

## Smart Beginnings Employee Perspectives on Child Care and Workforce Impact Survey Results (March 20, 2009)

*“In Charlottesville there is very limited high quality child care (centers) that have openings and hours that work with a working parent's schedule.”*

The Smart Beginnings initiative surveyed over 4,400 employees at 13 area employers. The community-wide surveys on *Employee Perspectives on Child Care and Work Force Impact* were conducted after an initial State Farm employee survey revealed significant needs and challenges in the area of child care and its impact on the workforce and absenteeism. The survey questions were designed to elicit the perspectives of working parents on the costs and availability of childcare options and their perspective of the workforce impact when balancing the care of young children and a job.

Each employer conducted the *Employee Perspectives on Child Care and Work Force Impact* survey with their employees. The participating businesses ranged in size from fewer than 10 employees to more than 1,500 employees, including a mix of private and public entities. Over 700 employees responded. The survey respondents were self-selecting and primarily included those with children or grandchildren not in kindergarten in their care. The response rate was 71% for small businesses, 27% for mid-size businesses and 14% for large employers. Participating employers included: State Farm, LexisNexis, *The Daily Progress*, Williams Mullen, Virginia National Bank, Region Ten CSB, United Way, SNL Financial, Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce, Piedmont Virginia Community College, CB Richard Ellis, County of Albemarle and the City of Charlottesville.

LexisNexis has provided an analysis of the survey findings. Overall, the survey responses support a continued investment in early childcare options in the Charlottesville/Albemarle area.

### **Finding Child Care**

*“It's very difficult finding available, affordable child care. Our first child care option had very frequent turnover; our second child care option was very high quality but extremely expensive.”*

*“Many jobs now require time outside the 9-5pm job, providers are hard to find.”*

17% of respondents were very satisfied, 57% were somewhat satisfied and 15% were very dissatisfied with their child care option. 50% of respondents reported that finding childcare was somewhat or very difficult.

### **Types of Child Care**

Nearly half (46%) of employees that responded to the question about types of care utilize child care centers. 29% of respondents utilize a family member and 20% utilize family day care or a babysitter's at the babysitter's home.

### **Cost, Limited Hours and Low Quality Care**

*“Cville has VERY VERY expensive child care options. We no longer have small kids but when we needed the care it was cheaper for my wife to quit her job and stay home.”*

*“The cost (of child care) is just too much and I can't afford it and because of that, I feel my child won't get the early education she deserves to get her ready for school!”*

Cost was stated as the number one problem in regards to finding child care. The respondents cited 1) cost, 2) lack of openings and 3) (tied) limited hours and low quality of care as their primary concerns. Only 14% reported encountering no problems in finding childcare.

### **Impact on Work**

*“Parent absenteeism for children does impact my work (team work is difficult when the team does not show up).”*

The lack of childcare options has an impact on employers. 62% of employees noted that childcare problems had some level of impact on their work schedules. Over half (52%) of those responding have missed work to handle a childcare issue.

**High-Quality and Affordable Care**

*“I was dismayed that there was not a greater focus on quality early childhood education. There are only a handful of nationally accredited centers.”*

The respondents provided 51 additional comments. The concerns most frequently raised (21 comments) addressed the cost of care and the difficulty of finding both high-quality and affordable care.

These survey findings on local child care needs and the impact on the workforce will be included in Smart Beginnings upcoming report on the state of local school readiness, to be released in Spring 2009.

**For more information:**

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