



NEEDS ASSESSMENT

In determining the need for a child care program, a thorough needs assessment should be one of the first steps. The needs assessment is a planning tool designed to determine the child care needs in a certain area. It should also assess the extent to which existing programs meet these determined needs.

A NEEDS ASSESSMENT IS IMPORTANT TO:

- 1) Find out how many people in the community need a child care program (scope of need)
- 2) Find out what the general and/or specific needs of this population are.
- 3) Find out what existing programs and resources are already providing child care services.
- 4) Identify if there are gaps in the existing services and the needed services.

HOW DO YOU START THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT PROCESS?

- 1) Determine what information is needed. Compile a list of what information needs to be gathered in order to meet the goals of the needs assessment. Prepare questions to obtain the needed information. Information needed may include items such as:
 - the children under age 12 in the geographic area
 - the number of children under age 12 with working mothers/parents
 - the number of current child care programs and their locations
 - the ages served and capacities of existing programs
 - enrollment of existing programs (do they have openings, waiting lists?)
 - who needs care for children (the numbers and types of people needing care)
 - who wants care for children (example: employees of a certain corporation)
 - what kind of care is needed/wanted (infant, toddler, preschool, school-age)
 - the children under age 12 in the geographic area
 - who would actually use a child care program
 - what are people willing to pay for child care
 - where do people prefer the care be located (near home, business, school)
 - what kinds of transportation would need to be provided
 - names, addresses, and phone numbers of people definitely wanting care (in case you open a program and enrollment numbers are low, you have contacts to make)
- 2) Determine what method will be used to collect information. This may include reviewing existing data, phone surveys, public meetings, face-to-face interviews with key informants, written questionnaires, or other methods designed to answer specific questions. Once a geographic area is determined, it may be possible to distribute flyers with a printed needs assessment survey through a public or non-public school if you want to provide school-age care.

- 3) Determine where to get the information needed (sources) and what information is already available. Contact local resources to find out what information has already been collected related to the community. This may include contacting a Child Care Resource and Referral Service to find out how many programs in your area provide child care and how many slots are available through these existing programs. LOCATE: Child Care (through the resource and referral centers) can provide listings of all centers and the number of family child care homes within any given area in the state, and, depending upon location, by zip code, map coordinates, school districts, and/or census tract. Local social services organizations or Child Care Administration offices may also be able to provide this type of information.

Other resources to contact may include:

- existing local child care programs/centers (they may have information available about the type of care most often requested, waiting listings, and vacancies)
 - local community resources, government agencies/planning offices (community demographics)
 - local employers, particularly the larger ones, may have information on the child care needs of their employees (usually within the departments of human resources)
 - local public and private schools (pre-K through school-age)
 - local community based youth organizations (e.g. YMCA/YWCA's, recreation programs, libraries, etc.)
 - local Parent Teacher Association (PTA) leaders
 - local churches or synagogues
 - local police offices (school-age children without care)
 - family court judges/juvenile services departments (school-age children without care)
- 4) Gather the information, summarize the results, and analyze the results for your use. The results of the needs assessment will be come part of your business plan that justifies the need for the center.