

the
family
conservancySM



Building Child Care Solutions

A Strategic Toolkit for Employers

Table of Contents

Why Invest	03
The Landscape	05
Getting Started	06
Explore Options	07
Build Your Plan	10
Put It Into Practice	14

This toolkit was developed by The Family Conservancy in partnership with Raising WYCO and the Wyandotte Economic Development Council.



About This Toolkit

The Strategic Advantage of investing in Child Care

Providing child care solutions is a powerful way to attract and retain top talent in today’s competitive job market. Working parents — who make up a significant portion of today’s workforce — are looking for more than just a paycheck. They value benefits and a workplace culture that support their well-being and family life, including access to reliable, high-quality child care.

But the child care landscape is complex. Many families face options that are expensive, hard to secure—especially during nonstandard hours—and often unreliable. These challenges directly impact employee attendance, productivity, retention, and career advancement. According to recent studies, lack of access to child care costs U.S. businesses billions of dollars each year. The connection is clear: when employees can’t find affordable, dependable child care, businesses feel the effects.

By investing in child care solutions, employers can reduce these burdens—helping families and improving workplace outcomes. It’s a strategic way to retain top talent, support employee well-being, and build a resilient workforce.

Recognizing the link between child care access and business performance, employers across industries are stepping up. Whether you lead a small team or a large organization, there are flexible strategies to meet your workforce’s needs—and your company’s goals.

This toolkit is designed for C-suite decision-makers and business leaders ready to take action. Inside, you’ll find:

- A look at how child care challenges impact your employees and your company.
- An overview of available child care solutions.
- A step-by-step guide to implementation.
- Strategies for measuring the return on your investment.

Why Invest

in Child Care Solutions

Child care challenges directly affect your company's ability to recruit and retain top talent. They also hinder employee focus, productivity, and advancement. When reliable, affordable care isn't available, even your most dedicated employees may turn down promotions or leave the workforce altogether. In fact, a national survey found that 9 in 10 working parents would prefer a consistent annual child care subsidy over a one-time cash bonus—underscoring just how critical this support is to today's workforce.¹

The Research is Clear^{1,2}

Recent research (sources on the following page) has focused on examining the impacts of child care on three broad categories:

1. Recruitment and retention
2. Productivity and presence
3. Job satisfaction and career progression

Recruitment and Retention^{1,2}

- Because of child care benefits, up to 86% of working parents are **more likely to stay with their employer.**
- 59% of employees said that if they had backup or subsidized child care, they would be **likely to stay put for at least 4 years.**
- 68% of employees said that if they had child care benefits, they would **“tell their friends to apply for jobs here”**

Productivity and Presence^{1,2}

- **70% of working parents' work days have been impacted** when child care falls through.
- Because of child care benefits, **working parents avoid up to 16 absences per year.**
- One study that looked at workplace motivators found that **“simply knowing their kids were safe and cared for while they worked”** ranked higher than deadlines, flexibility, and financial goals.

Job Satisfaction and Career Progression^{1,2}

- Without child care, 64% of employees said that their **care responsibilities negatively impact their ability to take on extra work.**
- 63% of working parents reported having made **a career change to afford child care.**
- 56% of part-time or non-working **parents would go back to work full time** if they had access to quality child care at a reasonable price.

Sources:

¹*The ROI of Caregiving Benefits, The Fifth Trimester and Vivvi*

²*The Employee Benefit that Pays for Itself, Moms F1rst and Boston Consulting Group*

³*Workforce Child Care Needs Survey, The Family Conservancy*



We asked Kansas City employees how child care challenges impact their work.

The Return on Your Investment

Employers that invest in child care see improvements in recruitment and retention, on-the-job productivity and presence, and job satisfaction and career progression. This is borne out across studies measuring the return on investment (ROI) of child care benefits. In fact, one study found positive rates of return ranging from 90% to 425% when looking at companies that offer child care stipends, on- or near-site child care, and backup child care.²

The top three child care challenges were:³

1. **Affordability:** 70% of respondents said child care is too expensive.
2. **Work Schedules:** 48% said their work hours make it hard to find child care.
3. **Availability:** 39% reported not enough child care options in their area.

Child Care Has a Direct Business Impact³

- **48%** Struggled with late arrivals and early departures
- **37%** experienced unexpected absences
- **19%** of whom have had 3-4 unexpected absences
- **31%** reported having to rearrange their work
- **26%** were distracted or unproductive at work
- **16%** found they had less capacity for work
- **33%** of employees have considered leaving or cutting back on hours because of child care

The Landscape

Child Care Solutions in Kansas City

Navigating child care options can be overwhelming for working parents. Taking a closer look at what your employees face when searching for and selecting child care can help you select a high-impact child care benefit.

Why Child Care Is Getting Harder to Find and Afford

Parents can choose from a variety of child care options, including in-home, center-based, and preschool programs for young children and before- and after-school programs for older children. Some working parents also rely on informal care from other family members, friends, or neighbors.

Over time, the supply of child care in the Kansas City region has steadily declined — especially among family child care providers, who play a vital role in supporting working families. While many factors influence supply and demand, one of the most significant is the flawed economics of the child care business model. Providers face high fixed costs — like staffing, supplies, and facilities — yet most families can't afford to pay what it truly costs to deliver high-quality care. This leaves providers operating on razor-thin margins, with little room for error. When even a few families fall behind on payments or enrollment dips, programs struggle to stay open — leading to closures, reduced availability, and fewer options for parents.

Dig Into the Data

Child Care Access and Availability Across the Kansas City Region

Want to better understand the child care landscape in your community? Explore up-to-date data on availability, cost, and program types across the Kansas City region.

This resource from The Family Conservancy provides valuable insights into where care is most needed — and how local trends may impact your employees and business.

Get Started

Understanding Your Employees' Child Care Needs

Before selecting a child care solution, it's important to understand what it is your employees need and want. Asking simple questions about the hours of care needed, the type of child care employees prefer, and how they handle child care disruptions - things like child care closures, school breaks, or other unexpected changes to their regular child care arrangements - can help you quickly get to the option that will work best for your employees and your company.

There are many ways to gather this information directly from employees. You can:

- Conduct an employee survey (*sample below*).
- Host a focus group for working parents and caregivers.
- Connect with employee resource groups to gain insight.
- Tap your internal human resources system or benefits broker to get a sense of the number of employees that carry dependents on your company-sponsored health insurance plan, the median age of employees by shift, or other key data.

Talking to your employees to understand their needs is both a necessary first step in assessing how to address child care challenges and key to your ongoing success. Consider how to create feedback loops with working parents to keep them engaged throughout the process. Their input can help you make important decisions along the way and course-correct when needed.

Other key perspectives to include in your planning and decision-making process are those of middle managers, human resources leaders, and financial and operations teams. These partners can help you quickly pinpoint the impact of child care challenges on your business; engaging them early in the process can help you leverage their support during implementation.



Employee Survey

Use our template to survey employees about child care needs.

Support for KS Employers

Partner with Child Care Aware of Kansas to strengthen your workforce.

Explore Options

Understanding Your Employees' Child Care Needs

When it comes to child care solutions, there is no “one-size-fits-all” option that will work for all employers and all employees. But with a deeper understanding of your employees’ child care needs, you can select one or more solutions that will achieve your desired impact. The child care solutions described in this section can be thought of in terms of workplace policies, benefits that require a financial investment, providing direct access to child care, and broader involvement in efforts to improve access to child care. Some solutions can be implemented quickly and require little to no financial investment while others require significant planning and long-term financial commitment. No matter what shape your child care strategy takes, your investment will pay off.

Workplace Policies

Difficulty: **Low**

Cost: **Low**

Flexible Scheduling

Policies that support workplace flexibility benefit all employees but may be particularly appreciated by working parents and caregivers. Examples of flexible scheduling can include the following:

- Allowing start/end time flexibility while establishing “core” business hours
- Allowing employees to establish alternative schedules, such as working four ten-hour days
- Allowing employees to flex worktime within a pay period

Flexible Locations

When feasible, offering employees the flexibility to work remotely or in a hybrid capacity can alleviate the challenges of juggling both child drop off/pick up schedules and a daily commute. Remote work options may also provide working parents with flexibility during unexpected closures or sick days (when back-up care is difficult to find).

Infants at Work Policy

Some workplaces may be positioned to consider a policy that allows new parents to bring their infant to work for the first weeks or months of the child’s life. Such policies clearly detail how care and supervision is to be provided while at work and may include an application and approval process.

Employee Resource Groups

Supporting an employee resource group focused on parents and caregivers is one way to demonstrate your company’s commitment to fostering a family-friendly workplace. Connecting working parents and caregivers to one another may increase resource-sharing among participants and offer a supportive environment for employees to navigate challenges.

Leverage Your Employee Assistance Program

Ensuring your EAP provider is knowledgeable of local and state child care resources, including details about child care assistance programs, means your employees have a trusted internal resource for high-quality information during their child care search.

Child Care Benefits

Difficulty: **Med.**

Cost: **Med.**

Concierge Child Care Referral Services

Finding the right child care can be overwhelming for parents and caregivers. Investing in personalized support services that guide families through the process—helping them understand what to look for in high-quality care, identify available openings, and select a program that fits their needs—can reduce stress and save time. These services are offered by child care resource and referral agencies.

Dependent Care Flexible Savings Accounts

Offering a Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account (DCFSA) gives employees the ability to set aside pre-tax dollars to pay for eligible child care and other dependent care expenses. Many employers choose to enhance this benefit by contributing matching funds. The IRS allows combined employee and employer contributions of up to \$5,000 per year (*increasing to \$7,500 beginning 12/31/2025*). DCFSA’s are typically managed by a third-party administrator and operate on a reimbursement basis.

Child Care Stipends and Scholarships

Child care is costly, especially for infants and families with more than one young child. Employer-provided child care stipends or scholarship programs can help offset these costs and ease the burden on working families. These benefits are often offered as reimbursements and may be administered internally or through a third-party provider, depending on company size and capacity. Some employers make the benefit available to all benefit-eligible employees, while others apply eligibility criteria such as household income.

Back-Up Child Care Services

Finding care for young children during inclement weather, school closures, or other disruptions is difficult for working parents and caregivers. For employers, investing in back-up child care can minimize unexpected attendance issues. Many employers that provide back-up child care benefits utilize third party vendors to connect employees to back-up care while others reimburse employees for back-up care at specific child care programs.

Paid Parental Leave

While not always thought of as a child care benefit, paid parental leave is incredibly valued by working families and allows many new parents to delay child care costs while on leave after birth or adoption.

On Site and Near-Site Child Care

Difficulty: High

Cost: High

Providing onsite or near-site child care can be an attractive option for larger employers. There are several ways to approach this child care solution, depending on the specific needs of employers and employees. This can include one or more of the following:

- Opening an employer-owned child care facility onsite.
- Partnering with a third party (often a corporate child care business) to operate a child care program onsite.
- Purchasing or subsidizing child care slots at a nearby child care program for the use of your employees.

Most employer-provided onsite or near-site child care programs prioritize enrollment of employee's children. Some may also welcome young children of non-employees both as a strategy to ensure full enrollment as well as a service to the broader community.

Planning for onsite or near-site child care requires the commitment of key leaders (such as your company's CEO and decision-makers from finance, operations, and human resources) and dedicated staff time to ensure thoughtful planning and successful implementation.

Community Involvement

Difficulty: Low

Cost: Low

Child care is a complex challenge—and solving it requires collaboration across all sectors. Businesses have a vital role to play by supporting community efforts that address local child care needs. You can also make a difference by advocating for local, state, and federal policies that invest in high-quality care for working families.

Connect with The Family Conservancy to explore how your business can get involved—whether through partnerships, policy advocacy, or local initiatives.



Build Your Plan

Once you have a clear understanding of your employees' child care needs, the impact on your business, and the array of child care solutions available to you, it's time to develop your child care plan. Key elements of your plan include the following:

- 1 Clarifying your vision.
- 2 Formulating your business case
- 3 Assessing readiness and buy-in, particularly for senior leaders.
- 4 Determining short- and long-term financial commitment.
- 5 Selecting one or more solutions to implement.

Clarify Your Vision

1

A vision statement provides a clear picture of what you want to achieve. It should be ambitious and capture your long-term goals for change. Getting clear on what you intend to accomplish by investing in child care solutions can keep your efforts on track and ensure that you have support from key leaders at every step in the process.

Guiding Questions

- What do we hope to achieve by addressing employee child care needs?
- How will things be different because of our efforts?
- What key organizational values inform and support our vision?
- What are the risks of investing in child care solutions?
- What are the risks of not investing in child care solutions?

Our Vision Statement

A strong vision statement clearly explains why investing in child care matters, what you hope to achieve, and how it aligns with your values and long-term goals.

Make Your Case

2

Articulating the business case for investing in child care is essential because it aligns the initiative with your core organizational goals. When you clearly communicate how investing in child care solutions directly impact employee recruitment, retention, and performance, it transforms the initiative from a perceived “perk” into a strategic investment. A strong business case also helps secure leadership buy-in, justify financial investment, and establish measurable success metrics—ensuring that the solution is not only well-intentioned but also sustainable and results-driven.

Example

Business Goal	Expected Impact	Metric to Track
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve recruitment Improve retention Improve productivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % increase in qualified applicants % decrease in turnover % decrease in unexpected absences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time to fill roles Quarterly or annual retention rate Quarterly or annual absenteeism rate

Your preliminary business case for investing in child care can also provide the foundation for your plan to measure the return on your investment (ROI) over time. For a complete toolkit to measure ROI, scan the QR code.

More information about the business case for investing in child care solutions is available on page 2.

Access Buy-in

3

You know your business best. Understanding how change happens – from adopting new behaviors to launching new initiatives – can help you anticipate potential challenges and work proactively to ensure your efforts are successful.

People typically experience change in stages, beginning with the early stages of thinking about something new. Once they understand what it is you’re trying to accomplish, they may begin preparing to act, then make the desired change. Understanding what stage of change your key stakeholders are experiencing is key to ensuring you’re able to support them in moving toward adopting the desired action or change. It’s also important to remember that change is not a one-and-done effort. As soon as you’ve launched your initiative, it’s time to revisit and reinforce your goals to sustain the change over time.



Guiding Questions

- How ready and engaged are senior leaders in addressing child care challenges?
- How ready and engaged are mid-level leaders?
- Who else do I need to engage if this project is going to be successful?
- Are there “early adopters” that could help me champion this project across the company?

Key Stakeholder	Stage of Change	Plan to Advance
Senior Leaders		
Mid-level Leaders		
Others		

Budgeting

4

Determining your company’s financial investment in child care solutions should take into account both your budget and the cost of the solutions you’d like to select. Working with your finance and operations teams to understand when annual budget decisions related to benefits are made can help you proactively position your child care plans for investment

The amount of investment required to implement your desired child care solutions is best determined on a case-by-case basis. Some solutions require no financial investment, others require significant up-front investment (for instance, opening a new onsite child care facility.

It’s also important to understand whether other financial resources may be available to you. These can include grants that support capital construction or renovation, child care materials and equipment, or professional development for child care staff.

Your financial investment in child care may qualify for state and federal tax credits, depending on the amount you invest and other factors. This will help offset your direct costs. No matter what child care solution you choose, your investment will pay for itself. You'll see a return on your investment through reduced turnover, reduced absences, and improved on-the-job productivity for your employees.

Your partners at The Family Conservancy can point you in the right direction. If you're in the Kansas City region, reach out for a [free consultation today](#).

Choose Your Solution

5

You know what your employees' child care needs are. You know the impact of child care challenges on your business. You're clear on your budget. Now, it's time to choose the solution (or combination of solutions) that will best address your employees' needs and your company's goals. Clearly defining your action steps, the timeframe for completion, and identifying who is responsible will help you stay on track for success.

Remember: it's OK to start small and build from there. If exploring onsite child care seems daunting, start with policy changes that support working parents or a smaller-scale investment in child care benefits, such as a Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account.

Actions Steps & Timeline

Describe the action steps you'll need to take – from pre-planning to “go live” – and your target timeline. You'll want to align with your company's annual budget cycles, open enrollment, and collective bargaining requirements (if applicable). The action steps you'll need to take depend on the solution(s) you've selected and how your company operates.

Example

Item	Lead	Date	Status
Conducting an employee survey			
<i>Pitching your business case to your company's leadership</i>			
<i>Developing a budget and seeking approval</i>			
<i>Working with your human resources team to revise policies</i>			
<i>Engaging employee resource groups for ongoing feedback throughout the implementation of your solution(s)</i>			
<i>Involving your benefits broker or another third party to offer or administer a child care benefit</i>			
<i>Engaging an internal or external project manager to plan and implement an onsite child care facility</i>			
<i>Engaging nearby child care programs to assess the possibility of subsidizing spaces for employee's children</i>			
<i>Executing contracts or agreements for services</i>			
<i>Working with your communications team to develop an internal communications plan that</i>			

Making Child Care Work

Investing in child care solutions is not just a gesture of goodwill - it's a strategic move that drives business performance, strengthens employee engagement, and builds a resilient workplace. By supporting working parents, you can reduce turnover, attract top talent, and enhance productivity across the board. This toolkit provides the structure and guidance needed to make informed, impactful decisions that align with both employee needs and organizational goals. Forward-thinking leaders who champion child care solutions position their companies for long-term success in an increasingly competitive and values-driven business landscape.

Additional Child Care Resources

Child Care Referral and Search Services

Families with young children can rely on child care resource agencies to find available child care that meets their needs. With a dynamic database of licensed child care providers and a team of support staff ready to assist, employees searching for child care will receive a customized list of options.

Child Care Assistance

Some families may be eligible for help paying for child care costs through Kansas and Missouri child care assistance programs. Information about the program by scanning the QR code on the right.

Kansas Resources

Child Care Referral and Search Services

Child Care Assistance

Missouri Resources

Child Care Referral and Search Services

Child Care Assistance

About The Family Conservancy

The Family Conservancy envisions a Kansas City region where every child has the foundation to flourish — and every caregiver is supported to nurture that journey. Through this toolkit and other resources, we build partnerships to improve access to child care, strengthen families, and support the workforce behind the workforce.

Worksheet

Workplace Child Care Solutions Planning Tool



Use this worksheet as a starting point to begin outlining your child care strategy.

Child Care Solution

Describe the child care solution(s) you plan to implement for your employees.

Anticipated Utilization

Describe how many employees and/or children you anticipate will utilize this solution.

Estimated Costs

Describe the costs to implement your child care solution(s). This could reflect both the total cost of the solution(s) and/or the estimated cost per employee/child.

Leadership Approval

Outline your internal approval process and list the individuals or departments whose support is required.

Internal Communications Plan

Engage your internal communications team to ensure that your employees are up-to-speed on your child care plan throughout the process. Outline key messages for employees and identify your communication channels (i.e. intranet, HRIS, email, meetings, etc.)
