 between September 2 and December 2 were eligible. In 2022–2023, children turning 5 between September 2 and February 2 were eligible. In the 2023–2024, children turning 5 between September 2 and April 2 were eligible.

School Age Children Use ECE – Difficult to Count How Much

Similarly to estimates of ECE availability, there is an absence of state requirements for school reports of ECE use by school age children. Data may be collected by schools and community-based organizations (e.g., churches, Boys and Girls Clubs) but this practice is not universal across programs, and data are not publicly available. The California ELO-P program requires school districts to document student participation. Table 3 shows that 8,211 school age children participated in activities funded by the After School Education and Safety (ASES) Program. The ASES Program is implemented by the California Department of Education to fund local after school education and enrichment programs. Programs are created through partnerships between schools and local community resources to provide literacy, academic enrichment and safe constructive alternatives for students in TK through sixth grade (California Department of Education, Expanded Learning Division, 2023).

Results on ELO-P participation have not been publicly available since 2021. The 2018 Tulare County ECE Needs Assessment used the online California After School Programs Database. The 2,200 school age children reported in that database represent a very small fraction of school age children.

Absenteeism may be impacting student use of ECE. Following COVID-19, schools nationwide experienced unprecedented absenteeism rates. Many schools struggled to recover after the first full year of re-opening in 2021–2022. Chronic absenteeism is when a student misses at least 10% of school days. Tulare County schools had a cumulative 52% chronic absenteeism rate compared to 30% for California (California Department of Education, 2023). The pre-pandemic chronic absenteeism rate was 9% (compared to 12% for California). It is likely that absenteeism reduced the use of ECE by school age children provided through schools.

School absenteeism may also be caused by older children taking care of the younger siblings at home. Studies estimate that up to 30% of adolescents take care of younger siblings (Armstrong-Carter, et al., 2023). Older siblings are the most available form of ECE for parents with unstable and unpredictable work schedules. ECE for younger siblings is estimated to be highest for Mexican American girls (49% of Tulare County school age children). Research shows that providing ECE for younger siblings has both positive and negative effects on children (Armstrong-Carter, et al., 2023). Consistently, one of the negative effects is missing school, with absenteeism rates as high as 28% for students providing ECE (East & Hamill, 2013).

Throughout California, better participant documentation and attention to absenteeism procedures can help Tulare and other counties understand and improve the use of ECE among school age children.

24% of “Children Eligible for Subsidized ECE” Use It

As discussed earlier (Figure 5), over 50% of children in Tulare County live in families earning income low enough to be eligible for government financial assistance to pay for ECE. ECE during school hours is “free” for all children in TK and elementary school. Government assistance may be the only way to obtain and afford ECE for families with infants, toddlers and preschoolers not eligible for TK and for ECE during non-school hours. Table 4 shows enrollment in subsidized ECE programs and services. The total count is a conservative underestimate because:

- 1) Some children may be double-counted because they participate in multiple programs.
- 2) TK students are not included because they include families with and without eligibility for subsidized ECE.

Table 4. Tulare County Children Enrolled in Different Types of Subsidized ECE

Children Enrolled in . . .	Infants & Toddlers	Preschool	School Age	All Ages
Alternative Payment	86	252	648	986
CA State Preschool (CSPP, Title V) Full-Time	--	698	--	698
CA State Preschool, (CSPP, Title V) Part-Time	--	2,446	--	2,446
General Child Care and Development Programs (CCTR)	106	54	27	187
Early Head Start	215	0	--	215
Head Start	87	735	--	822
Migrant Head Start	9	48	--	57
Migrant Child Care and Development Programs (CMIG)	31	58	63	152
CalWORKs Stage 1	142	194		336
CalWORKs Stage 2	53	169	240	462
CalWORKs Stage 3	56	184	598	838
Migrant Alternative Payment Program (CMAP)	57	92	150	299
TOTAL ENROLLED	842	4,930	1,726	7,498
Total Combined	5,772			

2021-2022 from TCOE enrollment for subsidized programs. Children may be counted more than once across programs.

22,914 infants, toddlers, and preschoolers were eligible for subsidized ECE in Tulare County; Only 5,772 (25%) were enrolled in at least one subsidized ECE program.

As noted earlier, some reasons families do not use available ECE include inconvenient location of ECE for parents (especially in remote areas), ECE staffing shortages, lack of ECE facilities, and lack of understanding about available ECE options. The section "How can Tulare County address its unmet ECE need?" explores challenges to using available ECE.

Since 2021, California's ECE agencies have made it easier for more families to qualify for subsidized ECE. For example the income eligibility for the California State Preschool Program was increased from 85% to 100% of the state median income. In addition, the income eligibility guidelines for the Alternative Payment Program increased which allowed more families to qualify based on need for ECE and income level. This change increased enrollment in the Alternative Payment Program from 1,135 children in 2021 to 2,265 in June 2024. These improvements increase ECE options for more families eligible for subsidized ECE.



How Much Unmet Need Exists?

The term "unmet need" describes how many more children may need ECE beyond those who are using it. The results about unmet need help us plan for additional staff, facilities, and other resources to ensure all children have ECE.

Figure 7 on the next page shows the results of calculations of unmet need. The sum of all children receiving ECE is called "supply" because this estimates how much ECE is used. Supply of ECE is subtracted from the total children eligible to receive ECE to calculate "unmet need." This calculation is done separately for each of the three age groups: all children, children in working families, and children in a family eligible for subsidized care.

50% or More Children Have "Unmet Need"

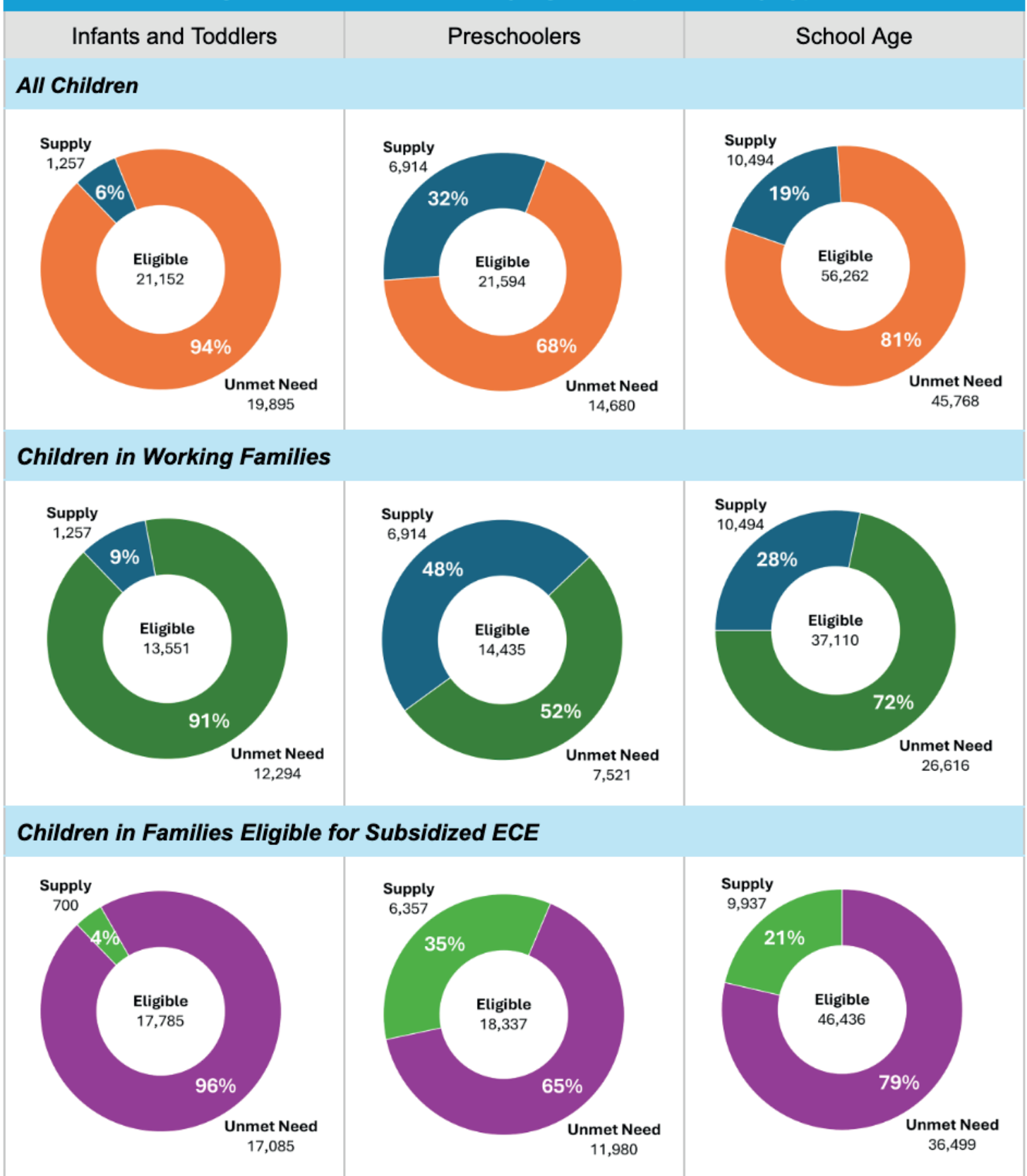
Infants and toddlers have the highest unmet need across all age groups. Unmet need for infants and toddlers is common throughout the US because staffing and facilities to care for infants and toddlers are expensive and missing. The highest unmet need is for infants and toddlers in families eligible for subsidized care. These families are not likely to receive ECE without some financial support.

Preschoolers in working families have the best availability to ECE, with 48% enrolled in some type of ECE. Over 60% of preschoolers in the general population and in families eligible for subsidized ECE are lacking availability to ECE. Substantial room exists to address unmet need for preschoolers.

School age children have less unmet need because they are enrolled in school for a portion of the day. ECE during non-school hours (e.g., after school, weekends, holidays) is important. The state-funded After School Education and Safety (ASES) Program in Tulare County had space for over 8,000 students in 2021-2022. In the 2022-2023 fiscal year, the state invested nearly \$4 billion in the Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELO-P), the highest in the program's history. ELO-P funds after school programs for TK through sixth grade. State-validated data on student participation in after school programs were not available at the time of the needs assessment. Calculations for unmet need were based on the latest available ASES data from 2021-2022.



Figure 7. Unmet ECE Need by Age Group and Family Type



Calculations for School Age children do not include ELO-P enrollment. Substantial funding increases in ELO-P in 2022-2023 likely increased after school enrollment. State data on ELO-P enrollment were not available at the time of this report.

How Can Tulare County Address Its Unmet ECE Need?

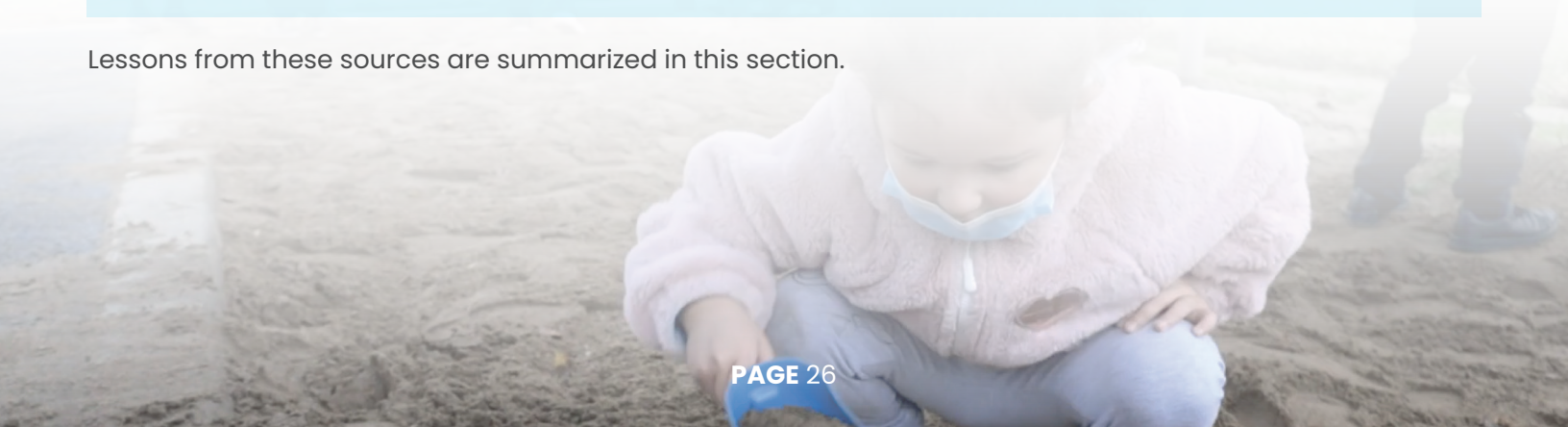
So far we have learned:

- How many children may need ECE.
Roughly 100,000 children ages birth to 12, and about 46,000 children ages birth to five (before they start kindergarten or first grade).
- How much ECE is available.
Roughly 11,000 spaces, conservatively serving at least that many children (usually ages birth to five).
- How much ECE is used.
For children ages birth to five, about 40% of available ECE is being used overall, and about 24% of children eligible for subsidized ECE use it.
- How many children have unmet ECE need.
ECE is unmet for over 90% of infants and toddlers, and over 50% of preschoolers.
School age children in TK through sixth grade may get after school care through the Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELO-P). California ELO-P enrollment statistics are forthcoming.

The Needs Assessment examined information from four sources to understand and address challenges in making ECE available to all children and families.

- Existing demographic and services data about children and families
- Input from parents and primary caregivers from a Parent Survey
- Planning information for Universal Pre-Kindergarten from Tulare County Local Educational Agencies (LEAs, consisting of school districts and charter schools)
- Input from a varied community audience at the Tulare County Council on Child and Youth Development's 15th Annual Legislative Event

Lessons from these sources are summarized in this section.



ECE Must Attend to Culture, Poverty, and Related Conditions

Figure 8 illustrates the diversity of children in the county. The larger Latino community suggests that ECE programs may increase their reach by understanding Latino traditions and values, and ensuring staff understand and represent Latino parents. At least one staff person speaks Spanish at 29% of Licensed Child Care Centers and 76% of

Licensed Family Child Care Homes (California Child Care Resource & Referral Network, 2021). Information on how many TK teachers and staff speak Spanish was not available.

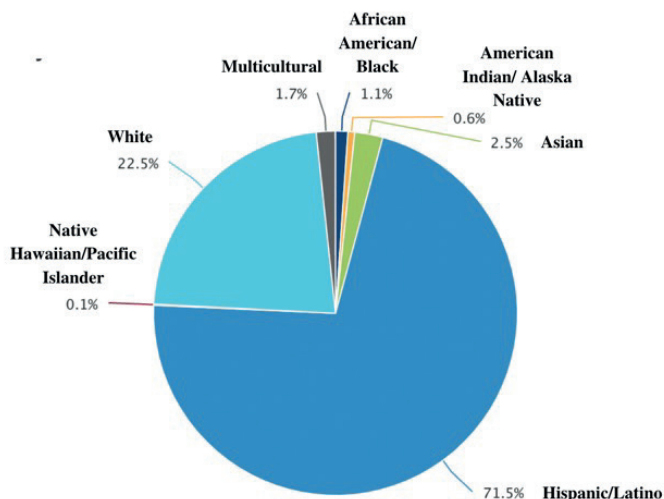
Over 85 languages other than English are spoken in homes throughout Tulare County (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). Approximately 2,500 kindergartners in Tulare County speak Spanish (California Department of Education, 2023). The next most common languages among kindergartners was Arabic (27), Vietnamese (10), and Cantonese and Tagalog (both with 7 students). Tulare County's languages extend beyond Spanish, the most common language spoken other than English. Information on how many ECE teachers and staff speak languages other than English and Spanish was not readily available.

The famous linguist Edward Sapir said, "People who speak different languages live in different worlds, not the same world with different labels." More information is needed to understand how prepared our ECE providers and programs are to attend to and uplift the numerous languages and cultures of Tulare County's families. Research shows that among families with a home language other than English, parents hesitate to enroll their child in ECE that may not have staff who speak their language. Parent concerns about staff not speaking their language extend to fears about providers not understanding their child's cultural needs, not being able to communicate to them about their child's care, and contributing to the loss of their child's home language.

The large percent of children in Tulare who speak a language other than English at home provides an opportunity to support multilingualism. Research shows children under age five can learn to speak multiple languages at the same time (Okal, 2014). The personal and professional advantages of multilingual and multicultural skills are well documented. ***Greater attention to culture and language may increase and improve ECE for families from different cultures and speaking different languages.***

Figure 8. Child Race and/or Ethnicity in Tulare County

Kids Data, 0-17 years old, American Community Survey 2020



Children with special needs are an important part of the county's child population. Over 10,000 children in Tulare County have one or more special need (Kids Data, 2021).

• Autism	1,195	• Speech or Language Impairment	1,390
• Emotional Disturbance	207	• Traumatic Brain Injury	41
• Hard of Hearing / Deaf	177	• Visual Impairment	35
• Intellectual Difference	1,357	• Multiple Special Needs	36
• Learning Difference	3,472	• Other Health Impairment	2,225
• Orthopedic Impairment	69		

Most parents with a child with special needs in Tulare County (60%) had difficulty finding ECE because of their child's special need (Tulare County ECE Parent Survey, 2023). Children with developmental, physical, and health challenges require ECE that is sensitive to and developmentally appropriate for their needs. State and federal programs exist to support ECE for children with special needs. County Offices of Education and school districts are encouraged to look for ways to integrate children with special needs into mainstream classrooms. ***ECE providers require partnerships with health leaders and families to ensure adequate care for children with special needs.***

Early intervention is critically important to improving the quality of life for children with special needs. ECE providers can remind and encourage families with children younger than age 3 to work with Central Valley Regional Center (a program of the California Department of Development Services) to complete an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). The IFSP helps to identify the services that a family needs to help them enhance the development of their child. Children ages 3 and older complete an Individualized Education Program (IEP) through their school district to identify the best way to address their needs during ECE. ***ECE providers may be an important resource to help families to identify and plan early interventions for children with special needs.***

ECE providers are serving children's needs related to families with lower income and poverty. Over 80% of children ages 0 to 12 live in low income families. Nearly 25% live in poverty. Low family income affects children in many ways, including availability to nutritious food, books and other early literacy materials at home, stable housing, and home and neighborhood safety.

ECE providers are serving children's needs related to housing stability. Approximately 3,126 children are experiencing homelessness.

ECE providers are serving children's needs related to abuse and neglect. Hundreds of children are displaced from their families due to threats of abuse and neglect. For example, Child Protective Services has removed 739 children from the care of their primary caregiver due to concerns of abuse and neglect. Of those children, 362 are in foster care (CDE, 2022).

The development of children – even when growing up in adverse conditions – is shaped by their early experiences with caring adults. The earlier, more frequent and more enriching the experiences, the greater the immediate and longer-term impact on a child’s success personally and for their community (as an employee, civic leader, parent). There may be few other topics so well researched (and continued to be researched) as the impact of ECE on the development of children, adults, and the community (Mays, 2016; Temple & Reynolds, 2007).

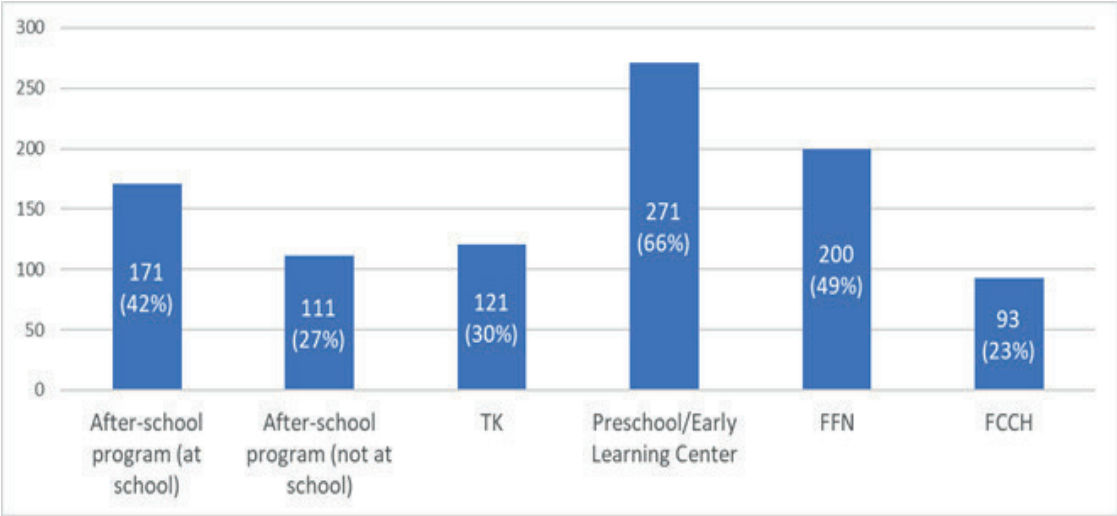


For years, studies have shown that ECE helps children reduce and reverse the effects of societal challenges, including poverty and abuse. ***ECE providers are a vital resource for addressing the socio-economic challenges children face.***

ECE Must Be Enriching, Affordable, and Fit Parent Work Schedules

Over 700 parents and primary caregivers completed the 2023 Tulare County ECE Parent Survey, and 410 had one or more children receiving ECE in Tulare County.

Figure 9. Type of ECE Used by Tulare County Parents
(From the 2023 Parent Survey. Each parent may use multiple types of ECE.)



While most parents (over 80%) receive ECE at a licensed center (e.g., preschool) or family home, 62% of parents did not know if their provider was licensed. ***ECE providers might consider providing parents with more information about the importance of licensing for ECE.***

We wanted to understand the reasons parents use ECE beyond allowing them to work. Parents were asked how ECE benefited their child. ***Across all types of ECE, most parents (80%) said that ECE is important because it supports their child's social and emotional development.***

Other reasons ECE matters to parents are because ECE teaches children to play and get along with others (77%), it supports children's education (72%), and it prepares children to succeed in elementary school (61%).

As discussed in the Introduction, Tulare County's workforce is dominated by jobs that require parents to find ECE (e.g., agriculture, transportation, services industry). **Nearly 70% of parents use ECE to work.** While 71% of parents need care on weekdays, 50% of parents also need care on weekends, during nightshifts and during overtime work. Parents also emphasized that they could not find ECE that fits the hours they need (19%) and that ECE is too far from home or work (11%). Most parents (72%) missed work at least one day during the year due to lack of ECE, and 50% missed five or more work days. ECE during non-traditional hours may be difficult to find. Licensed Centers usually do not offer ECE during non-traditional hours. About 41% of Family Child Care Homes offer evening, weekend or overnight care. Friends, Family and Neighbors (FFN) are the most likely source of ECE during non-traditional hours.

The top barrier to ECE for parents was the cost of ECE.

- **47% of parents with ECE believe *it costs too much***
- **47% of parents did not get ECE at some time because it was too expensive**
- **24% of parents *stayed home* to care for their children because ECE was *too expensive***
- **50% of parents *depended on government-subsidized ECE* (based on eligibility and need)
68% of these parents would not be able to afford any ECE without this aid**

On average, parents monthly costs for ECE were \$661. The median (50%) of parents paid \$300 per month for ECE. About 25% or more of parents paid more than \$900 per month. These estimates parallel the state reimbursement rate per child to ECE providers (Regional Market Rate, RMR) in Table 5.

Table 5. Monthly Regional Market Rate for Full-Time ECE Per Child

	Infants & Toddlers	Preschoolers	School Age
Licensed Child Care Centers	\$1,188	\$752	\$731
Licensed Family Child Care Homes	\$886	\$756	\$669

California Department of Education Management Bulletin, 2021

The California Child Care Resource and Referral Network estimates that a family with at least one preschooler and one infant or toddler may pay over 30% of their monthly budget for ECE. Families eligible for subsidized care may reduce this to 10% of their monthly budget.

Early Stages of Implementing Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK)

In 2021, California legislation began to increase requirements and support for Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK). UPK is a monumental change in California to increase availability to ECE. UPK includes ECE within and outside of schools, during school and non-school hours. To accomplish UPK, state agencies are providing guidance and funding to counties to plan a "mixed delivery system" for ECE. The mixed delivery system includes the Head Start Program, the California State Preschool Program (CSPP), family child care providers, private preschool programs (e.g., operated in businesses, churches, and non-profit organizations), and care from family, friends, and neighbors (FFN).

With changes in legislation, the state budget began including grants to County Offices of Education and school districts to lead UPK planning. Guidelines for UPK planning grants ask counties to review all school and school district operations, including staff recruitment and training, facilities, transportation, and auxiliary services (e.g., school meals, afterschool care). As part of UPK planning, CDE requires all local education agencies (LEAs), such as school districts and charter schools to complete a UPK Planning Survey. The first survey was completed in 2022. The survey was very comprehensive and required input from various staff to complete. This survey was the first comprehensive assessment of how schools were planning for UPK.

The Needs Assessment included an analysis of the 47 Tulare County LEAs surveys completed between September and November 2022. This is a summary of lessons from the analysis.

1. The focus of UPK planning for LEAs is the expansion of Transitional Kindergarten (TK).

TK is free and part of the public school system. TK is a new grade to enroll children in school before they are old enough for kindergarten. The age-eligibility for TK changes slightly through the 2025–2026 school year by when all children who turn 4 years old by September 1 will be eligible to enroll in TK.

2. TK implementation will include expanding school collaborations with school districts, CSPP, Head Start, and ELO-P (after school and extended day programs).

80% of LEAs plan to offer TK at all elementary schools for the full school day.

83% of LEAs are preparing to serve families who opt in for extended learning and care by expanding learning programs on the LEA site (e.g., ASES, 21st Century Community Learning Centers).

50% or more LEAs plan to offer TK faster than legislated by the state to enable more four year-old children to enter TK sooner than the 2025–2026 school year.

3. Facilities and transportation seem ready for TK enrollment, and will expand as TK grows.

- 77% of LEAs have adequate classroom space to meet the projected enrollment of TK students for the upcoming implementation year(2022).
- 68% of LEAs reported that their Facilities Master Plan adequately addressed the need for TK programming.
- 49% of LEAs plan to update their total amount of space to increase TK capacity.
- 81% will provide transportation to and from the TK program (but not to extended learning and care opportunities at other sites). Note, transportation is not required by law.

4. Plans include supporting multilingual education, children with special needs, and other ways to ensure developmentally appropriate TK.

- 60% of LEAs noted support for the development of social-emotional learning and executive function skills through multiple methods of instruction (e.g., designing developmentally appropriate learning environments, promoting learning through play) and by embedding and reinforcing this instruction in all curriculum areas.
- 50% or more LEAs indicated they will provide training on children's literacy and language development aligned with the Preschool Learning Foundations and Frameworks.
- 30% of LEAs asked for help to recruit multilingual educators, to develop and use materials and interventions that are culturally representative of children, and to understand different cultures.
- 30% of LEAs requested guidance on best practices for enrolling more children with special needs in TK classrooms and making sure they are part of appropriate services.

UPK expansion will increase ECE availability for all children. TK is a part of how UPK will contribute to universal availability to ECE. It is important to remember that all partners of UPK – schools, licensed centers and family homes, and family, friends, and neighbors – are essential to achieving the goal of universal ECE for all children. **LEAs are working with TCOE (e.g., TCOE UPK Coordinator) to prepare developmentally appropriate and safe environments for the younger students lacking familiarity with school campuses.**

Ideas and Action Steps from ECE Stakeholders

Among Tulare County's assets for ECE is the Tulare County Council on Child and Youth Development Annual Legislative Event. The Legislative Event is a public, community-wide event engaging all stakeholders in Tulare County. This includes ECE providers from community-based organizations, businesses, homes, schools, employers, public and private agencies, colleges and universities, and elected representatives from cities, the county, and the state.

Participants were asked to complete a brief survey at the end of the event. Participants were asked "How can we make it possible for all children to receive high quality early care and education (ECE) in Tulare County?" One hundred six participants offered comments. These comments are summarized into action steps and key ideas.

Key Ideas Emerging from ECE Stakeholders

Access: We need ECE access for all children, not based on income

- Flexible ECE based on parent needs
- Transportation to ECE
- Earlier drop-off times and later pick-ups
- Subsidized quality care for all 0-5 regardless of family income.
- More staff with skills to care for children with Special Needs

Collaboration: We need to collaborate and network for solutions

- Need a network of agencies that can strategize and act together to address shared priorities
- Partner with other underserved fields and collaborate to advocate in Sacramento.

Parent Engagement: We need parents as partners, not clients

- Educate parents that ECE is important so they can know to ask for it
- Help parents see how ECE benefits their children, especially socialization
- Go beyond caring for children to teaching parents and families skills to parent their child

Staff Support: We must support more qualified staff

- Higher pay, competitive wages and better benefits for all ECE staff
- Support ECE career pipelines
- Pay for staff to increase their ECE education and teaching level
- Increase professional development training opportunities and stipends

Tulare County Future Plans to Support ECE

The Needs Assessment taught us that the demand for ECE is much greater than our supply, especially for ages 0–3. Our county's predominant agricultural and service workforce needs ECE during non-traditional hours (e.g., outside of school hours). Children living in families with low income have the hardest time accessing ECE. Some ECE supply goes unused. Suggested improvements include making ECE available at times and locations parents need, increasing affordability and facilities, and attending to culture, language, and other needs.

To advance our support for ECE, five recommendations emerged from the Legislative Event:

Increase awareness about ECE throughout Tulare County

Increase awareness and education for parents about the importance of ECE and TK

Improve communication, understanding, and collaboration within ECE across schools, CBOs, and private and public agencies

Increase attention to ECE salaries and workforce

Increase support for ECE at the state level

To achieve these priorities, we must improve the networking of resources and collaboration across our strengths. The Tulare County UPK Master Plan describes how partnerships within and across sectors can contribute to 5-year goals to improve the amount, quality, and availability of ECE. Our collaboration must include community ECE providers, parents, schools, businesses, and civic and elected leaders. This is the best ECE for all children and families, and it is UPK the Tulare County way!

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APPENDICES



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