



RESEARCH REPORT

Nontraditional-Hour Child Care in Austin/Travis County

Insights from Interviews, Focus Groups, and Analyses of Supply and Demand

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Executive Summary

Recent research demonstrates that many families need nontraditional-hour child care (before 7:00 a.m. and after 6:00 p.m. during the traditional workweek and on weekends), yet child care options are scarce during these hours (Schilder et al. 2022). To learn about nontraditional-hour care in Austin/Travis County, United Way for Greater Austin, with funding from the City of Austin, engaged the Urban Institute to lead a study on this topic. The Urban study team examined the need for and supply of nontraditional-hour child care in Austin/Travis County and captured perspectives of community leaders, parents, child care providers, and employers.* This executive summary shares key study findings and recommendations.

Introduction and Methods

To provide Austin/Travis County leaders with information about nontraditional-hour child care needs, supply, and community members' perspectives on the topic, the Urban Institute team designed a study to address the following research questions:

1. What is the need for nontraditional-hour child care in Austin/Travis County? How does it vary for groups affected by historical and ongoing structural barriers to opportunity? How does it vary by parents' employment industries, education, and enrollment in school? How does it vary by specific nontraditional-hour periods?
2. What is the supply of nontraditional-hour child care in Austin/Travis County? How does it vary by provider type? How does it vary by time frame?
3. What are the consequences of inadequate nontraditional-hour child care for families and employers?
4. What are the challenges and proposed recommendations for increasing access to the types of nontraditional-hour child care that parents report they need?

* Find additional publications related to this report at "Informing Policy Decisions about Nontraditional-Hour Child Care," Urban Institute, accessed February 28, 2023, <https://www.urban.org/projects/informing-policy-decisions-about-nontraditional-hour-child-care>.

5. What are the implications of the findings for policy and practice?

To answer these research questions, we analyzed existing survey and administrative data, collected the perspectives of people representing different constituencies in Austin/Travis County, and analyzed existing documents and research to develop policy recommendations. Specifically, we performed a secondary analysis of data from the American Community Survey and the Survey of Income and Program Participation and state administrative data on the supply of regulated child care.

In addition to our secondary analysis, we also analyzed the perspectives of different groups impacted by nontraditional-hour care to better understand their experiences and the scope of the issues. We conducted focus groups and interviews with 27 community leaders in Austin/Travis County. These 27 community leaders shared that they held multiple roles: 13 identified as parents or primary caretakers of children, 7 as employers, 2 as child care providers, 8 as policymakers, 18 as nonprofit organizations or community organizers, and 3 as business organizations. We interviewed 12 child care providers, 25 parents, and 5 employers to learn their perspectives about nontraditional-hour child care. We also used a web-based survey to collect the perspectives of 37 parents. Qualitative findings are based on analysis of the data from these study participants.

Need for Nontraditional-Hour Child Care in Austin/Travis County is High and Outstrips the Supply of Care

Approximately one-third of all children younger than age 6 (or 18,000 children) in Austin/Travis County in households with working parents have parents with potential need for nontraditional-hour child care. In Austin/Travis County, there is a substantial gap between the need for and supply of nontraditional-hour child care, with only about 2,000 regulated child care slots (or about 4 percent of existing regulated supply) that are licensed to provide child care during any nontraditional hours.

The Potential Demand for Nontraditional-Hour Child Care is Higher among Groups Facing Structural Barriers to Opportunities

In Austin/Travis County high shares of children who are Black (47 percent) and Hispanic (42 percent), in families living in poverty (62 percent), with all immigrant parents (72 percent), and who have parents with low levels of education (55 percent) have parents with potential nontraditional-hour child care

needs. In contrast, a lower share of children who are white, in families with higher incomes, with only US-born parents, or with parents who have higher levels of education have nontraditional-hour child care needs. These findings are consistent with those observed nationally (Crosby and Mendez 2017).¹

Parents in groups most affected by historical and ongoing structural barriers to opportunities are more likely to have nontraditional-hour child care needs.

The Supply of Regulated Child Care Licensed to Operate during Nontraditional Hours Is Low

Our analysis of administrative data demonstrates that the regulated supply of child care does not meet current need. Only 4 percent of the available slots from regulated child care providers in Austin/Travis County are approved for nontraditional-hour care. This 4 percent, representing only 2,059 slots, is substantially lower than the potential demand for child care for about 18,000 children.

Only 2 percent of regulated providers in Travis County have been approved for early evening hours (6:00–6:59 p.m.) or during the weekend.

The few child care providers in Austin/Travis County and the state overall that offer any nontraditional hour-care are most likely to be licensed to operate in the hour before and the hour after traditional-care hours. Among the 62 providers licensed to provide care during nontraditional hours, 45 are licensed to offer early morning care, 15 are licensed to offer early evening care, 3 are licensed to offer late evening care, 2 are licensed to provide overnight care, and 15 are licensed to offer weekend care.

Although the potential need for nontraditional-hour care in Austin/Travis County is similar to other areas of Texas, the supply in Austin/Travis County is far lower than elsewhere in the state.

In Austin/Travis County, smaller, less regulated home-based child care providers are more likely than other types of providers to be approved to operate during nontraditional hours across all nontraditional-hour time frames. While 31 percent of regulated family homes are licensed to care for children during any nontraditional hours, only 5 percent of regulated centers are approved to offer care for children during these periods.

Study Participants' Preferences for Types of Nontraditional-Hour Child Care Vary by Time Frame

Many community leaders, parents, and providers told us home-based providers have greater flexibility to operate during nontraditional hours than center-based providers, which tend to approach the issue as a business decision and have more difficulty being flexible because their fixed costs are higher. Parents using licensed center or family child care during the traditional day told us they would prefer using that care for the hours immediately before or after the traditional day, but few providers are open during these times. In contrast, parents who need child care late in the evening, overnight, and very early in the morning prefer in-home care or family child care.

Lack of Nontraditional-Hour Child Care Creates Difficulties for Both Families and Employers

We heard from many Austin/Travis County community leaders, parents, and employers that parents experience substantial challenges coordinating child care with work, efforts to continue their education, and parenting responsibilities. Parents told the study team how the availability of child care constrained their decisions about their work schedules, career opportunities, and workforce participation, because child care is often the least flexible part of parents' schedules. Several parents indicated they would leave a job with unpredictable work. In turn, the lack of nontraditional-hour child care creates

challenges for employers, according to several employers we interviewed and many community leaders. Moreover, lack of child care is costly for states and employers, according to research by the US Chamber of Commerce (2020) and national experts (Wolters et al. 2021).²

Lower Levels of Attendance during Nontraditional Hours Drive Up Costs for Child Care Providers

Child care providers in Austin/Travis County face various challenges that make it more difficult to offer nontraditional-hour care than traditional-hour care. A major challenge that prevents and discourages child care providers from extending their hours is that lower attendance during nontraditional hours drives up costs (box E.1).

While a sizeable percentage of young children have parents working some nontraditional hours, many of these parents have inconsistent child care needs. Child care providers who decided to expand their hours of operation to include some nontraditional hours shared that they often care for fewer children than they are licensed to care for during these periods. As a result, the revenue they receive for care provided during these expanded hours of operation does not cover the additional salaries and overhead.

Reflecting the intermittent need for nontraditional-hour child care, providers told us that at times no children attend or only a single child attends during nontraditional hours. In contrast, during most traditional-hour periods multiple children attend. Most parents pay out of pocket pay only when their children are in care and therefore do not pay if they use intermittent care. As a result, many providers report they lose money when they offer intermittent and nontraditional-hour care.

BOX E.1

What Are the Costs of Providing Nontraditional-Hour Child Care?

To illustrate the financial pressures child care providers face when offering nontraditional-hour care, the research team explored the costs child care providers incur when providing care for only a few children:

- According to the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, salaries of caregivers represent 60 percent of costs incurred by child care providers, and overhead (including taxes, rent or mortgage, utilities, accounting, etc.) represents 40 percent of costs.³
- Tuition and fees from enrolling children are the primary source of revenue for many child care providers. However, regulations on child-to-caregiver ratios restrict the number of children that

can be enrolled per caregiver employed. Because costs are fixed even with lower revenue flow, lower enrollment during nontraditional hours means providers' finances are more negatively impacted if they are unable to maximize the number of children enrolled for every caregiver they need to hire.

- If only a single child attends the hour before regular operation, and parents pay \$20 for that hour of care, the provider loses money. Currently, the living wage in Austin/Travis County is \$20 an hour. If parents pay the child care provider \$20 and the provider pays the caregiver \$20, she incurs an additional \$4 in overhead costs and loses \$4 for each hour of nontraditional-hour care.³ According to the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, before the pandemic, profit margins for child care providers were 1 percent or less, making an hourly loss of \$4 substantive for child care providers.^b

Consistent with this analysis, the majority of providers we interviewed who expressed interest in providing care during nontraditional hours believed they would be at risk of losing money because of the current financing approach. The lower attendance levels during these periods means these providers need more funds to cover the increased salary costs and make extending hours a financially viable option.

^a US Department of the Treasury, *The Economics of Child Care Supply in the United States* (Washington, DC: US Department of the Treasury, 2021), <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/The-Economics-of-Childcare-Supply-09-14-final.pdf>.

^b Rob Grunewald and Phil Davies, "Hardly Child's Play: Times Have Been Even Tougher Than Usual for District Child-Care Providers," Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, July 1, 2011, <https://www.minneapolisfed.org/article/2011/hardly-childs-play>.

Child Care Providers Face Additional Challenges Offering Nontraditional-Hour Care

In addition to the financial problems caused by low levels of attendance, child care providers face other challenges in providing nontraditional-hour child care that are varied and complex. Child care providers told us they face the following challenges:

- Additional investments are needed to purchase beds or expand space to provide nontraditional-hour care. These include investments in facilities and materials to accommodate cribs and beds to meet the needs of sleeping young children.
- Providers have limited capacity to extend their hours.
- Many child care providers face administrative barriers, including difficulty accessing resources and funding.
- Several small providers told us they singlehandedly manage curriculum, teaching, preparing meals, and overseeing all the financial and administrative functions needed to keep their operations running. These providers told us the processes of applying to participate in the

subsidy system and participating in Texas Rising Star are time intensive and a challenge on top of all their other responsibilities.

- Providers, especially smaller ones, often need a mentor or coach to assist them in navigating the application processes for grants and the quality rating program.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, we developed the following recommendations for policymakers and community leaders in Austin/Travis County and Texas. Limited empirical evidence exists on conditions needed for successful implementation and outcomes of the proposed changes.

Recommendation 1. Use Austin/Travis County Funds to Pilot Strategies to Address Nontraditional-Hour Child Care Needs

We recommend that Austin/Travis County policymakers, community leaders, child care providers, employers, and parents work together to address the nontraditional-hour child care needs of parents with young children by prioritizing access to nontraditional-hour child care and pilot testing a range of initiatives. In collaboration with the local workforce boards, we recommend that the Austin/Travis County community pilot test changes in local policies and devote funding to expand the supply of nontraditional-hour child care options designed to meet the needs of parents with nontraditional-hour schedules. Our study's findings reveal that nontraditional-hour child care needs are nuanced and vary depending on the time of day. Study participants informed us that they use a variety of arrangements. Therefore, we recommend piloting multiple strategies that include incentivizing child care centers to open earlier and remain open later, supporting home-based providers to extend their hours of operation, and increasing the supply of in-home caregivers for families who work late in the evening and overnight. Parents and community leaders told us they believe this range of options would offer equitable access to nontraditional-hour care that meets the needs of parents and their young children. However, to date, limited empirical research exists about what funding levels are needed to incentivize providers to expand hours and what strategies are needed to ensure parents are aware of changes in child care hours. Therefore, using data from the pilots could inform a range of community-wide approaches that meet the needs of parents, employers, child care providers, and community leaders in Austin/Travis County.

Recommendation 2. Local Workforce Boards Can Exercise Flexibility in Subsidy Policies and Practices to Support Parents with Nontraditional-Hour Care Needs

We recommend that the workforce boards in Austin/Travis County do the following:

- **Pilot approaches to expand relative care for parents who work nontraditional hours.**
Currently, the local workforce boards are required to provide parents with information about “the option to choose an eligible relative care.”⁴ Given many parents with nontraditional-hour child care needs prefer relative care, we recommend that the local workforce boards enhance information about the option to use subsidies for this type of care and shorten the timeline to access subsidies for relative care.
- **Review how subsidy policies are administered in Austin/Travis County** to identify local subsidy policies that create barriers for in-home and home-based providers to participate in the subsidy system. Findings from our study are consistent with existing research showing that increased complexity in the process of participating in the subsidy system appears to be associated with decreases in the number and share of home-based providers who are regulated (Bromer et al. 2021). Challenges created by complex processes could exacerbate existing inequities in access to in-home and home-based care that parents prefer during the evening and overnights (Henly and Adams 2018). We recommend that Austin/Travis County workforce boards review subsidy policy administration to address barriers to participation in the subsidy system for the types of providers that parents with nontraditional-hour child care needs prefer.
- **Examine the child care subsidy application process** to simplify it for parents and ensure information is translated into the languages of families who need child care. Our study findings reinforce existing research that suggests the process of applying for subsidies is currently challenging for many eligible parents (Goodman et al. 2017). Local policymakers can create more equitable access to child care subsidies by identifying and addressing barriers to accessing subsidies for nontraditional-hour care for different communities.

Recommendation 3. Texas State Agencies Can Improve Access to Information about Nontraditional-Hour Child Care

We recommend that Texas State Agencies pilot initiatives to increase access to information about nontraditional-hour child care. In Texas, the state agencies that oversee the databases of regulated child care that are publicly posted and provide information about regulated care in specific regions are

the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and Texas Health and Human Services. We recommend that Austin/Travis County leaders encourage these state agencies to do the following:

- **Translate information about available nontraditional-hour child care to reach broader populations of parents.** Translating materials and ensuring materials about child care are accessible to those eligible for public benefits can help establish equitable access to child care (Brown et al. 2019).
- **Maintain up-to-date information** on county-level websites to include information about regulated, informal, and backup care that operates during nontraditional hours.
- **Implement plans to create a new field in the Texas Workforce Information System to help boards identify families with nontraditional-hour child care needs.** We recommend the public portal include additional information about providers who would be interested in expanding hours to meet the child care needs of families with nontraditional-hour schedules.
- **Inform state agencies of the needs for education and career pathways for nontraditional-hour child care providers.** In Texas, multiple state agencies are responsible for credentials and degrees for the child care and education workforce. Thus, any changes to statewide education and credentialing would also require local leaders to work with state agencies to elevate the conversation about the needs of the nontraditional-hour workforce.

Recommendation 4. Austin/Travis County and State Policymakers Can Continue to Engage Employers in Efforts to Expand the Supply of Nontraditional Hour-Child Care

Currently, employers are participating in a range of efforts to address nontraditional-hour child care supply. Business leaders have partnered with local child care providers and explored ways to support employees with nontraditional-hour child care needs. We recommend that state and local policymakers take the following actions:

- **Continue to support child care through efforts such as the TWC Child Care Expansion initiative.**⁵ This initiative provides funding to child care businesses partnering with employers to expand access to child care. It also provides benefits to employers who offer child care benefits to their employees.
- **Pilot programs that draw from the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation’s toolkit examples of employers and educational institutions that have helped develop child care solutions for**

working parents.⁶ Doing so could help to minimize the turnover and disruptions associated with inadequate or unstable child care (US Chamber of Commerce Foundation 2021).

Recommendation 5. TWC Can Explore Establishing a Separate, Enhanced Subsidy Reimbursement Rate for Care Provided during Nontraditional Periods Based on a Study of Nontraditional-Hour Costs

Lower demand, fewer staff, and heightened requirements for caregivers providing care during nontraditional hours make this type of care more costly for providers. We recommend that the TWC use a cost-modeling approach to determine what reimbursement rates reflect actual costs of care. This alignment of rates with costs might require working with cost-modeling experts to determine cost of nontraditional-hour care, as study participants informed our team that this type of care is often intermittent. We also recommend that TWC include nontraditional-hour and intermittent care in the statewide market rate survey and consider commissioning a study of the cost of quality nontraditional-hour care.

TWC could consider basing rates on the cost of quality care rather than current market rates (Workman and Jessen-Howard 2018). Current rates are based on findings from a market rate survey commissioned by TWC (2022). However, the market rate study excluded drop-in care because it was substantially costlier than traditional-hour care.

Recommendation 6. TWC Can Make it Easier for Home-Based and Relative Providers to Offer Quality Subsidized Nontraditional-Hour Care

TWC is responsible for meeting federal requirements for publicly funded child care and thus is responsible for subsidy policy and overseeing the state's quality rating and improvement system. We recommend that Austin/Travis County policymakers inform TWC of the need to make it easier for home-based and relative providers to participate in these systems. A recent study based on interviews of state child care administrators revealed that most state child care agencies do not have a complete picture of the existing supply of child care available during nontraditional work hours or the extent to which that care is subsidized for low-income families (Rachidi et al. 2019). This study further noted that public child care assistance programs can offer a critical safety net for low-income working parents with nontraditional-hour child care needs.

Making child care subsidies more accessible to parents working nontraditional-hour schedules is important to ensuring that distribution of and access to public dollars are equitable and meet the needs of families eligible for child care subsidies. Given the high percentages of families with nontraditional-hour child care needs who are Black, Hispanic, immigrants, have low incomes, and who face obstacles to education and employment opportunities, it is important for Austin/Travis County leaders to inform state policymakers of the current need.

Recommendation 7. TWC Can Update the Quality Rating and Improvement System to Include Nontraditional-Hour Care

From our interviews with parents, we learned that those who use nontraditional-hour child care, particularly in the evening and overnight, prioritize the provider's ability to provide a safe, nurturing environment with less disruption to sleep, meals, and the families' overall schedule. Parents with nontraditional-hour child care needs also rate care provided by family and friends and home-based care more highly than center-based care in terms of flexibility and affordability. Parents in our study defined quality care late in the evening as caregivers who support children's bedtime routines, including supporting children with brushing their teeth, putting on their pajamas, tucking them into bed, and reading them books. Existing research suggests such routines are important for young children's growth and development (Spagnola and Fiese 2007). In contrast, parents rate learning activities, preparing for school, and socialization with other children as areas of high importance during traditional hours. We recommend that Austin/Travis County community leaders and policymakers encourage TWC and statewide leaders responsible for the design and administration of Texas Rising Star to do the following:

- **Explore updating how quality is measured during nontraditional hours** to better match families' definitions of quality care during specific nontraditional-hour periods, the types of care that families use during these times, and the features of quality that are important to parents during specific nontraditional hours.
- **Consider appropriate measures for the types of nontraditional-hour care parents use the most.** Parents in our study rated relative and home-based care highly in terms of flexibility and warmth. Existing qualitative research also suggests that parents, especially from marginalized communities, prefer family, friend, and neighbor care because it minimizes disruptions with meals and sleep routines, which families prioritize over learning activities during nontraditional hours (Garcia et al. 2019; Schilder et al. 2022). Policies could provide more equitable access to care for families with nontraditional-hour care needs by including specific measures of quality

and ways family members who are caring for young children can participate in the existing systems.

- **Allow unregulated caregivers and relatives to participate in educational opportunities, coaching, and other quality improvement services.** By doing so, those who are caring for large percentages of children will have the opportunity to learn about quality early care and education. Thus, to support equitable access to high-quality care, it is important to offer quality improvement services to all nontraditional-hour caregivers.

In conclusion, evidence from this study suggests a high need for nontraditional-hour child care in Austin/Travis County and an insufficient supply of child care from regulated providers during nontraditional-hour periods. Policymakers have an opportunity to take action to address this gap. Improving the supply of affordable, accessible, quality nontraditional-hour care will result in improvements for parents, employers, members of the community, and ultimately for young children in families with parents who work nontraditional-hour schedules.

Introduction

In Texas, nearly 40 percent of all children younger than age 6 in working families have parents working nontraditional hours—that is, before 7:00 a.m. or after 6:00 p.m. on weekdays or during any hours on weekends. Children with parents working nontraditional-hour schedules are disproportionately Black, Hispanic, and in families with low incomes (Schilder et al. 2021) who are impacted by historical and ongoing structural barriers to educational and occupational opportunities. These barriers to opportunity may be the reason these parents are more likely to work nontraditional hours (Lou, Schilder, and Wagner 2022).

Research suggests parents working nontraditional-hour schedules face challenges accessing high-quality child care and are less likely to use child care subsidies than families working traditional hours (Schilder et al. 2022). As a result, access to public resources, including child care subsidies for quality care, is inequitable for families working nontraditional-hour schedules.⁷ Across the US, only one-third of children eligible to receive child care subsidies are accessing them.⁸ Moreover, racial differences in subsidy use suggest structural inequities prevent families from accessing this support. For example, about half of all Latinx children are eligible for subsidies, but their families are not accessing them.⁹

A study of nontraditional-hour child care in Connecticut, the District of Columbia, and Oklahoma found that parents prefer in-home care for their children overnight and when children would be engaged in evening and bedtime routines or sleeping. However, in the hours immediately before and after the traditional-hour day, parents are equally likely to prefer center-based care and in-home care (Schilder et al. 2022).

To develop and implement evidence-based policies to meet families' nontraditional-hour child care needs in Austin/Travis County, United Way for Greater Austin, with funds from the City of Austin through an award from the US Department of the Treasury, commissioned a study of nontraditional-hour care in Austin/Travis County. United Way for Greater Austin has convened a Success by 6 Austin/Travis Coalition whose collective goal is to ensure all children enter kindergarten happy, healthy, and prepared to succeed in school and beyond.¹⁰ To achieve this goal, local leaders in Austin/Travis County believe it is necessary to learn the extent to which families need nontraditional-hour care for their young children and the supply of such care. The aim of this study was to document need, supply, parental preferences, and perceived strategies to support parents with young children in need of nontraditional-hour child care.

The Urban Institute designed and implemented a mixed-methods study to provide policymakers and community leaders with actionable evidence about nontraditional-hour child care issues in Austin/Travis County. We designed the study to provide evidence about the potential demand for nontraditional-hour care and the supply of care from regulated providers.¹¹ We also obtained perspectives and learned about the experiences and recommendations of community leaders, parents, child care providers, and employers. Finally, we analyzed the Austin/Travis County policy landscape and prior research to develop recommendations to promote more equitable access to nontraditional-hour child care.[†]

The report is organized into three main sections, with most of the report designed to present findings. The findings section consists of multiple sections.

- **Research methods.** We briefly present the questions guiding the study and the methods we used.
- **Findings.** We present findings in the following sections:
 - » need for nontraditional-hour child care
 - » supply of regulated child care
 - » consequences of limited access to nontraditional-hour child care
 - » strategies and objectives suggested by study participants to help improve the availability, quality, and access to nontraditional-hour child care in Austin/Travis County
- **Conclusion and recommendations.** We conclude with a discussion of key themes, a set of recommendations to promote nontraditional-hour child care in Austin/Travis County, and questions and issues for further exploration.

[†] Find additional publications related to this report at “Informing Policy Decisions about Nontraditional-Hour Child Care,” Urban Institute, accessed February 28, 2023, <https://www.urban.org/projects/informing-policy-decisions-about-nontraditional-hour-child-care>.

Research Questions and Methods

We designed our study to address the following research questions:

6. What is the need for nontraditional-hour child care in Austin/Travis County? How does it vary for groups affected by structural barriers to opportunity? How does it vary by parents' employment industries, education, and enrollment in school? How does it vary by specific nontraditional-hour periods?
7. What is the supply of nontraditional-hour child care in Austin/Travis County? How does it vary by provider type? How does it vary by time frame?
8. What are the consequences of inadequate nontraditional-hour child care for families and employers?
9. What are the challenges and proposed recommendations for increasing access to the types of nontraditional-hour child care that parents report they need?
10. What are the implications of the findings for policy and practice?

To address these research questions, we analyzed existing survey and administrative data, collected the perspectives of people representing different constituencies in Austin/Travis County, and analyzed existing documents and research to develop policy recommendations. Specifically, we performed a secondary analysis of data from the American Community Survey (ACS) and the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) as well as state administrative data on the supply of regulated child care.

We conducted focus groups and interviews with 27 community leaders in Austin/Travis County. These 27 community leaders told us they held multiple roles: 13 identified as parents or primary caretakers of children, 7 as employers, 2 as child care providers, 8 as policymakers, 18 as nonprofit organizations or community organizers, and 3 as business organizations. We also heard perspectives from 12 child care providers, 25 parents, and 5 employers through interviews, and we obtained perspectives from 37 parents who responded to a web-based survey. We analyzed the interview data employing a thematic approach. We began with an initial set of codes based on previous research and created new codes as themes emerged. Because the parent survey was administered to a nonrandom sample of parents, we treated responses as qualitative in nature and do not report numbers or percentages. Instead, we analyzed the survey data along with the interview data to explore divergent and convergent perspectives. For an in-depth discussion of our methodology and data sources, see appendix A.

Findings

Significant potential demand for nontraditional-hour child care exists in Austin/Travis County, and this demand varies by family circumstances and the times when care is needed. The share of regulated providers licensed to offer nontraditional-hour child care is lower in Austin/Travis County than in the state as a whole, and there are far fewer slots available at these providers than there are children with potential demand for nontraditional-hour care. Tables and figures with detailed information on the number and characteristics of children with potential demand for nontraditional-hour care and the regulated providers licensed to offer such care are in appendix B.

Need for Nontraditional-Hour Child Care in Austin/Travis County Is Substantial and Outstrips Supply

We estimate that approximately one-third of children younger than age 6 in working families, or about 18,000 children, have parents with nontraditional-hour schedules in Austin/Travis County. Potential demand may be highest among children affected by structural racism (especially Black and Hispanic children), in immigrant families, in families with lower incomes, with parents with less education, and with parents enrolled in school. Employees in key industries, including food services, also are more likely to have potential demand for nontraditional-hour child care. This demand aligns with what families and community leaders said about the need for care during nontraditional hours.

Approximately one-third of young children in working families, or about 18,000 children, have potential demand for care during nontraditional hours.

Potential Demand for Nontraditional-Hour Child Care in Travis County Is Substantial

About one-third (or 18,000 out of approximately 55,000) Travis County children younger than age 6 with working parents have parents working nontraditional-hour work schedules (table 1). The share of children in working families with potential nontraditional-hour child care needs in Travis County (32

percent) is lower than the share in the state as a whole (39 percent), while the share of children in Texas whose parents work nontraditional hours is similar to the share nationally (Schilder et al. 2021).

TABLE 1

Children with Parents Working Nontraditional Hours

Number and share of children younger than age 6 with parents working or commuting during any nontraditional hours, by area

Location	How many children have parents working NTHs?	What share of children in working families have parents working NTHs?
Austin/Travis County	17,990	32%
Texas	502,450	39%

Sources: Urban Institute analysis of Census Bureau microdata from the 2016–20 American Community Survey downloaded from IPUMS-USA and from the 2018 Survey of Income and Program Participation.

Notes: NTHs = nontraditional hours. Frequencies are rounded to the nearest 10, and percentages are rounded to the closest 1 percent. For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working for the child to be considered as having all parents working. Children with parents working during nontraditional hours had all parents predicted as working or commuting during nontraditional hours (6:00 p.m.–6:59 a.m. on weekdays or anytime on Saturday or Sunday). For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working or commuting either during the same weekday hours or anytime during the weekend to be considered as working nontraditional hours. The share reflects the percentage of young children with parents working or commuting during any nontraditional hours out of the total number of young children with all parents working.

Community and Business Leaders, Parents, and Child Care Providers Reported a Need for Nontraditional-Hour Child Care in Austin/Travis County

Most of the community and business leaders, parents, and child care providers who participated in the study perceived a strong need for nontraditional-hour child care. Sixty-nine people, including community leaders, providers, employers, and parents in Austin/Travis County, participated in interviews, and an additional 37 parents shared perspectives through an online survey. Study participant perspectives were consistent with our analyses of quantitative data. Among those working directly with parents and parents themselves, nearly all reported a clear need for nontraditional-hour care. One community leader remarked,

[It is] not a question of if there is a need [for nontraditional-hour care. It is] a question of availability, and quality and affordable services.

Most community leaders, child care providers, and parents reported a strong need for nontraditional-hour care. Several told us they perceived this need is invisible to many in positions of power. One community leader pushed back against the term *nontraditional hours*, explaining that working hours after 6:00 p.m., before 7:00 a.m., and on weekends has often been the tradition in many communities, particularly communities of color. Another community leader with knowledge of state

and local policy actions expressed a need for nontraditional-hour care, as evidenced by policymaker discussions of and supports for nontraditional-hour child care:

The need is great enough that the Texas Workforce Commission is trying to get involved with child care expansions grants...to increase their capacity of staff, but also hours, and they have grants for businesses who might be interested in trying to offer child care.

A few community leaders who primarily work with families who have traditional-hour child care and early education needs told us they believed addressing the existing inadequate supply of quality traditional-hour child care should be prioritized over nontraditional-hour care. Currently, about 40 percent of Travis County children younger than age 6 living in families with low incomes reside in deserts for subsidized or Texas Rising Star traditional-hour child care.¹² Community leaders told us that during the early onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, some resources were in place for essential workers to access nontraditional-hour care, but they reported they believed these resources were not accessed. Other leaders told us that information about nontraditional-hour care was very limited, used a narrow definition of essential workers, and was not widely disseminated. In addition, several community leaders suggested that in the early days of the pandemic, many parents were hesitant to use nonparental child care because of concerns about increased health risk.

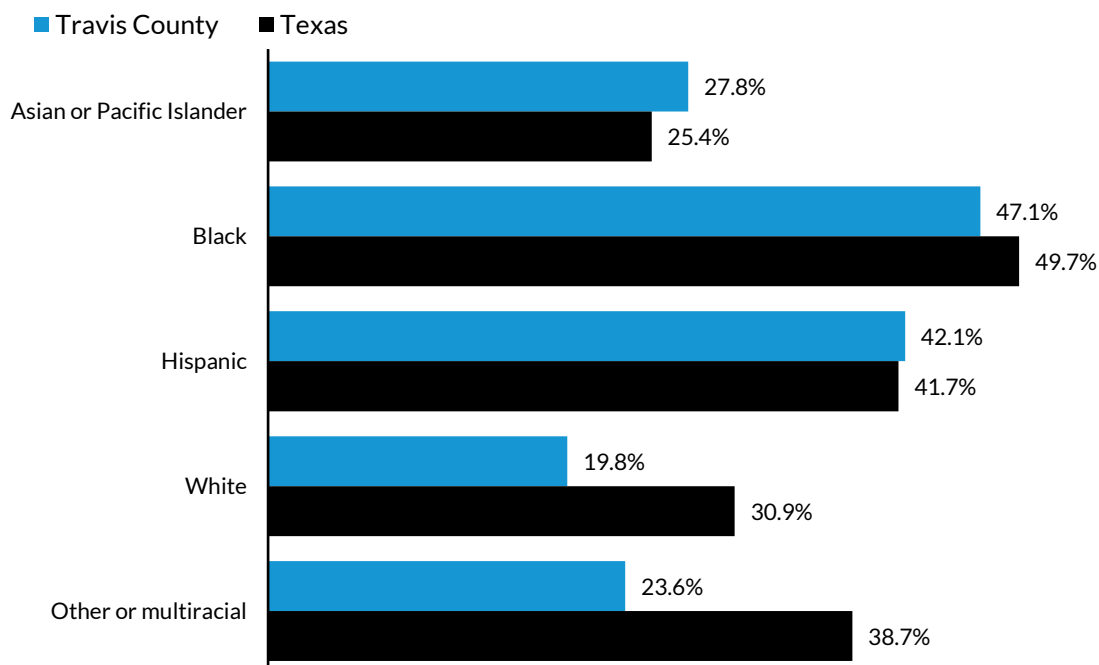
Potential Demand for Nontraditional-Hour Child Care Is Higher among Groups Facing Structural Barriers to Opportunities

In Travis County, Hispanic children and non-Hispanic Black children are more likely to have parents working nontraditional hours (42 and 47 percent, respectively) than those who identify as non-Hispanic white (20 percent), Asian American or Pacific Islander (28 percent), and non-Hispanic children of other races or who are multiracial (24 percent) (figure 1). Hispanic children accounted for the largest group of young children with parents working nontraditional hours (9,950 children younger than age 6). Patterns of potential need for nontraditional-hour care across child race and ethnicity groups in Travis County are similar to the patterns statewide and nationally. However, the shares of children with parents working nontraditional hours among children in the white and multiracial or other race categories are higher in Texas overall than they are in Travis County.

FIGURE 1

Children with Parents Working Nontraditional Hours, by Child Race/Ethnicity and Area

Share of children younger than age 6 in working families who have parents working or commuting during any nontraditional hours



URBAN INSTITUTE

Sources: Urban Institute analysis of Census Bureau microdata from the 2016–20 American Community Survey downloaded from IPUMS-USA and from the 2018 Survey of Income and Program Participation.

Notes: For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working for the child to be considered as having all parents working. Children with parents working during nontraditional hours had all parents predicted as working or commuting during nontraditional hours (6:00 p.m. to 6:59 a.m. on weekdays or anytime on Saturday or Sunday). For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working or commuting either during the same weekday hours or anytime during the weekend to be considered as working nontraditional hours. The “other or multiracial” group includes Native Americans, those who identified as another race outside of these categories, and those who identified with more than one race. Hispanic children of any race are included in the Hispanic category; all other categories comprise non-Hispanic children.

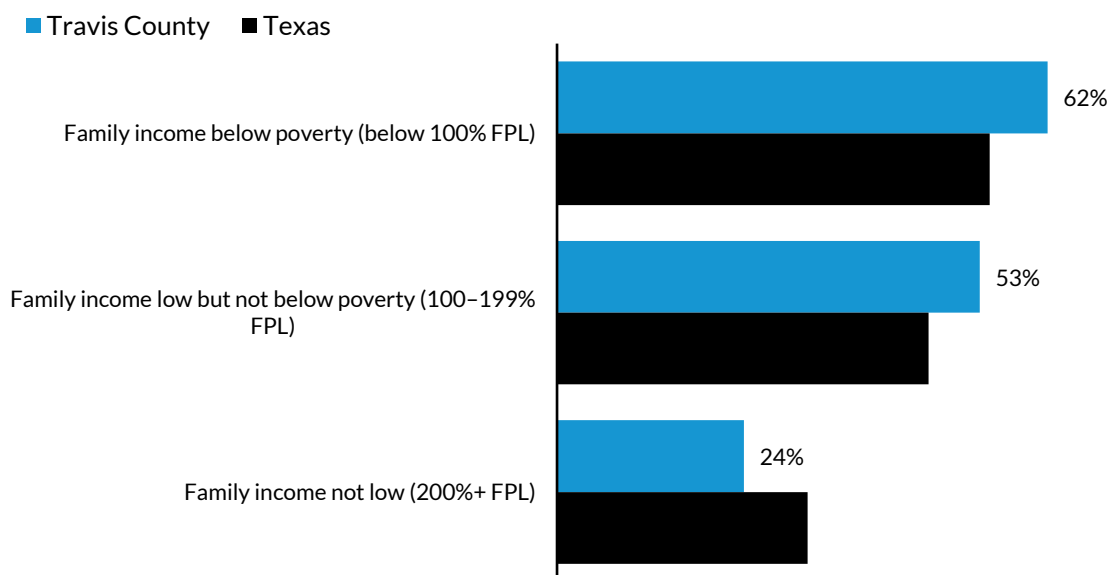
Children in families with lower incomes (figure 2), including those who are eligible for subsidies based on income, are also more likely to have parents working nontraditional hours than children in families with higher incomes (see table B.4 in appendix B). For instance, in Travis County, 62 percent of children in working families with incomes below 100 percent of the federal poverty level had potential nontraditional-hour care need, while only 24 percent of children in working families with incomes at or above 200 percent of the federal poverty level had potential demand. Patterns of potential demand for nontraditional-hour care across income groups in Travis County are similar to statewide and national patterns. However, the share of children in families with incomes below 100 percent of the federal poverty level with parents working nontraditional hours is higher in Travis County than Texas overall.

Also, the share of children with parents working nontraditional hours in families with incomes at or above 200 percent of the federal poverty level is higher in Texas overall than in Travis County. Higher levels of potential demand for nontraditional-hour care among families of color and those with lower incomes in Travis County are consistent with existing research (Dill and Duffy 2022; Enchautegui 2013).

FIGURE 2

Children with Parents Working Nontraditional Hours, by Family Income Level

Share of children younger than age 6 in working families who have parents working or commuting during any nontraditional hours



URBAN INSTITUTE

Sources: Urban Institute analysis of Census Bureau microdata from the 2016–20 American Community Survey downloaded from IPUMS-USA and from the 2018 Survey of Income and Program Participation.

Notes: FPL = federal poverty level. Figures are estimates with percentages rounded to the closest 1 percent. For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working for the child to be considered as having all parents working. Children with parents working during nontraditional hours had all parents predicted as working or commuting during nontraditional hours (6:00 p.m. to 6:59 a.m. on weekdays or anytime on Saturday or Sunday). For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working or commuting either during the same weekday hours or anytime during the weekend to be considered as working nontraditional hours. A small group of children living with unrelated household members or in group quarters fell into a “not applicable” category for which poverty status was not calculated (not shown here).

Children in Working Families with All Immigrant Parents Are More Likely to Be in Nontraditional-Hour Child Care

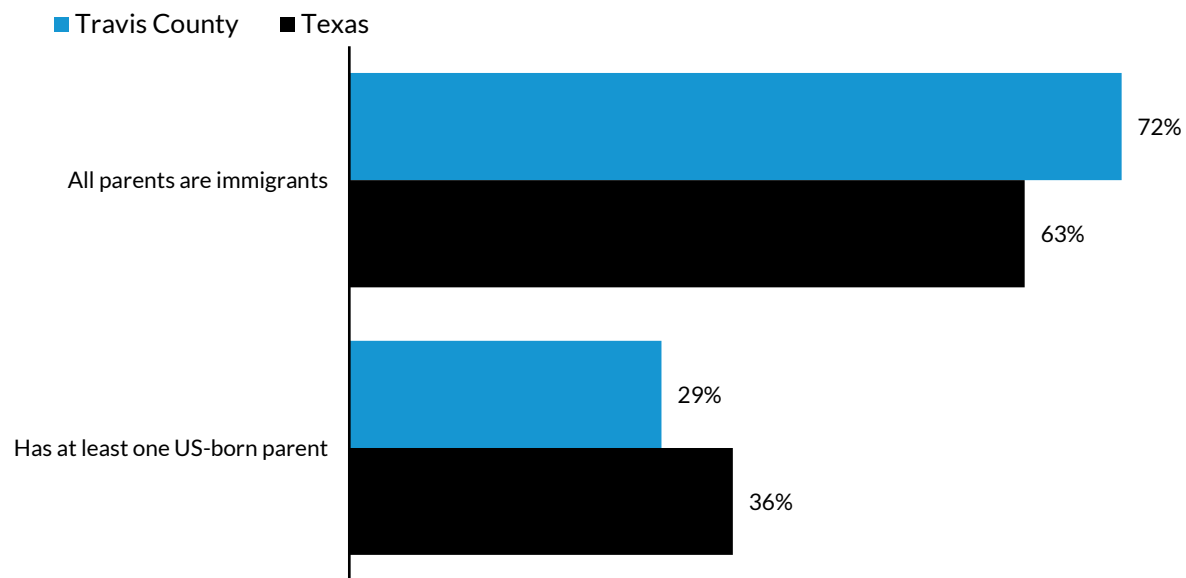
In Travis County, the share of young children with all immigrant parents who have potential demand for nontraditional-hour care is more than double the share for those with US-born parents (figure 3).

Children with both an immigrant and a US-born parent were the least likely to have potential demand

for nontraditional-hour care, but their lower potential demand reflects the lower rate of nontraditional-hour schedules among two-parent families in general. Because both parents had to be working during the same nontraditional hour(s) to be defined as having a nontraditional-hour schedule, two-parent families tended to have much lower rates of nontraditional-hour care need.

Patterns of potential need for nontraditional-hour care based on immigration status are relatively similar in Travis County and Texas as a whole. However, the share of children with only immigrant parents who have potential demand for nontraditional-hour care is higher in Travis County than in the state. Additionally, the share of children with all US-born parents who have potential demand for nontraditional-hour care is lower in Travis County than in Texas.

FIGURE 3
Children with Parents Working Nontraditional Hours, by Parental Immigration Status
Share of children younger than age 6 in working families who have parents working or commuting during any nontraditional hours



URBAN INSTITUTE

Sources: Urban Institute analysis of Census Bureau microdata from the 2016–20 American Community Survey downloaded from IPUMS-USA and from the 2018 Survey of Income and Program Participation.

Notes: Figures are estimates with percentages rounded to the closest 1 percent. For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working for the child to be considered as having all parents working. Children with parents working during nontraditional hours had all parents predicted as working or commuting during nontraditional hours (6:00 p.m. to 6:59 a.m. on weekdays or anytime on Saturday or Sunday). For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working or commuting either during the same weekday hours or anytime during the weekend to be considered as working nontraditional hours. A small group of children not living with their parents fell into a “no parents” category (not shown here).

Some Industries and Job Types Are Especially Likely to Employ Workers Who Have Nontraditional-Hour Work Schedules

Employees in some industries are more likely to work during nontraditional hours than in other industries. Nearly 70 percent, of children in working families in Travis County (about 3,100) whose parents work in food service have parents who work nontraditional hours (figure 4).¹³ In contrast, about 38 percent of children whose parents work in retail and in entertainment, recreation, and accommodation have parents who work nontraditional hours.

In Travis County, nearly 70 percent of children in working families whose primary parent work in food services have potential demand for nontraditional-hour care, which equates to approximately 3,100 children younger than age 6.

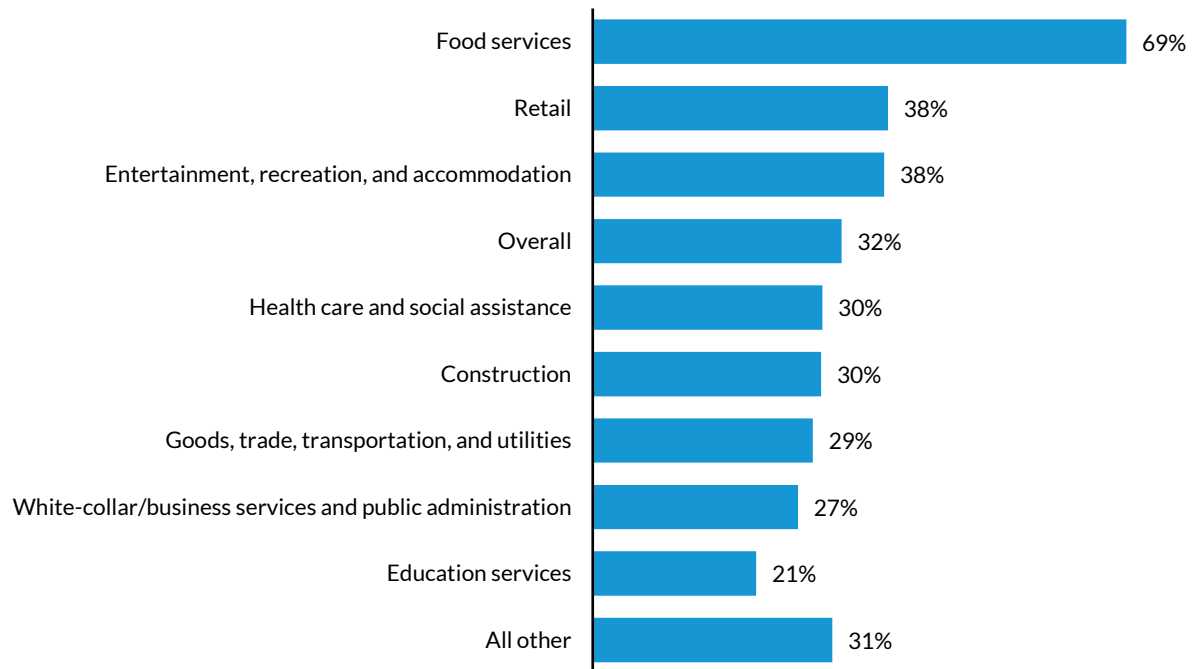
Lower shares of children in working families whose primary parent work in either the white collar or business services and public administration or the health care and social assistance industries have potential demand for nontraditional-hour care (27 and 30 percent, respectively). However, these industries account for the most children whose parents were all working during nontraditional hours (approximately 4,200 and 3,800 children, respectively) because of the large size of these sectors.

A divide also exists by the type of job worked within an industry. Among Travis County children in working families, those whose primary parent works a health care support job are more than twice as likely to have parents working nontraditional hours (55 percent) than children whose primary parent work as a health care practitioner (24 percent). For additional information about parental industries and occupations, see tables B.11 and B.12 in appendix B.

FIGURE 4

Travis County Children with Parents Working Nontraditional Hours, by Industry Employing Primary Parent

Share of children younger than age 6 in working families who have parents working or commuting during any nontraditional hours



URBAN INSTITUTE

Sources: Urban Institute analysis of Census Bureau microdata from the 2016–20 American Community Survey downloaded from IPUMS-USA and from the 2018 Survey of Income and Program Participation.

Notes: Figures are estimates with percentages rounded to the closest 1 percent. For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working for the child to be considered as having all parents working. Children with parents working during nontraditional hours had all parents predicted as working or commuting during nontraditional hours (6:00 p.m. to 6:59 a.m. on weekdays or anytime on Saturday or Sunday). For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working or commuting either during the same weekday hours or anytime during the weekend to be considered as working nontraditional hours. Primary parent is the mother in two-parent opposite-sex couples, the first listed parent in two-parent same-sex couples, and the only parent for children living with one parent. “All other” industries include administrative services and other services.

Parents with Lower Education Levels Have Higher Potential Demand for Nontraditional-Hour Care

Austin/Travis County community leaders told the study team they believe children are more likely to have parents who work nontraditional hours when their parents have lower levels of education. This finding is consistent with our analysis of survey data collected by the US Census (figure 5).

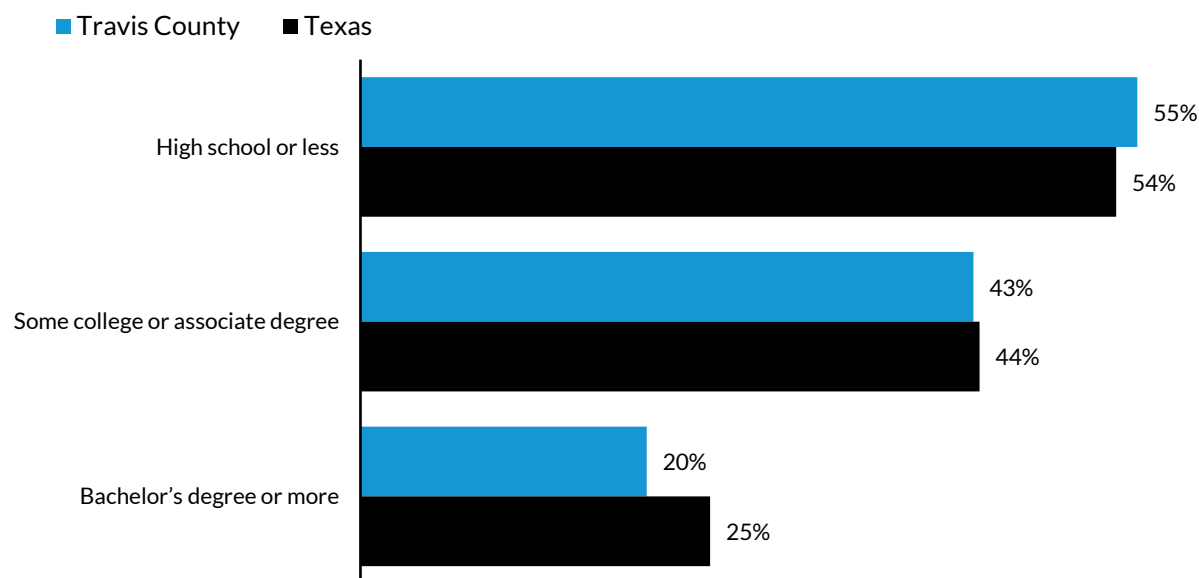
Among young Travis County children in working families, those whose parents completed high school or less are more than twice as likely to have potential demand for nontraditional-hour care (55

percent) than those with a parent who has a bachelor's degree or more (20 percent). The pattern in Austin/Travis County is similar to that in Texas.

FIGURE 5

Children with Parents Working Nontraditional Hours, by Parental Education Level

Share of children younger than age 6 in working families who have parents working or commuting during any nontraditional hours



URBAN INSTITUTE

Sources: Urban Institute analysis of Census Bureau microdata from the 2016–20 American Community Survey downloaded from IPUMS-USA and from the 2018 Survey of Income and Program Participation.

Notes: Figures are estimates with percentages rounded to the closest 1 percent. For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working for the child to be considered as having all parents working. Children with parents working during nontraditional hours had all parents predicted as working or commuting during nontraditional hours (6:00 p.m. to 6:59 a.m. on weekdays or anytime on Saturday or Sunday). For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working or commuting either during the same weekday hours or anytime during the weekend to be considered as working nontraditional hours. Parental education level reflects the highest level of attainment between both parents for children living with two parents.

Parents Working and Enrolled in School Have Higher Potential Demand for Nontraditional-Hour Child Care

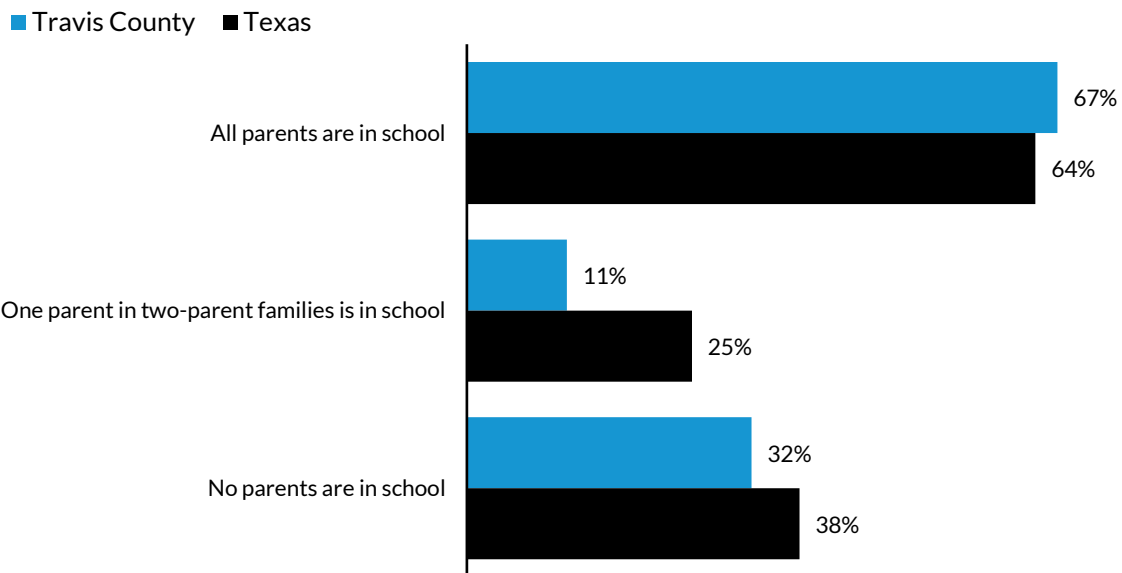
Student participants reported lack of nontraditional-hour child care is a potential obstacle to educational advancement and accompanying professional and economic opportunities. Parents who are working and attending school are more likely to work nontraditional hours. Children in Travis County with all parents (one parent in single-parent families or two parents in dual-parent families) working as well as attending school are more than twice as likely to have parents working nontraditional hours than children in working families whose parents do not attend school (figure 6). Moreover, parents both

working and in school who participated in our study told us they needed access to care during both traditional hours and nontraditional hours to balance these responsibilities and to allow them to finish and reap the rewards of their schooling.

Children in Travis County in working families with all parents in school are more likely than those with no or one parent in school to have parents with nontraditional-hour schedules (figure 6). Because both parents have to be working during the same nontraditional hour to be defined as having a nontraditional-hour schedule, two-parent families tend to have much lower rates of nontraditional-hour schedules. Thus, patterns of nontraditional-hour schedules for parents enrolled in school are similar to overall patterns.

FIGURE 6
Children with Parents Working Nontraditional-Hour Schedules, by Parental School Enrollment Status

Share of children younger than age 6 in working families who have parents working or commuting during any nontraditional hours



URBAN INSTITUTE

Sources: Urban Institute analysis of Census Bureau microdata from the 2016–20 American Community Survey downloaded from IPUMS-USA and from the 2018 Survey of Income and Program Participation.

Notes: Figures are estimates with percentages rounded to the closest 1 percent. For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working for the child to be considered as having all parents working. Children with parents working during nontraditional hours had all parents predicted as working or commuting during nontraditional hours (6:00 p.m. to 6:59 a.m. on weekdays or anytime on Saturday or Sunday). For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working or commuting either during the same weekday hours or anytime during the weekend to be considered as working nontraditional hours. A small group of children not living with their parents fell into a “no parents” category (not shown here).

Potential Demand for Nontraditional-Hour Child Care Varies by Time Frame

In Travis County, the potential demand for child care varies across nontraditional-hour periods, with the highest demand in the hours immediately before and after the traditional-hour day (figure 7). Patterns are similar between Travis County and other areas of the state. The period of highest potential demand for nontraditional-hour care is the hour before 7:00 a.m. and the hour after 5:59 p.m. during the workweek and on weekends.

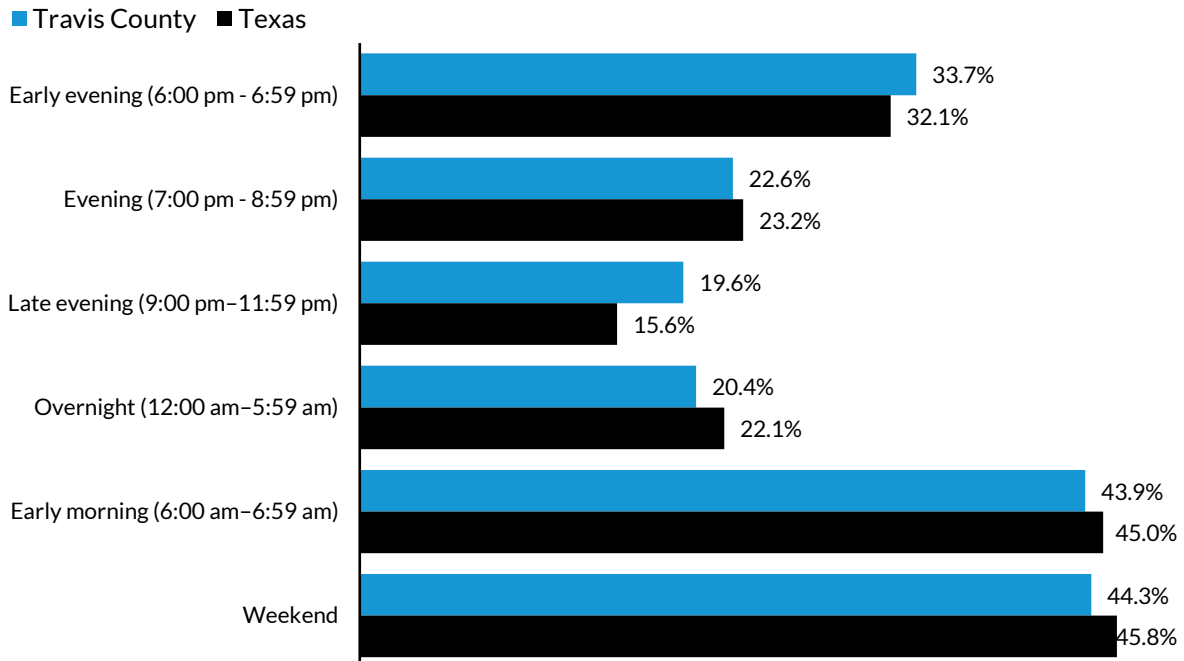
In Travis County, 44 percent of (almost 8,000) young children whose parent(s) work nontraditional hours have parents working in the early morning (6:00–6:59 a.m.), while a third (34 percent, or more than 6,000 children) have parents working in the early evening (6:00–6:59 p.m.).¹⁴ A similar percent (approximately 7,900 young children) have parents working during the weekend—the same as during the early morning.¹⁵ Potential demand for nontraditional-hour child care for families in Travis County is lower in the evening and at night, with fewer parents working at these times.

Less than one-quarter (23 percent) of young children with parents working nontraditional hours have parents working in the evening (7:00–8:59 p.m.), while one-fifth (20 percent) have parents working during the late evening (9:00–11:59 p.m.) or overnight (12:00–5:59 a.m.) periods. Despite being less common parental work schedules, approximately 3,500 to 4,100 children still have potential need for care during each of these periods. Patterns of potential demand for nontraditional-hour child care during specific times are similar in Travis County and statewide.

FIGURE 7

Children with Parents Working Each Nontraditional-Hour Period

Share of children younger than age 6 with parents working or commuting during specific nontraditional-hour periods



URBAN INSTITUTE

Sources: Urban Institute analysis of Census Bureau microdata from the 2016–20 American Community Survey downloaded from IPUMS-USA and from the 2018 Survey of Income and Program Participation.

Notes: For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working for the child to be considered as having all parents working. Children with parents working during nontraditional hours had all parents predicted as working or commuting during nontraditional hours (6:00 p.m. to 6:59 a.m. on weekdays or anytime on Saturday or Sunday). For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working or commuting either during the same weekday hours or anytime during the weekend to be considered as working nontraditional hours. The total across nontraditional-hour periods is greater than 100 percent, as parents could work during more than one nontraditional-hour period.

Austin/Travis County Study Participants Perceived That Nontraditional-Hour Child Care Is Most Needed Immediately before and after Traditional-Hour Child Care

Parents, child care providers, community leaders, and employers told us parents primarily need nontraditional-hour care in the early morning and early evening, consistent with findings presented in figure 7. Parents reported a desire for child care centers to extend hours of operation by a few hours in the morning and/or evening to address this need.

In contrast, many study participants, especially employers and employees working in the hospitality, entertainment, and health care industries, as well as parents pursuing education for career advancement, told us child care is also needed later into the evening.

We also heard that many parents needed care on an intermittent basis because of irregular or ad hoc work and school schedules. Multiple parents told us their work schedules varied from week to week, which created challenges arranging nontraditional-hour child care. This finding is consistent with existing research showing that about 10 percent of all workers have irregular schedules, and irregular schedules are most common for workers earning low wages (Golden 2015).

Numerous parents told us they arranged their work schedules based on available, affordable, and accessible child care. When care was not available, many told us they were not able to work or go to school. A few parents reported they had to bring their children to work. One parent reported stress associated with her responsibilities caring for her child and her gig job: “I want to stop with the gig job because the job, usually if it’s on the weekend, I will take my son with me and he can ride while I deliver packages. Sometimes I don’t feel very comfortable doing that...because he’s not getting enough rest. He’s five, we can’t do this during the day because either the heat is too hot or he’s too wiggly, and it just puts—I feel it’s too stressful to have him in the car with me.”

The Supply of Nontraditional-Hour Child Care in Austin/Travis County Is Limited

The supply of nontraditional-hour care in Austin/Travis County is low relative to other parts of the state and compared with potential demand for care during these hours. The share of regulated child care providers licensed to offer nontraditional-hour care is lower in Austin/Travis County than in Texas as a whole. Regulated child care providers licensed to offer care during nontraditional hours in Travis County account for 2,059 slots compared with about 18,000 children with potential demand for such care. The study team did not confirm that each of the child care providers licensed to operate during nontraditional hours are actually providing care during these time frames; therefore, this estimate of regulated supply could be lower. Many parents, community leaders, and business owners told us the inadequate supply of regulated care created challenges and limited parents’ ability to work during nontraditional hours, pursue education, or advance in their careers. For example, one parent described how lack of child care constrained his ability to change careers:

I also wanted to change jobs to drive buses for a medical transport. But I would need evening availability, and there are no daycares available at those times.

The Supply of Regulated Nontraditional-Hour Child Care in Austin/Travis County Is Low Relative to Potential Demand and Is Mostly Available in the Mornings and Evenings

Analyses of regulated provider data show the supply of nontraditional-hour care from licensed and regulated providers in Austin/Travis County is relatively low compared with other areas of Texas and appears insufficient to meet the potential demand for nontraditional-hour care. Only 62 child care providers licensed to provide care to children younger than age 6 are approved to operate during any nontraditional hours. These providers are approved to serve 2,059 children—much less than the approximately 18,000 children younger than age 6 in Travis County who may need nontraditional-hour care. The share of regulated providers approved to operate in other parts of the state is much higher. One-third (34 percent) of regulated providers in Texas overall are licensed to operate during nontraditional hours.

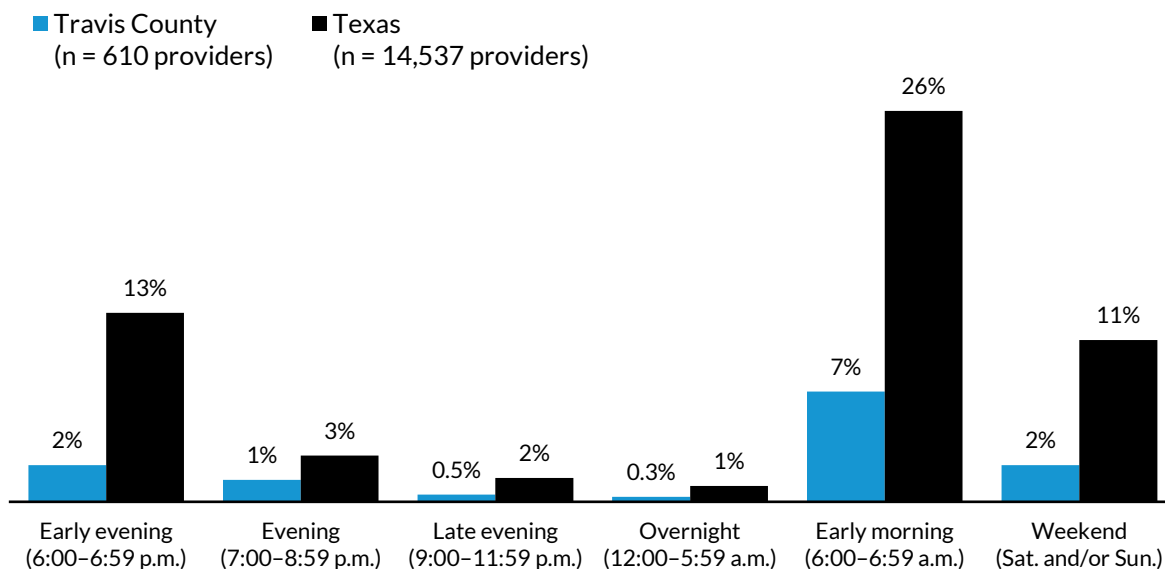
Only 62 child care providers licensed to provide care to children younger than age 6 are approved to operate during any nontraditional hours in Austin/Travis County.

Figure 8 shows regulated available care during the following times: early evening, evening, late evening, overnight, early morning during the traditional week, and during the weekend. In Travis County, early morning (6:00–6:59 a.m.) care is the most common nontraditional-hour period during which providers are approved to operate, mirroring higher potential demand in this period. Few Austin area providers are approved to operate during other nontraditional-hour periods: only 2 percent of regulated providers in Travis County have been approved for early evening hours (6:00–6:59 p.m.) or during the weekend (Saturday, Sunday, or both days), and 1 percent or less are approved during other nontraditional-hour periods. The general patterns are similar statewide. That is, throughout Texas early morning and early evening care are most common, and regulated care licensed to operate late in the evening, overnight, and on weekends is least common. Nonetheless, compared with Travis County, the state as a whole has three or more times the share of providers licensed to provide care during nontraditional hours.

Only 2 percent of regulated providers in Travis County have been approved for early evening hours (6:00–6:59 p.m.) or during the weekend.

FIGURE 8

Share of Regulated Providers Licensed to Operate during Nontraditional Hours, by Period and Day



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Source: Search Texas Child Care website provider listings as of July 5, 2022.

Notes: Regulated provider data included licensed centers, licensed and registered child care homes, and listed family homes. The data did not include unregulated care arrangements, such as family, friend, and neighbor care. Figures reflect approved hours of operation and do not mean the provider necessarily offered care during all approved hours.

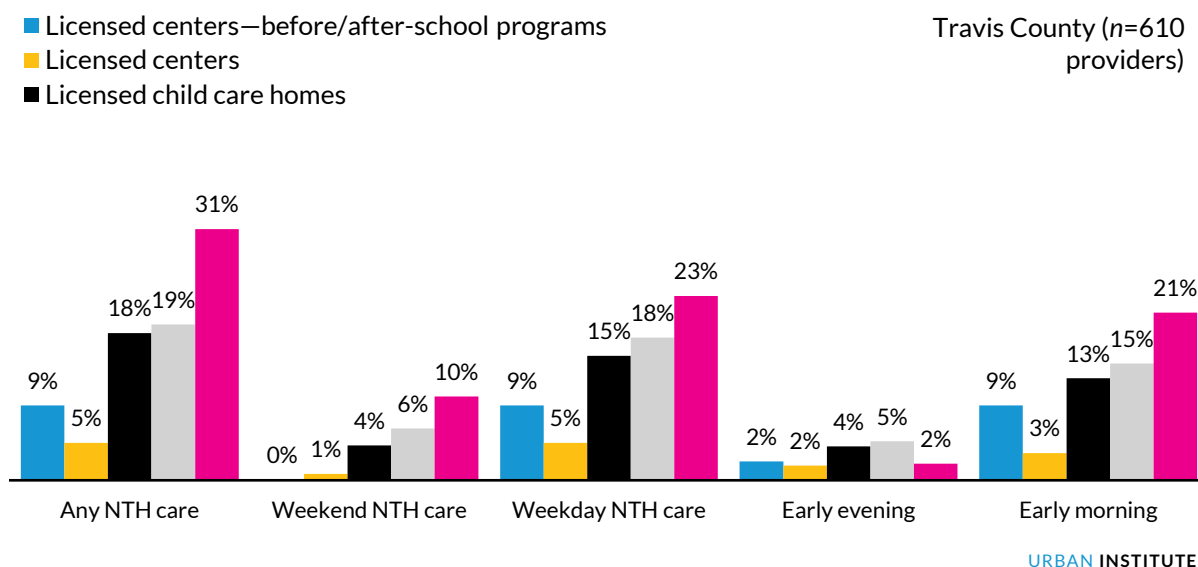
The supply shown in figure 8 is based on the hours child care providers are licensed to operate. However, some child care providers told the study team that they are not necessarily open during all of the hours they are licensed to operate. We also heard from providers who were interested in providing care during nontraditional hours but were told that if they did not have children enrolled during nontraditional hours, then they should not keep their license to be open during these times.

Most Regulated Providers Offering Care during Nontraditional Hours Are Home Based

In Austin/Travis County, smaller, less regulated home-based child care providers are more likely than other types of providers to be approved to operate during nontraditional hours: 31 percent of listed

family homes are licensed to care for children during any nontraditional hours, but only 5 percent of regulated centers are approved to care for children during these times. Smaller, home-based providers are the most likely to be approved to care for children across nontraditional-hour periods. Statewide, in contrast with Travis County, the share of registered child care homes approved for nontraditional hours is higher than regulated family homes licensed to provide nontraditional-hour care. Figure 9 shows the share of Travis County regulated providers approved for any nontraditional-hour period by type of provider.

FIGURE 9
Share of Regulated Child Care Providers Licensed to Operate in Travis County during Nontraditional Hours, by Provider Type



Source: Search Texas Child Care website provider listings as of July 5, 2022.

Notes: NTH = nontraditional-hour. Regulated provider data included licensed centers, licensed and registered child care homes, and regulated family homes. The data did not include unregulated care arrangements, such as family, friend, and neighbor care. Figures reflect approved hours of operation and do not mean the provider necessarily offered care during all approved hours.

Moreover, because smaller providers serve fewer children, the overall number of slots in Travis County open during nontraditional hours is low (2,059). In other words, a higher percentage of smaller home-based providers is licensed to provide care during nontraditional hours than center-based providers, but these smaller providers care for fewer children than large centers.

Study Participants' Preferences for Types of Nontraditional-Hour Child Care Vary by Time Frame

Many community leaders, parents, and providers told us home-based providers have greater flexibility to operate during nontraditional hours than center-based providers, which tend to approach the issue as a business decision and have more difficulty being flexible because their fixed costs are higher. However, we also heard that small home-based providers can lose money providing care (box 1).

BOX E.1

What Are the Costs of Providing Nontraditional-Hour Child Care?

To explore the costs of offering nontraditional-hour care, our team examined costs incurred by child care providers when caring for only a few children.

- Salaries of caregivers represent 60 percent of costs incurred by child care providers, and overhead (including taxes, rent or mortgage, utilities, and accounting) represents 40 percent of costs.^a
- Tuition and fees from enrolling children are the primary source of revenue for many child care providers. However, safety regulations limit the number of children that can be enrolled per caregiver employed. Because regulated child care teachers are paid for every hour worked, child care providers can incur a financial hit if fewer than the maximum number of children attend for every hour a caregiver is paid.
- If only a single child attends for a few hours before traditional-hour operation and parents pay \$20 for each hour of care, the provider would lose money. Currently, the living wage in Austin/Travis County is \$20 an hour. If parents pay the child care provider \$20, and the provider pays the caregiver \$20, she incurs an additional \$4 in overhead costs and loses \$4 for each hour of care.

Consistent with this analysis, the majority of providers we interviewed who indicated they were interested in providing care told us they think they would be at risk of losing money because of the current financing approach. Low attendance during nontraditional hours would mean these child care providers would need more funds to cover salary costs. Moreover, providers told us they incur additional costs if providing care during nontraditional hours, such as costs of additional cribs and beds for children and higher utility costs incurred when extending hours of care.

^a US Department of the Treasury (2021).

Most community leaders and child care providers and many parents told us they believed home-based care is best for children late in the evening, overnight, and very early in the morning. Study

participants told us that most home-based and in-home care was provided by unlicensed family, friends, or neighbors. Similarly, when describing care used during nontraditional hours, most parents told us they used a combination of family, friend, and neighbor care and other child care arrangements. Yet none of the parents we spoke with who used family, friends, and neighbors to care for their children paid the caregivers through subsidies. In some instances, parents' relatives were potentially eligible to receive child care subsidies but other relatives, friends, or neighbors were not.

None of the parents who used family, friends, and neighbors to care for the children paid them through subsidies.

Austin/Travis County community leaders, providers, employers, and parents told us parents working nontraditional-hour schedules varied in their preferences for care depending on the time frame. Although some parents who worked both nontraditional and traditional hours preferred the same type of care during all periods, most parents told us their preferred type of care varied depending on the specific time frame and should be tailored to best support young children's development. Most community leaders, child care providers, and employers also suggested the type of child care available should be tailored to the needs of young children. Specifically, the features of care they believed are best in the evening and night differed from the features of quality traditional-hour care. One mother's ideal child care arrangement included two types of care:

[I] want stable licensed child care from 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 or 8:00 p.m., and then overnight [I] would prefer a relative caregiver or someone who they have a close personal trust. I prefer my child sleeping in her own bed.

Many parents told us they wanted their children to have dinner and bedtime routines that supported their development and preferred care offered in their own home or in the home of a trusted person who could provide a warm and nurturing environment. Several community leaders told us that since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, they perceived that families "who can afford to hire nannies" were mostly using this type of unregulated care. Moreover, some told us that Spanish-speaking families engaged "tía networks" (*tía* is the Spanish word for aunt) to access informal caregivers for nontraditional-hour work and school needs.

Some parents told us they preferred home-based or unregulated care because of its greater flexibility to meet their scheduling needs. This finding is consistent with existing research (Home Grown 2021). One parent did not consider center-based care because of her changing schedule:

It might be harder for a facility to work with the schedule because usually they're not drop-ins. Even with drop-in care, probably still not because of the short notice.

In contrast, parents who used regulated care during traditional hours told us they would prefer if their primary care arrangement expanded hours. One parent expressed that her child care's limited hours held back her career: "I wish there were day cares that opened earlier, because I can't move up in the company, like become a lead or a supervisor or anything, because...I would have to be at work at 6:00 [a.m.]. The earliest the day care opens is 6:00 a.m."

Parents and community leaders value quality of nontraditional-hour care, defined as care provided in a safe and secure environment by well-qualified and trained staff whom the family trust. Their high standard for the health and safety of their children was generally consistent across hours of the day and days of the week, but many people we spoke to specified that their idea of quality overnight was less focused on educational curricula than on care provided during the daytime. As one community leader explained,

Quality is different if the care is overnight...Quality means uninterrupted sleep in their own bed, health, and safety. There is less time for the "high-quality interactions" you look for during the day.

At the same time, most parents told us they preferred and used nontraditional-hour care offered by family, friends, and neighbors, particularly for evening and overnight care. Parents reported that the most important features of this type of care are trust, safety, respect, and cultural competency, especially for Black or Hispanic parents. A significant minority of parents told us they distrusted child care centers for overnight care for various reasons, including safety concerns, cultural norms regarding prioritizing family care, and feeling respected by the caregiver. A community leader observed,

Unlicensed FFN [family, friend, and neighbor care] is the most used type of care for Austin and Travis County, especially for people of color.

Although most parents told us they preferred family, friend, and neighbor care, several parents told us they preferred licensed child care centers because of difficulties they had encountered relying on family, friends, and neighbors due to lack of reliability, their caregiving approach, and safety concerns. The nonrandom sample of parents, child care providers, employers, and community leaders who participated in our study told us they believed child care preferences varied for families with different demographic characteristics and cultural backgrounds. Most study participants told us they believed

parents of color and parents who are immigrants were more likely to work nontraditional-hour schedules and thus have nontraditional-hour child care needs. This finding is consistent with our analysis of survey data collected by the US Census.

Several study participants suggested that, because of these factors and the lack of regulated child care during nontraditional hours, parents who are immigrants are more likely to use family, friend, or neighbor child care. The majority of both parents of color and white parents who participated in our study told us they preferred to have their young children cared for by a close and trusted family member overnight and in regulated child care during the day. Many of the parents told us they would not want just any family member to care for their children and would only rely on a highly trusted relative. Others valued formal child care centers during the day because they saw licensing and training requirements as assurances their children would be cared for in a healthy and safe place. A small but notable number of parents said that even at night they would prefer a licensed or certified professional to care for their child in the family's home to ensure reliability and safety.

Consequences of Inadequate Supply of Nontraditional-Hour Child Care

Community leaders, child care providers, parents, and employers believed the supply of nontraditional-hour child care is inadequate and that this inadequate supply of nontraditional-hour care particularly affects parents most affected by structural inequities to opportunities. The lack of nontraditional-hour care also negatively affects employers and the community.

Community Leaders, Providers, Parents, and Employers Believed the Supply of Nontraditional-Hour Child Care Is Inadequate

Community leaders, child care providers, parents, and employers reported that the supply of nontraditional-hour care was inadequate to meet parents' needs. Several community leaders, child care providers, and parents told us nontraditional-hour care is less available today than in the past, often referencing closures in the immediate aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although providers, parents, and business and community leaders reported a lack of available regulated care during all nontraditional hours, they noted in particular an inadequate supply of care in the hours immediately before and after the traditional-hour day. Many child care providers, in turn, reported an interest in

expanding their hours on either side of the traditional workday and said this would be more feasible for them than operating late into the evening and overnight.

Many child care providers reported an interest in expanding their hours on either side of the traditional workday and said this would be more feasible for them than operating late into the evening and overnight.

Several providers told us they offered care during some portion of the early morning period, but among the regulated providers we interviewed, only one offered care late into the evening or overnight. One of the child care providers who was approved to operate during nontraditional-hour periods indicated they were not open for the full period they were authorized to provide care. Many told us that they offered such care on an ad hoc basis or were licensed for fewer hours than they would be willing to provide care because of low enrollment. These providers might be willing to open earlier or stay open later, but they were listed in the database of regulated providers for more restricted hours because they did not currently have families enrolled for those times. A reduction in licensed hours changes the hours listed on Search Texas Child Care, the state’s child care search tool, which means parents cannot easily find providers who, while not currently offering nontraditional-hour care, may be willing to do so. These providers could easily become licensed for extra hours but are not currently licensed for those hours because they do not have children in care for those times. One provider licensed to start at 6:45 a.m. noted that she would be willing to open as early as 6:00 a.m.: “Right now my earliest drop-in is 6:45. If I do get one that...needs me as early as 6:00 in the morning, yes, I’ll take them.” One provider indicated she was told by a child care licensing representative to reduce her authorized hours because she was not currently caring for children at that time. As she explained,

[The child care licensing representative] stated, “Because you do not have kids on the weekends, evenings and overnights right now...I’m going to need you to write a letter [to the licensing office] and switch your hours,” because basically she didn’t want to have to make a blank trip.

If providers were to offer nontraditional-hour care, they would lose money if they did not have enough children regularly attending during the entire nontraditional-hour period. Indeed, several child care providers told us they were willing to provide nontraditional-hour care, but because of the intermittent need, they did not currently provide it. Thus, the supply of regulated child care providers

that actually operates during all hours they are licensed to operate may not be an exact match for the numbers and shares reported in figure 8.

Study Participants Reported Children in Lower-Income, Black, and Hispanic Families Experience Inadequate Access to Nontraditional-Hour Care

Austin/Travis County community leaders, parents, employers, and child care providers informed us that lack of accessible nontraditional-hour care was a barrier to economic advancement. These study participants told us that nontraditional-hour work schedules were more common for families with low incomes and families who are Black or Hispanic, who have faced historical and persistent structural and systemic barriers to economic opportunity. These reports are consistent with our analysis of survey data collected by the US Census.

Community leaders also told us most parents working in low-paying jobs have less control over their schedules than those in higher-paying jobs. This lack of control over work schedules makes finding nontraditional-hour child care more difficult for families with lower incomes. Additional barriers to accessing nontraditional-hour child care included high costs, lack of information about child care availability, the perception that nontraditional-hour care is low quality, and systemic barriers in existing policies that make accessing affordable care challenging for parents. For example, some parents described difficulty accessing child care subsidies for nontraditional-hour care.

Study participants noted that although parents with nontraditional-hour schedules preferred relatives to provide home-based care during many nontraditional-hour periods, these individuals have difficulty participating in the regulated system or becoming licensed as a home-based provider. This finding is consistent with research showing home-based child care providers' participation in the subsidy system has declined substantially in the past several decades and that many home-based providers experience difficulty completing licensing paperwork (Bromer et al. 2021).

Many study participants also reported the current subsidy reimbursement rates for nontraditional-hour care were not adequate to cover costs. They shared their perspective that because of these barriers, many families with the highest need for nontraditional-hour care also faced the greatest difficulty accessing and using quality, affordable nontraditional-hour care. Study participants also perceived that the lack of availability of culturally competent or culturally congruent care was a challenge for parents seeking access to both nontraditional-hour child care and traditional-hour child care and early education.

Study Participants Believed Children in Families with Immigrant Parents Face Particular Challenges Accessing Nontraditional-Hour Child Care

Immigrant parents are structurally more likely than US-born parents to work in low-wage, nontraditional-hour jobs. Moreover, as some community leaders pointed out, some immigrant parents in Austin/Travis County have few relatives who live near their family and whom they can rely on for child care. Thus, many immigrant parents face particular challenges accessing nontraditional-hour child care even though their need for it is great.

Community leaders in Austin/Travis County shared that immigrant families faced particular challenges accessing affordable nontraditional-hour care. Immigrants who are not fluent in English face barriers to accessing information about care because of a lack of translated information about the supply of regulated child care. Community leaders told us many immigrants have difficulty accessing child care subsidies and figuring out how to complete required application materials. Several community leaders reported families were reluctant to use center care based on previous experiences of feeling their children were not safe or that they were disrespected by staff in child care centers. This finding is consistent with Goodman and colleagues' research showing immigrant women experience trauma interacting with public systems in the US (Goodman et al. 2017).

Many community leaders reported a perception that immigrant parents preferred family, friend, and neighbor care based on shared ethnicity and cultural values. A few community leaders who worked closely with immigrant families told the study team about some concerns of immigrant parents and child care providers about participating in public systems. These community leaders said some immigrant parents and child care providers were hesitant to participate in public systems because of concerns such participation could lead to surveillance by Immigration and Customs Enforcement or Child Protective Services.

Similar to other parents, many immigrant parents who participated in our study told us they preferred licensed center-based child care during the day and care from trusted family overnight. Notably, many immigrant parents we spoke to highly valued the safety associated with licensed providers during the day. Several told us it is important to ensure only close and trusted family members cared for their children at night. Others made the choice to care for their own children full time, rather than working nontraditional hours, to ensure the safety of their children and because they believed any income would be consumed by the high cost of child care.

Study Participants Perceived Specific Challenges with Nontraditional-Hour Child Care for Parents Enrolled in School

Community leaders and parents reported that the lack of availability of nontraditional-hour child care was a key obstacle to parents pursuing educational opportunities related to career advancement. Community leaders indicated that parents who were seeking to advance in their careers through education often needed both traditional and nontraditional-hour child care. All of the parents in our study who were both enrolled in school and working told the study team they combined traditional- and nontraditional-hour child care to meet their school and work needs. Moreover, several parents told the study team that lack of child care limited their ability to pursue their preferred career or job because of scheduling challenges and the cost of paying for care that met the family's needs. One parent described how her career choices were constrained because of a lack of nontraditional-hour child care:

Sometimes, it feels like I'm choosing between my kid and my career. I don't really want to work as a school nurse, but it's one of the only things that works with my daughter's schedule.

Other parents expressed similar sentiments about how they were not able to advance in their companies or take on better job opportunities because of a lack of nontraditional-hour care. Others even left higher-paying nontraditional-hour jobs in favor of lower-paying, more traditional-hour jobs because child care was available.

Many parents with nontraditional-hour schedules told us they were juggling multiple responsibilities, including work, family, and school and thus needed both nontraditional- and traditional-hour child care to support their children's growth and development and so they can work and attend school.

Parents frequently cited being stuck in traffic as an additional obstacle to juggling work and child care. Multiple parents reported traffic delays caused them to arrive late to pick up their children and to incur costly late fees. In addition, several community leaders cited a need for care for nonwork-related reasons, such as to go to a doctor's appointment, attend to health-related issues, or pursue social services in person.

Many Study Participants Reported Lack of Nontraditional-Hour Child Care Decreased Families' Financial Well-Being and Businesses' Ability to Access Talented Employees

Many parents reported that challenges in accessing nontraditional-hour care constrained their employment and education opportunities. Community leaders reported that lack of nontraditional-

hour care prevented parents from pursuing the education needed to enter higher-income careers. We spoke with a range of community leaders and child care providers about nontraditional-hour care. Several leaders reported that lack of access to nontraditional-hour care limited parents' ability to work, participate in schooling and training opportunities, and pursue higher-paying jobs that require work or commute times before 7:00 a.m., after 6:00 p.m., or on weekends. For example, one community leader pointed out,

There are five parents who are waiting to start training, but they can't because they don't have child care.

Employers, community leaders, and policymakers perceived the lack of nontraditional-hour care in Austin/Travis County as detrimental to parents' workforce participation. Many study participants told us that reliable care is essential for parents to be able to work. One community leader stated,

Child care is [the] number one cause of retention problems for employers.

A community leader reflected on the opportunity costs incurred because parents lack nontraditional-hour child care:

Businesses are losing out on talent when parents opt out of careers with nontraditional-hour work schedules.

A shortage of accessible care that meets families' needs can negatively impact businesses by limiting the pool of potential high-quality employees. Employers may be losing out on talent when a lack of accessible care leads parents to opt out of certain career paths because they cannot otherwise maintain a nontraditional-hour work schedule.

A recent study estimated that Texas misses out on about \$9.4 billion in economic activity annually because of child care challenges that result in work disruptions. This includes situations where parents have to miss work, reduce work hours, or leave the labor force entirely. This report found that about three-quarters of parents reported missing work and 7 percent reported voluntarily leaving the workforce because of child care issues (US Chamber of Commerce Foundation 2021). Additionally, researchers have predicted that in Texas an additional 27,300 mothers would join the workforce and 38,600 children would be lifted from poverty if subsidies were available to all working families with incomes below 150 percent of the federal poverty level (Giannarelli et al. 2019).

Community leaders and child care providers also reported workforce issues that make it difficult to provide nontraditional-hour child care. Nearly all child care providers who participated in our study reported challenges providing nontraditional-hour child care related to recruiting and hiring staff, at times needing to broaden their criteria for screening prospective employees. These findings are

consistent with the child care staffing pulse survey conducted by the Success by 6 Austin/Travis Coalition in March 2022 (Success by 6 2022). Providers also described challenges related to retaining staff in a poorly compensated profession with few benefits. Several home providers described paying their staff and covering operating expenses while not paying themselves a salary.

Box 2 discusses how the consequences of an inadequate supply of affordable nontraditional-hour child care played out for one Austin mother.

BOX 2

A Parent's Experiences with the Insufficient Supply of Nontraditional-Hour Child Care in Austin/Travis County

Ashley (name changed to protect the parent's identity), a mother who lives with her three children in Austin, starts work making car parts in the early morning. She would like to advance her career by becoming a supervisor, but she would have to get to work even earlier, and the child care center that her children attend in the mornings before school does not open early enough. She is also interested in switching careers but does not have access to child care for the hours she would need to be a medical transport driver.

During the parts of the year that Ashley has to work on the weekends, her children stay with a family member, but she is not able to set up a reliable arrangement because of the inconsistent nature of her work hours. Her job is on a points system, and she has been docked points when she gets to work late when her caregiver has been late. If she gets too many points docked, there are consequences. Sometimes, she has to drive as much as 40 minutes one way to take her children to a family member she trusts and is available to care for her children on the weekends.

Her ideal child care for early mornings is a center—but one that is open a little bit earlier to accommodate the hours that she actually needs to advance her career. She trusts the child care center to be more dependable than family members. For Ashley, safety is the most important factor in choosing child care, but she also stressed the importance of reliability in selecting an arrangement. Ashley noted that if she needs someone to care for her children on the weekend when her child care center is closed, she sets up care with a family member in advance. But because no one is reliable 100 percent of the time, she may need to ask several people.

Ashley's options for child care are limited, and the cost is prohibitive. She receives a scholarship from the local Workforce Commission to help her pay for care during the day. She said she struggles to afford child care at all without it. Lack of nontraditional-hour child care holds her back from moving up in her career and taking home a better living for her family.

Source: Interview with a parent.

Austin/Travis County Interviewees Perceived Specific Barriers to Nontraditional-Hour Child Care

Many people we interviewed told us they believed existing policies were not designed to adequately support the nontraditional-hour child care arrangements parents tend to prefer and use and families' access to care. Regulated providers as well as unlicensed family, friend, and neighbor providers told us the existing systems were difficult to navigate, and some caregivers would not be eligible to apply for subsidy payment. Selected quotes from study participants related to the effects of a lack of nontraditional-hour child care are presented in appendix C.

- **Community leaders and providers told us administrative burdens limited the number of providers who could become licensed, participate in the subsidy system, and meet quality standards.** We heard that relatives caring for children during nontraditional hours faced substantial administrative challenges in meeting the requirements to be eligible for subsidy payments. Analysis of regulated care providers was consistent with study participants' perceptions: only 25 to 30 percent of home-based providers participated in subsidy programs compared with 50 to 70 percent of center or organizational programs. We also heard that some smaller home-based providers feared that “surveillance” would ensue from accepting resources from government sources that would make them vulnerable to other interventions, such as Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Child Protective Services. Community leaders representing immigrant and Spanish-speaking constituents were especially concerned about these issues.
- **Unregulated care providers expressed fear of being investigated.** Some participants in our study told us the new funding to support unregulated care was being distributed in a way that created distrust. For example, a participant shared that, in the year before the pandemic, Texas reestablished an Unregulated Operations Unit with a Child Care Regulation program.¹⁶ Although a key function of the unit has been to engage in outreach with unregulated providers and educate them about the benefits of becoming regulated, community leaders said this outreach created significant concerns about how regulation would affect its intended recipients. Many of the caregivers are undocumented immigrants or individuals who provide care to children whose parents are undocumented or live in mixed-status families. As one community leader shared, “This was the first time that there was dedicated money and staff in a different way that was solely to look for unregulated unlicensed care providers more actively in our communities....We were very alarmed with that.” Many community leaders, parents, and providers perceived that unregulated caregivers provided the majority of nontraditional-hour

care, and several recommended providing training and supports to these caregivers and addressing the existing barriers to participating in the current system in a nonthreatening way.

- **Parents told us they mostly relied on unpaid care by family and friends for most nontraditional-hour care.** We heard from many parents and community leaders that family and friend care was preferred during many nontraditional-hour periods. We also heard that a large segment of the local population lacked family members who were close or friends who were willing to provide such care. Thus, many parents were faced with choosing between work and the types of child care they preferred. A few parents described using less than ideal approaches to child care that included bringing their children to work and having their children sleep in their cars while they completed their work shifts. Some families used regulated care during the day and did not work nontraditional hours because they were unable to access subsidies for nontraditional-hour care. None of the parents in our study reported using scholarships or subsidies to pay for care from family, friends, or neighbors. In some cases these preferred caregivers may have been eligible to apply for these scholarships or subsidy payments, but other relatives and friends would not be eligible. Scholarships or subsidy payments may only be paid to specific relatives who are older than age 18, including siblings who are not living in the same household as the primary parent and grandparents, great-grandparents, aunts, and uncles. These restrictions do not permit subsidy payment to a neighbor or friend category or other categories of relatives.
- **Smaller child care centers and home-based providers reported that the subsidy rates did not adequately cover their costs.** Providers told us that to offer care for a single child during nontraditional hours costs them substantially more than providing care for a group of children. Moreover, they told us the current, market-based subsidy rates for traditional hours did not cover the cost of providing quality care or incentivize offering care during nontraditional hours, which is accompanied by additional costs for a smaller number of children and higher hourly rates for staff.
- **The Texas Rising Star program was designed to support centers but not the types of relative and home-based providers parents prefer during nontraditional hours.** The quality standards and metrics used for Texas Rising Star are appropriate for traditional-hour center-based care, but they do not reflect the type of care offered when children are sleeping early in the morning or having dinner and engaging in bedtime routines, which we heard are typically offered by smaller home-based or relative caregivers.

Although the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) state plan indicates the state is working to increase and incentivize child care providers engaged with the Texas Rising Star quality improvement system, the current system is designed to support quality during traditional hours. Among the child care providers we interviewed, none had received professional training that was specific to nontraditional-hour care. Thus, smaller providers—most from groups who have been marginalized historically and in the present day—experience challenges accessing the maximum available funding and support that would help them provide care during nontraditional hours. Moreover, several providers we interviewed reported administrative burdens related to the process of becoming a part of the Texas Rising Star program, which, as of October 2022 and after a grace period, will be required to receive subsidy payments. With a higher quality rating, providers are eligible for higher subsidy payment rates. The administrative process is further complicated because the licensing agency, Texas Health and Human Services, differs from the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), which oversees the subsidy and Texas Rising Star programs.

The quality standards and metrics used for Texas Rising Star are appropriate for traditional-hour center-based care, but they do not reflect the type of care offered when children are sleeping early in the morning or having dinner and engaging in bedtime routines, which we heard are typically offered by smaller home-based or relative caregivers.

- **Study participants reported that child care centers faced staffing shortages that were worse than during traditional hours.** Currently, a small portion of child care centers in Austin/Travis County are licensed to care for children during nontraditional hours, but we heard from community leaders and providers that many faced challenges hiring and retaining staff. These study participants told us these staffing challenges were worse during nontraditional hours than during traditional hours. These perspectives are supported by survey data from March 2022 conducted by United Way for Greater Austin. The survey showed that nearly half of the child care programs surveyed limited hours of operation because of staffing shortages (Success by 6 2022).

Study Participants' Perspectives on Strategies to Address Nontraditional-Hour Child Care Needs

Austin/Travis County community leaders, parents, providers, and employers shared perspectives about how to increase access to nontraditional-hour child care that meets families' needs. They reflected on the importance of increasing the supply of regulated nontraditional-hour child care, supporting unregulated providers, tailoring quality improvement efforts to support nontraditional-hour child care providers, engaging employers and private partners in seeking solutions, and taking action to address inequitable access to care and funding for nontraditional-hour care.

Several study participants reflected on specific strategies they believed need to occur based on their understanding of the child care policy context, but many provided general reflections that could be relevant to both traditional- and nontraditional-hour care. Some suggestions would require changes in federal, state, and community policies. Box 3, presented after the study participants' perspectives, summarizes federal, state, and local policies, especially as they affect funding and regulation, and appendix D discusses the policy context in Texas. Appendix E provides additional details about the strategies presented below.

Strategy 1. Increase the Supply of Regulated Nontraditional-Hour Child Care

Study participants believed action needs to be taken to increase the supply of regulated nontraditional-hour care. Several community leaders noted that the supply of regulated nontraditional-hour child care is much lower than traditional-hour care, although traditional-hour child care is also insufficient to meet demand. Moreover, regulated providers have reduced hours of operation in recent years because of staff shortages. To increase the supply of regulated nontraditional-hour care, study participants suggested that community leaders, child care providers, employers, and parents need to take action to achieve the following objectives:

- Ensure private and public child care payments are sufficient to cover the cost of regulated nontraditional-hour child care.
- Support child care providers in finding, hiring, and retaining qualified staff to work during nontraditional hours.
- Make it easier for nontraditional-hour child care providers to become licensed and participate in the subsidy system.

- Offer coaching and individual support to nontraditional-hour child care providers to help with the process of applying for a license to provide care and to meet requirements to receive subsidies.
- Invest public and private funds in resources and supports to help nontraditional-hour child care providers develop and deepen networks so they can more easily share staff.
- Update existing websites and dissemination strategies to share information about whether regulated providers are willing to offer nontraditional-hour care.

Strategy 2. Support Unregulated Providers, Including Relatives, Who Are Caring for Children during Nontraditional Hours

Many study participants reported that unregulated child care providers offered most of the nontraditional-hour child care currently being used by parents in Austin/Travis County. Many parents told us they preferred to have family, friends, and neighbors care for their young children during the evening and overnight. Several parents reflected on personal experiences, and community members, including leaders of community-based organizations, offered reflections based on their role supporting parents with young children. These study participants suggested that strategies to address this need should aim to achieve the following objectives:

- Help relatives who are caring for children during nontraditional hours become approved to participate in the subsidy system, as currently many of these relatives are not being paid equitably for providing this needed nontraditional-hour care.
- Support networks of parents and informal caregivers to form trusting relationships with one another so they can access informal nontraditional-hour child care.
- Expand existing child care referral networks, including private services such as nanny services and backup care to include nontraditional-hour, ad hoc, intermittent, and backup child care for all families in Austin/Travis County.

Strategy 3. Reconsider How to Measure Quality of Nontraditional-Hour Child Care

Many parents, child care providers, and community leaders told us that quality nontraditional-hour care differs from quality traditional-hour care in some important ways. Study participants shared several objectives they believed are important to address issues of how quality of nontraditional-hour care is measured:

- Update quality measures to reflect differences in features of care provided during nontraditional hours compared with traditional-hour care.
- Maintain existing quality measures that are appropriate for care during the traditional day.
- Provide quality improvement supports, such as coaching and technical assistance, to all child care providers, including unregulated providers, and ensure the type of quality improvement is tailored to nontraditional-hour periods.

Strategy 4. Engage Employers and the Private Sector to Support Nontraditional-Hour Child Care

Employers, community leaders, and child care providers told the study team that employers are negatively affected when parents lack reliable nontraditional-hour care. Moreover, we heard that parents experienced stress when juggling child care with nontraditional-hour work and schooling. Interview participants suggested two ways employers could support nontraditional-hour child care:

- Engage employers through an existing active local business alliance called Early Matters Greater Austin, and support use of resources and tools developed by this organization.¹⁷
- Expand existing partnerships between child care providers and employers, such as engaging more employers in the TWC Child Care Expansion initiative.

Strategy 5. Take Steps to Address Inequitable Access to Public Funds for Child Care

Many study participants expressed concern that existing policies that prioritize traditional-hour over nontraditional-hour child care are exacerbating existing inequities. Parents facing structural barriers to opportunities are more likely to need nontraditional-hour child care, which is currently not adequately paid for with public funds. To support equitable access to publicly funded child care that meets the needs of parents with nontraditional-hour schedules, study participants suggested that community leaders support strategies that will achieve the following objectives:

- Ensure a portion of public funds are devoted to the types of child care that are preferred and best meet the needs of parents with nontraditional-hour schedules.
- Provide additional financial support and resources to smaller child care centers and home-based providers seeking to provide nontraditional-hour child care.

- Translate and broadly disseminate plain-language resources to ensure parents have access to information about options for nontraditional-hour care, features of quality, and financial supports for such care.
- Engage informal and unregulated caregivers in public systems, as they appear to be providing most of the nontraditional-hour care for parents who have low incomes and are therefore eligible for subsidies.

BOX 3

Child Care Policy Context

A range of federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and funding sources affect child care in Texas and in Austin/Travis County.

- At the federal level, the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) provides the largest federal funding stream that supports child care and requires states to ensure the health and safety of publicly funded child care. The Office of Child Care in the US Department of Health and Human Services issues regulations, distributes funds to states, and monitors states to ensure their policies meet federal requirements.
- In Texas, the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) is the lead state agency responsible for distributing CCDF funds to 28 local workforce development boards. TWC is responsible for providing parents and child care providers with information about child care, administering funding to provide services to families with young children, supporting quality improvement, and implementing a range of policies to improve equitable access to child care to support parents' workforce participation and attendance in training or school.^a A separate state agency, Texas Health and Human Services, is responsible for licensing and regulating child care providers.
- In Austin/Travis County, two local workforce development boards (Workforce Solutions Capital Area and Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area) are responsible for providing trainings and resources as well as administering the child care subsidy and Texas Rising Star quality rating and improvement programs. These local workforce boards must adhere to applicable federal and state laws and regulations, but they have discretion over some policies. For example, they could offer enhanced child care subsidy rates for child care providers licensed to provide offering nontraditional-hour care during nontraditional hours.

^a TWC (2022).

Conclusion and Discussion

Austin/Travis County has a large share of young children in working families with nontraditional-hour schedules and a relatively low supply of nontraditional-hour care from regulated providers approved for these hours. About one-third of Travis County children younger than age 6 with working parents, or about 18,000 children, have potential demand for nontraditional-hour care, but only about 2,060 spaces are available for children in regulated providers approved for such care. This finding is consistent with recent studies showing that nationwide a large share of young children is in care provided by someone other than a parent during at least some nontraditional-hour periods (Schilder, Lou, and Wagner 2022). Our findings suggest that a substantial share of subsidy-eligible families used nontraditional-hour care, but none of the parents in this study use scholarships or subsidies for their nontraditional-hour child care. Our overall findings are consistent with some older research based on analyses of the 2012 National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE Project Team 2015) and with qualitative research (Liu and Anderson 2012; Scott and Abelson 2016; Sloane et al. 2019; Vesely 2013) and address gaps in the research. Specifically, we found the following:

- **The supply of regulated child care in Austin/Travis County is insufficient to meet needs.** The existing supply of regulated nontraditional-hour care in Travis County does not meet the current need. Parents and community leaders reported nontraditional-hour care is not available to meet their needs, and the availability of nontraditional-hour regulated care has decreased in recent years. Thus, parents with nontraditional-hour child care needs have constrained child care options.
- **Children in families facing structural barriers to employment, education, and access to care are more likely to need nontraditional-hour care.** These include children who are Black; Hispanic; live in families with lower incomes; live with a single parent, grandparent, or guardian; or live in immigrant families. Our findings from parents add evidence that the nonrandom sample of parents in our study who are parents of color, work low-wage jobs, are immigrants, or are single parents have particular challenges accessing nontraditional-hour child care that meets their needs and supports their children’s development.
- **Nontraditional-hour care is most needed in the early morning and early evening hours, immediately before and after the traditional-hour day, as well as on weekends.** Overnight nonparental care is much less common in Austin/Travis County than child care during other nontraditional-hour periods.

- **The types of child care families prefer and use during nontraditional hours differ** from those used by families only working during traditional hours. Parents with nontraditional-hour child care needs are more likely to use family, friend, and neighbor care for their children (Schilder, Lou, and Wagner 2022). The parents we interviewed were also less likely to use center-based care during traditional hours, but many parents used multiple child care arrangements, such as using a formal child care center during traditional work hours and family, friends, and neighbors for child care when they work during traditional and nontraditional hours.
- **Parents' preferences for nontraditional-hour child care differed based on the time care is needed.** Parents working both traditional and nontraditional hours who used formal care providers during the day told us they would benefit if the centers their children attend during traditional hours slightly expanded their hours of operation. Yet parents indicated they preferred family and relative care for their children very early in the morning, late in the evening, and overnight.
- **None of the parents in our study told us they used subsidies to support nontraditional-hour care.** Instead, parents exchanged care with relatives and friends or personally paid for the costs of nontraditional-hour child care.

Our findings raise a number of considerations for community leaders, child care providers, employers, and parents in Austin/Travis County.

Recommendations

Our study's findings reinforce existing research suggesting that the lack of child care at the times parents need it reduces both their labor force participation and their working hours (Goldin and Katz 2008). Further, parents, who are often young adults with few resources and mounting expenses, are in the greatest need of child care during a period of their lives when they are least able to afford it (US Department of the Treasury 2021). In Austin/Travis County, about one-third of young children in working families, or about 18,000 children, need child care during nontraditional hours. Very high shares of children living in immigrant families (more than 70 percent) and children in families with low incomes (62 percent) have parents with nontraditional-hour child care needs. Moreover, Black and Hispanic children are disproportionately affected as they are more likely to live in families with nontraditional-hour child care needs.

Providing support for nontraditional-hour child care through subsidies and other public and private funds could be an important first step toward addressing long-standing structural inequities. Publicly funded child care is designed to support parents' workforce participation and children's development and growth, but none of the parents in our study were accessing publicly funded child care to offset the cost of nontraditional-hour child care.

Based on our research findings, reviews of existing research, and understanding of policy options, we recommend that Austin/Travis County leaders take action to address the lack of quality, affordable and accessible nontraditional-hour child care. As Austin/Travis County leaders review these recommendations, it is important to consider what action(s) will best address the needs articulated by the participants in this study. Some strategies will require working with the Texas Workforce Commission and the federal government, whereas other strategies can be implemented locally. Some actions will be more costly than others. Moreover, limited empirical data currently exist demonstrating which strategies are most easily implemented and which yield the biggest desired impacts. Thus, we recommend that Austin/Travis County pilot test different actions to determine which best addresses the needs of parents with nontraditional-hour child needs in the local context.

We developed the following recommendations for Austin/Travis County leaders.

Recommendation 1. Use Austin/Travis County Funds to Pilot Strategies to Address Nontraditional-Hour Child Care Needs

We recommend that Austin/Travis County policymakers, community leaders, child care providers, employers, and parents work together to address the nontraditional-hour child care needs of parents with young children by prioritizing access to nontraditional-hour child care and pilot testing a range of initiatives. In collaboration with the local workforce boards, we recommend that the Austin/Travis County community pilot test changes in local policies and devote funding to expand the supply of nontraditional-hour child care options that are designed to meet the needs of parents with nontraditional-hour schedules. We found that nontraditional-hour child care needs are nuanced and vary depending on the time of day. Our study participants told us they use multiple care arrangements. Therefore, we recommend piloting multiple strategies that include incentivizing child care centers to open earlier and remain open later, supporting home-based providers to operate for longer hours, and increasing the supply of in-home caregivers for families who work late in the evening and overnight. Parents and community leaders told us they believe this range of options would offer equitable access to nontraditional-hour care that meets the needs of parents and their young children.

However, to date, limited research is available about what funding levels are needed to incentivize providers to expand hours, and what strategies are needed to ensure parents are aware of changes in child care hours. Therefore, using data from the pilots could inform a range of community-wide approaches that meet the needs of parents, employers, child care providers, and community leaders in Austin/Travis County. We recommend that Austin/Travis County leaders do the following:

- **Pilot test increased subsidy reimbursement rates for child care centers and family child care providers to expand hours earlier in the morning and later in the evening.** Lower demand, less staff, and heightened requirements for caregivers providing care during nontraditional hours make this type of care more costly for providers. We recommend that the Workforce Solutions Capital Area and Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area use a cost-modeling approach to determine what reimbursement rates reflect actual costs of care. This alignment of rates with costs might require working with TWC to exercise the option of being approved to offer enhanced rates, informing TWC that intermittent and nontraditional-hour care hours should be included in the statewide market rate survey, or commissioning a study of the cost of quality nontraditional-hour care.

- **Expand the shared services efforts currently being piloted to include relative and unregulated providers**, who many parents are currently relying on for nontraditional-hour care and to encourage providers participating in the networks to expand hours of care. In Austin/Travis County, United Way for Greater Austin is using one-time funding to create family child care networks that support home-based care providers; family, friend, and neighbor care; and other informal child care providers in improving quality. To date, these networks have resulted in providers overcoming barriers to participating in the subsidy system and Texas Rising Star and becoming licensed.¹⁸ Building on these pilots, we recommend that Austin/Travis County leaders expand the shared services agreements currently being piloted to include relative and unregulated providers, who many parents are currently relying on for nontraditional-hour care. These networks are designed to improve providers' access to resources, provide peer connections, coordinate with state child care agencies, and help providers access additional funding.¹⁹ The Greater Austin Shared Services Alliance for Early Learning is a network of early care and education centers that work together to share information and costs. The alliance aims to improve operational stability and service quality in all participating centers by centralizing business and leadership. The AVANCE²⁰ shared services alliance, set to launch in early 2023, is also designed to provide support for family and home-based child care providers across the state. We recommend Austin/Travis County leaders support implementation of these pilots and evaluate the effectiveness of these networks in increasing the supply of nontraditional-hour child care.
- **Engage parents to serve as ambassadors** to other parents to help them learn about child care and how to navigate complex systems of applying for child care subsidies and learn about licensed care that is available during nontraditional hours. We recommend that Austin/Travis County leaders systematically collect data on these activities and existing strategies to support parents and share information, such as those supported by organizations such as AVANCE, a nonprofit organization that supports underresourced families with young children, engages parent ambassadors who share information with families about services including child care.
- **Evaluate the implementation and outcomes of the pilots** to assess effectiveness in expanding the existing supply of nontraditional-hour care. To date, limited empirical evidence exists about whether these networks are effectively expanding the supply of nontraditional-hour child care.

Recommendation 2. Local Workforce Boards Can Exercise Flexibility in Subsidy Policies and Practices to Support Parents with Nontraditional-Hour Care Needs

The TWC allows local workforce boards to support in-home care if a parent has nontraditional work hours (evenings, nights, and/or weekends) (TWC 2022, p. 139). We recommend that the Workforce Boards in Austin/Travis County do the following:

- **Pilot approaches to expand relative care for parents who work nontraditional hours.**
Currently, the local workforce boards are required to provide parents with information about “the option to choose an eligible relative care.”²¹ Because many parents with nontraditional-hour child care needs prefer relative care, we recommend the local workforce boards enhance information about the option to use subsidies for this type of care and shorten the timeline to access subsidies for relative care.
- **Review how subsidy policies are administered in Austin/Travis County** to identify local subsidy policies that create barriers for in-home and home-based providers to participation in the subsidy system. Our study findings are consistent with existing research showing that increased complexity in the process of participating in the subsidy system appears to be associated with decreases in the number and share of home-based providers who are regulated (Bromer et al. 2021). Challenges created by complex processes could exacerbate existing inequities in access to in-home and home-based care parents prefer during the evening and overnights (Henly and Adams 2018). We recommend that Austin/Travis County workforce boards review subsidy policy administration to address barriers to participation in the subsidy system for these types of providers that parents with nontraditional-hour child care needs prefer.
- **Examine the processes of applying for child care subsidies** to simplify the process for parents and ensure information is translated into the languages of families who need child care. Similar to findings from the current study, existing research suggests the process of applying for subsidies is currently challenging for many eligible parents (Goodman et al. 2017). By identifying and addressing barriers to accessing subsidies for nontraditional-hour care for different communities, local policymakers can create more equitable access to child care subsidies.

Recommendation 3. Employers Can Take Action to Support Nontraditional Hour-Child Care

Based on employer input, we recommend that the Austin/Travis County business community take the following actions to support to address the gap between nontraditional-hour child care need and supply:

- **Chambers of Commerce, business associations, and employers have opportunities to learn about and use resources available** to support increased access to child care for employees with young children. These include the Austin Child Care Toolkit and the US Chamber of Commerce Child Care Roadmap.
- **Participate in Early Matters Greater Austin** and use resources developed and disseminated by this organization.²² This alliance promotes a campaign called Best Place for Working Parents, a national effort spearheaded in local communities.²³ Employers who participate are recognized as creating family-friendly policies. Businesses that participate have access to tools and resources about actions to facilitate access to child care to parents with young children. For example, the organization offers guidance on how employers can implement supportive practices and policies such as stable, predictable scheduling and can support parents through use of a Child Care Toolkit.²⁴ By supporting the use of tools developed by Early Matters Greater Austin, businesses could better support nontraditional-hour child care.
- **Expand existing Austin/Travis County partnerships with child care providers**, such as those supported by the TWC Child Care Expansion initiative.²⁵ This initiative provides funding to child care businesses partnering with employers to expand access to child care. It also provides benefits to employers who offer child care benefits to their employees. These employers report increased employee retention and loyalty, improved productivity, and a better workplace environment, yielding reductions in expenses from employee absences and turnover. Participating employers meeting requirements are also eligible to receive a tax break for investing in child care for employees.²⁶ Pilot programs could also draw from the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation's toolkit examples of employers and educational institutions that have helped develop child care solutions for working parents.²⁷
- **Make the financial and economic case for meeting Austin/Travis County workers' and students' child care needs** and develop partnerships between businesses and child care providers. Doing so could help to minimize the turnover and disruptions associated with inadequate or unstable child care (US Chamber of Commerce Foundation 2021). Like the

recommended partnerships between employers and child care providers, partnerships developed between community leaders and providers could benefit from the suggestions, recommendations, and examples of employers and educational institutions that have helped develop child care solutions for working parents in the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation’s “Childcare Roadmap for Employers.”²⁸

- **The federal government can continue to create incentives for employers to offer child care to employees.** Currently, applicants for federal CHIP (Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors) for America funding are required to submit a plan to provide workers with access to child care.²⁹ The federal government notes that these plans should be responsive to employees’ needs and state and local contexts, and they should account for extended work schedules. Along with these incentives, the federal government can continue providing incentives for employers to support the early care and education workforce and to address the lack of nontraditional-hour child care available to employees.³⁰

Recommendation 4. Texas State Agencies Can Improve Access to Information about Nontraditional-Hour Child Care

We recommend that Texas State Agencies pilot initiatives to increase access to information about nontraditional-hour child care. In Texas, the state agencies that oversee the databases of regulated child care that are publicly posted and provide information about regulated care in specific regions are TWC and Texas Health and Human Services. We recommend that Austin/Travis County leaders encourage these state agencies to do the following:

- **Translate information about available nontraditional-hour child care to reach broader populations of parents.** Translating materials and ensuring materials about child care are accessible to those eligible for public benefits can help establish equitable access to child care (Brown et al. 2019).
- **Maintain up-to-date information** on county-level websites to include information about regulated, informal, and backup care that operates during nontraditional hours.
- **Implement plans to create a new field in the Workforce Information System of Texas to help Boards identify families with nontraditional-hour child care needs.** We recommend the public

portal include additional information about providers who would be interested in expanding hours to meet the child care needs of families with nontraditional-hour schedules.

- **Inform state agencies of the needs for education and career pathways for nontraditional-hour child care providers.** In Texas, multiple state agencies are responsible for credentials and degrees for the child care and education workforce. Thus, any changes to statewide education and credentialing would also require local leaders to work with state agencies to elevate the conversation about the needs of the nontraditional-hour workforce.

Recommendation 5. TWC Can Explore Establishing a Separate, Enhanced Subsidy Reimbursement Rate for Care Provided during Nontraditional Periods Based on a Study of Nontraditional-Hour Costs

Lower demand, less staff, and heightened requirements for caregivers providing care during nontraditional hours make this type of care more costly for providers.

- Consistent with workgroup recommendations to inform child care workforce strategies, **we recommend that the TWC use a cost-modeling approach to determine what reimbursement rates reflect actual costs of care** (Prenatal-to-Three Policy Impact Center 2022; 2023). This alignment of rates with costs might require working with cost-modeling experts to determine cost of nontraditional-hour care, as study participants informed our team that this type of care is often intermittent. Cost modeling can reflect the actual cost of quality care and also can account for the hours of care (Workman and Jessen-Howard 2018).
- **TWC can update the market rate study to reflect costs of nontraditional-hour care.** Current subsidy rates are based on findings from a market rate survey commissioned by TWC (2022). However, the market rate study excluded drop-in care because it was substantially costlier than traditional-hour care. We also recommend that TWC include nontraditional-hour and intermittent care in the statewide market rate survey and consider commissioning a study of the cost of quality nontraditional-hour care.

Recommendation 6. TWC Can Make it Easier for Home-Based and Relative Providers to Offer Quality Subsidized Nontraditional-Hour Care

TWC is responsible for meeting federal requirements for publicly funded child care and thus is responsible for subsidy policy and overseeing the state’s quality rating and improvement system. We recommend that Texas take the following actions:

- **Make it easier for home-based and relative providers to participate in these systems.** A recent study based on interviews of state child care administrators revealed that most state child care agencies do not have a complete picture of the existing supply of child care available during nontraditional work hours or the extent to which that care is subsidized for low-income families (Rachidi et al. 2019). This study further noted that public child care assistance programs can offer a critical safety net for low-income working parents with nontraditional-hour child care needs.
- **Make child care subsidies more accessible to parents working nontraditional-hour schedules.** It is important to ensure that distribution of and access to public dollars are equitable and meet the needs of families eligible for child care subsidies. Given the high percentages of families with nontraditional-hour child care needs who are Black, Hispanic, immigrants, have low incomes, and who face obstacles to education and employment opportunities, it is important for state policymakers to take action to address the existing need.

Recommendation 7. TWC Can Update the Quality Rating and Improvement System to Include Nontraditional-Hour Care

We found that parents who use nontraditional-hour child care prioritize the provider’s ability to provide a safe, nurturing environment with less disruption to sleep, meals, and the families’ overall schedule. Parents with nontraditional-hour child care needs also rate care provided by family and friends and home-based care more highly than center-based care in terms of flexibility and affordability. Parents in our study defined quality care late in the evening as caregivers who support children’s bedtime routines, including supporting children with brushing their teeth, putting on their pajamas, tucking them into bed, and reading them books. Existing research suggests such routines are important

for young children’s growth and development (Spagnola and Fiese 2007). In contrast, parents rate learning activities, preparing for school, and socialization with other children as areas of high importance during traditional hours. We recommend that Austin/Travis County community leaders and policymakers inform TWC and statewide leaders responsible for the design and administration of Texas Rising Star to do the following:

- **Explore updating how quality is measured during nontraditional hours** to better match families’ definitions of quality care during specific nontraditional-hour periods, the types of care that families use during these times, and the features of quality that are important to parents during specific nontraditional hours.
- **Consider appropriate measures for the types of nontraditional-hour care parents use the most.** Parents who participated in our study rated relative and home-based care highly in terms of flexibility and warmth. Existing qualitative research also suggests that parents, especially from marginalized communities, prefer family, friend, and neighbor care because it minimizes disruptions with meals and sleep routines, which families prioritize over learning activities during nontraditional hours (Garcia et al. 2019; Schilder et al. 2022). By including specific measures of quality and ways for family members who are caring for young children to participate in the existing systems, policies could provide more equitable access to care for families with nontraditional-hour care needs.
- **Allow unregulated caregivers and relatives to participate in educational opportunities, coaching, and other quality improvement services.** By doing so, those who are caring for large percentages of children will have the opportunity to learn about quality early care and education. Thus, to support equitable access to high-quality care, it is important to offer quality improvement services to all nontraditional-hour caregivers.

In conclusion, evidence suggests a high need for nontraditional-hour child care in Austin/Travis County and a relatively low supply of nontraditional-hour care from regulated providers. Policymakers, community leaders, child care providers, and employers have an opportunity to take action to address this gap. Improving the supply of affordable, accessible, quality nontraditional-hour care will yield improvements for parents, employers, members of the community, and ultimately for young children in families with parents who work nontraditional-hour schedules.

Appendix A. Definitions, Data Sources, and Methodology

We conducted this study from August through December 2022 to understand nontraditional-hour care supply from regulated providers, potential demand from families, and different community members' perspectives regarding the issue in the Austin/Travis County area. We employed a mixed-methods approach that began with analyses of existing publicly available survey and administrative data. We then conducted interviews with community leaders, child care providers, parents, and employers. Below, we describe the focal site, our definition of nontraditional hours, primary and secondary data sources, the sample for primary data collection, and methods.

Defining the Austin/Travis County Area

For the purposes of the supply and demand analysis, we focused on Travis County. Travis County contains nine Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs)—nonoverlapping, statistical geographic areas containing no fewer than 100,000 people in each area. We examined potential demand at the subcounty level:

- PUMA 5301—Pflugerville, Manor Cities, and Wells Branch
- PUMA 5302—Austin City (North)
- PUMA 5303—Austin City (Northeast)
- PUMA 5304—Austin City (Southeast)
- PUMA 5305—Austin City (Northwest)
- PUMA 5306—Austin City (Central)
- PUMA 5307—Austin City (South)
- PUMA 5308—Austin City (Southwest), Lost Creek, and Barton Creek
- PUMA 5309—West, South, and Outside Austin City

Defining Nontraditional-Hour Periods, Potential Demand, and Regulated Supply

Our quantitative analyses focused on children whose parents had nontraditional-hour work schedules, whom we identified as having potential demand for nontraditional-hour child care, and the regulated supply of child care licensed to provide nontraditional-hour care.

Nontraditional-Hour Periods

Nontraditional hours were defined as 6:00 p.m.–6:59 a.m. on weekdays and anytime on Saturday or Sunday. Specific nontraditional-hour periods are listed below:

- **Early evening** (6:00–6:59 p.m.)
- **Evening** (7:00–8:59 p.m.)
- **Late evening** (9:00–11:59 p.m.)
- **Overnight** (12:00–5:59 a.m.)
- **Early morning** (6:00–6:59 a.m.)

These definitions align with prior definitions used by the Urban team and with Texas regulations (e.g., defining night care as between 9:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.). We used these definitions across the analyses of potential demand for and regulated supply of nontraditional-hour care.

Potential Demand for Nontraditional-Hour Child Care

To estimate the potential demand for nontraditional-hour child care, we examined the number of Travis County children younger than age 6 with all parents working or commuting during at least one weekday nontraditional-hour period or anytime on weekends. We also calculated the share of children with potential demand for nontraditional-hour care out of all Travis County children who had working parents and therefore might need nontraditional-hour care. We substituted the household head when no parents were present and excluded children living in group quarters without a household head. Further definitions of parents working nontraditional hours and working parents are presented below.

- **Parents working nontraditional hours.** Parents working or commuting between 6:00 p.m. and 6:59 a.m. during the week or anytime on weekends. To be counted as a parent working nontraditional hours, a parent needed to be working for at least one full hour encompassing at

least one full nontraditional hour. For instance, a parent working 6:00–7:30 p.m. would be counted as working the nontraditional-hour of 6:00 p.m.–6:59 p.m. A parent working 6:00–6:30 p.m. would not be counted as working during nontraditional hours because it is possible formal care would not be needed during a shorter gap. For two-parent families only, unless stated otherwise, we only counted children as part of potential demand for nontraditional-hour care if both parents were predicted to be working or commuting either during the same weekday nontraditional hours or on the weekend. We determined potential demand in this way because our goal was to identify periods with the potential need for child care (i.e., when no parent would be available to provide care). Children living with a single parent were considered as having potential demand for nontraditional-hour care if the parent was predicted to be working or commuting during any weekday nontraditional hour or during the weekend.

- **Working parents or working families.** Children with parents who are all working. For two-parent families only, both parents had to be working for the child to be included as having all parents working. Children with a single parent only had to have the single parent working to be considered as having potential demand for nontraditional-hour care.

Regulated Supply of Nontraditional-Hour Child Care

To understand the supply of nontraditional-hour care, we examined data on regulated center-based and home-based providers, including licensed, and regulated homes. We analyzed the number and share of regulated providers approved to operate during any nontraditional hours, which were defined as meeting any one of the two criteria below:

- **Weekday nontraditional-hour care.** Provider was approved to operate for at least one continuous hour between 6:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. (only a single set of operating hours is the same across all days was available in the data).
- **Weekend nontraditional-hour care:** Provider was approved to operate during at least some hours on Saturday, Sunday, or both days.

We excluded providers in the school-age center licensing category from the analysis to focus on providers most likely to serve children younger than age 6 rather than older school-age children. The provider data contain information on the hours and days providers are approved to serve. In interviews with providers, we heard that some providers were not willing to offer care or actually operate or serve children during all hours for which they were approved. We also heard that with recent staff shortages, providers were reducing hours of operation even if they were licensed to provide care for longer

periods of time. Conversely, some providers reported they were willing to offer care beyond their currently approved hours, but they were not allowed to seek a change if they did not have a child currently in care during the additional hours.

Data Sources and Analysis

To address our research questions, we collected and analyzed the following data from secondary and primary sources. We downloaded secondary data in July 2022 and collected primary data from August through December 2022.

Secondary Data Sources

Secondary sources included public survey data, administrative data, and publicly available documents describing Texas child care policies and regulations.

PUBLIC SURVEY DATA

We analyzed data including the US Census Bureau's 2016–20 American Community Survey (ACS) five-year file and the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) for 2018 to better understand the potential demand for nontraditional-hour child care. These data were the most recent available when beginning the study. The ACS file contained information on household members and their relationships, demographic characteristics, workers' industry of employment and occupation type, typical departure time for and arrival time at work, and usual number of hours worked each week. Building on the methodology developed in prior analyses of potential demand for nontraditional-hour child care by the authors and their colleagues (Sandstrom et al. 2019), information in these fields was used to infer whether the child reflected in each record was a child in the age range of interest, had parent(s) who worked, and if his or her parent(s) likely worked during nontraditional hours.

We also explored differences in potential demand along other key dimensions, including family income, racial and ethnic identity, parental industry and occupation, and different geographic areas captured by the ACS.

We used SIPP data to help estimate demand for weekend child care because the ACS lacks information on which days people work. We used a linear regression model to estimate the likelihood of weekend work for employed parents based on key personal characteristics (e.g., educational attainment, income, industry of employment). Using both data sources, we estimated an overall

indicator reflecting a parent’s likelihood for nontraditional-hour work. For more information on how children with parents working nontraditional hours were identified and the methodology used in the ACS and SIPP data collection, please see Sandstrom and colleagues (2019) and Schilder and colleagues (2022).

We also explored differences in potential demand along other key dimensions, including family income, racial and ethnic identity, parental industry and occupation, and different geographic areas captured by the ACS.

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

We analyzed publicly available administrative data to assess the availability of regulated child care approved to operate during any nontraditional work hours in Travis County. We obtained these data from two sources:

1. The Search Texas Child Care tool, which allows parents and caregivers to obtain information about child care providers, including their approved days and hours of operation, licensing status, ages served, and capacity.
2. The Texas Child Care Availability Portal, which provides the following information to parents seeking available child care: the number of age-specific openings; subsidy program participation; and Texas Rising Star participation and designation (only subsidy-recipient providers participate in Texas Rising Star, the state’s quality rating and improvement system).

The Search Texas Child Care tool and the Texas Child Care Availability Portal do not include informal or unregulated care arrangements, such as family, friend, and neighbor care. Thus, our analysis of supply was limited to regulated child care providers (i.e., licensed or otherwise regulated by the state of Texas). Both prior research and perspectives of care contributed by Austin/Travis County participants in the current study revealed that unregulated care providers make up a significant portion of the supply for nontraditional-hour care.

DOCUMENT REVIEWS

The research team obtained documents that describe Texas child care policies, the supply and demand for child care, and the policy context. Most documents are publicly available and are included in the notes or cited in the list of references. In some instances, community leaders provided nonpublic documents that provided details consistent with perspectives shared during interviews or focus groups. Documents were reviewed to identify policies that affect child care broadly as well as nontraditional-

hour child care and economic impacts of changes in child care policies. Peer-reviewed research and grey literature were also reviewed to provide context about whether findings from this study were consistent or divergent from research conducted in other states and communities.

Primary Data Sources

Using one-on-one and group interviews, focus groups, and surveys, we collected the perspectives of a diverse range of local officials, community leaders, parents, child care providers, and employers in Austin/Travis County from August through December 2022. We developed data collection based on a review of instruments designed to capture perspectives about nontraditional-hour child care and tailored questions to the Austin/Travis County context. We used semistructured protocols to collect data through interviews and focus groups. We designed each data collection activity to learn about participants' experiences, perspectives, and preferences related to nontraditional-hour child care. We asked questions of child care providers, employers, and key community leaders about their understandings of the availability of and need for nontraditional-hour child care and what policymakers could do to support families with such needs. We designed a short web-based survey to collect background information about community leaders, as several volunteered during interviews that they had multiple roles. We administered the survey after all interviews were completed.

Parent interviews and focus groups included questions about the types of child care they preferred during nontraditional hours and why, as well as background and demographic questions. We also designed a survey to collect data from a larger sample of parents that was designed to capture the perspectives of parents who were reluctant to be interviewed or participate in a virtual focus group. Questions were similar to those asked during the interviews and focus groups, but they included more closed-ended response options so respondents could more easily answer questions.

To recruit participants, we shared information about our study by working closely with local organizations. These organizations shared information about the project through email and telephone outreach, social media, and by distributing flyers. We translated materials into Spanish. We offered parents, child care providers, and employers a \$50 gift card for participating in the study. We conducted interviews with 27 community leaders, 12 child care providers, and 5 employers. We interviewed 25 parents and collected survey data from 37 parents (31 of whom provided race and ethnicity data). We screened parents to ensure study participants had children younger than 13 years old, worked nontraditional hours, and used some form of nonparental child care.

COMMUNITY LEADER DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

We interviewed 27 community leaders representing organizations including scholarship and job training programs, community-based organizations and nonprofits, business associations, school districts, educational institutions, and government agencies. We interviewed these individuals to obtain their perspectives about the supply of and need for nontraditional-hour child care in Austin/Travis County and possible solutions to address the existing need.

Community leaders provided services to families in the Austin/Travis County community and represented parents and employers, and several also identified as parents. Thus, the community leaders we interviewed offered perspectives from direct personal experiences as well as from working with families with nontraditional-hour child care needs and with child care providers offering nontraditional-hour child care.

Based on responses to the survey, we learned that the 27 community leaders held multiple roles: 13 identified as parents or primary caretakers of children, 7 as employers, 2 as child care providers, 8 as policymakers, 18 as nonprofit organizations or community organizers, and 3 as business organizations.

Table A.1 presents details about the community leaders we interviewed who consented to provide demographic information through a survey.

TABLE A.1

Characteristics of 18 Community Leaders Interviewed in Austin/Travis County

Characteristic	Number (%)
Black/African American	2 (11%)
Hispanic/Latinx ^a	5 (28%)
White	9 (50%)
Biracial	2 (11%)
Female	13 (72%)
Male	5 (28%)
Straight	15 (83%)
Bisexual	2 (11%)
Declined to provide sexual orientation	2 (11%)
Nonprofit	14 (78%)
Government	8 (44%)
Employer	7 (39%)
Business organization	3 (17%)
Parent/guardian	11 (61%)
Represented one sector/group	5 (28%)
Represented more than one sector/group ^b	13 (72%)
Parents who ever needed nontraditional-hour child care	11 (100%)

Source: Data compiled through a survey administered by the Urban research team during and after interviews.

Notes: Eighteen community leaders completed the demographic survey; 9 of the 27 total did not provide their demographic information and are not represented in the table.

^a The authors acknowledge these terms may not be the preferred identifiers, and we remain committed to employing inclusive language whenever possible.

^b Community leaders could select more than one sector or group. Here, they are counted in each sector or group they selected. The majority represented two or more sectors or groups.

PARENT DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

We collected data from parents through interviews and surveys. We recruited participants through community-based organizations.

Parent interviews

We conducted interviews with 27 parents in Austin/Travis County. We spoke to parents who worked and/or were in school during nontraditional hours to learn their preferences for child care arrangements during specific nontraditional-hour periods and their experiences accessing nontraditional-hour child care.

We asked parents about the child care arrangements they would recommend for a friend who had young children to determine what they believed would be best. Research suggests parents often answer questions about child care preferences in light of what is available rather than what would be ideal (Shlay 2010). Thus, simply asking parents about their preferences would likely yield information that would be influenced by actual constraints and not as accurate as presenting parents with scenarios and asking them for their recommendations under ideal circumstances without those constraints. We presented parents with scenarios and asked them to recommend to a friend the child care option they believed would be best if availability and affordability were not concerns. We asked them to answer questions based on the following specific periods: early morning (before 7:00 a.m.), evening (after 6:00 p.m.), overnight, weekends, irregular, and during the day. We presented the following options to choose from when we asked parents which child care option or options they would recommend to their friend to use:

- a person caring for the child in the family’s home—noting that this person could be a family member, a friend, or a hired nanny or babysitter
- a person caring for the child in her or his own home—noting that this home could be a licensed family child care home or the home of a friend or relative
- a licensed provider caring for children in a child care center licensed by the state

We also asked respondents if their answers would have been different before the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, we asked if their answers would be different if they had a school-age child. We included additional questions about the families’ demographic characteristics, parents’ work schedules,

child care arrangements the parents were currently using, and parents' thoughts about different aspects of child care.

To learn about parents' perspectives on different attributes of child care, we asked them about a range of attributes, including reliability of care, cost, location, warmth of the caregiver, the focus on curriculum, and shared race, ethnicity, culture, and language. A research assistant took notes that were analyzed to identify themes identified from prior research and emergent themes.

Survey of Spanish-speaking parents

To hear perspectives of parents who primarily speak Spanish in an anonymous manner, the study team designed and administered a short online survey that we translated into Spanish. The survey asked questions about current nontraditional-hour child care use and preferences and included demographic questions. The study team combined the survey data with the interview data to explore similarities and differences. Analyses revealed similar perspectives offered by parents who participated in the interviews and those who completed the survey. Thirty-seven parents answered at least one question asked through an online survey (table A.2).

TABLE A.2
Characteristics of 37 Spanish-Speaking Parents Surveyed in Austin/Travis County

Characteristic	Number (%)
Hispanic	31 (84%)
Declined to provide race/ethnicity	6 (16%)
Female	29 (78%)
Male	2 (5%)
Declined to provide gender	6 (17%)
Straight	28 (76%)
Declined to provide sexual orientation	9 (24%)
Ages 18–24	7 (19%)
Ages 25–34	14 (38%)
Ages 35–44	15 (41%)
Age 45–54	1 (3%)
Average number of children	2

Source: Data obtained by Urban research team from online survey responses.

Note: We use the term Hispanic to describe parents of Latin American descent because they self-identified as such.

Demographic characteristics of interviewed parents

The parents we interviewed were similar in ages but differed in demographic characteristics. All but one of the parents identified as a woman. They ranged in age from 20 to 46, with a median age of 31. Parents

had between one and four children, with the average number of children being a bit younger than 2. Most parents worked in the mornings and evenings, with fewer parents working weekend shifts. Only a couple of parents worked overnight. However, several reported working until midnight or 2:00 a.m. and coming home from work in the middle of the night.

Table A.3 presents details about the final sample of parents we interviewed.

TABLE A.3
Characteristics of 25 Parents Interviewed in Austin/Travis County

Characteristic	Number (%)
Black/African American	3 (16%)
Hispanic	12 (48%)
White	5 (20%)
Biracial	3 (12%)
Native American	1 (4%)
Female	24 (96%)
Male	1 (4%)
Straight	19 (76%)
Bisexual	3 (12%)
Average age	31.25
Age range	20–46
Average number of children	2

Source: Data compiled through a survey administered by Urban research team during and after interviews.

Notes: One respondent did not answer the question asking about race and ethnicity, and therefore the total is 24. We use the term Hispanic to describe interviewed parents of Latin American descent because they self-identified as such.

Parents' jobs and work schedules

Parents reported a wide range of occupations. The majority of parents worked in health care, especially in nursing. Multiple parents participated in gig work. Several worked in cleaning and janitorial occupations. A few parents worked in retail, manufacturing, and administration, such as in the state government. One parent worked as a hairdresser; another worked as a real estate agent. Among these occupations, only two people reported some ability to work from home; the majority of parents commuted to their workplace.

Most parents we interviewed were pursuing higher education in some form: nearly half of them were full-time students, and more than a third were part-time students. Most of these parents were pursuing a bachelor's degree in nursing, although some were pursuing an associate or a master's degree.

Many parents were pursuing degrees in nursing, although other areas of study were also represented. All parents who were students were also working either full time or part time.

Parents most commonly worked during the evenings and weekends. Of the parents working on the weekends, most worked specific times, such as one of the two weekend days or one or two shifts. Some parents started their shifts in the early morning and continued them through traditional hours, although this was less common than evening and weekend work. A smaller group of parents worked overnight. For these parents, the overnight shift was their primary schedule. Additionally, most parents who were students reported working on school activities during any nontraditional-hour time that they had available.

A portion of the parents we interviewed reported working set nontraditional-hour schedules, but many parents reported that their schedules changed on a regular basis with varying degrees of advance notice.

EMPLOYER DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

We interviewed five employers from industries with higher shares of employees with nontraditional-hour work schedules including health care and social services, retail, and entertainment, accommodation, and food services. We recruited employers through outreach to community leaders, who shared information about the research with employers and business leaders in their networks. We also directly reached out to employers and business leaders in industries with higher shares of employees working nontraditional-hour schedules.

We asked these business leaders about the number of employees or contractors working for them, the share of employees or contractors who worked nontraditional hours, and how many of those workers were parents. We also asked about their experiences employing parents who work nontraditional hours who had child care needs; their understanding of their employees' nontraditional-hour child care needs; their perceptions of how employees were meeting their nontraditional-hour child care needs; and what, if any, supports they offered employees to address their nontraditional-hour child care needs.

The five businesses employed from fewer than 20 employees or contractors to more than 500 employees. Three of the five employers reported that all their employees or contractors worked at least some nontraditional hours, and the other two reported that only specific employees or contractors worked nontraditional-hour schedules.

From our qualitative analysis of employer interviews, we identified key themes regarding employers' experiences with parents working during nontraditional-hour work schedules. We also wrote analytical

memos to develop and refine the themes we identified and to explore how business leaders' perspectives were consistent with or divergent from perspectives shared by child care providers.

CHILD CARE PROVIDER DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

We interviewed 12 child care providers serving Austin/Travis County. These child care providers included 6 center-based providers, 5 home-based providers, and 1 nanny/babysitting service. Half of the center-based providers had more than one site or facility and half were located at a single site or facility.

We asked these providers about their experiences providing care during nontraditional hours, if they had ever considered expanding their hours, and what they perceived to be important to incentivize child care providers to expand hours. We also asked how they defined quality care and if definitions of quality were the same or different for each period based on different times of the day.

We performed qualitative analysis of data from interviews with child care providers and triangulated key themes that had emerged from interviews with community and business leaders. We also identified new themes specific to child care providers. As we conducted qualitative analysis, we developed analytical memos to summarize emerging themes.

Qualitative Analytic Approach

We analyzed the interview data by employing a thematic approach. We began with an initial set of codes based on previous research and created new codes as themes emerged from the first round of analysis. Because the parent survey was administered to a nonrandom sample of parents, we treated responses as qualitative in nature and do not report numbers or percentages. Instead, we analyzed the survey data along with the interview data to explore divergent and convergent perspectives.

Because our qualitative interviews represent a nonrandom sample of parents, child care providers, employers, and community leaders, we do not report numbers or percentages of responses. We report findings based on whether all, most, or a few study participants provided specific perspectives. We triangulated findings that emerged from qualitative and quantitative data sources. For qualitative analysis of community leader interview data, we identified convergent and divergent perspectives and compared qualitative findings with quantitative findings based on analyses of survey data collected by the US Census, analyses of administrative data collected by TWC, reviews of documents, and findings from existing research. We also analyzed additional data sources to provide greater context to the potential demand for and regulated supply of nontraditional-hour child care in Austin/Travis County.

Appendix B. Additional Potential Demand and Regulated Supply Analysis Results of Nontraditional-Hour Child Care

We estimated whether children’s parents or household heads worked or commuted during nontraditional hours by setting the start time for when the child potentially required care to the value of the “time of departure for work” variable. The end time for when care was potentially needed was calculated by taking the value of the “time of arrival at work” variable and adding the values of the “usual hours worked each week” variable divided by five (assuming work hours were spread over a five-day workweek) and “travel time to work” (assuming commute time to home was the same as to work) to determine the typical time parent(s) arrived at home after work each day. For example, if a parent typically arrived at work at 9:00 a.m. and worked 40 hours a week, we assumed the parent worked 8 hours a day and departed work at 5:00 p.m.

TABLE B.1
Travis County Children Younger Than Age 13 with Parents Working Nontraditional Hours

Location	How many children younger than 13 in Travis County? ^a	How many children have working parents?	What share of children have working parents?	How many children have parents working NTHs?	What share of children with working parents have parents working NTHs?
Travis County	198,980	123,770	62%	40,580	33%

Sources: Urban Institute analysis of Census Bureau microdata from the 2016–20 American Community Survey downloaded from IPUMS-USA and from the 2018 Survey of Income and Program Participation.

Notes: NTHs = nontraditional hours. Frequencies are rounded to the nearest 10, and percentages are rounded to the closest 1 percent. For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working for the child to be considered as having all parents working. Children with parents working nontraditional hours had all parents predicted as working or commuting during nontraditional hours (6:00 p.m.–6:59 a.m. on weekdays or anytime on Saturday or Sunday). For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working or commuting either during the same weekday hours or anytime during the weekend to be considered as working nontraditional hours.

^aThis is the only table in this report that contains this column, showing the total number of children younger than 13 in Travis County. We included this column to provide context for the number of children younger than 13 in Travis County with parents who are all working.

TABLE B.2

Travis County Children with Parents Working Nontraditional Hours, by Child Race/Ethnicity

Number and share of children younger than age 6 in working families

Racial or ethnic group	How many children have working parents?	How many children have parents working NTHs?	What share of children with parents working NTHs are in each racial or ethnic group?	In each racial or ethnic group, what share of children with working parents have parents working NTHs?
Asian or Pacific Islander	2,950	820	5%	28%
Black	5,030	2,370	13%	47%
Hispanic	23,610	9,950	55%	42%
White	20,620	4,080	23%	20%
Other or multiracial	3,300	780	4%	24%
Travis County total	55,510	17,990	100%	32%

Sources: Urban Institute analysis of Census Bureau microdata from the 2016–20 American Community Survey downloaded from IPUMS-USA and from the 2018 Survey of Income and Program Participation.

Notes: NTHs = nontraditional hours. Frequencies are rounded to the nearest 10, and percentages are rounded to the closest 1 percent. For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working for the child to be considered as having all parents working. Children with parents working during nontraditional hours had all parents predicted as working or commuting during nontraditional hours (6:00 p.m.–6:59 a.m. on weekdays or anytime on Saturday or Sunday). For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working or commuting either during the same weekday hours or anytime during the weekend to be considered working nontraditional hours. The “other or multiracial” group includes Native Americans, those who identified as another race outside of the given categories, and those who identified with more than one race. Hispanic children of any race are included in the Hispanic category; all other categories comprise non-Hispanic children.

TABLE B.3

Travis County Children with Parents Working Nontraditional Hours, by Family Income Level

Number and share of children younger than age 6 in working families

Family income group	How many children have working parents?	How many children have parents working NTHs?	What share of children with parents working NTHs are in each family income group?	In each family income group, what share of children with working parents have parents working NTHs?
Below 100% FPL	5,590	3,460	19%	62%
100% to 199% FPL	8,620	4,600	26%	53%
200%+ FPL	41,000	9,670	54%	24%
Overall	55,510	17,990	100%	32%

Sources: Urban Institute analysis of Census Bureau microdata from the 2016–20 American Community Survey downloaded from IPUMS-USA and from the 2018 Survey of Income and Program Participation.

Notes: NTHs = nontraditional hours; FPL = federal poverty level. Frequencies are rounded to the nearest 10, and percentages are rounded to the closest 1 percent. For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working for the child to be considered as having all parents working. Children with parents working during nontraditional hours had all parents predicted as working or commuting during nontraditional hours (6:00 p.m.–6:59 a.m. on weekdays or anytime Saturday or Sunday). For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working or commuting either during the same weekday hours or anytime

during the weekend to be considered as working nontraditional hours. A small group of children living with unrelated household members or in group quarters fell into a “not applicable” category for which poverty status was not calculated (not shown here).

TABLE B.4

Travis County Children with Parents Working Nontraditional Hours, by Income-Based Subsidy Eligibility

	How many children have working parents?	How many children have parents working NTHs?	What share of children with parents working NTHs are subsidy eligible?	For subsidy-eligible families, what share of children with working parents have parents working NTHs?
Income-based subsidy eligibility				
Not income-based subsidy eligible	82,420	19,980	49%	24%
Income-based subsidy eligible	41,350	20,610	51%	50%
Travis County total	123,770	40,580	100%	33%

Sources: Urban Institute analysis of Census Bureau microdata from the 2016–20 American Community Survey downloaded from IPUMS-USA and from the 2018 Survey of Income and Program Participation.

Notes: NTHs = nontraditional hours. Frequencies are rounded to the nearest 10, and percentages are rounded to the closest 1 percent. For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working for the child to be considered as having all parents working. Children with parents working during nontraditional hours had all parents predicted as working or commuting during nontraditional hours (6:00 p.m.–6:59 a.m. on weekdays or anytime on Saturday or Sunday). For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working or commuting either during the same weekday hours or anytime during the weekend to be considered as working nontraditional hours. The income limit for subsidy eligibility in Texas is 85 percent or less of state median income. Eligibility status was calculated by determining Texas state median income levels of families ranging in size from 1 to 20. Income levels of families in the data were then compared with 85 percent of state median incomes for families of their size.

TABLE B.5

Travis County Children with Parents Working Nontraditional Hours, by Parental Immigration Status
Number and share of children younger than age 6 in working families

	How many children have working parents?	How many children have parents working NTHs?	What share of children with parents working NTHs have US-born versus immigrant parents?	In each parental immigration status, what share of children with working parents have parents working NTHs?
Parental immigration status				
All immigrant parents	3,430	2,470	14%	72%
Has at least one US-born parent	51,370	14,960	83%	29%
Travis County total	55,510	17,990	100%	32%

Sources: Urban Institute analysis of Census Bureau microdata from the 2016–20 American Community Survey downloaded from IPUMS-USA and from the 2018 Survey of Income and Program Participation.

Notes: NTHs = nontraditional hours. Frequencies are rounded to the nearest 10, and percentages are rounded to the closest 1 percent. For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working for the child to be considered as having all parents working. Children with parents working during nontraditional hours had all parents predicted as working or commuting during nontraditional hours (6:00 p.m.–6:59 a.m. on weekdays or anytime on Saturday or Sunday). For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working or commuting either during the same weekday hours or anytime during the weekend to be considered as working nontraditional hours. A small group of children not living with their parents fell into a “no parents” category (not shown here).

TABLE B.6

Travis County Children with Parents Working Nontraditional Hours, by Period

Number and share of children younger than age 6 with parents working nontraditional hours

	How many children have parents working NTHs?	What share of children with parents working NTHs have parents working in each period?
Nontraditional-hour period		
Early evening (6:00–6:59 p.m.)	6,070	34%
Evening (7:00–8:59 p.m.)	4,070	23%
Late evening (9:00–11:59 p.m.)	3,530	20%
Overnight (12:00–5:59 a.m.)	3,670	20%
Early morning (6:00–6:59 a.m.)	7,910	44%
Weekend	7,970	44%
Travis County total	17,990	100%

Source: Urban Institute analysis of Census Bureau microdata from the 2016–20 American Community Survey downloaded from IPUMS-USA and from the 2018 Survey of Income and Program Participation.

Note: NTHs = nontraditional hours. Frequencies are rounded to the nearest 10, and percentages are rounded to the closest 1 percent. For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working for the child to be considered as having all parents working. Children with parents working during nontraditional hours had all parents predicted as working or commuting during nontraditional hours (6:00 p.m.–6:59 a.m. on weekdays or anytime on Saturday or Sunday). For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working or commuting either during the same weekday hours or anytime during the weekend to be considered as working nontraditional hours. A small group of children not living with their parents fell into a “no parents” category (not shown here).

TABLE B.7

Travis County Children with Parents Working Nontraditional Hours, by Child Age

Numbers and shares by child age group

Child age	How many children have working parents?	How many children have parents working NTHs?	What share of children with parents working NTHs are in each age group?	In each age group, what share of children with working parents have parents working NTHs?
Birth to age 1	9,130	2,280	6%	25%
Ages 1–2	19,850	6,850	17%	35%
Ages 3–4	18,200	6,180	15%	34%
Ages 5–12	76,580	25,270	62%	33%
Travis County total	123,770	40,580	100%	33%

Sources: Urban Institute analysis of Census Bureau microdata from the 2016–20 American Community Survey downloaded from IPUMS-USA and from the 2018 Survey of Income and Program Participation.

Notes: NTHs = nontraditional hours. Frequencies are rounded to the nearest 10, and percentages are rounded to the closest 1 percent. For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working for the child to be considered as having all parents working. Children with parents working during nontraditional hours had all parents predicted as working or commuting during nontraditional hours (6:00 p.m.–6:59 a.m. on weekdays or anytime on Saturday or Sunday). For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working or commuting either during the same weekday hours or anytime during the weekend to be considered as working nontraditional hours. A small group of children not living with their parents fell into a “no parents” category (not shown here).

TABLE B.8

Travis County Children with Parents Working Nontraditional Hours, by Number of Parents

Numbers and shares by number of parents

	How many children have working parents?	How many children have parents working NTHs?	What share of children with parents working NTHs are living with one versus two parents?	For each number of parents, what share of children with working parents have parents working NTHs?
Number of parents				
One parent	36,080	22,340	55%	62%
Two parents	84,810	16,380	40%	19%
Travis County total	123,770	40,580	100%	33%

Sources: Urban Institute analysis of Census Bureau microdata from the 2016–20 American Community Survey downloaded from IPUMS-USA and from the 2018 Survey of Income and Program Participation.

Notes: NTHs = nontraditional hours. Frequencies are rounded to the nearest 10, and percentages are rounded to the closest 1 percent. For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working for the child to be considered as having all parents working. Children with parents working during nontraditional hours had all parents predicted as working or commuting during nontraditional hours (6:00 p.m.–6:59 a.m. on weekdays or anytime on Saturday or Sunday). For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working or commuting either during the same weekday hours or anytime during the weekend to be considered as working nontraditional hours. A small group of children not living with their parents fell into a “no parents” category (not shown here).

TABLE B.9

Travis County Children with Parents Working Nontraditional Hours, by Parental Education Level

Number and share of children younger than age 6 in working families

	How many children have working parents?	How many children have parents working NTHs?	What share of children with parents working NTHs have parents at each education level?	At each parental education level, what share of children with working parents have parents working NTHs?
Highest parental education level				
High school or less	11,850	6,530	36%	55%
Some college or associate degree	11,250	4,890	27%	43%
Bachelor’s degree or more	32,410	6,580	37%	20%
Travis County total	55,510	17,990	100%	32%

Sources: Urban Institute analysis of Census Bureau microdata from the 2016–20 American Community Survey downloaded from IPUMS-USA and from the 2018 Survey of Income and Program Participation.

Notes: NTHs = nontraditional hours. Frequencies are rounded to the nearest 10, and percentages are rounded to the closest 1 percent. For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working for the child to be considered as having all parents working. Children with parents working during nontraditional hours had all parents predicted as working or commuting during nontraditional hours (6:00 p.m.–6:59 a.m. on weekdays or anytime on Saturday or Sunday). For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working or commuting either during the same weekday hours or anytime during the weekend to be considered as working nontraditional hours. Parental education level reflects the highest level of attainment between both parents for children living with two parents. A small group of children not living with their parents fell into a “no parents” category (not shown here).

TABLE B.10

Travis County Children with Parents Working Nontraditional Hours, by Parental School Enrollment Status

Number and share of children younger than age 6 in working families

	How many children have working parents?	How many children have parents working NTHs?	What share of children with parents working NTHs have parents enrolled in school?	In each parental school status, what share of children with working parents have parents working NTHs?
Parental school enrollment status				
All parents are in school	1,110	740	4%	67%
One parent in two-parent families is in school	2,660	300	2%	11%
No parents are in school	51,030	16,400	91%	32%
Travis County total	55,510	17,990	100%	32%

Sources: Urban Institute analysis of Census Bureau microdata from the 2016-20 American Community Survey downloaded from IPUMS-USA and from the 2018 Survey of Income and Program Participation.

Notes: NTHs = nontraditional hours. Frequencies are rounded to the nearest 10, and percentages are rounded to the closest 1 percent. For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working for the child to be considered as having all parents working. Children with parents working during nontraditional hours had all parents predicted as working or commuting during nontraditional hours (6:00 p.m.–6:59 a.m. on weekdays or anytime on Saturday or Sunday). For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working or commuting either during the same weekday hours or anytime during the weekend to be considered as working nontraditional hours. A small group of children not living with their parents fell into a “no parents” category (not shown here).

TABLE B.11

Travis County Children with Parents Working Nontraditional Hours, by Parental Industry

Numbers and Shares by Parental Industry

	How many children have working parents?	How many children have parents working NTHs?	What share of children with parents working NTHs have parents working in each industry category?	In each parental industry category, what share of children with working parents have parents working NTHs?
Industry of primary parent				
Goods, trade, transportation, and utilities	10,210	2,790	7%	27%
Construction	4,690	2,150	5%	46%

	How many children have working parents?	How many children have parents working NTHs?	What share of children with parents working NTHs have parents working in each industry category?	In each parental industry category, what share of children with working parents have parents working NTHs?
White collar/business services	28,490	7,060	17%	25%
Education services	12,570	2,980	7%	24%
Health care and social assistance	25,030	8,700	21%	35%
Retail	8,280	3,110	8%	38%
Entertainment, accommodation, and food services	12,060	7,100	17%	59%
Public administration	7,170	1,810	4%	25%
All other	15,270	4,880	12%	32%
Travis County total	123,770	40,580	100%	33%

Sources: Urban Institute analysis of Census Bureau microdata from the 2016–20 American Community Survey downloaded from IPUMS-USA and from the 2018 Survey of Income and Program Participation.

Notes: NTHs = nontraditional hours. Frequencies are rounded to the nearest 10, and percentages are rounded to the closest 1 percent. For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working for the child to be considered as having all parents working. Children with parents working during nontraditional hours had all parents predicted as working or commuting during nontraditional hours (6:00 p.m.–6:59 a.m. on weekdays or anytime on Saturday or Sunday). For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working or commuting either during the same weekday hours or anytime during the weekend to be considered as working nontraditional hours. Primary parent is the mother in two-parent opposite-sex couples, the first listed parent in two-parent same-sex couples, and the only parent for children living with one parent. “All other” industries include administrative services and other services.

TABLE B.12

Travis County Children with Parents Working Nontraditional Hours, by Occupation of Primary Parent

Numbers and shares by primary parent occupation

Occupation of primary parent	How many children have working parents?	How many children have parents working NTHs?	What share of children with parents working NTHs have parents working in each occupation?	In each parental occupation, what share of children with working parents have parents working NTHs?
Management, business, and technical	33,310	7,850	19%	24%
Education	3,110	700	2%	23%
Legal	9,280	1,870	5%	20%
Health care practitioner	11,190	3,280	8%	29%
Health care support	6,280	3,370	8%	54%
Social and public services	4,100	1,130	3%	28%
Food and entertainment	10,350	5,180	13%	50%
Personal care	4,980	1,890	5%	38%

	How many children have working parents?	How many children have parents working NTHs?	What share of children with parents working NTHs have parents working in each occupation?	In each parental occupation, what share of children with working parents have parents working NTHs?
Retail service	10,500	4,160	10%	40%
Office, administrative, and building support	22,710	7,400	18%	33%
Construction	2,140	1,420	4%	66%
Maintenance, production, and transportation	5,830	2,340	6%	40%
Travis County total	123,770	40,580	100%	33%

Sources: Urban Institute analysis of Census Bureau microdata from the 2016-20 American Community Survey downloaded from IPUMS-USA and from the 2018 Survey of Income and Program Participation.

Notes: NTHs = nontraditional hours. Frequencies are rounded to the nearest 10, and percentages are rounded to the closest 1 percent. For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working for the child to be considered as having all parents working. Children with parents working during nontraditional hours had all parents predicted as working or commuting during nontraditional hours (6:00 p.m.–6:59 a.m. on weekdays or anytime on Saturday or Sunday). For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working or commuting either during the same weekday hours or anytime during the weekend to be considered as working nontraditional hours. Primary parent is the mother in two-parent opposite-sex couples, the first listed parent in two-parent same-sex couples, and the only parent for children living with one parent.

TABLE B.13

Travis County Children with Parents Working Nontraditional Hours, by PUMA

City and towns in subarea	How many children have working parents?	How many children have parents working NTHs?	What share of children with parents working NTHs are in each subarea?	In each subarea, what share of children with working parents have parents working NTHs?
PUMA 5301 (Pflugerville, Manor Cities and Wells Branch)	22,730	7,660	19%	34%
PUMA 5302 (Austin City (North))	9,260	3,390	8%	37%
PUMA 5303 (Austin City (Northeast))	17,440	7,160	18%	41%
PUMA 5304 (Austin City (Southeast))	13,000	6,620	16%	51%
PUMA 5305 (Austin City (Northwest))	13,980	2,620	6%	19%
PUMA 5306 (Austin City (Central))	8,310	1,540	4%	19%
PUMA 5307 (Austin City (South))	10,360	3,010	7%	29%
PUMA 5308 (Austin City (Southwest, Lost Creek and Barton Creek))	13,590	3,260	8%	24%
PUMA 5309 (West, South and Outside)	15,100	5,300	13%	35%

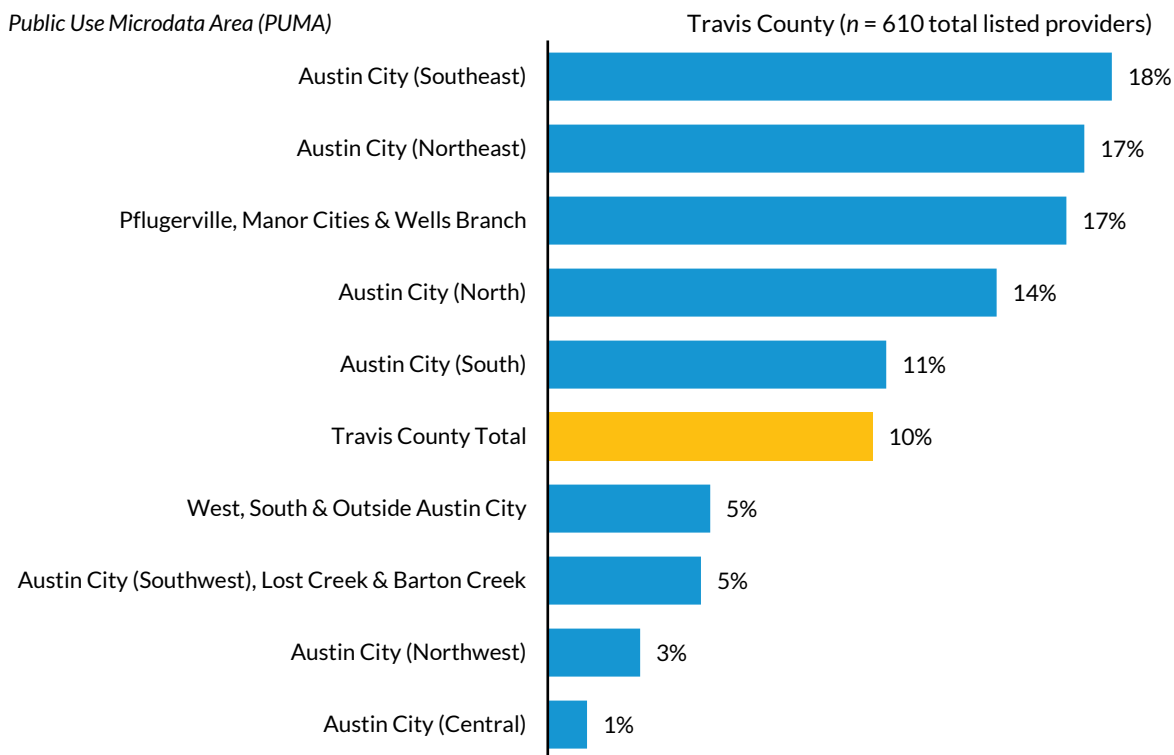
	How many children have working parents?	How many children have parents working NTHs?	What share of children with parents working NTHs are in each subarea?	In each subarea, what share of children with working parents have parents working NTHs?
Austin City)				
Travis County total	123,770	40,580	100%	33%

Sources: Urban Institute analysis of Census Bureau microdata from the 2016–20 American Community Survey downloaded from IPUMS-USA and from the 2018 Survey of Income and Program Participation.

Notes: PUMA = Public Use Microdata Area; NTHs = nontraditional hours. Frequencies are rounded to the nearest 10, and percentages are rounded to the closest 1 percent. For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working for the child to be considered as having all parents working. Children with parents working during nontraditional hours had all parents predicted as working or commuting during nontraditional hours (6:00 p.m.–6:59 a.m. on weekdays or anytime on Saturday or Sunday). For children living with two parents, both parents had to be working or commuting either during the same weekday hours or anytime during the weekend to be considered as working nontraditional hours.

FIGURE B.1

Share of Travis County Regulated Providers Approved to Operate during Nontraditional Hours, by Area
Share of providers approved for any nontraditional-hour care within each PUMA



URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Search Texas Child Care website provider listings as of July 5, 2022.

Notes: Regulated provider data came from the Search Texas Child Care website and include licensed centers, licensed and registered child care homes, and listed family homes. The data do not include unregulated care arrangements, such as family, friend, and neighbor care. Figures reflect approved hours of operation and do not mean the provider necessarily offered care during all approved hours.

Appendix C. Selected Quotations from Study Participants

TABLE C.1

Example Quotes from Interviewed Parents

Parent quotes regarding their current child care arrangements
On clinical days, which is my 14-hour clinical days, I have to be at the hospital at 6:00. I have to be there at 6:00, so I drop her off at my neighbor's. She drops her off. I drop my daughter off at like 5:30 at my neighbor's, and she'll drop her off at 7:30 when child care opens, and then she'll pick her up. My neighbor will pick up my daughter at 5:00, and then I will get her from my neighbor whenever—like around 7:00, 7:30.
I drop off my daughter to [my friend] on Fridays. We make sure we have a schedule that alternates, so we don't have the issue of having to find someone else. I'll put her in this wagon, and it's like the academy wagon, and I'll put her pillow and her blankets down and I'll put her there. Ideally, I would like for her to sleep through that, but she doesn't sleep through that. We'll just go upstairs. I'll put her in the wagon. I'll take the elevator upstairs with all her things and a pillow and a blanket, and I drop her off upstairs to my neighbor's house. Then that's when I get in the car and I'll drive to the hospital.
Several times I went to the Workforce [child care subsidy], they said, "Oh, we don't have a wait list." They had me month to month downstairs, because first one time they said that they would just send me letters. Oh, your time is that I needed to be working at least 25 hours a week in order to qualify for child care. I didn't meet all the requirements, and then there was a waiting list. It was difficult to navigate, too.
When those additional days are added, so the Tuesday is pretty routine for the most part. She's able to pick them up, and she can either keep them or take them to another friend of mine or take them to a different child care center or whatever. Those additional days, though, aren't planned for like that because those aren't expected, so I should be able to leave work at 4:30 or 5:00, make it across town, which is a 30-minute drive, to get my sons so that I can get them home and all the things, and make sure that I'm not having to pay—if I'm not mistaken, the late fee is like \$30 per child immediately, and then five minutes every minute that you're late from there, and that's per kid so I get that twice if I'm not there, which is very difficult to keep up with. That's why those additional days when they do occur make my life just a little bit more challenging, because I don't have the same arrangements that I have for Tuesday for any of the other days of the week.
I've been fortunate enough to—there is what they call a special populations advocate. They reached out to me from my college saying that "We have this information you're a single parent," so there's an active child care scholarship in place for me. When I send my kids, I do have to send them to a different facility. I have to send them to a drop-in care center, which is open on Saturdays from 9:00 to 10:00. They go there. The child care scholarships help cover most of that, and if I go over the amount that they allot me, then I am responsible for covering the rest. For the hours that I am due to be at work is when I try to have my kids there. Traditionally we don't run into an issue where I need to pay too much, but I think there's maybe been like once or twice where I've had to cover the rest of the difference between what was charged and what they will allot me.
I was in a community for single mothers, it's a nonprofit community, and because everyone in the community is a single mom going to school and juggling all these things, that was really nice. We would rely on each other and make arrangements like, "Okay, pick up my kid today, I'll watch your kid over the weekend for a little bit." It was very bartering and child care trade. I moved away from that community because I was no longer eligible to be there when I got my bachelor's degree. I still keep in touch with those people and they help me a lot still, but it's been a lot more complicated because we don't live in the same apartment complex anymore, they live about 20 minutes away from me. It does work, but it's a huge commitment.
During the pandemic, schools were shutting down frequently, we still had to work and go to school. We did a lot of child care trade, and I organized a community child care trade situation with about five different moms that we

<p>would each watch the kids for four hours a day throughout the week, different rotating schedules. That allowed me to get some work done during that time and just have a break honestly, it was very overwhelming.</p>
<p>Parent quotes regarding how child care affects careers</p>
<p>It's just difficult because I feel like I've got to choose. Do I really want to go over here and work and have a career, or do I raise my kid? I don't feel like I have to be choosing both things, and as a nurse I'm going to have long hours and I'm going to need some help. I'll have to work weekends and I'll have to work holidays, and yeah. I feel like right—my options to work are going to be limited right now so I can make sure that she's thriving first, and then my needs are being met. As a nurse, I can go work as a school nurse. I mean even though that's not what I wanted to do originally, I feel like that's something that I would have to do because it works with my daughter's schedule.</p>
<p>I want to stop with the gig job because the job usually if it's on the weekend, I will take my son with me and he can ride while I deliver packages. Sometimes I don't feel very comfortable doing that and I don't feel—because he's not getting enough rest. He's five, we can't do this during the day because either the heat is too hot, or he's too wiggly, and it just puts—I feel it's too stressful to have him in the car with me.</p>
<p>It just dangerous. Yes, I got offered this position at [a hospital], and I wanted days where I could work 7:00 to 5:00, where while he was at school, or after care they said that they only had second shift or third shift (nighttime). So I had to take it. I had to take third because that's when he sleeps, and maybe I can get one of my nieces to come and spend the night.</p>
<p>They offered 2:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m., that's his awake hours. He's in school in the morning. I'm his sole provider and his soul—the only stable person in his life. I don't want to be away from him, like during dinner or during—I'm the one who get—so that's my situation right now.</p>
<p>Before I started going to school...I was being a substitute teacher, and I would only go—they offered me a TA position, but he would get sick. He would get sick, or he would cry a lot. Then the babysitter would [not come and was unreliable.]...I tried applying for the Work Force (subsidy), and it was a long waiting list for that. I never...I needed to pay rent. I had a car payment and it was just a lot of stress.</p>
<p>I try to work at least seven hours for [gig employer] a week and that's not very much. If it's a time where I'm not in school, then I will work up to 40 hours. It really depends. I do my best to do it during my child's school day, and make sure that the block will finish. She can be in after school till up to 6:00 p.m., so I make sure the block will finish around 5:30 p.m. so I have time to pick her up. That's my main limitation with work. I can't really do a lot of work on the weekend unless I have someone to help me watch her.</p>
<p>Yeah, so my program is, they honestly don't offer any classes before 3:30 p.m. They offer classes from 3:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., which is a really not good schedule for me, and it's been very challenging to have child care. Full time in our program is nine hours, so I'll be taking three classes. That will be up to three hours a week that I need someone to at least pick up my kid from school and feed her before I pick her up. This semester has been really difficult, I was only able to get the late night one, so I have two night classes that end at 9:30 p.m., and it's been really hard to get people to watch my child and put her to sleep for me to come home.</p>
<p>I would get a real job if I could, but because of this inconsistent child care, I'm stuck with this gig work right now. It is what it is, that's all I can do to get people to watch her after school, so I feel like I can't ask for too much because also, I don't really have the funds to pay someone a bunch of money to do the whole nanny thing.</p>
<p>Parent quotes regarding child care preferences</p>
<p>[A licensed child care center] would be reliable. With babysitters coming in or relatives doing it, like my relative—oh, well, relatives are not always the best option in the sense that like me, there's alcohol abusers, there might be drug abuse, and relatives are not always the best option. Then for reliability reasons, there's an open child care center. You're able to drop them up. You're that it's regularized. I like that idea better, and especially since I cannot just call in if I'm going to be someone at a hospital or if that person is, it's what is it called? One of those first aligner—if they're essential workers, they need something reliable.</p>
<p>Yeah, I don't want my child doing—being allowed to do things that I wouldn't allow in my household or just—like shouting. We don't hit. We don't snatch. All those things, and the diet. Okay, we're going to sit down and eat. We are going to brush your teeth. You have to take your Zyrtec in the morning. We go to bed at this time and you take a bath. We're drinking water. Don't give her juice all day. Don't let her sit down in front of the TV all day.</p>

<p>Turn it off. She's going to cry. It's going to be okay. You know? My family's, although they're amazing and I love them, I really do—there's some things that I've changed in my household.</p>
<p>I grew up from babysitter to babysitter to babysitter. I did not have the best experience because my mom, she also had to work these long shifts, and it was very—sometimes the babysitters didn't want to take care of me. It was random hours. That's why I try not to take my kids to a babysitter, because even though they say, oh, yeah, but no, and it was not reliable at all. It just made it, I grew up with a lot of insecurities and a lot of trauma from my babysitters. I do not like babysitters, I prefer a facility.</p>
<p>[Cost is] important because I need to be able to make—if I'm getting paid \$15 an hour, and then I'm paid \$10 an hour, it's not for child care. I'm not getting much profit, so it's very important. It has to be affordable.</p>
<p>[Warmth and nurturing is] very important because—it's difficult to drop off kids at a facility or it's difficult just to drop them, to drop them off, and sometimes they have big emotions. I've experienced this whenever I was a child, so to me, that's something I see, too. It just brings peace to the parent and lowers anxiety for the kid, and for the parent, and it's very important. I guess a sense of safety, too.</p>
<p>Maybe if there was more child care places where they were out of the nontraditional type, more drive zones accessible, because usually the people who have the resources, who are doctors, they have the money to pay a nanny that is trained and that has a degree to come and stay with their kids at their house, but this is not the same picture for everyone.</p>
<p>As a parent to another parent, I would be saying, "Those are the things that you look out for. You want to make sure that your child is in the best hands possible." Again, not saying that at their own home would be an issue. However, relatives are going to care for your child very differently than somebody who this is their job and they have been trained to behave a certain way, to treat your children a certain way, to act a certain way, to conduct the classroom in a certain way, and all of that matters. I want to make sure that while I'm working late and stressed as I may be, I know that my stress is not about are my kids taken care of properly, are they doing what I want them to do.</p>
<p>If it's a nanny, it would be good to get them from a service where she has a background check, or they have a background check already. I would just say really make sure to vet them, and think about all the implications and the future possible consequences. If you rely on a—same thing with friends as family, if you enter an arrangement with someone and you think it's all good, but expectations are not communicated clearly, it can escalate into a dramatic situation that wouldn't be good. You just want to make sure there's someone who you trust with your kid and who you trust to be a good communicator and be clear.</p>
<p>Daycare's okay. Daycare I think is actually good because the kids will get to interact with other kids. Any kind of daycare situation drop, not a drop in one, a regular one. It could be at someone's house, it could be an actual facility. Obviously not all daycares are created equal, so I would investigate that and see the teacher to child ratio and what food they're providing and all that stuff. Or a personal private nanny, tutor person, whatever works. I would be less opinionated about that.</p>
<p>I always want to teach my kid to be tolerant and open-minded. I've noticed with certain acquaintances or family members, not family, friends who have watched her, they don't try but they subtly impose ideals on their children and then their child is like, "Hey, you, your mom looks like a boy because she has short hair," whatever. I'm just like, I don't have time for that. My kid doesn't really care, but I'm just like, what? It's 2022. Calm down and let people live.</p>
<p>The financial is a limitation. It's just a factual limitation. My heart is like "warmth toward my child," but my structural options are just financial, you know what I mean?</p>
<p>I feel like depending on a family member so much—unless it's a family member that doesn't work, and you're helping them out financially while they're helping you watch your kids—depending on them 100 percent is, you know, they have lives, too. That is just my opinion. I can't fall back on a family member that we have here to watch my children all the time.</p>
<p>I know ahead of time when I've got to work on the weekends, and I make phone calls and figure it out. I mean, yeah, it can be frustrating because sometimes I've got to drive to Maynard and drive back into Austin, but, I mean, you've got to do what you've got to do. I wish there was child care on the weekends.</p>

TABLE C.2

Selected Quotes from Interviewed Employers

How employers describe employees' nontraditional-hour child care needs
<p>I do notice that if I look at the servers that I have children themselves, or I know we I know, because they've spoken about it, that they are providing child care within their family units or their friends' circles, that those folks generally just, they earn less in total because they have fewer hours that they're available to work. Which is something that I've always found really sad and disheartening because I'm trying to do all that I can, and this is just a structure that's outside of the control of the business.</p>
<p>We guarantee a minimum of \$15 an hour. But even, let's say, that the tip pool means around 19 bucks an hour. You still got to work a lot of hours to cover rent food, gas, let alone, you know, throw in child care on top of that. So, I think most of the time the child care arrangements that people have is either going to be with their coparent or with family, or with friends, watching over their kid while they're at work.</p>
<p>Some of our staff with children prefer the earlier schedule to get back to their children sooner. Staff without children like the hour later [schedule].</p>
<p>From previous experience—coming from a hospital—there aren't many [child care] providers that work nontraditional hours. In a hospital, you have to work 6:45 a.m. to 7 p.m. It's difficult for people in hospitals to have day care coverage in the 14-hour period that they're gone with driving and everything if they don't have home support to drop off and pick up kids.</p>
<p>Some staff have kids in day care, but the cost of day care is prohibitive. You can't have two kids in day care with \$18/hour. Some staff drive kids 30 minutes in the opposite direction to take a kid to their parent's house because they can't afford to take the kid to day care in the area.</p>
<p>I have heard that day cares close too early, which means that health care staff sometimes have to rush out earlier to pick up their kid before they get the big fees....There's also a social impact for parents, from standpoint of there being no downtime available to parents between getting off work and having to pick up their child. Especially in the health care industry where you're dealing with life and death every day. So extended hours of child care into the evening can have additional benefits as well, not just work needs, also work-life balance needs.</p>
How employees' child care needs affect employers
<p>For some events, the business has a year of advance notice—we try to book contractors early. But events often change, or contractors* change. They are not very reliable and there's no solid way to stop them from changing their schedule. Because of contractors not being reliable, contracts are usually finalized within a week of event, sometimes a day before. Ninety percent of contractors are parents, and when contractors cancel, it's usually because their husband can't watch their kids, or their kid is sick, or it's too far a drive, something like that. *This employer hires individuals as "contractors" and does not pay withholding taxes so refers to them as contractors instead of employees.</p>
<p>Retail workers probably don't have the money to pay for child care, so they can't work as much because they can't pay for child care. There's plenty of child care in the area, but the problem is people being able to pay for it.</p>
<p>Health care in general, for a long period of time, has been short staffed. This isn't a new crisis. The past two years of the pandemic has made health care staffing more challenging. I think that a lot of it was child care shutting down during pandemic when people had to come into work. It hurt everyone, but especially health care.</p>
<p>Most of the problem to me is the cost of day care—that's it's unaffordable. It's mostly what I get feedback on, not that there isn't care available, more that the day care that they want is too expensive and the day care they can afford is less convenient. and depending on that, they may leave the organization and go work somewhere else. With health care, there's so much staffing need that people can choose their employer based on where child care is convenient.</p>
<p>We had some people leave during the pandemic because they had to become a full-time stay-at-home child care provider....I would guess child care responsibilities affected 5 to 10 percent of employees—either changing jobs, quitting, having to change their work routine, or rethinking their career.</p>

Employers' practices or ideas to assist with child care
<p>We don't provide any formal [child care] assistance or any or any monetary assistance. We try, and I mean we'll provide a lot of intangible [support], such as being understanding. If something comes up or your plan, child care thing falls through, and it's like we know that we don't want a kid running around back here where we are, and we know that if you're worried about how your kids doing, or you know, or whatever that responsibility is, you aren't going to be focusing on your job. So, we try and not to hold that against anyone or anything.</p>
<p>Every now and again on here we'll have somebody that, even this year we had somebody that was working with us who, they're basically not housed because they had a string of temporary living arrangements. And they also had a child and so you know that's not really good. There are programs to help provide funding for child care for people in that situation. And so, I was able to be like, "Hey, look, go! Fill up this form." I call [state agency], talk to their administrator, or one of their administrators.</p>
<p>Contractors will help take care of each other's children so that others can work. We've helped too, like [husband] has watched a baby so that others can work occasionally, or I've helped pick up people's baby or drop them off somewhere.</p>
<p>We don't charge the contractors [when the owners help with child care]. They can't afford to pay for child care with their wages. It's not like we can pay for child care centers for the contractors.</p>
<p>We personally could not afford formal child care. We have asked friends and neighbors for help. We are first-generation immigrants, we came here without any family or people, so we don't have family members to ask for child care. Nowadays, our kids are grown up, so we don't have the same problems.</p>
<p>Obviously, it's easy to say that the government should just give more money to child care. I don't know, it's hard to say if that would specifically help. I don't know much about it. It would be good of course, especially to help small businesses and employees.</p>
<p>We tried to provide some child care support [for staff] during the pandemic. It would be easier for a big hospital versus our network of clinics. We were trying to evaluate how to better support employees with child care during that time. Currently, we're not seeing the level of concern that we saw at the peak of the pandemic.</p>
<p>We were looking to make partnerships with child care facilities to get employees in, because a lot of them were full during the [nontraditional-hour] time. There was also a fund for people dealing with extensive [child care] circumstances, so we helped employees apply.</p>
<p>We considered trying to do child care in-house but realized it doesn't make sense for us given our geographic spread and smaller individual locations, and the cost is too much. There's no traction in that space for us to provide financial resources for employees.</p>
<p>It would be helpful for providers to work with employers to refer employees. For some businesses, it may make sense to develop child care in-house. But many employers do not have the money for it, but for those that can, it can serve as a benefit for employees.</p>
<p>We partnered with a lot of community resources to provide child care, helped staff find care and learn about care. But some people just couldn't come into work because of child care, especially for single parents.</p>
<p>As an organization, we provided resources through some platforms, like emergency child care resources that employees can use. We expanded it during pandemic, where there's a certain number of days that employees can call and ask for babysitter, and we expanded the number of days during the pandemic. It covers every benefit-eligible employee. For example, we doubled number of days per month from 5 days to 10 days that the organization would pay for a babysitter.</p>
<p>If specific employees reached out to HR about child care problems, they would provide contact info for a provider to help start child care.</p>
<p>Austin should review the geographical locations [of child care providers], make sure that there's an equal distribution of child care, to make sure they're accessible and within communities. There are gaps in available care in some areas of Travis County, and then subsidize someone opening care in that area.</p>

We own the building, and we have a [name] center on site. It's a public center, but employees get to skip the wait list. It's right next to the business.

It would be good to have some kind of portable funding that goes with the parent. The parent knows what works best for them. A subsidy or voucher or something to help parents get the care that works best for them.

Appendix D. Texas Policy Context

TWC Provides Information about Child Care

TWC provides child care and early learning programs with information about certification, accreditation, child referral and attendance tracking, and training and credentialing opportunities through the Child Care Programs Resources web page³¹ and has designated the number 2-1-1-TEXAS for parents to call to talk with a person about child care options. Information about part-time (less than 6 hours) and full-time (6 to 12 hours) child care is available through these resources.

TWC Administers Public Child Care Funds

In fiscal year 2022, the estimated discretionary CCDF funding from the federal government was \$672,646,745. (American Rescue Plan Act funding in 2021 was \$1,699,934,795 in discretionary funding and \$2,724,368,837 in stabilization funding, for a total of \$4,424,303,632.) In 2020, Texas licensed 2,119 child care centers and 1,515 family child care homes across the state. These licensed facilities provided care to 766,223 young children in centers and 18,065 in family child care homes. According to the US Census, approximately 1,919,316 children younger than age 5 live in Texas. Thus, the portion of children attending licensed care in Texas is less than 40 percent. Some of the child care funding is used to support Texas Rising Star, the state program designed to enhance child care quality.

TWC Oversees Some Policies to Support Nontraditional-Hour Child Care

Federal laws and regulations allow states and local agencies responsible for child care policies to support nontraditional-hour care in specific ways:

- They allow child care to be provided by an eligible relative in a child's own home if a parent has nontraditional work hours (6:00 p.m.–6:59 a.m. on weekdays or anytime on Saturday or Sunday). These relatives are required to list as a family home, undergo a criminal background check, and undergo a check against the sex offender registry and the central child abuse and neglect registry. Sibling caregivers are not allowed to live at the same residence as the child. Local workforce boards can allow relative in-home child care for circumstances in which the

board's child care contractor determines and documents that other child care provider arrangements are not available in the community.³²

- They awarded grants to two local collaborative efforts to develop staffed family child care networks designed to provide training, specialized services, and technical assistance to address the needs of home-based caregivers, thereby increasing the availability and quality of family child care. TWC continues to explore opportunities to support family child care networks to build supply and improve quality in local underserved areas and statewide.
- They allow local workforce development boards to define differential rates for nontraditional hours based on a market rate survey. However, relative care and drop-in care were excluded from the market rate survey. Drop-in care was excluded “because they charge very high hourly rates and are not usually used for parents for regular care” (TWC 2022 pp. 179–80). Texas plans to conduct a study of the availability of nontraditional-hour child care and will support local workforce development boards in increasing this type of care, if needed.
- They pay for enrollment rather than attendance (TWC 2022 p. 185).

In addition, according to the CCDF plan, a new data field has been added for nontraditional hours for regulated child care providers. Texas Health and Human Services, which administers CCDF funds, oversees 28 local workforce development boards that administer child care services through Texas Workforce Solutions offices. Each of the 28 boards is responsible for following a combination of federal and state regulations. In Austin/Travis County, Workforce Solutions Capital Area is responsible for administering the subsidy services, and Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area administers subsidies to families of children younger than age 13 who meet income eligibility guidelines so parents can receive child care financial assistance designed to let them work, attend school, or participate in training. Workforce Solutions also partners with regulated child care and early learning programs to improve the quality of child care. Texas Rising Star offers training and quality improvement activities and supports to participating child care providers. Child care providers that meet specific quality criteria receive higher reimbursements than providers that do not provide evidence of meeting the quality criteria.

Technically, parents in Austin/Travis County who are eligible for child subsidies, as well as parents who fully pay for care with their own funds, can choose child care from a range of options that includes child care centers, registered homes, and relatives who provide child care. However, families relying on subsidies, who are more likely to work nontraditional hours, are not allowed to use listed homes for care, which are a potentially preferred source of nontraditional-hour child care.

Child care regulations and licensing are administered by a separate agency, Texas Health and Human Services. Having two agencies involved in child care policies and practices may add to the administrative burdens of child care providers and families seeking nontraditional-hour care for their children.

Appendix E. Study Participants' Perspectives on Strategies to Address Nontraditional-Hour Child Care Needs

Austin/Travis County community leaders, parents, providers, and employers shared perspectives about strategies to increase access to nontraditional-hour child care that meets families' needs. Note that many study participants suggested strategies that could be relevant to both traditional and nontraditional-hour care. Although some strategies and associated objectives would require changes in federal, state, and local policies, others could be addressed locally. The strategies suggested by study participants are presented below.

Strategy 1. Increase the Supply of Regulated Nontraditional-Hour Child Care

Study participants suggested increasing the supply of regulated nontraditional-hour child care by focusing on the following objectives:

- **Ensure private and public child care payments are sufficient to cover the cost of regulated nontraditional-hour child care.** Many community leaders and providers told us that the cost of child care is based on providing care to a full group of children who are in attendance. Because fewer children attend during nontraditional hours, public and private payments are usually insufficient to cover the costs of nontraditional-hour child care. Regulated child care providers pay the caregiver's hourly wages and overhead even if no children attend or only a few children attend during nontraditional hours. Thus, this funding approach typically does not cover the costs of providing nontraditional-hour care. Some home-based providers offering nontraditional-hour care told us they prioritized paying their staff a competitive wage and did not pay themselves a salary beyond covering their child care operating expenses. Some individuals who participated in the study told us paying actual costs would require an increase in public funding, whereas others told us adequate funding is important but did not offer ideas of how to adequately fund nontraditional-hour child care.

- **Support child care providers in finding, hiring, and retaining qualified staff working during nontraditional hours.** Child care providers offering nontraditional-hour child care face acute challenges finding, hiring, and retaining staff. United Way for Greater Austin has documented that nearly half of child care providers surveyed in 2021 that accept child care subsidies limited hours of operation because of staffing shortages. Our study team also heard that some providers have reduced hours of operation because of staffing shortages, exacerbating the problem of an inadequate supply of nontraditional-hour child care. Thus, the problem of staff shortages facing traditional-hour care is even worse for those seeking to offer nontraditional-hour care.
- **Make it easier for child care providers to participate in the subsidy system.** Child care providers reported some challenges with participating in the subsidy system. Given the low share of regulated child care providers that participates in the subsidy system, several study participants told us those responsible for these systems should take steps to ease administrative burdens for providers. Community leaders and policymakers noted that making changes to the administrative processes of becoming eligible to offer subsidized care would require working with TWC. Several told us about a recent change in state regulations that requires child care providers that participate in the subsidy system to participate in Texas Rising Star, the state’s quality improvement system. Taking steps to simplify the processes of applying to offer subsidies and of participating in Texas Rising Star could expand the supply of both nontraditional-hour and traditional-hour child care.
- **Offer coaching and individual support to child care providers to help with the process of applying for a license to provide nontraditional-hour care and to meet requirements to receive subsidies.** Several study participants told us individualized support is needed to help child care providers navigate the systems required of regulated providers. Among providers who are already regulated, the process of becoming licensed for nontraditional-hour care is not complicated. Nonetheless, child care providers told us they wished they knew that they would be expected to provide care during all hours for which they are licensed once their applications were approved. Some said they wished they had more information and that individual support about the process would be helpful. Moreover, several recommended one-on-one supports to help providers apply to participate in the subsidy system.
- **Invest public and private funds in resources and supports to help child care providers develop and deepen networks so they could more easily share staff to work nontraditional hours.** Some child care providers told us they were working informally together and found these networks helpful. Community leaders told us that Austin/Travis County is piloting “shared services agreements” to

pool the costs of business operations that small businesses incur. Some suggested that expanding these shared services agreements to support nontraditional-hour care might be one solution to addressing staffing shortages and increasing the supply of nontraditional-hour care.

- **Update existing websites and dissemination strategies to share information about nontraditional-hour care.** Some child care providers told us that the current child care search website does not reflect their willingness to provide nontraditional-hour care even if they are not already doing so. However, none of the parents we spoke with were aware that websites provide information about regulated child care. Therefore, updating dissemination approaches would also be needed to share information with parents in search of nontraditional-hour child care.

Strategy 2. Support Unregulated Providers, Including Relatives, Who Provide Nontraditional-Hour Child Care

Study participants offered suggestions based on personal experiences and their roles supporting parents with young children. These study participants suggested Austin/Travis County leaders, community members, employers, and parents work together to address the following objectives:

- **Help relatives who care for children during nontraditional hours to participate in the subsidy system.** Parents using nontraditional-hour care provided by relatives told us they did not use subsidies to pay relatives to care for their children. Instead, they relied on favors or trades. We heard from community leaders that the state technically allows relatives who have been approved to accept subsidies. However, none of the nonrandom sample of parents we interviewed used subsidies to pay for relative care. Parents told us they would like help learning how to access subsidies for relative care.
- **Support networks of parents and informal caregivers.** We heard that some parents relied on friends and close relationships to trade child care during nontraditional hours, but other parents told us they lacked informal relationships and were at a loss when their formal care arrangement fell through. Some parents who relied on family and friends said they believed it was important for parents to have these informal relationships to provide nontraditional-hour child care and that they wished parents who lacked these relationships had a way to establish them. One community leader told us his organization supported networks to help parents establish and build trusting relationships that help them feel comfortable providing nontraditional-hour care for one another's children.

- **Expand existing child care referral networks to include nontraditional-hour care and ad hoc, intermittent, and backup child care.** We heard that parents with high incomes used nannies and private referral services funded by businesses. These services complete background checks and ensure caregivers have received appropriate training. Yet none of the parents who faced structural barriers to opportunities had access to these resources. Several individuals who participated in our interviews told us that they believed these resources should be available to parents who participate in the subsidy system and parents who face structural barriers to opportunities.

Strategy 3. Reconsider How to Measure Quality during Nontraditional-Hour Care

Study participants suggested that during nontraditional hours features of quality care differ from those during traditional hours in some important ways. Participants recommended developing strategies to achieve the following objectives:

- **Update quality measures to reflect differences in quality care offered during nontraditional versus traditional hours.** In the evenings, parents want caregivers who will provide children with homestyle meals. Late in the evening, parents want caregivers who will follow bedtime routines, including supporting children with brushing their teeth, putting on their pajamas, tucking them into bed, and reading them books. Overnight, parents want their children to sleep in a safe and secure place that is home or feels like home. And early in the morning, parents want children to be able to sleep so they are not awakened at a time that would make them stressed and tired. To update measures of quality, community leaders would need to inform state agencies of proposed modifications to the existing Texas Rising Star measures. Austin/Travis County leaders cannot make changes without state authority. Community leaders could inform the state of suggested changes.
- **Maintain existing quality measures for care offered during the traditional-hour day.** During the traditional day, parents told us they wanted their children to engage in active learning with other children. Some mentioned the importance of learning the alphabet and learning to play with others. Most child care providers concurred with this perspective. Although most community leaders also concurred, some stated that quality care should be measured consistently at all times, noting the importance of preparing children for school.

- **Provide quality improvement supports to caregivers offering nontraditional-hour care.** Currently, only regulated caregivers can access quality improvement supports. Some states, such as Indiana, allow unregulated caregivers to participate in the state's quality rating and improvement system and provide coaching, materials, and supports to caregivers who are not yet licensed.³³ Moreover, study participants suggested that local philanthropies and nonprofit organizations consider offering coaching and support to unregulated caregivers who are providing care during nontraditional hours.

Strategy 4. Engage Employers and the Private Sector to Support Nontraditional-Hour Child Care

Employers, community leaders, and child care providers told the study team that employers are negatively affected when parents lack reliable nontraditional-hour care. Moreover, we heard that parents experienced stress when juggling child care, work, school, and other responsibilities. Interview participants recommended several ways employers could support nontraditional-hour child care:

- **Engage employers in Early Matters Greater Austin and support the use of resources and tools developed by this organization.** This alliance promotes a campaign called Best Place for Working Parents for employers, a national effort spearheaded in local communities. Employers who participate are recognized as creating family-friendly policies. Businesses that participate have access to tools and resources about actions to provide child care to parents with young children. For example, the organization offers guidance on how employers can implement supportive practices and policies, such as stable, predictable scheduling, and can support parents through use of a Child Care Toolkit. By supporting the use of tools developed by this organization, businesses could better support nontraditional-hour child care.
- **Expand existing partnerships, such as the TWC Child Care Expansion initiative, between child care providers and employers.** This initiative provides funding to child care businesses partnering with employers to expand access to child care. It also provides benefits to employers that offer child care benefits to their employees. These employers report increased employee retention and loyalty, improved productivity, and a better workplace environment, yielding reductions in expenses from employee absences and turnover. Participating employers meeting requirements are also eligible to receive a tax break for investing in child care for employees.³⁴

Strategy 5. Take Steps to Address Inequitable Access to Public Funds for Child Care

To support equitable access to public child care funds for parents who need nontraditional-hour child care, study participants suggested leaders develop strategies to achieve the following objectives:

- **Ensure a portion of public funds are devoted to the types of child care that are preferred and best meet the needs of parents with nontraditional-hour schedules.** Study participants offered few specific ideas about how to ensure equitable distribution of public funds. Some suggested that leaders listen to those providing nontraditional-hour care and ensure that individuals who have historically and currently lack power inform some child care policy decisions. Others recommended tailoring supports to smaller child care providers (see below), who are most likely to be women of color.
- **Provide additional financial support and resources to smaller child care centers and home-based providers seeking to provide nontraditional-hour child care.** Several small child care centers and home-based providers noted that fixed costs make it difficult to expand hours, despite the fact that parents prefer these settings. These providers recommended that those responsible for financing reconsider the funding approach to provide additional funds to smaller, home-based providers who offer nontraditional-hour child care.
- **Translate resources and ensure parents have access to information about nontraditional-hour child care and what parents should look for in seeking quality nontraditional-hour care.** Many non-English speaking parents use informal care and are not aware of regulated care because materials are not translated. Moreover, parents who know about regulated care told us applying for this care is intimidating. Finally, parents told us they are not aware of regulated care that is a linguistic and cultural match, and this is an issue both for nontraditional-hour and traditional-hour child care.
- **Engage informal and unregulated caregivers in public systems as they appear to be providing most of the nontraditional-hour care for parents who have low incomes and are therefore eligible for subsidies.** The study found that none of the informal and unregulated caregivers were accessing subsidies. Developing approaches to engaging these providers could expand equitable access to nontraditional-hour care.

Notes

- ¹ Gina Adams, Diane Schilder, and Laura Wagner, “Child Care Systems Don’t Align with What Parents Working Nontraditional Hours Recommend,” *Urban Wire* (blog), March 30, 2022, <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/child-care-systems-dont-align-what-parents-working-nontraditional-hours-recommend>.
- ² Kevin Bloodworth II and Charles S. Gascon, “Estimating the Affordability of Child Care across U.S. States,” *On the Economy* (blog), Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, October 6, 2022, <https://www.stlouisfed.org/on-the-economy/2022/oct/estimating-affordability-child-care-us-states>.
- ³ “Workgroup Recommendations to Inform the 2022 Texas Child Care Workforce Strategic Plan,” Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center, January 13, 2023, <https://pn3policy.org/resources/workgroup-recommendations-to-inform-the-2022-texas-child-care-workforce-strategic-plan/>.
- ⁴ “Promoting Consumer Education,” Texas Administrative Code, Rule §809.15, [https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac\\$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=40&pt=20&ch=809&rl=15](https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=40&pt=20&ch=809&rl=15).
- ⁵ “Child Care Provider Expansion Initiative,” Texas Workforce Commission, accessed January 6, 2023, <https://www.childcare.texas.gov/child-care-expansion>.
- ⁶ “The Childcare Roadmap for Employers: Childcare Solutions for Working Parents,” US Chamber of Commerce Foundation, November 3, 2022, <https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/employer-roadmap>.
- ⁷ Gina Adams, Peter Willenborg, Cary Lou, and Diane Schilder, “To Make the Child Care System More Equitable, Expand Options for Parents Working Nontraditional Hours,” *Urban Wire* (blog), January 14, 2021, <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/make-child-care-system-more-equitable-expand-options-parents-working-nontraditional-hours>.
- ⁸ Erin Hardy, “Child Care Policy Research Consortium,” Urban Institute webinar, 2022.
- ⁹ Hardy, “Child Care Policy Research Consortium.”
- ¹⁰ For more information about “Success by 6,” see <https://www.unitedwayaustin.org/success-by-6-plan/> (accessed February 24, 2023).
- ¹¹ Texas uses the term “regulated” to refer to child care providers that are approved to operate in the state. The Texas Workforce Board reviews the days and hours that regulated providers can operate.
- ¹² Lauren Biegel and Sara Moran, “Access to Affordable High-Quality Child Care Is Scarce,” *Children at Risk*, June 2, 2022, <https://childrenatrisk.org/child-care-desert-analysis-22/>.
- ¹³ The primary parent is the only parent in single-parent families, the head of household in families in which the parent is not present, the mother in two-parent opposite-sex couples, and the first listed parent in two-parent same-sex couples.
- ¹⁴ Parents could work in multiple nontraditional-hour periods, so the shares working across different periods sum up to more than 100 percent.
- ¹⁵ Because we cannot tell when parents were working during the weekend or if both parents in two-parent families were working at the same time by using these data, the actual need for care may be lower during the weekend than in these estimates. However, prior research by Urban researchers, including members of the team conducting analyses of the Austin/Travis County data, has shown that more than half (55 percent) of young children in working families nationally are actually in nonparental care at some point during the weekend, more than during the 6:00–6:59 a.m. (50 percent) and 6:00–6:59 p.m. (37 percent) time spans that comprise the early morning and early evening periods, respectively (Lou, Schilder, and Wagner 2022).

- ¹⁶ For more information about Texas Child Care Regulation responsibilities, see <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/providers/protective-services-providers/child-care-regulation> (accessed February 20, 2023).
- ¹⁷ For additional information about Early Matters Greater Austin, see <https://www.earlymattersgreateraustin.org/> (accessed February 20, 2023).
- ¹⁸ Private organizations such as care.com, other privately funded websites, and nanny services offer parents information about child care, including backup child care. Federal policies require states to support “consumer education” so parents “with a reasonable effort” can access information about child care. The existing TWC website could be updated to include information about the hours and days of operation, openings, and whether caregivers are willing to consider expanding hours to help parents seeking NTH care.
- ¹⁹ Heather Sandstrom and Fernando Hernandez-Lepe, “Six Ways States Can Leverage Funding to Increase the Supply and Quality of Home-Based Child Care,” *Urban Wire* (blog), November 9, 2021, <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/six-ways-states-can-leverage-funding-increase-supply-and-quality-home-based-child-care>.
- ²⁰ “About Us,” AVANCE.org, accessed February 24, 2023, <https://www.avance.org/about-us/>.
- ²¹ “Promoting Consumer Education,” Texas Administrative Code, Rule §809.15, [https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac\\$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=40&pt=20&ch=809&rl=15](https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=40&pt=20&ch=809&rl=15).
- ²² For more information on Early Matters Greater Austin, see <https://www.earlymattersgreateraustin.org/> (accessed February 24, 2023).
- ²³ For more information on Best Place for Working Parents in Austin, see <https://www.earlymattersgreateraustin.org/best-place-for-working-parents> (accessed February 24, 2023).
- ²⁴ For information from Best Place for Working Parents on the benefits of scheduling flexibility for both staff and employers, see <https://www.earlymattersgreateraustin.org/flexibility> (accessed February 24, 2023); the Child Care Toolkit is available at https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a0f56aebce17652bb2ee11a/t/636e82e17c8aad5b9e23ba77/1668186851494/Child_Care_Toolkit_Austin_10_27_22_FINAL.pdf (accessed February 24, 2023).
- ²⁵ “Child Care Provider Expansion Initiative,” Texas Workforce Commission.
- ²⁶ The employer-provided child care facilities and service tax credit offers a refund of up to 25 percent of child care expenses at tax season, plus 10 percent of research and referral expenses, with a maximum annual credit of \$150,000; provides funding of up to \$150,000 to reimburse employers for the costs of building child care facilities on site; and offers funding for employers who partner with child care facilities to offer care. See <https://www.childcare.texas.gov/tax-credit-for-businesses> (accessed February 24, 2023).
- ²⁷ “The Childcare Roadmap for Employers: Childcare Solutions for Working Parents,” US Chamber of Commerce Foundation, November 3, 2022, <https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/employer-roadmap>.
- ²⁸ “The Childcare Roadmap for Employers,” US Chamber of Commerce Foundation.
- ²⁹ “Biden-Harris Administration Launches First CHIPS for America Funding Opportunity” (press release), US Department of Commerce, February 28, 2023, <https://www.commerce.gov/news/press-releases/2023/02/biden-harris-administration-launches-first-chips-america-funding>.
- ³⁰ “Investing ARP and PDG funds to address the Early Childhood Workforce Shortage,” US Department of Health and Human Services, October 13, 2021, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/archive/e cd/investing-arp-and-pdg-funds-address-early-childhood-workforce-shortage>.

- ³¹ “Child Care and Early Learning Services -Program Overview: Child Care Programs,” Texas Workforce Commission, last updated February 15, 2023, <https://www.twc.texas.gov/programs/childcare#childCarePrograms>.
- ³² “Minimum Requirements for Providers,” Texas Administrative Code, Rule §809.91(e), [https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac\\$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=40&pt=20&ch=809&rl=91](https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=40&pt=20&ch=809&rl=91).
- ³³ Paths to QUALITY™, Indiana Family and Social Services Administration, <https://www.in.gov/fssa/pathstoquality/> (accessed February 20, 2023).
- ³⁴ The employer-provided child care facilities and service tax credit offers a refund of up to 25 percent of child care expenses at tax season, plus 10 percent of research and referral expenses, with a maximum annual credit of \$150,000; provides funding of up to \$150,000 to reimburse employers for the costs of building child care facilities on site; and offers funding for employers who partner with child care facilities to offer care. See <https://www.childcare.texas.gov/tax-credit-for-businesses><https://www.childcare.texas.gov/childcare-expansion> (accessed February 20, 2023).

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STATEMENT OF INDEPENDENCE

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