

Understanding the Need for Multi-Model Approach: Inclusive Options for Families

The semiconductor construction and facilities workforce will need a range of child care options

Families often choose child care arrangements based on factors such as their child's age, developmental needs, working schedules, budget, and personal preferences. A plan to provide reliable, accessible, affordable high quality child care must provide families with a range of options that meet their diverse needs, including multiple care options for an individual family and care for nontraditional hours in early mornings, nights and weekends as well as flexible timing that reflects the nature of their work.

As we mentioned in Chapter 2 of this Toolkit, the Department of Commerce's Workforce Development Planning Guide lays out models that are currently being used by employers and recognizes that "[many companies have successfully used mixed delivery models to provide benefits that are tailored to their workers' diverse needs.](#)" The four most likely models named are: (1) on-site care, operated by the employer; (2) on-site care, contractor operated; (3) off-site care, cash assistance; and (4) off-site care, provider sponsorship. A multi-pronged approach—combining these and other strategies is ideal for ensuring families can match with the child care arrangements that work best for them. Employers can invest in child care provisions that offer a variety of choices to workers.

The following are the most common types of child care arrangements for families:

- **Family Child Care Homes:** Family child care homes are operated by individuals in their own residences. They offer care for a small group of children, usually a mix of different ages. Family child care providers follow licensing regulations and provide a home-like environment for smaller groups of children. They provide some of the most flexible care options in the child care system, including being more likely to provide care during nontraditional hours.
- **Family, Friend, and Neighbor care (FFN):** Private arrangements with family and friends as reliable child care providers refer to Family, Friend, and Neighbor care (FFN) where trusted family members or close friends take care of children. In these arrangements, child care is provided within the home environment of the caregiver,

(such as a grandparent's house or a friend's residence) or in the child's home. Care arrangements with family and friends offer several potential benefits. They often provide a familiar and comfortable setting for the child, promoting a sense of security and continuity. Because the provider can come to the family's home, informal in-home care removes the burden of transporting children to and from care. These arrangements are more likely to be available in the child's culture and/or language. Additionally, this form of care can offer flexibility in scheduling especially true if parents work nontraditional hours, such as second and third shifts, when most other types of care settings are closed. Often, this form of care also allows for most flexibility of care for households with multiple children of varying ages.

- **Center-Based Care:** These are licensed facilities that provide care and early education for children in a structured setting. Child care centers typically have multiple classrooms and age-specific programs, accommodating infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children. They employ qualified staff and follow specific curriculum guidelines. Facilities can be on-site at workplaces or off-site in the community. Most centers offer care during standard business hours and sometimes extended after-school hours.
- **Preschool Programs:** Preschool programs focus on early education and school readiness for children typically between the ages of three and five. These programs offer structured learning experiences and may operate within schools, child care centers, or standalone preschools.
- **Before and After School Programs:** These programs cater to school-aged children and provide care during the hours before and after the regular school day. They offer a safe and supervised environment for children, often including recreational activities, homework assistance, and opportunities for social interaction.
- **In-Home Child Care:** In-home child care involves hiring a caregiver who provides care for children within the family's own residence. This can include nannies, au pairs, or other types of in-home caregivers. In-home child care offers the convenience of personalized care within the familiar home environment.
- **Head Start and Early Head Start:** Head Start and Early Head Start programs are comprehensive early childhood development programs primarily targeting low-income families. They provide educational, health, nutritional, and social services to promote school readiness and support children's overall well-being.

Meeting the needs of nontraditional hours and culturally specific strategies

Some families face additional barriers to finding affordable child care, including low-income families; families of infants and toddlers; families who work nontraditional hours; families with a child or family member with a disability; immigrant families and families with limited English proficiency. Oftentimes, home-based child care providers can best meet the needs of parents who work nontraditional hours and/or seek culturally responsive providers.

- **Family child care homes and family, friends, and neighbor (FFN) child care offer the most flexible child care options** for working parents due to their inherent characteristics and arrangements. Family Child Care and FFN child care typically involve trusted individuals within a parent's personal network, such as relatives, close friends, or neighbors. This close relationship fosters a sense of trust and familiarity, providing parents with peace of mind knowing that their child is in a caring and familiar environment. They often provide more individualized and personalized care compared to other formal child care settings.
- **Both family child care and FFN child care arrangements are often more flexible in terms of scheduling.** Providers may be willing to accommodate irregular or non-traditional work hours, including early mornings, late evenings, or weekends, to support the varying schedules of working parents. Proximity and convenience for families occurs when they are located within or near the family's own neighborhood or community, making it convenient for parents to drop off and pick up their children. This proximity reduces commuting time and provides a more seamless transition between home and child care.

Additional mechanisms employers can use:

- **Subsidized or discounted child care spaces:** Employers can provide a certain number of subsidized or discounted child care spaces with local providers. This ensures that local families have access to affordable child care options and helps address the financial barriers that families face while ensuring local providers are earning sufficient and stable wages. However, with this option, it is important to consider how employee access to limited child care supply impacts the availability of care for other families in the local community.

- **Direct sponsorships or financial contributions:** Employers can make financial contributions to support the expansion or improvement of existing child care facilities in the community. This can involve providing funding for facility upgrades, equipment purchases, or staff training, ensuring more availability of high-quality child care services in the community. However, it may not, on its own, provide direct access to care for employees.
- **Direct cash assistance:** Employers can provide direct cash assistance to employees to find the child care option they need. However, there are significant tax implications for workers in this option, and without a broader fix to child care supply issues, workers will continue to face limited supply of available child care in their local region making it hard to secure care even with financial support.

Example: Wisconsin and New York

The TradesFutures organization, a national nonprofit promoting effective construction apprenticeship readiness programs especially for women and people of color, launched two pilot child care programs in 2022 in Milwaukee and New York City. The programs sought to reduce the burden of child care costs for trades workers by testing two different approaches on their Milwaukee and New York City sites. In Milwaukee workers were offered onsite child care near a construction worksite. In New York City, voucher payments were made directly to child care providers of pilot participants. In the Milwaukee site, interviews with potential pilot participants revealed they were unable to use the child care benefit because it did not fit their unique circumstances and specific child care needs. Program managers noted the learning lesson here for other employers is to ensure a thorough needs assessment be done before creating child care action plans. The Milwaukee pilot has since pivoted to voucher payments made directly to child care providers. Workers' needs are unique and programs should first be designed to understand what those current needs are and to be able reassess and pivot to meet emerging needs.