



# FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACES:

A Guide for Utah Business Leaders

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## Fellow Utah Business Leaders,

Utah is recognized for its strong and vibrant economy, unparalleled quality of life, and community spirit. Yet despite our many successes, Utah has challenges that require our best efforts. One that needs to be more fully addressed is child care.

This issue spans across most, if not all, industries, and while many complex factors influence child care choices, we know that the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic has made this long-standing problem significantly worse.

Child care is a personal family issue, and also a community and business issue, because it affects how we work, when we work, and for many, why we work. We believe the private sector can positively impact Utah's workforce by addressing the intersectionality of child care, employee wellness, employee retention, and upward mobility. Utah's working parents need business leaders who are willing to elevate corporate culture by taking a comprehensive approach to the child care challenge.

We hope this toolkit will be a helpful resource for Utah leaders in business, government, and community. We recommend CEOs, presidents, managers, and human resource professionals throughout Utah's business community carefully review the contents of this toolkit, and consider steps they can take in their organizations to support the child care needs and overall well-being and success of their employees.

**Sincerely,**

**Derek Miller**

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**DID  
YOU  
KNOW**

Child care issues result in an estimated **\$1.36 billion loss** annually for Utah's economy.<sup>1</sup>

The **opportunity cost** for a young worker who makes \$50,000 a year and chooses to take three years away from work to care for a child equates to more than **\$500,000** over the course of their career.<sup>2</sup>

For every dollar invested in child care, there can be as high as a **\$9 return on investment.**<sup>3</sup>



## THE SITUATION: UTAH'S CHILD CARE CHALLENGE

The unfortunate truth is that Utah is considered a child care desert with **77% of Utahns living without access to child care** either due to limited proximity to services or income, the inability to afford care.<sup>4</sup> For child care to be considered affordable, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) outlines that **a family should pay no more than 7% of its household income**. Utah has one of the lowest rates of poverty in the nation, yet households are still strongly influenced by the affordability of child care. **Over half of Utah's 29 counties pay between 15% and 20% of income** for full-time care of children ages zero to twenty-four months at a Center Licensed facility.

The price of formal child care forces parents to consider alternative arrangements — mainly informal care arrangements that may come at the cost of employment and educational participation. For parents that prefer to work, flexibility in their employment is a key component of

whether they will be able to participate in the labor force. Ultimately, **Utah parents' child care decisions are primarily based on affordability.**<sup>5</sup> It is important to note that **more than 70%** of Utah parents either care for children themselves or have a parent/guardian caring for the children when they are not in school; **with 35% relying on an extended family member for child care** (grandparent, aunts/uncles, older siblings, etc.).<sup>6</sup>

Utah is also seeing an ever-increasing proportion of our parents in the workforce. This means that policies like paid parental leave, family-friendliness in company culture, creating a safe space for working parents, and possibly most critical of all — child care — are all becoming more and more important in Utah. The percentage of Utah families with all available parents working in Utah has increased — from **62.5% in 2010 to 64.1% in 2019**.

Additionally, the total number of families has grown from **342,000 to 364,000** in the same time period, making the need for child care more important than ever.<sup>7</sup>

## CALL TO ACTION FOR BUSINESS LEADERS

Child care is one of the most significant costs distressing families, and as the child care crisis rages on, both access and affordability are increasingly out of reach. As federal pandemic-era relief funds dwindle, Utahns and families across the country will face a reality in which child care is no longer attainable.

Families are not the only ones affected. Child care providers and small-business owners will also feel the burden of insufficient funds to sustain access to child care through greater difficulty in finding employees, preventing employee turnover, and paying workers enough to enable them to meet all the financial demands facing their families. A future with more care center closures, growing child care deserts, and fewer options for families means greater economic costs for communities everywhere.<sup>8</sup>

On a brighter note, the National Forum on Early Childhood Policy and Programs has found that high-quality early childhood

programs can yield a \$4–9 dollar return per \$1 invested. Early childhood stands out as a particularly notable area for investment precisely because so many interventions appear to save money in the longer term. The primary beneficiaries are children and their parents. For example, if a low-income parent can secure a place for their child in a high-quality day care program, that child

is likely to benefit from exposure to a wider array of learning opportunities than he or she might have at home. Enrolling their child in day care may also open the door for the parent to take on employment or further his or her education in order to improve their career prospects. Those individual benefits can be substantial, and life-changing.

**The benefits of investing in high-quality day care programs are far-reaching.**

Beyond individual families, other beneficiaries may include state and local government, and more broadly, taxpayers and society at large. Because high-quality early childhood programs promote healthy development, they can generate savings by counteracting the need for more expensive interventions later in a child's life.

HIGH-QUALITY  
EARLY CHILDHOOD  
PROGRAMS CAN  
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DOLLAR RETURN  
PER \$1 INVESTED.



For example, studies show that participation in high-quality early care can help children avoid special education, grade repetition, early parenthood, and incarceration — all outcomes that imply large costs for the government and for society. Furthermore, children (over the long term) and parents who participate in such programs are more likely to be employed; thus revenue from their taxes and enhanced buying power can positively contribute to the economy.<sup>9</sup>

The bottom line is that we need substantially more companies and philanthropic organizations to invest in child care and early childhood education. Without it, Utah families, especially those from low-income households, and employers will continue to suffer.





## WHY ARE FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACES NEEDED?

A 2021 Harvard Business Review article suggests that child care is not a family issue, but rather a business issue that affects how we work, when we work, and for many, why we work. Moving forward, employer-provided child care could also influence where we work. Employers that provide high-quality child care will not only differentiate themselves from the competition, but will also create a “sticky” benefit that fosters employee retention. Employees are less likely to move to a new job if it also means moving their child care from an environment they love and trust.

It is up to businesses to think creatively about ways to build the child care infrastructure we need to help working parents keep working for their families, and the economy as a whole.

The coronavirus pandemic has exposed the previously invisible (or forgotten) link between child care and the economy. It is the lifeline for women to stay employed. More than **2.3 million women have left** the labor force since February 2020, accounting for 80% of all discouraged workers during the pandemic, reducing the labor force participation rate to 57%, **the lowest it's been since 1988.**<sup>10</sup>

# -\$1.10B

Absences and employee turnover due to child care cost Utah employers an estimated \$1.10 billion per year.

# -\$258M

Utah loses an estimated \$258 million annually in tax revenue due to child care issues.

# -\$1.36B

## **The Untapped Potential:**

Child care issues result in an estimated \$1.36 billion loss annually for Utah's economy.

## **Employers are Already Paying for the Lack of Child Care**

- Child care issues result in an estimated \$1.36 billion dollar loss annually for Utah's economy.<sup>11</sup>
- Parents must balance the availability, affordability, and quality of child care options when making employment decisions. Parents working non-traditional hours have even few options to consider.
- Finding and retaining skilled talent was a top concern for employers prior to the pandemic; the challenge is only increasing as we continue into recovery. Use the Center for Economic and Policy Research [Turnover Calculator](#)<sup>12</sup> to see how much employee turnover is costing you.
- Child care responsibilities fall disproportionately on female caregivers, especially women of color.
- Employers committed to diversify their workforce must recognize that child care challenges work against efforts to recruit, retain, and grow skilled female employees.

# Parents are Paying the Price Too

The Economic Policy Institute's Family Budget Calculator measures the income a family needs in order to attain a modest yet adequate standard of living. The budget estimates community-specific costs for 10 family types (one or two adults with zero to four children) in all counties and metro areas in the United States. Compared with the federal poverty line and the Supplemental Poverty Measure, EPI's family budgets provide a more accurate and complete measure of economic security in America.<sup>13</sup> See exhibit A for a real-life scenario for a Salt Lake County family of two parents and two children.

## Did you know that...

- 49% of Utah parents who have left educational pursuits due to child care issues do not plan on returning to school for at least one year. The reality is that only 13% of students who drop out of school actually re-enroll, and they typically do not re-enroll at the same level of institution.
- The opportunity cost for a young worker who makes \$50,000 a year and chooses to take three years away from work to care for a child equates to more than \$500,000 over the course of their career.
- For both men and women, there is an estimated 7% wage penalty for time spent away from work to care for a child.<sup>14</sup>

## EXHIBIT A

Monthly and annual expenses for a family of four in Salt Lake County.

### MONTHLY COSTS

2 adults and 2 children

#### Salt Lake County, UT

|                                                                                     |                   |         |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---------|
|   | Housing           | \$1,204 |
|   | Food              | \$770   |
|   | Child Care        | \$1,422 |
|   | Transportation    | \$1,189 |
|   | Health Care       | \$1,035 |
|   | Other Necessities | \$715   |
|  | Taxes             | \$878   |

Monthly Total \$7,213

Annual Total \$86,552

# FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACES: WHERE TO START

## Understand the Needs of Your Working Parents

Your working parents will be your most valuable partners in your journey to find solutions that directly benefit them and your organization at the same time.

- Start with existing HR or dependent data that's available to you.
- Conduct surveys, host focus groups, or listen to Employee Assistance Programs/Employee Resource Groups for the needs of your working parents.
- Open up the lines of communication between front line staff and line managers to senior leadership.
- Build parent feedback loops and tracking systems for return on investment and continuous improvement.

## Find Your Partners and Learn the Landscape

You are not alone. Existing resources and community partners can provide expertise and information to guide you.

- Determine what you need to know about the availability of child care in your community.

- Start Inside. Conduct surveys or focus groups to learn how employees feel about child care arrangements. Are they satisfied, and can their child care providers recommend others? What options can you provide for additional flexibility to schedules? Do any members of your senior leadership team serve in leadership positions for any local child care or advocacy organizations?
- Do your due diligence. Contact the [Utah Office of Child Care](#)<sup>15</sup> to learn more about the local child care market.
- Learn about local coalitions of partner organizations, state and local chambers, child care providers, and advocates who are experts in your community and can be a resource for your journey.

## Go For Some Quick Wins and Then Build on Them

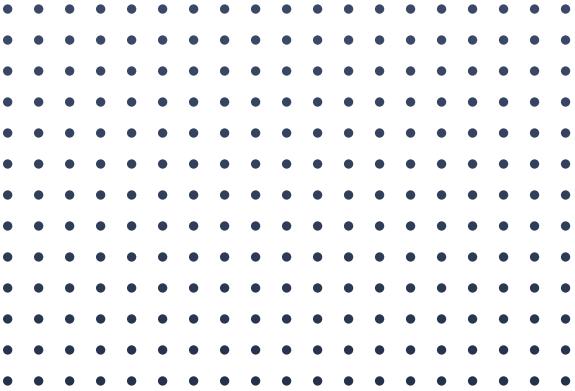
Take small steps and get quick wins to generate momentum and enthusiasm for meeting this complex challenge.

- Establish flexibility where possible. Tap into Employee Assistance Programs/Employee Resource Groups.
- Provide employees with a directory of all the local child care programs in your community.
- Ask for feedback on these small changes — what is most helpful, and what should be the next step?
- Build on these wins — what's next? Plan for longer/larger changes.<sup>16</sup>

# Cultivate Strong Leadership to Support an Elevated Culture

Have internal champions, ideally, high-level executives, lead the effort to promote child care benefits and options in the organization. Provide these internal champions the ability to cultivate new ideas. You may be surprised by how supporting working parents may also improve productivity and increase loyalty among all employees. Meaningful and positive change will be most successful if it comes from the top down. It is also important to have representation from different divisions and maybe even Employee Resource Groups to ensure the needs of all employees are considered.

Creating a culture where employees feel supported and cared about has to begin with all levels of leadership within the organization. Culture change is a long-term process, so it may take years for an organization to see meaningful gains. We encourage you to not give up too quickly as the investment is very likely to prove profitable.





## ADDITIONAL EMPLOYER BEST PRACTICES TO CONSIDER

### **Making the Most of Existing Child Care Realities**

#### **1. Set Standard Start and End Times for Meetings**

Some organizations have implemented a policy that no meetings will start prior to 9:30 a.m. or end later than 4:30 p.m. This simple move cuts down on the anxiety surrounding timely day care pick-up and drop-off, and the expense related to day care overtime charges. When parents aren't worried about running late, they can keep their mental energies focused on the business.

#### **2. Make Schedules Predictable**

Whenever possible, making schedules predictable and avoiding telling employees at the last minute that they need to stay late, come in early, or travel on short notice can reduce stress, build trust, and enhance efficiency. This also allows employees to plan their outside-of-work responsibilities around work commitments more effectively.

#### **3. Offer Flexibility**

Allow employees to set schedules that work for them by providing flexibility about the hours they work and the location they will be working from. Ask employees to put their availability (time in and out) onto their calendars and set the expectation that colleagues schedule meetings around those hours. Invest in conference room technology so team members can dial in to any meeting from anywhere, especially if scheduled earlier or later than usual.<sup>17</sup>

## How Employers Can Assist Their Employees with Child Care Options

### 1. Research Existing Child Care Options in the Community and Provide a Child Care Directory for Employees.

Many states have existing child care networks or associations for the education of young children. Contact the organizations that specialize in child care in your state to help identify different types of quality care in your community. Be sure to include traditional child care centers and child care homes, non-profit and faith-based providers, and Head Start and Early Head Start programs for eligible families.

### 2. Contract with a Third-Party Company to Assist Employees in Connecting with Child Care Providers.

A third-party company can facilitate an array of services that will bolster benefits packages and provide substantive assistance to employees in addressing dependent care needs.

Examples of third-party intermediaries include [KinderCare](#), [Care.com](#), [TOOTRiS](#), and [WeeCare](#). These services can be activated with as little as two hours' notice and can prove to be an outstanding benefit to your team.

#### A third-party company can:

- Provide direct guidance and service to employees to help them find the type of child care that meets their needs.
- Facilitate a “back up care” program where a business establishes a relationship with a specific provider that will be able to provide care should a working parent’s usual child care arrangement be disrupted.
- Set up and manage an employer subsidy program where employers help defray the cost of care for employees by providing vouchers.
- Manage partnerships with child care providers. For example, arranging access to a certain number of spots reserved at a child care provider with negotiated special rates for your employees.



### **3. Offer a Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account (DCFSA)**

Employers can offer a Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account (DCFSA) — a pre-tax benefit account used to pay for eligible dependent care services. Make sure child care expenses are included in your benefit policies and provide training during employee onboarding or after a life-change event so they understand how to use these accounts for significant savings.<sup>18</sup>

### **4. Provide On-Site or Local Child Care Spaces and Supervision**

Black and Hispanic families are more likely to live in child care deserts with few options before the coronavirus pandemic struck. A 2021 survey of working parents, conducted by Harvard Business Review, found that the loss of hours due to lack of child care thus far in the pandemic is greater for women of color, women without a college degree, and women living in low-income households — groups which lost nine or more hours per week and who were more likely to be working in essential industries that require in-person work.

When back-up child care was available to these vulnerable populations, they lost fewer hours of work per week during the pandemic. Employers who can pool together to offer quality on-site or local child care options for employees will see more productive and loyal employees. As mothers, the mere idea of being able to bring our children to work and know they are well cared for, safe, and engaged, would be a game-changer.<sup>19</sup>

Child care can be expensive and hard for working parents to navigate, even in the best of circumstances. Smart, compassionate companies help their employees through this minefield, recognizing that it could be the benefit that matters most for employee retention. Policies and programs can help with the practicalities of care and express an authentic desire to do well by your company's working parents.<sup>20</sup>

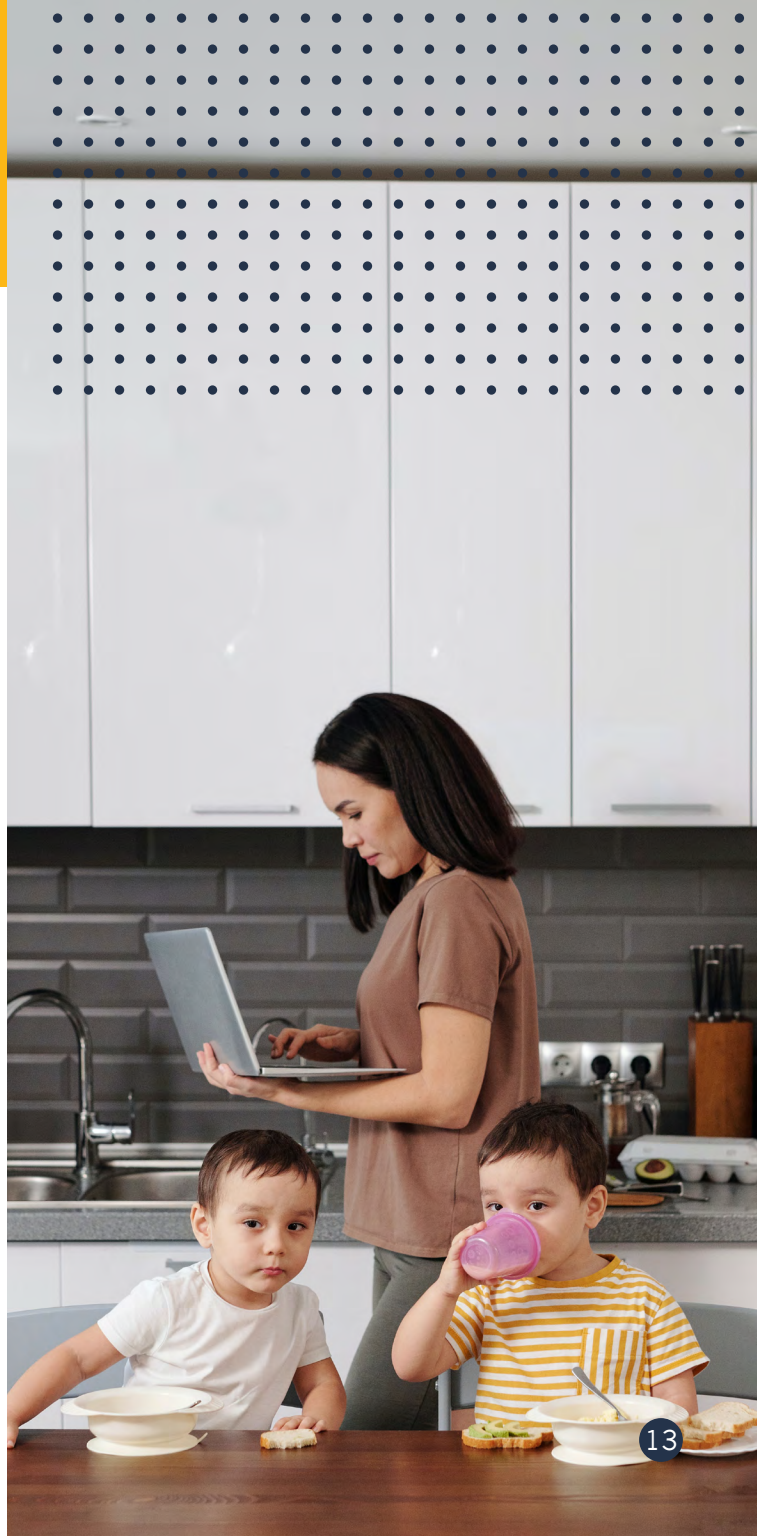
## FAMILY-FRIENDLY TIPS FOR EMPLOYEES

Here are four approaches for parents to consider, either individually or as a group of families.

### 1. Keep Your Pod

During the height of the pandemic, when many of us still had demanding jobs and children needing care and schooling and no social outlets, we turned to the concept of “pods” — one or two families that we could safely socialize with, share meal prep with, and swap child care with. For many, they felt natural because they are natural: They were a mini version of our existing village.

As you think about back up care, keep this mentality around with one change: keep it just as intentional (clearly communicating expectations and needs) but not nearly as rigid (exclusively considering one family to suffice for all needs). Consider expanding your pod to include multiple families for different needs, including socializing, meal help, and last-minute child care assistance. For each family, have a conversation around the mutual help that would be great to give and get and what it might look like.





For example, you can choose to do communal meals on Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, where on Tuesdays and Thursdays, one family makes dinner and delivers it to the other, and on Fridays, everyone eats together. You can choose to swap child care each weekend morning — each family gets 8 a.m. to noon and swaps on the other day. This is also an option for the tricky after-school slot where families can rotate caring for all the children in the 3–6 p.m. time frame. There are many ways to structure the mutually helpful, rotating blocks of care. The key is to identify what each family needs and come to a communal agreement within your pod.

## **2. Find People With the Same Patterns as Your Life**

Another option is to look at your family's schedule in the fall and find people that match parts of that schedule. For example, think of families that go to the same school and share pick-up and drop-off times, are on the same soccer team, or go to the same day care. Get to know three or four of these families and consider making a back up pact with them.

This looks like saying, “Hey, my fall work schedule has me going into the office on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. In case I’m running late or something comes up on those days, would you be open to taking Cara and Chris to school or bringing them home?”

I'd be able to do the same for you, especially on Mondays and Fridays. The kids have booster seats they'd be able to bring." This is especially useful if you find yourself not able to make it to soccer pick-up on time or need to deal with one sick kid but still need the other child to get to school. In these cases, you'll have a ready-to-go set of people you can call.

Keep in mind that you'll want to be comfortable with how the other family will provide care for your children — car seats, driving rules, etc. — and vice versa. The key is clear overcommunication and upfront, mutually agreed upon expectations to minimize or lessen issues down the road.

### **3. Build Your Professional Back Up Bench**

This was the go-to option for many of us pre-pandemic — a network of sitters, nannies, and teachers that we had on call as paid, professional back up. It takes time and care to build up this bench. You have to proactively find, interview, and manage them, but you get the benefit of a trusted professional that can swoop in and do just what you need.

The first step is to reach out to anyone you used to have on your “bench” and see if they're still available and willing to help for a specific set of times. It could be a standing weekly time, a flexible number of hours each week, or the ability to be on-call in times of last-minute hiccups.

Depending on how many existing relationships you're able to resurrect, you may need to add a few new people using the usual avenues — asking around, posting on parent/neighborhood forums, and using child care-focused services.

Think about having at least two to three sitters on your bench, more if you'll be asking them for last-minute needs. The deeper your bench, the more likely you'll be able to get help when you need it. Also, reach

out to your employer to see if they have options they've brought on. Over the pandemic, caregiving has risen to the top of employee needs, and workplaces everywhere have expanded the support they're providing. This could look like on-site options to subsidize child care.

THE KEY IS CLEAR  
OVERCOMMUNICATION  
AND UPFRONT,  
MUTUALLY AGREED  
UPON EXPECTATIONS





#### **4. Be Your Own Back Up (When Necessary)**

There is only so much we parents can do to manage the unpredictability of our home lives. So as much as we can do to build our networks to step in in times of need, we also need to turn our attention the other way, toward appropriately setting the expectations of our employers. After these 15+ months, employers should deeply understand the context in which the work gets done — and that the context is complicated.

Another option to consider is to let your manager know that, although you have created a robust plan to deal with unexpected circumstances, there are going to be times when you'll need (or want) to be the back up. And in those times, they should expect that you'll be taking meetings from home, with a little one in the background, or you'll be shuffling meetings to get individual work done on those days. After all, you've proven you can do it during the pandemic.

The two years have pushed parents to the very limits of our resilience and resourcefulness. But there are important lessons and adaptations from our pandemic experiences that we can take and bring forward into the next phase — continuing to create and build robust social structures that help us weather the ups and downs of parenthood. And if we start with a realistic picture of what we need, and build up the right bench for us, the transition to yet another chapter will feel uncomfortable but doable.<sup>21</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Workplaces need to recognize that they have an integral role in promoting child care options for their employees. We know that child care challenges and concerns are pervasive and that finding the right solution for your company will prove a productive investment. In the end, by implementing a combination of the strategies provided here, employers have an opportunity to realize significant benefits both for their employees and for their organization.

# APPENDIX A – RESOURCES

## Key Data Sources

- 1. [Untapped Potential in Utah Report](#)
- 2. [Work/Life Balance Preferences: Utah Parents Report](#)
- 3. [Employer Roadmap: Childcare Solutions for Working Parents](#)

## Resources for Business Leaders

- 1. [Family Centered Employment Toolkit](#)
- 2. [Utah Child Care Cooperative for Businesses](#)
- 3. [Understanding America’s Labor Shortage: The Scarce and Costly Childcare Issue](#)
- 4. [Data Deep Dive: A Decline of Women in the Workforce](#)
- 5. Third Party Vendor Options:
  - a. [Care.com for Business](#)
  - b. [KinderCare](#)
  - c. [TOOTRiS](#)
  - d. [WeeCare](#)
- 6. Local and National Awareness Days
  - [Week of the Young Child in Utah \(First Full Week of April\)](#)
  - [Children’s’ Mental Health Awareness Day in Utah \(May 7\)](#)
  - [National Child Care Provider Day \(May – Friday before Mother’s Day\)](#)
  - [National Children’s Awareness Month \(June\)](#)
  - [National Child Welfare Workforce Development Month \(September\)](#)

## Resources for Parents

- 1. [Search for Child Care Near You – Dept of Workforce Services](#)
- 2. [Child Care Assistance – Dept of Workforce Services](#)
- 3. [Care About Childcare – Utah Valley University](#)
- 4. [Child Care Options – University of Utah](#)
- 5. [Care About Childcare – Utah State University](#)
- 6. [Utah Afterschool Network](#)
- 7. [Care About Childcare – USU Eastern](#)
- 8. [Care About Childcare – Five County](#)

## APPENDIX B – WEB SOURCES

<sup>1</sup>[https://issuu.com/saltlakechamber/docs/untappedpotential\\_utah\\_011223\\_digital](https://issuu.com/saltlakechamber/docs/untappedpotential_utah_011223_digital)

<sup>2</sup>[https://issuu.com/saltlakechamber/docs/untappedpotential\\_utah\\_011223\\_digital](https://issuu.com/saltlakechamber/docs/untappedpotential_utah_011223_digital)

<sup>3</sup><https://www.impact.upenn.edu/early-childhood-toolkit/why-invest/what-is-the-return-on-investment/>

<sup>4</sup><https://childcaredeserts.org/2018/index.html?state=UT>

<sup>5</sup>[https://issuu.com/saltlakechamber/docs/untappedpotential\\_utah\\_011223\\_digital](https://issuu.com/saltlakechamber/docs/untappedpotential_utah_011223_digital)

<sup>6</sup><https://gardner.utah.edu/survey-research/business-and-economy/>

<sup>7</sup><https://utahchildren.org/kidscount#30-2021-county-data-sheets>

<sup>8</sup><https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-economic-realities-of-child-care/>

<sup>9</sup><https://www.impact.upenn.edu/early-childhood-toolkit/why-invest/what-is-the-return-on-investment/>

<sup>10</sup><https://hbr.org/2021/04/childcare-is-a-business-issue>

<sup>11</sup>[https://issuu.com/saltlakechamber/docs/untappedpotential\\_utah\\_011223\\_digital](https://issuu.com/saltlakechamber/docs/untappedpotential_utah_011223_digital)

<sup>12</sup>[https://cepr.net/calculators/turnover\\_calc.html](https://cepr.net/calculators/turnover_calc.html)

<sup>13</sup><https://www.epi.org/resources/budget/>

<sup>14</sup>[https://issuu.com/saltlakechamber/docs/untappedpotential\\_utah\\_011223\\_digital](https://issuu.com/saltlakechamber/docs/untappedpotential_utah_011223_digital)

<sup>15</sup><https://jobs.utah.gov/occ/about.html>

<sup>16</sup><https://www.uschamber.com/workforce/employer-roadmap-childcare-solutions-for-working-parents>

<sup>17</sup><https://hbr.org/2017/04/how-some-companies-are-making-child-care-less-stressful-for-their-employees?autocomplete=true>

<sup>18</sup><https://www.uschamber.com/workforce/employer-guide-to-childcare-assistance-and-tax-credits>

<sup>19</sup><https://www.uschamber.com/workforce/employer-guide-to-childcare-assistance-and-tax-credits>

<sup>20</sup><https://hbr.org/2021/04/childcare-is-a-business-issue>

<sup>21</sup><https://hbr.org/2017/04/how-some-companies-are-making-child-care-less-stressful-for-their-employees?autocomplete=true>

<sup>22</sup><https://hbr.org/2021/07/4-tips-to-manage-childcare-when-you-go-back-to-the-office?autocomplete=true>



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