

# Cornell Child Care Grant Subsidy Program

## *Online Survey - Evaluation Report*

July 2007

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This project was conducted in partnership with Cornell University's Office of Worklife Diversity, Equity, and Life Quality. <http://www.ohr.cornell.edu/workLife/>

This project was funded by a grant from Cornell University's Institute for the Social Sciences.

## Cornell Child Care Grant Subsidy Program Online Survey - Evaluation Report

### Executive Summary July 2007

In 2002, Cornell University created a new employee benefit of child care subsidies for employees (Cornell Child Care Grant Subsidy Program or CCCGSP). Available on a sliding income scale, the grant is administered through the Flexible Spending Account (FSA) and can be used to pay for any form of legal child care including child care centers, preschools, summer camps, licensed family child care homes, and license-exempt relatives, friends or neighbors (i.e., informal or unregulated caregivers). All employees with children under twelve are eligible for assistance, and the program was extended to graduate students in 2005. In 2004, Cornell awarded \$663,081 to cover 645 children, with subsidies ranging from \$100 to \$5,000 per employee.

***“Cornell has demonstrated their loyalty to improving the quality of life for their employees through this grant. I am deeply grateful for my award. My children receive higher quality of care with the help of this grant which, in turn, helps me to be a more effective employee because I can be certain that they are well cared for. Cornell has invested in me and in my family, loyalty comes full circle.”***

An evaluation of the program and its impacts has not been conducted until now. This evaluative online survey collected in-depth information on Cornell employees’ ideas regarding the CCCGSP, both those who had received grants and those who had not. Evaluators were particularly interested in grant recipients’ perceived impacts of the grant program on the quality of child care their children receive, as well as grant recipients’ productivity at work. This evaluative online survey also asked questions regarding the design, implementation and administration of the program, as well as strategies for improving it. While increased funding can increase parental effective demand for child care, program designers were interested to know if there is an effect on the quality of care.

Below are the primary questions this research sought to answer and the “quick and dirty” answers:<sup>1</sup>

- Q: Do parents, when given subsidies for child care, choose higher quality care?

A: Yes, many choose higher quality care, especially those who couldn’t afford high quality care otherwise. One in four (24%) reported that the CCCGSP directly increased the quality of their child care arrangement. Eleven percent of the respondents believe the grant provided them with access to higher quality infant care.

- Q: Does the additional money for child care allow families to change their type of care arrangement?

A: Yes, for some. Fourteen percent of respondents changed their arrangement due to the grant.

Q: .... or afford after-school programs or summer camps?

A: Yes, for 19%.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: The “quick and dirty” answers are based on respondent percentages and open-ended comments and have not been tested for statistical significance.

- Q: If so, do parents feel that their new arrangement is of higher quality?
  - A: Yes. About half of respondents who changed their primary (non-summer) arrangement felt their new arrangement was of higher quality.
- Q: Compared to their past arrangements, are parents more likely to choose regulated over unregulated care?
 

A: Somewhat. A few respondents reported changing child care to regulated arrangements. Eighty-four percent of respondents believe that the freedom to use funds for any type of legal care is an important strength of the grant program.
  - Q: Do extra child care funds allow families to maintain an arrangement they prefer?
 

A: Yes. Nearly all respondents reported that the grant helped pay for child care, and almost one-quarter reported that the grant helped to increase the quality of their children's care.
  - Q: Do additional monies free up funds for families to address other quality-of-life issues, such as buying a new computer or taking a family vacation?
 

A: Yes, 73% believe the extra grant money freed up money for other family activities.
  - Q: Do employer-sponsored child care programs help recruit and retain employees?
 

A: Yes! Two-thirds of respondents indicated that receiving a child care grant positively influenced their decision to continue working at Cornell. In addition, numerous comments throughout the survey indicate that the CCCGSP helps to recruit and particularly retain employees.
  - Q: Does an improvement in the quality, stability, or reliability of child care arrangements affect employees' concentration and productivity at work?
 

A: Yes! About two-thirds of respondents reported that receiving the grant had somewhat or significantly decreased their work-family stress. Furthermore, numerous comments throughout the survey indicate that maintaining stable, reliable and high quality child care arrangements positively impact employee engagement and productivity at work.

Overwhelmingly, respondents who have used the CCCGSP are grateful and satisfied with the program and process. The main negative that was voiced by a majority of respondents was that although the program helps ease the financial burden of child care costs (and most graciously accept this "gift"), many feel the amount per family only makes a small dent in their substantial child care budget. Some employees feel the small portion is not worth the application and Select Benefit/FSA process.

Want to know more about what Cornell parents think about the current state of child care and Cornell's support for working families?.....Read the attached full report.

**Cornell Child Care Grant Subsidy Program  
Evaluation Report - Online Survey Results  
July 19, 2007**

*“Cornell has demonstrated their loyalty to improving the quality of life for their employees through this grant. I am deeply grateful for my award. My children receive higher quality of care with the help of this grant which, in turn, helps me to be a more effective employee because I can be certain that they are well-cared for. Cornell has invested in me and in my family, loyalty comes full circle.”*

**Purpose:** In 2002, Cornell University created a new employee benefit of child care subsidies for employees (Cornell Child Care Grant Subsidy Program or CCCGSP). Available on a sliding income scale, the grant is run through the Flexible Spending Account (FSA) and can be used to pay for any form of legal child care including child care centers, preschools, summer camps, licensed family child care homes, and license-exempt relatives, friends or neighbors (i.e., informal or unregulated caregivers). All employees with children under twelve are eligible for assistance. The program was extended to graduate students in 2005. In 2004, Cornell awarded \$663,081 to cover 645 children, with subsidies ranging from \$100 to \$5,000 per employee.

An evaluation of the program and its impacts has not been conducted until now. This evaluative online survey collected in-depth information on Cornell employees’ ideas regarding the CCCGSP, both those who had received grants and those who had not. Evaluators were particularly interested in grant recipients’ perceived impacts of the grant program on the quality of child care their children receive, as well as grant recipients’ productivity at work. Additionally, the survey also asked questions regarding the design, implementation and administration of the program, as well as strategies for improving it. While increased funding can increase parental effective demand for child care, program designers were interested to know if there is an effect on the quality of care. The grant program designers were also interested to know:

- Do parents, when given subsidies for child care, choose higher quality care?
- Does the additional money for child care allow families to change their type of care arrangement or afford after-school programs or summer camps? If so, do parents feel that their new arrangement is of higher quality?
- Compared to their past arrangements, are parents more likely to choose regulated over unregulated care?
- Do extra child care funds allow families to maintain an arrangement they prefer?
- Do additional monies free up funds for families to address other quality-of-life issues, such as buying a new computer or taking a family vacation?
- Do employer-sponsored child care programs help recruit and retain employees and graduate students?
- Furthermore, does an improvement in the quality, stability, or reliability of child care arrangements affect employees’ concentration and productivity at work?

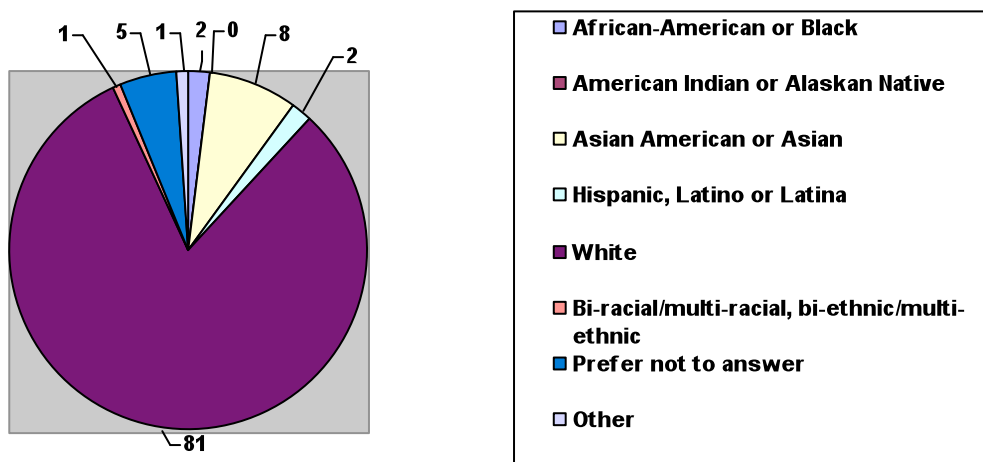
The following basic data report will provide some of the answers to these questions.

**Methods:** An online survey was designed and developed by a multi-disciplinary working group composed of Human Resource staff at Cornell, faculty and graduate students from several departments, members of the Day Care and Child Development Council of Tompkins County, and an independent consultant. The survey was sent in May 2007 via email to 2,450 Cornell employees who were identified through Human Resources records as: 1) having dependent children and/or 2) past or current Cornell Child Care Grant Subsidy Program (CCCGSP) participants. 986 respondents fully completed the survey resulting in a 40% response rate. Results (frequencies and percentages) in this report are based on completed surveys only and have not been tested for statistical significance.

**Survey Results: Respondent Demographics**

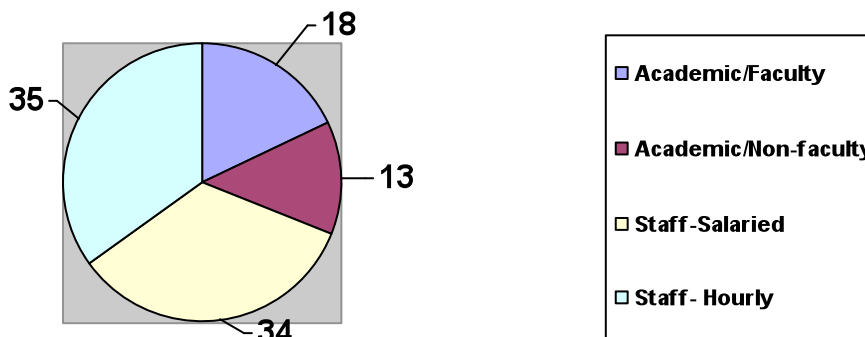
The survey collected information on the participants who completed the survey. Sixty-seven percent of the respondents are female, 33% male (N = 944). Eighty-one percent of the respondents describe themselves as white.

*Chart 1: Percent - Participant Race/Ethnicity (N = 943)*



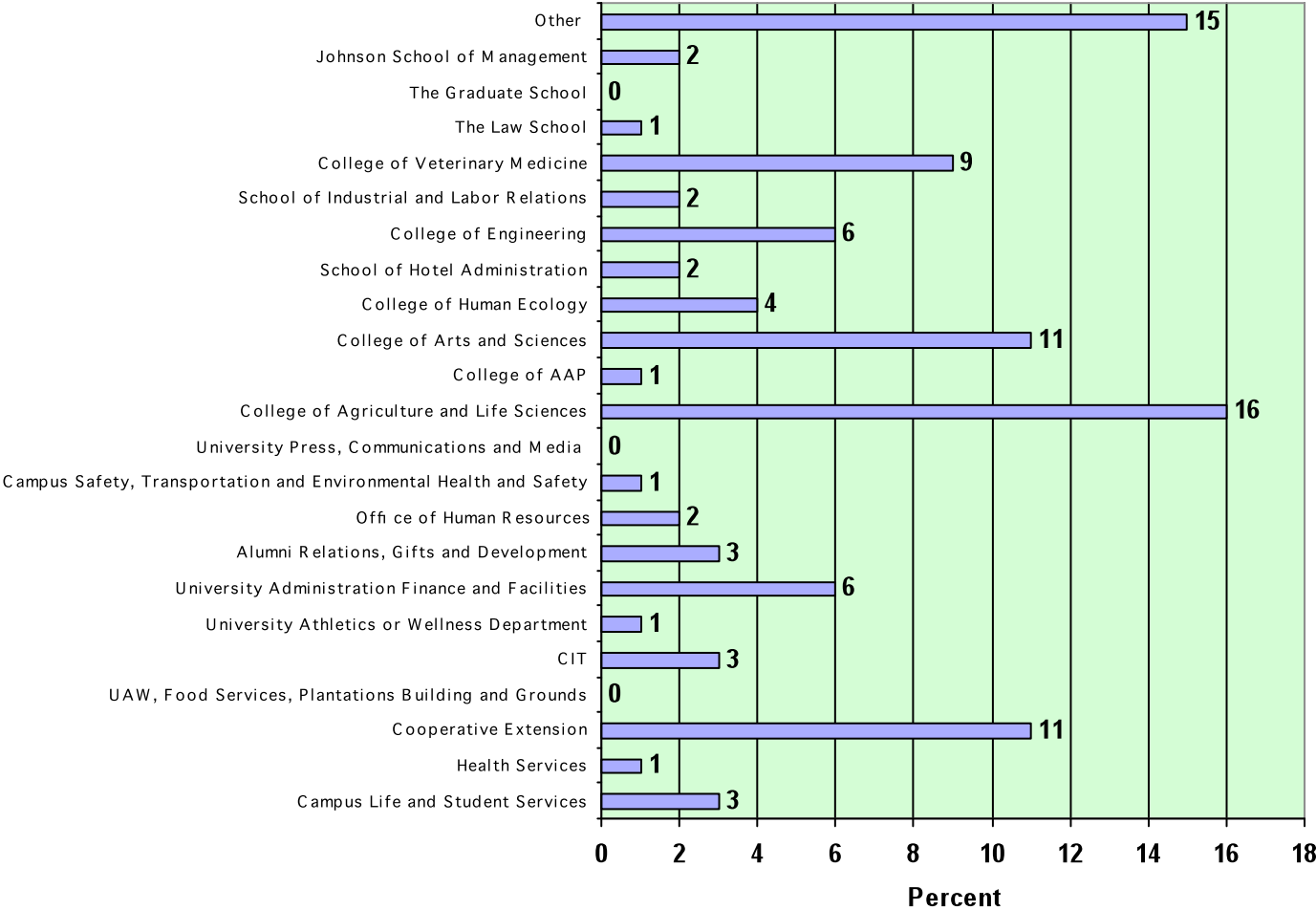
A range of employees including faculty, staff, and hourly and salaried employees are represented in this survey.

*Chart 2: Percent Participation of Faculty and Staff (N =943)*



Most units/areas of the university participated in the study except those in UAW, Food Services, Plantations and Building and Grounds, the Graduate School, and University Press, Communications and Media (each of these groups had less than 5 respondents). Many of those who entered “other” entered the “library or library system”. Most “other” entries could be re-entered into the following established categories.

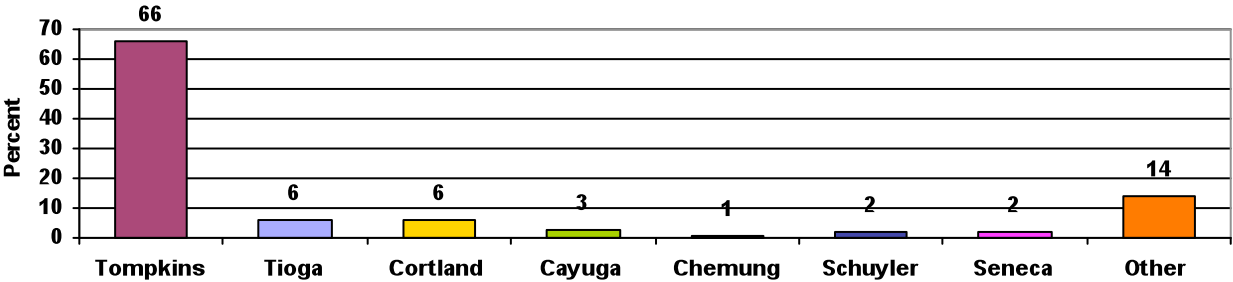
Chart 3: Cornell Work Unit (N =934)



Eighty-six percent of the respondents are married, 12% are single or head of household and 2% are in a domestic partnership. (N = 943)

Respondents represented 44 NY counties, NYC and 12 out of state locations, although most live in Tompkins County.

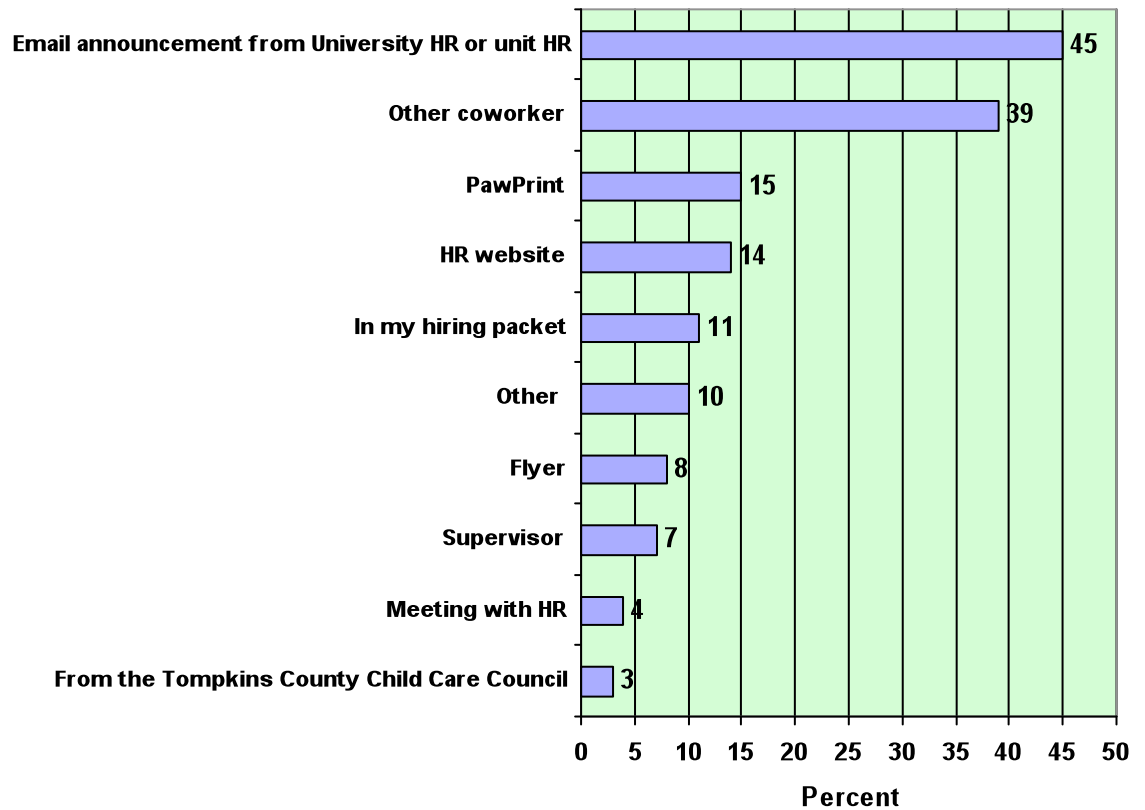
Chart 4: Participant Home County (N = 945)



### Overall Survey Results: All Respondents

Respondents were asked if they have ever heard of the Cornell Child Care Grant Subsidy Program; 90% of respondents (N = 986) indicated that they have heard of the program. The following chart indicates how those 90% who are familiar with Cornell’s grant program learned about it:

Chart5: Learned about CCCGSP from:



### Children:

Ninety-six percent of respondents indicated that they have children under age thirteen living with them or for whom they have partial custody (N = 985). Over 1,500 children were reported.

Table I: Frequency and Percentage of Children Reported by Age Group

1,552 children were reported		
Age group	Frequency	Percentage of all children reported
Infants (0-17 months)	192	12%
Toddlers (18 -36 months)	236	15%
Pre-school/pre-kindergarten (3-5 years)	342	22%
School-Age (5-12 years)	782	50%



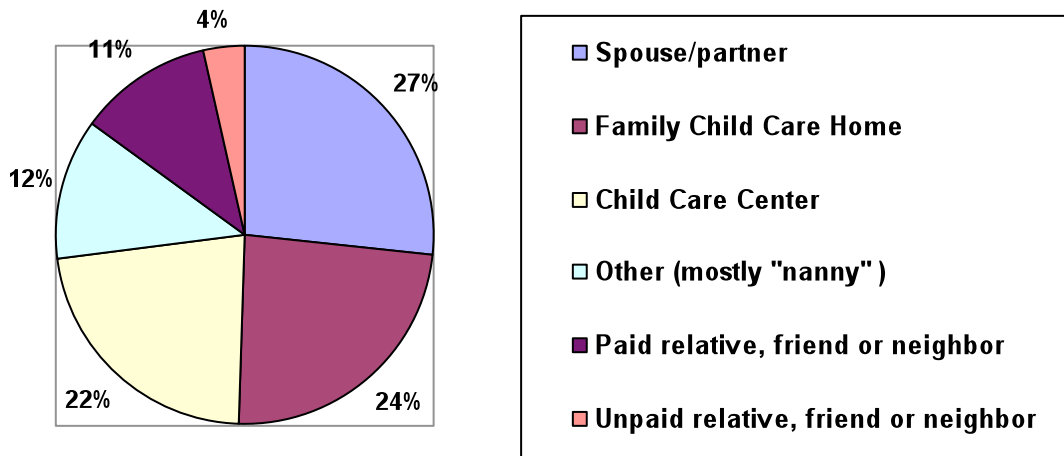
**Type of Child Care by Age**

The following data represents children of all respondents – whether they have used the CCCGSP or not.

*Infants: (N = 192)*

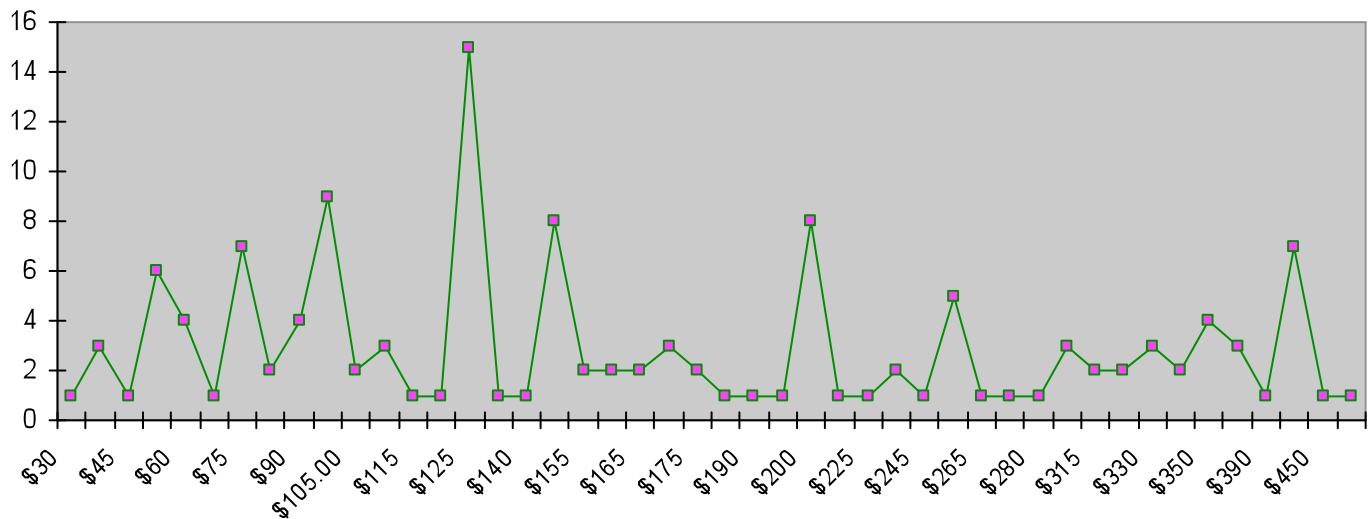
More than one-quarter of infants are cared for (primarily) by a spouse/partner, another quarter (24%) are cared for in a family child care home, and another quarter (22%) are cared for in a child care center. Most of the “other, please specify” answers (12%) indicated “in-home nanny” care.

*Chart 6: Primary Type of Infant Care Reported*



Parental satisfaction with infant care averaged 4.10 on a Likert Scale with values 1-5 (5 = “very satisfied”). For those who pay for care, the cost of infant care averages \$189 per week, with the highest amount at \$1,280 per week.

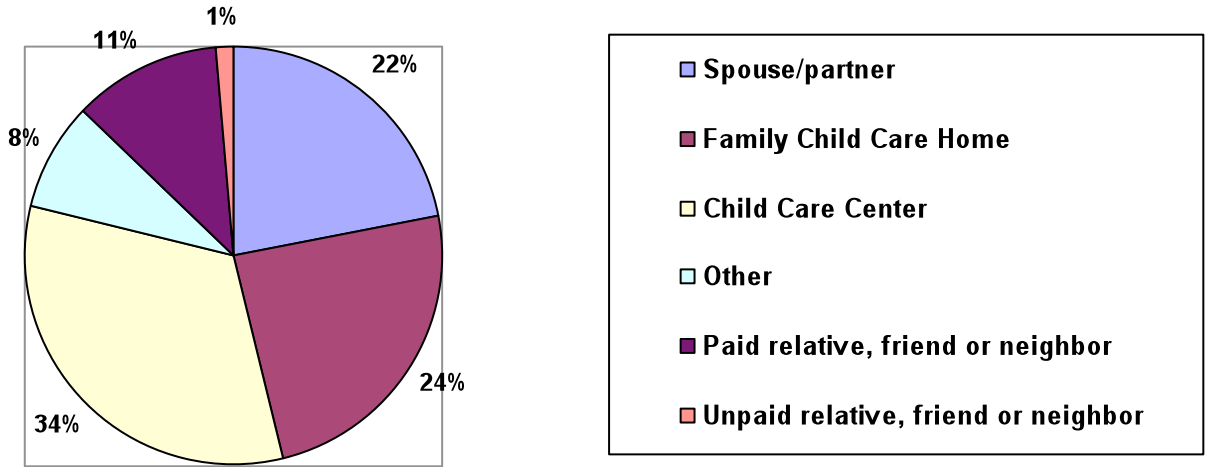
*Chart 7: Frequency Chart - Cost of Infant Care*



Toddlers: (N = 236)

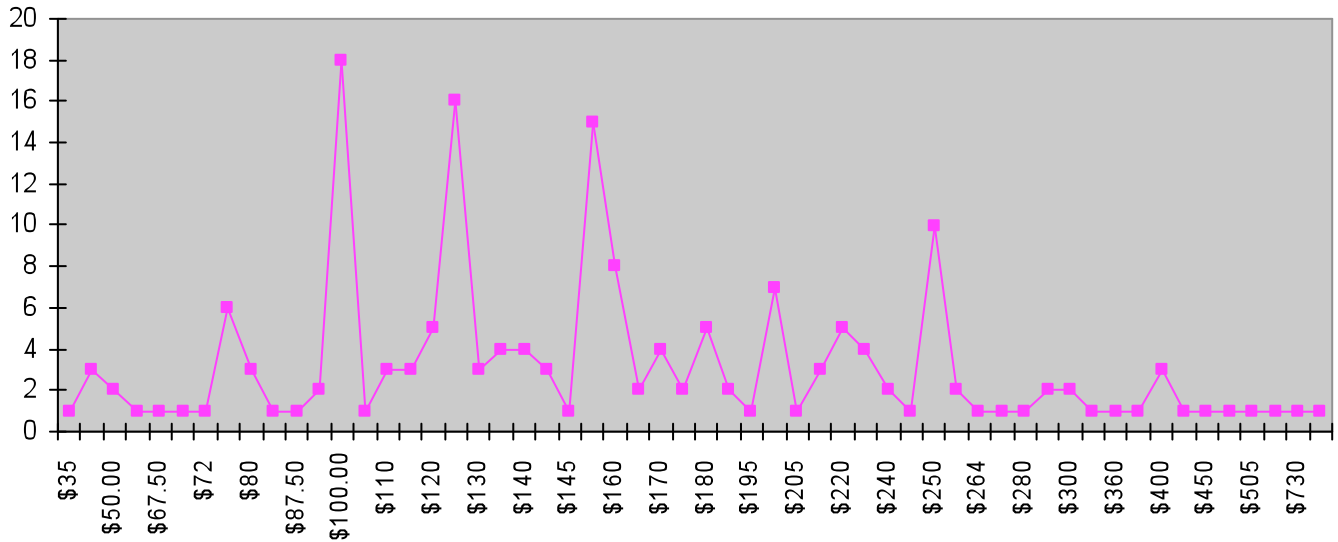
Approximately one-third (34%) of toddlers are cared for (primarily) within a child care center. One in four (24%) are cared for in a family child care home, and another one-fifth (22%) are cared for by a parent (spouse/partner). Twelve percent are cared for in informal settings, either by paid (11%) or unpaid (1%) caregivers. Parental satisfaction with toddler care averaged 4.22 on a Likert Scale with values 1-5. (5 = “very satisfied”).

Chart 8: Primary Type of Toddler Care Reported



For those who pay for care, the cost of toddler care averages \$178 per week, with the highest amount at \$900 per week

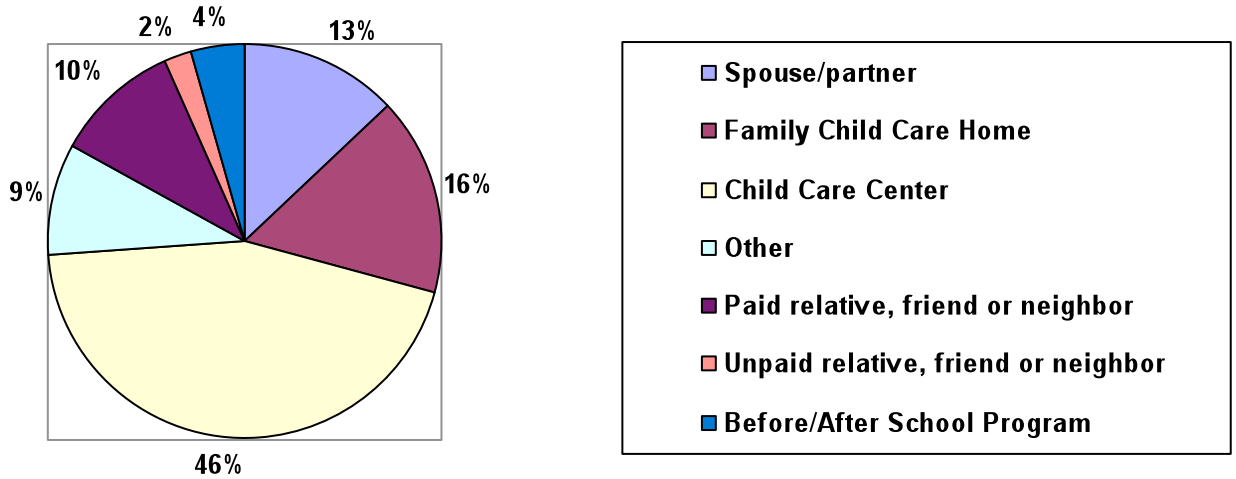
Chart 9: Frequency Chart - Cost of Toddler Care



Pre-School: (N = 342)

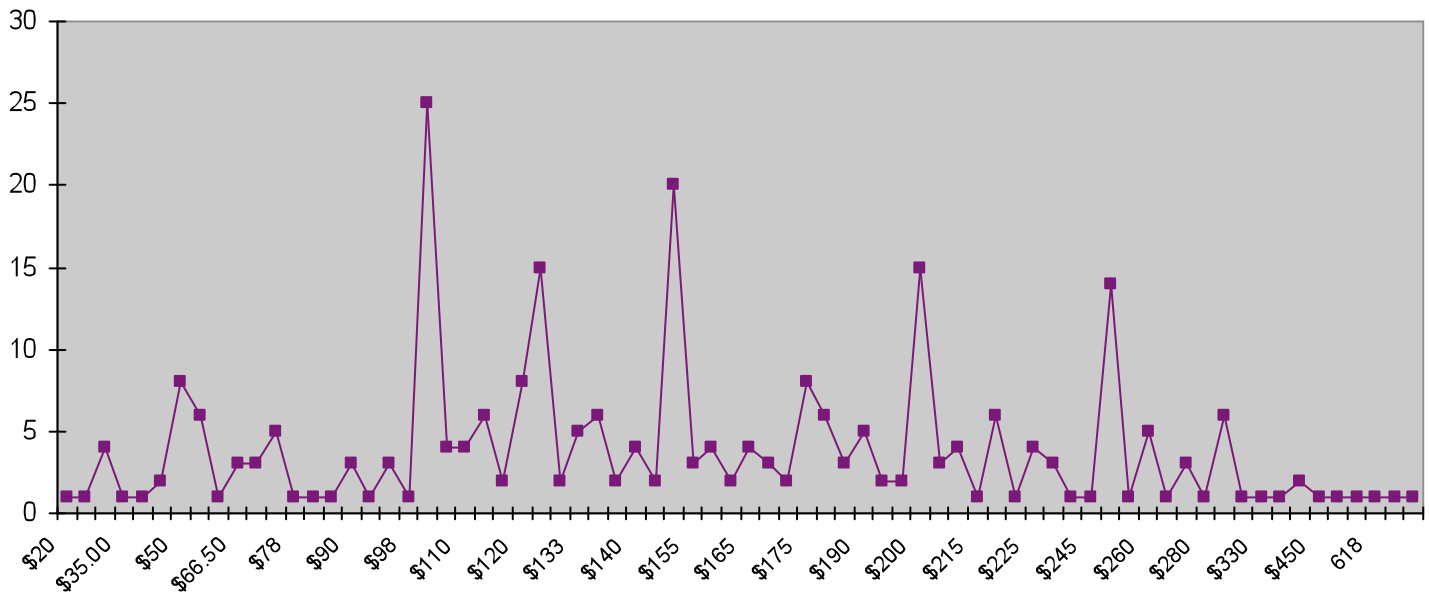
Approximately one-half (46%) of all pre-schoolers are cared for (primarily) within a child care center. Parental satisfaction with pre-school care averaged 4.18 on a Likert Scale with values 1-5 (5 = “very satisfied”).

Chart 10: Primary Type of Pre-School Care Reported



For those who pay for care, the cost of pre-school care averages \$152.80 per week, with the highest amount at \$1,031 per week.

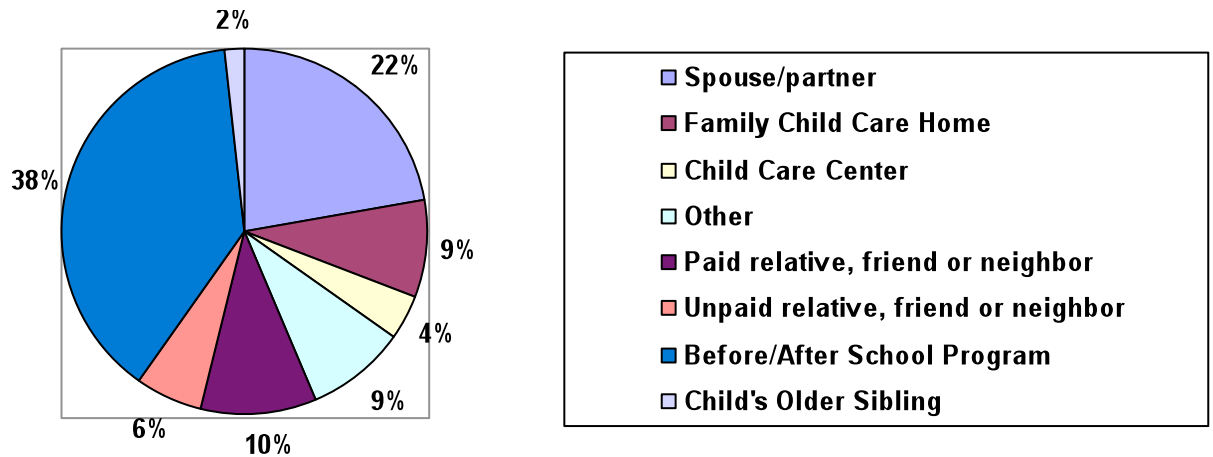
Chart 11: Frequency Chart - Cost of Pre-School Care



*School-Age: (N =782)*

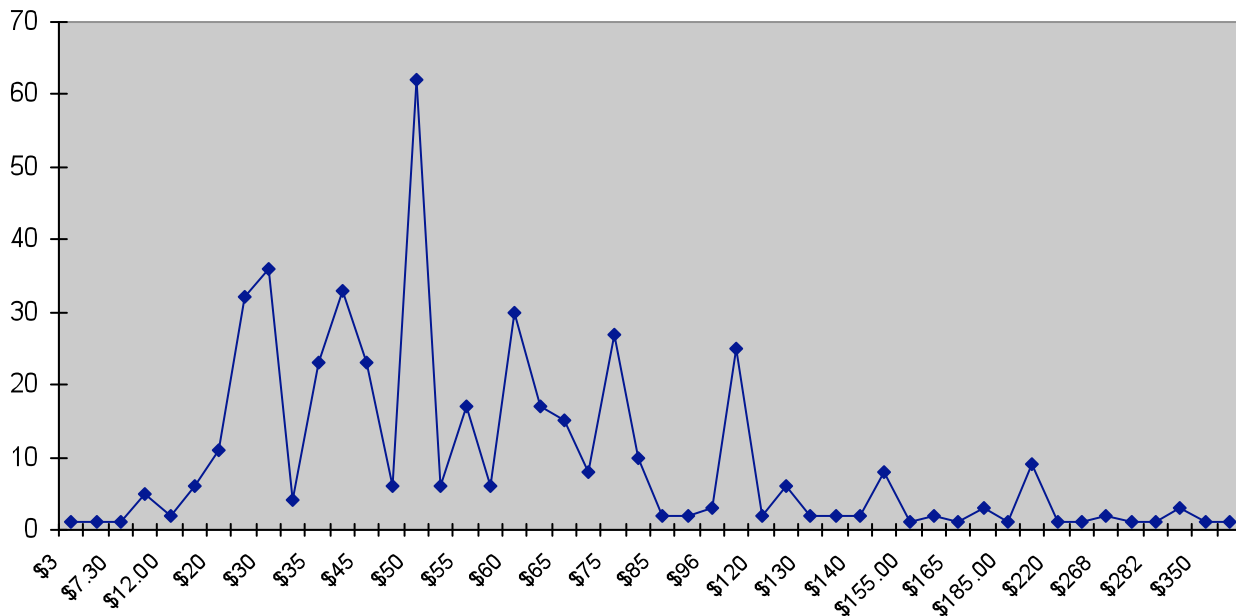
Over one-third (38%) of all school-age kids are cared for during the school year at a before/after-school program. Another 22% are cared for by a spouse/partner. Other arrangements (9%) predominantly consisted of “a babysitter or nanny”, “I work PT/flextime so I am home after school”, or child is “old enough to stay home alone”. Parental satisfaction with school-age care averaged 4.10 on a Likert Scale with values 1-5 (5 = “very satisfied”).

*Chart 12: Primary Type of School-Age Care Reported*



For those who pay for care, the cost of regular school-age care averages \$65 per week, with the highest amount at \$500 per week.

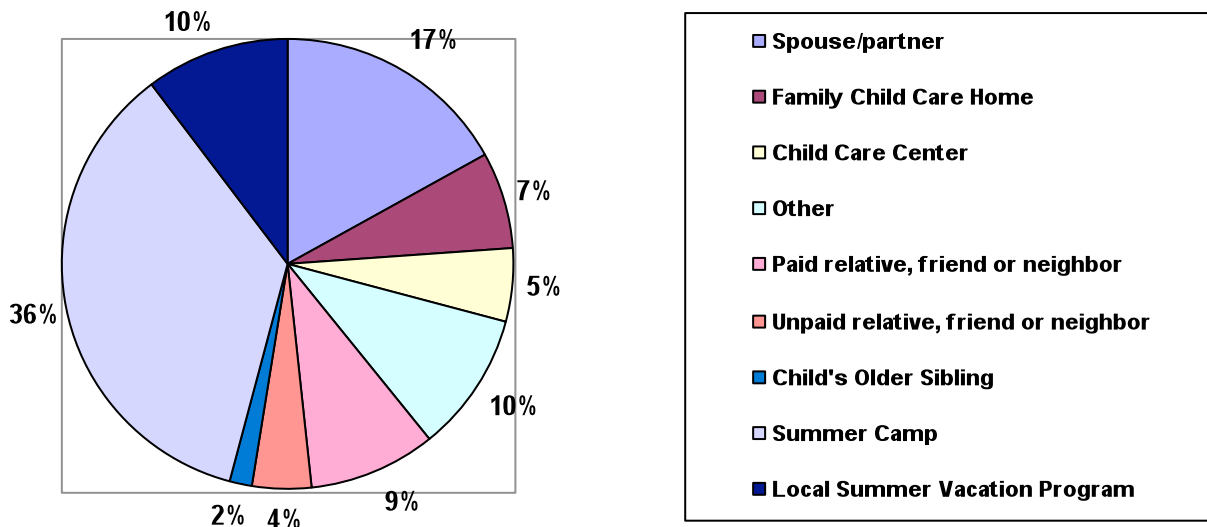
*Chart 13: Frequency Chart - Cost of Regular School Age Care*



*School-Age – Summer Care: (N =782)*

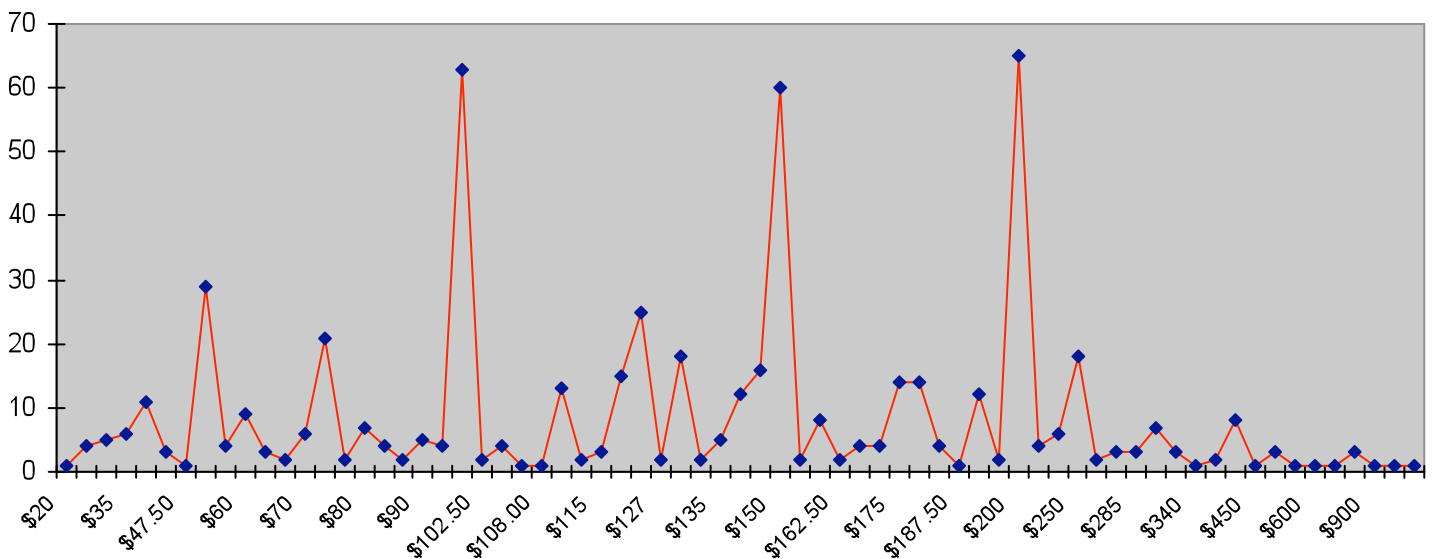
Over one-third (36%) of all school- age kids are cared for during the summer at a summer camp and another 10% go to a local summer vacation program. Another 17% are cared for by a spouse/partner. The majority of “Other” comments (10%) indicated a “combination/cobbling of various caregivers and summer programs”.

*Chart 14: Summer Type of School-Age Care Reported*



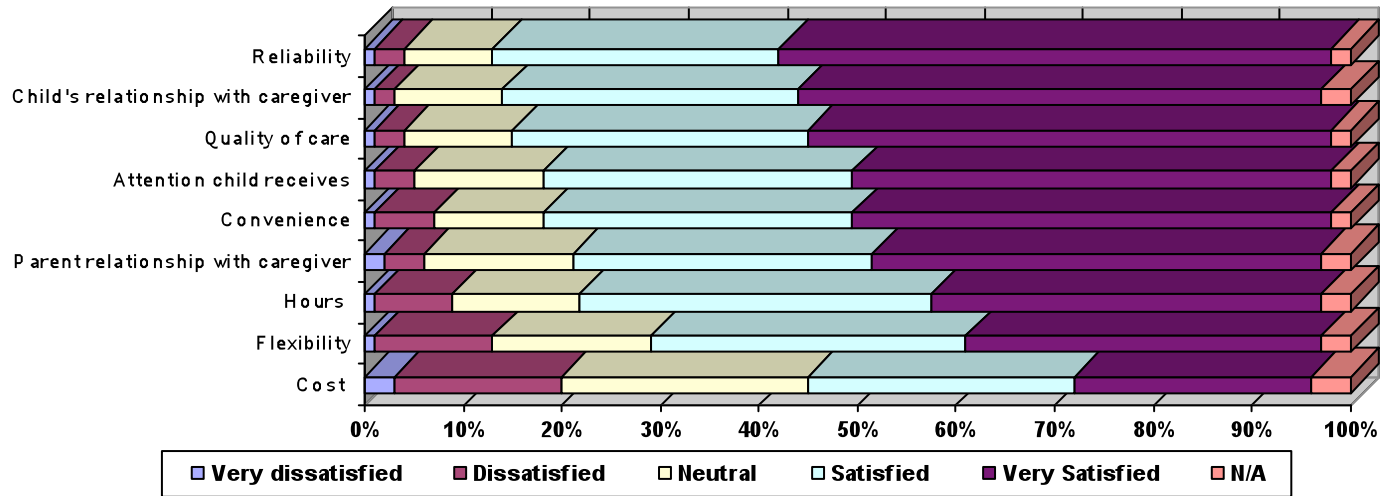
For those who pay for summer school-age care, the cost of regular school-age care averages \$153.88 per week, with the highest amount at \$1,200.

*Chart 15: Frequency Chart-Cost of School Age Summer Care*



The following table indicates respondent level of satisfaction with each of the following child care issues. Parents were asked to respond in terms of their overall child care experience. Parents are most satisfied with reliability, child’s relationship with caregiver, and quality of care. Parents are least satisfied with cost, flexibility and hours of care.

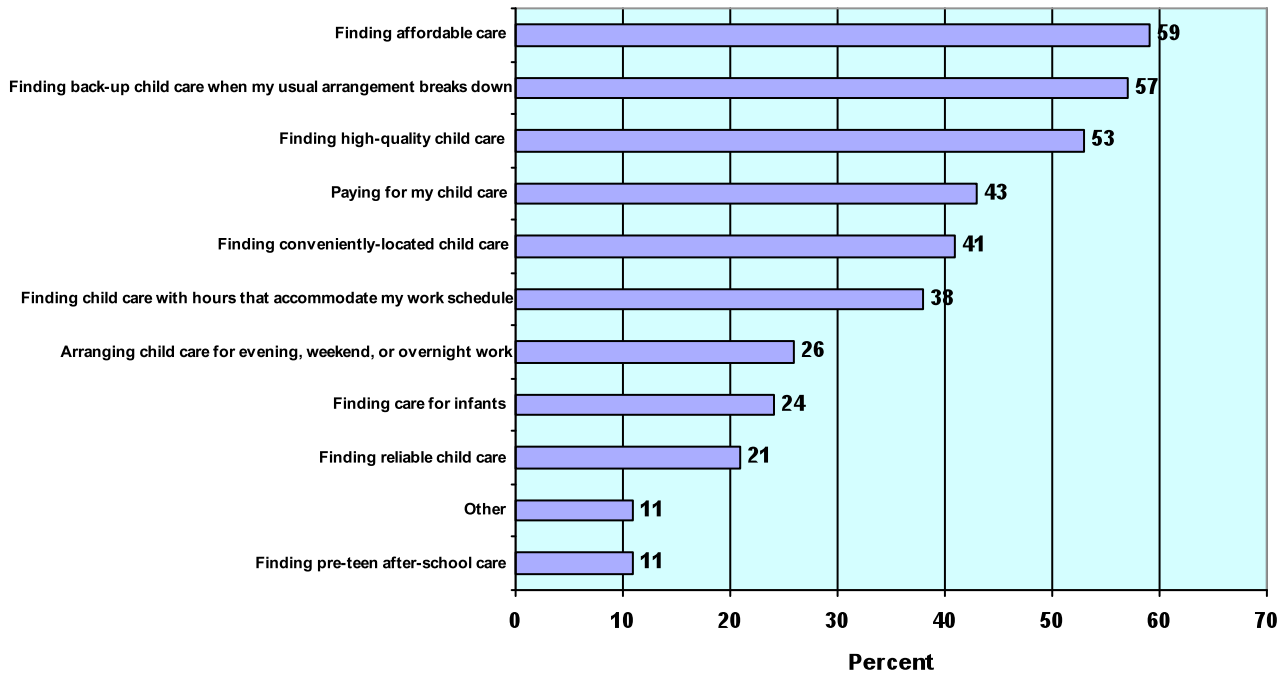
Chart 16: Parental Satisfaction with Child Care Issues



When asked, “On average, how many times a year/month does (do) your child care arrangement(s) break down (i.e., when the caregiver is unable to care for your child(ren) and you must find another arrangement)”, most respondents (48%) replied only twice per year; 21% replied every three to four months; 11% replied every other month; 9% replied once a month and another 10% replied twice a month (6%) or more (N = 876).

Cornell parents face challenges regarding child care, especially finding affordable care (59%) and finding back-up care (57%). Over one-half (53%) of parents report having difficulty finding high quality child care. Approximately 40% of parents report that paying for child care, finding conveniently located child care, and finding care with hours that accommodate work schedules has been challenging. Other comments (11%) included problems finding summer/holiday/break care (15%), care for special needs (8%), finding care for sick kids (7%), finding part-time care (5%) and finding infant care (5%).

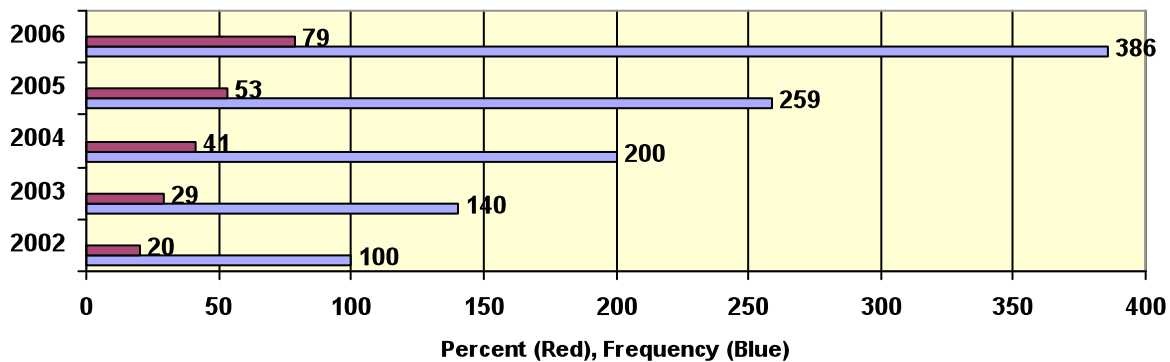
Chart 17: Parental Challenges Regarding Child Care



**Survey Results: Respondents who Received Cornell Child Care Grants in the Past**

Fifty-six percent (527) of survey respondents report that they have received a Cornell Child Care Subsidy Grant (N = 949). Of those who did not apply for the grant, 27% replied that they were unaware of the program, 14% missed the application deadline, 12% responded that the amount of money was not worth the time, 5% did not want to sign up for select benefits which is required, and 4% indicated that the application was too burdensome. Over one-half of respondents (52%) indicated that there were “other” reasons why respondents did not apply: one-in four (25%) commented that they felt their income was too high, 22% simply felt that they did not qualify, 10% use non-paid/unqualified care, 9% have a spouse at home, 8% commented that they felt they have “no need” and 6% responded that they missed the deadline. However, number of respondents who have received grants has increased gradually and dramatically from 2002 to 2006.

Chart 18: Number and Percent of Respondents who Received the Grant 2002-2006 (N= 488)



The survey asked participants to indicate the age of their children at time of enrollment. Results indicate that age three is the average age of children at the time of enrollment. 764 children were reported. Only four respondents report enrolling a fourth child in the program.

*Table 2: The Average Age of Children When First Enrolled*

Age of 1 <sup>st</sup> child	Age of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Child	Age of 3 <sup>rd</sup> Child	Age of 4 <sup>th</sup> Child	Age of 5 <sup>th</sup> Child
3.67	3.21	3.56	2.06	No data
N = 494	N = 229	N = 37	N = 4	No data

***Perceived Impacts of the CCCGSP:***

A series of questions asked respondents whether receiving grants from the CCCGSP changed aspects of their child care or work productivity. More than half (57%) reported that receiving a grant increased their overall satisfaction with their children’s child care arrangements, while 24% reported it did not and the remaining 19% were “not sure” or reported “not applicable”. Although, almost one-half of respondents (47%) did not feel the grant money increased the selection of child care arrangements available; approximately one-third (35%) responded that the grant money did open up the selection of available child care options.

When asked, “Did receiving a Cornell Child Care Grant decrease the number of times your care arrangement broke down?”, 76% of respondents replied “no”(another 11% replied “not sure”).

However, almost three-quarters (73%) responded that the extra money provided by the Cornell Child Care Grant Program freed up money for other family activities.

Interestingly, the majority (86%) of grant recipients did not change their child care arrangements because they applied or received a grant from the grant program. However, of the 14% (73) of respondents who changed arrangements, 69% indicated that their new arrangement was more convenient and 59% indicated that it was more reliable than their child’s previous arrangement.

When participants were asked to comment about the child care changes they made and why they made them, 50% of the comments related to being able to afford a higher level of quality care for their child(ren) due to the grant. Some examples follow:

*I was taking my son to home care and knew he needed more stimulation so I switched him to a day care center. This was a lot more money, but the CCG helped me afford the quality care, otherwise I wouldn't have been able to afford a child care center.*

*We were able to afford better quality, more flexible, convenient care.*

*The grant made it possible to find high-quality paid care for my children. Thank you! I couldn't work without my child-care provider.*

*At (a young age) I received the full grant amount for my child (\$5000 in 2002). I was able to enroll her in a high-quality daycare for 2 years due to that money. Otherwise, decisions would have been made with cheaper providers.*

Other comments indicated that the grant helped find more reliable and convenient care. Fifteen percent of the comments illustrated that participants were better able to afford more days of care, and a few comments indicated that participants were able to come back to work at Cornell or work more hours for the university because of the grant.



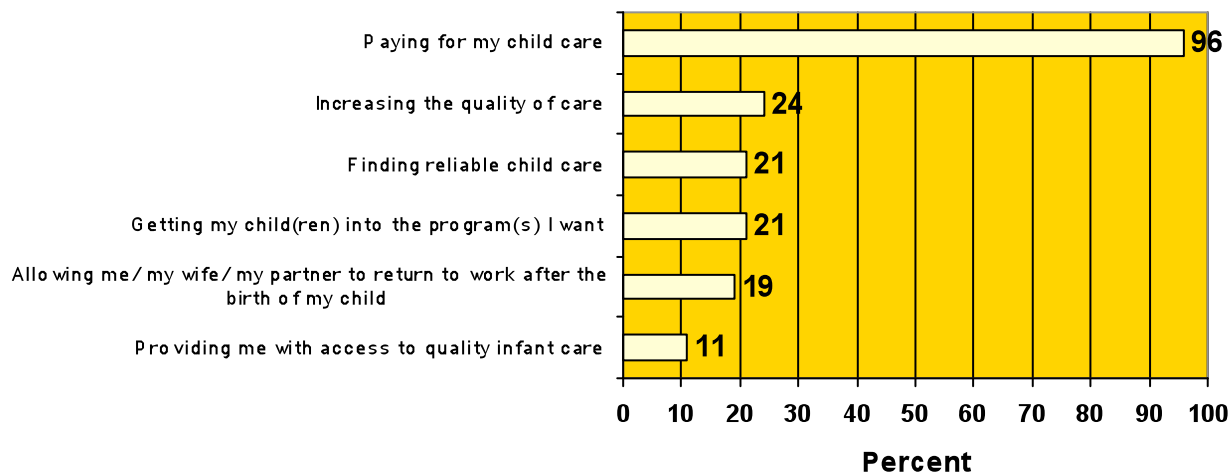
The grant monies afforded me the opportunity to work more regulated hours because it made the childcare more accessible to me financially.

I am able to afford before/after school programs and can stay at work later and get to work earlier – more productive. I never could have paid for that before!

A majority (62%) of the respondents did not enroll their child(ren) in summer camps, sports or other extracurricular programs because of participation in the Cornell Child Care Grant Subsidy Program. Although, almost one-fifth (19%) did enroll their kids in summer camps, sports or other extracurricular programs because of the grant. Another 19% responded that the question was not applicable. Of those who did enroll their children in these programs, 54% responded that they would not have done so, if it were not for the grant program.

Respondents indicated that the grant helped with the following child care issues:

*Chart 19: The CCCGSP Helped with the Following Child Care Issues:*



Almost all (96%) respondents indicated that the grant helped with paying for child care. Almost one-quarter responded that the grant assisted in increasing their quality of care. Interestingly, almost one-fifth responded that the program allowed Cornell parents to return to work after the birth of their child. Eight percent reported that the grant helped then in “other” ways: 23% of the comments indicated additional financial assistance – “easing the financial burden of child care”, 16% mentioned assistance with providing better or expanded summer experiences, 13% commented that it helped them afford better care, and another 13% of comments indicated that the grant assisted Cornell, their employer, by increasing worker satisfaction, engagement, and productivity.

Does receiving a Cornell Child Care Grant reduce work-family stress? Almost half of the respondents (47%) indicated the grant “somewhat decreased” their work-family stress, and one in five responded that the grant “significantly decreased” their work-family stress. Thirty percent responded “no change” in work-family stress.

However, the grant appeared important to employee retention. Two-thirds (67%) report that receiving a Cornell Child Care Grant positively influenced their decision to continue working at Cornell University (18% reported “no”, 15% reported “not sure or not applicable”).

Furthermore, the majority of respondents (88%) report that receiving a Cornell Child Care Grant has improved their feelings about Cornell University as an employer (6% “not improved”, 6% “not sure or not applicable”). As an indication of positive impact, 90% of respondents have recommended the program to coworkers.

Participants were asked to explain why receiving a Cornell Child Care Grant has improved their feelings about Cornell University as an employer. Of the 423 written responses:

- 43% indicated that “Cornell cares about its employees”.

It shows that Cornell cares about me as a human being and my family.

Cornell University cares about its employees and their families.

It shows that Cornell cares about each employee not just we do for our employer, but us as a person and our commitments to family.

The grant is a tremendous benefit; it shows Cornell cares about the hardships of raising a family and having a career.

- 24% indicated that “Cornell recognizes and understands the financial stress of child care on working families.”

It shows that some people at the university do understand the extreme financial drain having children in daycare costs. We have (four young children) and we are still not able to cover the costs on our own.

Indicates that the university recognizes that childcare is a financial stress for families and they are willing to make an effort to ease/share the strain.

The child care grant provides a great deal of (monetary) stress relief, as well as a feeling that Cornell understands the difficulties of raising a family in a dual career household.

It reflects a level of concern for the welfare of my family and is a significant component of the benefits package available through Cornell. It relieved the financial burden of quality childcare in a locale where choices are limited and expensive.

It's nice to know that my employer is aware of the costs associated with daycare and has provided me with an option to ease that financial burden!

In this day and age both parents need to be working to afford the costs associated with raising a family. In order for both parents to work they need to find affordable child-care close to work or home. While Cornell University doesn't provide child-care themselves, they do help make child care affordable. Every little bit helps since child care can easily eat a majority of one parent's income. The Child Care grant has helped my family afford child care and is an inclusive and progressive aspect to working at Cornell University. Providing direct childcare for staff on or very near campus would be the only step to improve working families at Cornell.

It is nice to know that they recognize what a problem paying for childcare is and that they care enough to help underwrite this significant expense. Makes me feel that they really are attuned to the needs of employees.

Cornell dedicates specific resources to help employees pay for child care. This puts truth to action. Many employers talk about the importance of child care for their employees, but do not dedicate resources to help in this effort.

It was an incredibly huge help in paying for childcare. I was getting behind and it helped me immensely. I am so grateful that it was available. Thank you so much.

- 13% indicated that the “CCCGSP benefits Cornell by creating and retaining a productive and engaged workforce.”

I just received a supplement to my grant to help defer costs for my second (newborn child). Thank you! Both my husband and I are tremendously grateful to Cornell for their acknowledgement that it costs a lot of family income in order for a mom (in our case) to continue working. I really like my job and feel I'm a better parent for having my own professional life. It is wonderful that Cornell makes it more financially viable for me to continue working with the help of the child care support grant. I've got a terrific boss who I'm devoted to, but I feel very indebted to Cornell as well for making this time in our lives a bit easier. Lots of transitions, but with the added finances, I've got one less thing to distract and worry me. Between this program, a generous maternity leave program, and terrific health benefits, I feel very

fortunate to be working at Cornell and am not interested in looking for work elsewhere. My sincere thanks for the administrative support Cornell provides for family-work life!

I can't think of anywhere else in the area where I would have flexibility and support the way I have had at Cornell. I am much more productive when I can focus on my work and not worry about my child care. I know my children are happy and safe. Because of the grant I could afford quality care and so I don't worry all the time while I am working.

As a single mom, being offered a grant like this significantly helped my daycare situation and the idea that my employer would recognize this as a huge issue for most of its employees makes me a more loyal employee and increases the likelihood of recommending Cornell to family and friends looking for a job. It shows Cornell supports families and recognizes the family/work balance needed to sustain a happy work environment.

I have always been lukewarm about my job and CU in general, but first the family care leave, and then the child care grant really demonstrated how CU cares for their employees and the excellent benefits they offer. If it weren't for the grant, we'd probably have been forced to put our son in a lower quality care situation, and given that as a choice, I would very likely have resigned instead.

Feel as though Cornell cares about my family life and not just about the job/work. If I'm happy outside of work, I'll do a better job while at work.

An employer who recognizes the fact that the employees are not only employees, but also parents who are very concerned about the kind of care our children receive while we need to go to our jobs to make a better life for them. Without reliable daycare, I am not able to work. Without the Child Care Grant, the daycare expense alone takes a great portion of the paycheck. Thank You.

Knowing that my employer cares about childcare issues makes a difference in my life. The smart thing is that once my childcare issues are taken care of I know I'm more at ease at my job and therefore a better worker/more dedicated and focused during my day.

It's a nice benefit that effectively increased my salary (albeit temporarily) and made it more difficult for another university to compete.

Simply put - Cornell, as an employer, makes a statement that it respects its employees. This is very important to me and I feel much more loyal and connected to CU as a result.

- 10% responded that the “CCCGSP is a benefit other local employers do not offer.”

I just turned down another local job and the child care grant program was a major reason. It increases my real income and the other employer could not offer me enough to cover this higher income.

Not many employers provide a service such as this. It has eased the burden of expense and stress on the entire family. I feel Cornell really cares for their employees and that makes me strive to work harder for the University. They take good care of me, and I will take good care of them.

It is a fantastic benefit which many large corporations don't even offer. While I do not need it any longer I'm glad that others are able to take advantage of this outstanding benefit!

I have never had a benefit like the Cornell Child Care Grant at any other job I have had. This demonstrates to me a real desire by Cornell University to keep not only their own best interests in mind, but also mine.

I have worked for many institutions and none have offered this type of assistance. For families like mine, where no other programs are available, this was a tremendous help.

I'm acutely aware that this type of benefit is NOT available in most workplaces, so I greatly appreciate that Cornell offers it.

I can't think of anywhere else in the area where I would have flexibility and support the way I have had at Cornell. I am much more productive when I can focus on my work and not worry about my child care. I know my children are happy and safe. Because of the grant I could afford quality care and so I don't worry all the time while I am working.

There aren't many programs out there that help employees with the common dilemma of childcare. I believe Cornell realizes the difficulties in finding and maintaining good quality childcare and has developed this program for the betterment of the employees. Other places of employment should embrace this issue as well. I feel honored to work in a place that recognizes this need and helps its employees in dealing with these difficulties. Everyone should be so lucky as to be able to utilize a program like this.

Simply put: not many employers offer anything like Cornell's child care grant. It is a very generous gift, and quite amazing.

- 4% responded that the grant “allows parents to afford the best child care possible.”

It was an incredible benefit that allowed my child to have a positive care experience in a reputable place. I would not have been able to afford it otherwise. I am extremely grateful to Cornell for this benefit. It affected our lives in many positive ways.

It supports my working part-time (I can afford the best care for my kids) while still only working part-time. Enables me to have good work-life balance, which in my opinion is the best thing an employer can offer.

I have been able to put my child in a program that I may not have been able to put her in if I did not receive money. Therefore I feel that she is receiving good skills for kindergarten. As a parent it is helping me to understand schools and how to talk with teachers. Besides that I feel that Cornell also cares about the parents who both work and just have enough for the basic necessities when really the extra edge or good child care and learning are really what is needed for the edge on society. It has also lessened the stress of a few dollars to get my child what is needed. I hope that this grant continues to really look at the working family and helps to give them a break on some of financial burden for having both parents work.

I can't think of anywhere else in the area where I would have flexibility and support the way I have had at Cornell. I am much more productive when I can focus on my work and not worry about my child care. I know my children are happy and safe. Because of the grant I could afford quality care and so I don't worry all the time while I am working.

We don't earn much money, so the grant has been enormously helpful for our family. My son now has a wonderful family home care provider who is a good communicator and very loving. Finding her (and being able to afford her rates) has made me feel even more positive about working for Cornell. My daughter will go to Kindergarten next year and we'll need the grant money to help us pay for after school program (about \$250 - 300 per month).

As a working mother of two young children, it means a lot to me and my spouse to know that my employer recognizes that employees are better--and happier--workers when their children are in quality child care programs they can trust while at work. Without the grant, we would not have been able to afford to send our children to the high-quality programs they are enrolled in.

Cornell has demonstrated their loyalty to improving the quality of life for their employees through this grant. I am deeply grateful for my award. My children receive higher quality of care with the help of this grant which, in turn, helps me to be a more effective employee because I can be certain that they are well-cared for. Cornell has invested in me and in my family, loyalty comes full circle.

We also asked the 6% of participants that indicated that the Cornell Child care Grant did not improve their feelings toward the university to explain why they felt this way: 42% of the comments indicated that the grant amount was too small to have any real impact on their lives, and therefore had no positive impact on their feelings toward the university; 26% responded that the overall work environment issues, namely overwork, disrespectful environment, inflexible work environment and general feelings of lack of family support in their department/unit, overshadowed the positive benefits of the grant. Another 26% of the comments indicated that the participants already had good or neutral feelings toward their work and the university, so the grant had no significant impact or influence.

When asked, “Do you plan to continue participating in Cornell’s Child Care Grant Program?”: 83% (440) indicated they would, 13% indicated “no”, and 3% indicated “no, because their children aged out of the program”. Sixty-nine respondents commented on why they will not participate in the future: 26% reported no need for the funds, 17% moved, 17% think they earn too much money to qualify, 16% feel the amount of money received is not worth the time/burden, 13% either simply do not qualify or their provider does not qualify, and 13% report altruistic reasons – believing that the money available should go to families who need it more than they do.

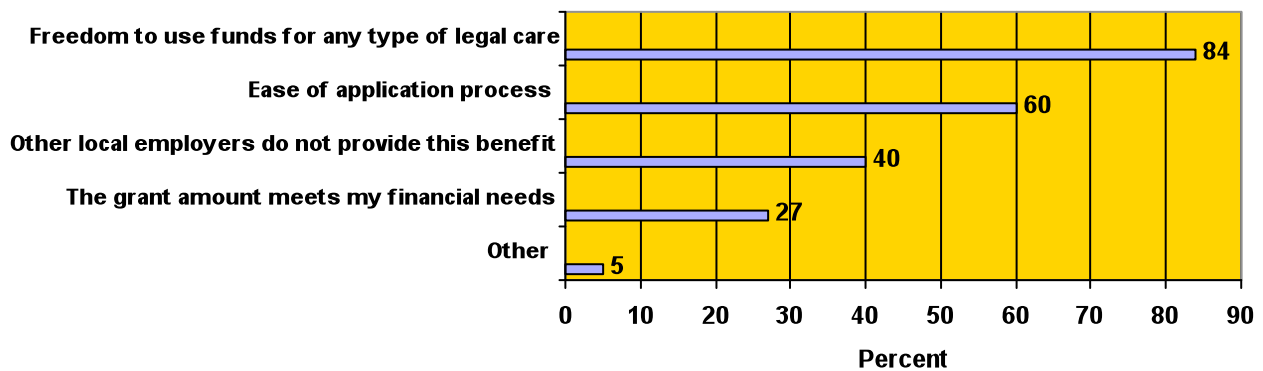
A majority (73%) of respondents manage their grant and select benefit child care funds using the ClaimsPlus on-line system (51% responded “yes, regularly” and another 22% responded “yes, sometimes”).

For the 23% who do not use the online management system, here are the main reasons why:

- Just haven't tried it (21%)
- Didn't know about it (20%)
- Easier to file/submit on paper/mail (17%)
  - With the online system, one still has to print and submit a paper copy – so why bother? (4%)
- When using grant program (prior years), online access not available (12%)
- No computer at home/password access problems (6%)
- Only had one claim which used entire amount (5%)
- Haven't submitted claims yet (2%)

Participant reported that the freedom to use any type of legal care (84%) is the main strength of the CCCGSP, followed by the “ease of the application process” (60%). Only one in four (27%) indicated that “the grant amount meets my financial needs”.

*Chart 20: Strengths of the Cornell Child Care Grant Program*

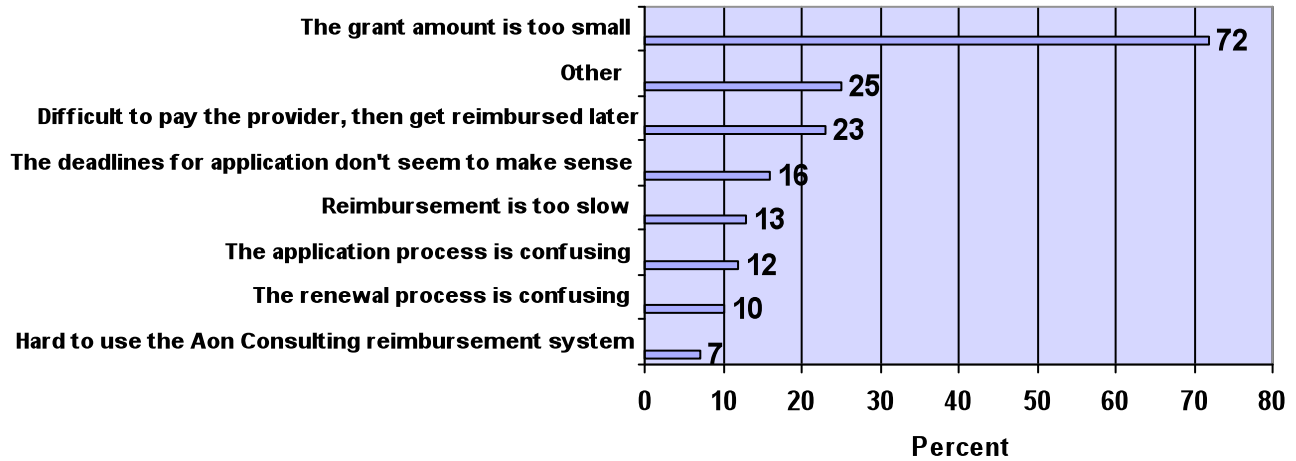


Participants were asked to provide comments on what they thought are the most important benefits of the grant program. Overwhelmingly, 60% commented that helping to ease the financial burden was the most significant benefit. Again, respondents also discussed:

- benefits to Cornell in helping to retain and create a productive, loyal and creative workforce.
- flexible use of funds
- access to quality otherwise unaffordable
- access for everyone – everybody can get assistance
- grant helps those who need it most
- ease of reimbursement process
- ease of application
- tax benefits
- self improvement- helps employee be better employees, parents and people, and
- encourages legal care.

Overwhelmingly, most (72%) respondents think that the grant amount is too small, and one-quarter feel that it is difficult to pay the provider and get reimbursed weeks later. Twenty-five percent of respondents (110 comments) indicated “other” issues/difficulties with the program, most of which suggested ways to improve the program.

*Chart 21: Weaknesses of the Cornell Child Care Grant Program*



***Satisfaction and Ways to Improve the Program:***

Overall, 82% of respondents are very (31%) or moderately (51%) satisfied with the program. Only 4% are dissatisfied. Respondents were asked to comment on ideas to improve the program. A large majority made comments that indicated they were extremely grateful and satisfied with the program, and also offered suggestions for additional improvement (N = 232):

- 23% cited the need for additional funding, as current grant amounts (although graciously welcomed by almost all) for many barely put a dent in the cost of care.
- 10% demonstrated a lack of understanding of how and why grants are currently calculated and request:
  - a different way of calculating need, such as: “just income”, “no income”, “just child care expenses”, “flat rate”, “percent of income”, “re-evaluate income ranges”, “re-evaluate qualification levels” – increase top limit/include more faculty, eliminate faculty and grad students, and “no limit - increase funding per additional number of children per family”.
  - a description (better communication) of how grants are awarded or disseminate funding report to Cornell community– make process transparent to alleviate apparent inequity
- 10% request additional notification through email system and marketing of program. Many current participants commented that they missed the deadline because they were not notified.
- 7% are not satisfied with Aon – problems with re-imburement.
- 5% demonstrated a lack of understanding of federal limitations of the Flexible Spending Account (FSA) and how that impacts the structure of the grant program – they need additional education/communication on federal FSA requirements and why program is structured this way. Participants offered suggestions including: “rollover of funds from one year to another”, “use of debit card system”, “currently mixed with select benefits medical coverage which leads to confusion”, “pay provider of choice directly”, and “pay me the entire amount as a check”.
  
- Participants also request (less than 5% each):
  - more money for lower income families and those who need it most.

- deadline flexibility for those who are or become pregnant during the year.
- on-campus care, including equal or better access to and quality than the closed ECC/CHE center.
- that “extenuating circumstances” be re-admitted to the application process.
- online application and online renewal process to make application renewal easier that includes individual data populated in online renewal form.
- that participants can change their status/grant award during the year due to unforeseeable and extreme life/financial changing events.
- increase in coverage beyond age 13 to include funding for teen care, teen summer programs, and other programs.
- increase in education/communication regarding quality care, including “What is it?”, “How can I find it?” as well as, marketing of local Child Care Councils (beyond Tompkins County).
- that the grant does not decrease in amount when children turn three. Participants commented that their costs do not decrease when their child reaches age 3.
- synchronization of application deadline with school year

Respondents were asked to provide additional comments. Almost all comments reiterated findings previously illustrated in this report. However, the following additional findings stand out:

- *Funds for “traditional families”*: The spouses of stay-at-home parents perceive grant program and work/life inequity at Cornell. Many commented that by choosing “the best care for their children – having their own parent stay home”, they receive penalties and financial burdens: loss of other spousal/partner income, loss of retirement income, etc., as well as general financial constraints instead of societal supports. Many commented that employees whose spouses do not work should not be eliminated from the program and should receive some form of remuneration for child education as well, even if it is just a small stipend for stimulating preschool care a couple times a week, home schooling supplies, or to afford a babysitter so that parents can go out to dinner once in a while. This finding was sprinkled throughout the open-ended comment sections, particularly within the write in comments on the cost (intangible, lost salary, lost opportunity) of care per child.
- *On-site Care*: Many respondents reported being excited and thrilled about the upcoming Bright Horizons Center. Some are upset that Cornell does not currently have an on-campus center and did not indicate that they are aware of the upcoming Bright Horizons center. A few commented that they hope (but are concerned) it will be of the same quality as the ECC in the College of Human Ecology and are upset because they believe the new center is the reason why the ECC closed. Back-up and night/weekend care would be helpful to some employees. Others hope that the new center will not deplete the grant program funds and hope that the grant will still be available to those who choose or must have off-campus care.
- *Access to Affordable Quality Care*: The expense of child care in Ithaca (and NYC) and the lack of infant, quality summer care and overall affordable quality child care were highlighted repeatedly. Parents are not sure how the grant can increase the supply of appropriate care, but are hopeful that the program is adjusting the market in a positive direction.
- *Increase Flexible Work Arrangements*: Respondents also suggested that flexible work arrangements could help address child care concerns, especially during snow days, school holidays or when back-up or sick-child care is needed,... and request culture change, more education/training of

supervisors/unit level administration on how flexibility can improve unit productivity. A few parents commented that they would like to work at home full-time or a majority of the week so “that they can spend more time with their children”. (Although parent comments do not reflect the understanding that as an employee working from home on a regular basis – one needs a regular child care provider other than the work-at-home parent.)

**Conclusion:**

- Does the Cornell Child Care Grant Subsidy Program positively impact the variety, reliability and quality of child care for employee children?
- Are employees mostly satisfied with the grant?
- Does the CCCGSP positively impact the productivity of Cornell’s working parents?
- Is the university, as a whole, positively impacted by this grant?

... the answers are... Yes!

**Acknowledgements:**

We would like to acknowledge the following individuals for their guidance and leadership on this project:

*Principal Investigators:* Taryn Morrissey, Ph.D. Candidate, and Mildred Warner, Ph.D.

*Report Author:* Karen Shellenback, M.S.

*Funder:* This project was supported by a grant from Cornell University’s Institute for the Social Sciences.

Special thanks to Lynette Chappell-Williams, Director of the Office of Worklife Diversity, Equity and Life Quality, and Mary George Opperman, Vice President for Human Resources, for their vision and support for the Child Care Grant Subsidy Program and this evaluation project.

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We would also like to thank the Cornell employees who took the time to respond to the survey.