



Access to Early Care and Education

Spring 2024 Progress Report

Every Child Thrives is a collaborative network of 60+ active and engaged community partners, whose vision is to ensure every child has the opportunity to thrive in health, learning and life. Every Child Thrives aligns the work and resources of many organizations (including Foundation strategic investments) to support three priority areas: Strong Families, Kindergarten Readiness and School Success.

PRIORITY: _____

Kindergarten Readiness

STRATEGY: _____

Provide great early learning opportunities for every child

WHY INVEST? _____

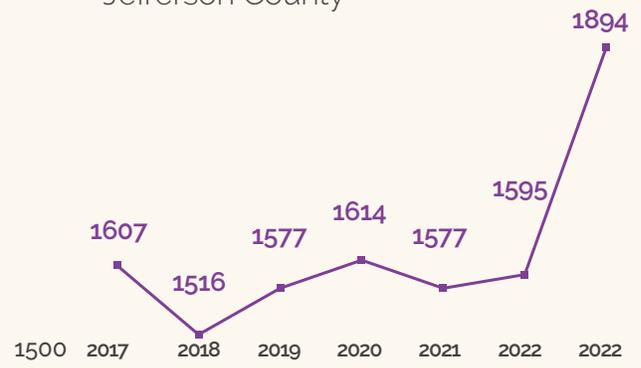
The costs to operate a childcare business are greater than the tuition fees working parents can afford. This broken business model has forced provider closures and created a childcare desert in Dodge and Jefferson Counties - meaning there are more than three children for every available slot. Quality early care and education has lifelong benefits, but the trend of closures means fewer children have access, which also limits the ability of parents to work.

Learn more about our work on Access to Early Care and Education at our website: watertownhealthfoundation.com.

KEY PARTNERS: _____

- » Childcare providers
- » Dodge County
- » Jefferson County
- » City of Watertown
- » State of Wisconsin Dream Up grant
- » Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA)
- » Raising Wisconsin
- » Madison College
- » Local Business Owners
- » Dodge County Dream Up Collaborators

2000 **Licensed child care slots**
Jefferson County



*2023 data is through September. Data source: Wisconsin Dept. of Children and Families, Bureau of early care regulation.



Impact from FY2023

Earned \$75,000 Dream Up grant

A collaborative team of Dodge County early care and education advocates successfully completed activities funded through a Wisconsin Department of Children and Families grant, including many of the following accomplishments.

Created 166 new childcare slots

Provided startup coaching and assistance to one new center and two expansion projects. Unfortunately, the closing of Mary Linsmeier Preschool in 2023 also meant a loss of 50 slots in Watertown.

- » New YMCA Early Education Center at the Collective (96 slots)
- » Expansion at Willows Christian Childcare Center in Iron Ridge (38 slots)
- » Expansion at Gingerbread Preschool & Childcare Center in Watertown (32 slots, plus 20 for ages 5+)

Provided operations support to 44 early care providers

Partnered with the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA) to give early care providers access to cost-savings, back-office assistance, and other services that help them manage their businesses more efficiently and cost-effectively, aiming to retain existing slots in our region.

13 more providers joined the Wisconsin Early Education Shared Services Network (WEESN).



Activated support for policy change

Supported issue advocacy and education at the state and national levels, making the voices of local early care providers and business leaders heard.

- » Hosted educational event in Beaver Dam for state legislators, who heard firsthand from area employers that lack of childcare impacts ability to hire and retain quality employees.
- » Every Child Thrives partners participated in Madison Advocacy Day hosted by Raising Wisconsin. Early care providers also visited Congressional leaders in Washington, DC.
- » Area business leaders testified at a Legislative Finance Committee hearing.
- » Every Child Thrives was invited to speak to Wisconsin's Legislative Children's Caucus and at "Winning with Wisconsin's Workforce," hosted by the Department of Workforce Development.



Fostered pipeline of qualified, passionate early care educators

Launched a 3-year partnership with Madison College to offer free early childhood classes at Watertown campus that includes a pathway to scholarship-supported (no-cost) associate's and/or bachelor's degrees in early education.

- » Since Fall 2023, all classes have had full enrollment.
- » 4 students from Dodge and Jefferson Counties achieved their basic childhood educator credentials (completing the three required classes).



2024 GOALS FOR EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION INVESTMENTS	2024 GOAL
ACCESS: Increase the number of licensed childcare slots	335
EMPLOYER SPONSORED CARE (WATERTOWN PILOT PROJECT): Number of community employers who financially support early care and education	5
WORKFORCE: Number of new Dodge and Jefferson County residents achieving basic childhood educator credentials	15
QUALITY: Percent benchmark of quality measures in place across Pyramid Model sites	80%

In progress now

Supporting start-ups and expansions:

Our partner, Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA) is providing start-up coaching to three area churches interested in starting or expanding early care and education programs. We have plenty of capacity to support more interested individuals and organizations.

Partnering with Wisconsin Latino

Chamber of Commerce: Slated to launch in May, the "Futuro" (Future) program (founded in 2023) is a childcare center incubator that identifies and nurtures aspiring entrepreneurs with an interest in launching their own daycare.

Piloting employer sponsored care:

A pilot program in Watertown with five participating employers is currently underway.

Building a unified advocacy approach:

- » Joined the Wisconsin Philanthropy Network and philanthropic partners across the state to apply for a Children's Funding Project grant to support fiscal mapping in Wisconsin.
- » Joined the National Collaborative for Infants and Toddlers, which focuses on advocacy for children Prenatal to age 3.

Maximizing existing programs:

Building connections to support youth apprenticeships, TEACH scholarships, and the CESA-led "Inspire" pilot program to grow future early care and education providers.

Supporting professional development for high-quality early care:

- » **March 8:** Sponsored "Biology of Trauma" training on navigating adversity by exploring biological and behavioral effects of trauma.
- » **April 30:** Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health (WIAMH)'s Virtual Spring Summit featuring special guest Dr. Dan Siegel.

Supporting high quality care:

Continuing to work with partner early care providers on training and coaching using the Pyramid Model, an evidence-based framework for early learning that emphasizes social-emotional life skills.

- » Benchmarks of Quality at Pyramid Model sites grew from 65% in 2022 to 77% in 2023.
- » Children aged 0 to 5 in Pyramid Model classrooms consistently show greater readiness for Kindergarten based on 2018-2023 Developmental Screening data.

