

**Early Care and Education Needs Assessment for Boulder County, 2009
Prepared for The Early Childhood Council of Boulder County**

**Supplemental Analysis:
Use of Licensed and Unlicensed Care**

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December 2009**

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June 2009**

Introduction

The Early Childhood Council of Boulder County sponsored a comprehensive early care and education needs assessment, which was completed in June 2009. Additional analyses have been conducted in order to explore selected topics in greater detail than was possible in the original needs assessment. These supplemental analyses used the needs assessment's main data set of 400 completed telephone interviews with a random sample of Boulder County families having at least one child between the ages of birth and 5.

The present analysis examined use of licensed and unlicensed care among families with one or more children currently in care in the birth-to-5 age group. The survey asked parents about this and other care-related topics for their special-needs child in care, or if there were no special needs children in care, their youngest child in care.

Summary of Key Findings

- Among Boulder County families having a child aged birth to 5 in care, 83.5% used licensed care and 15.3% used either unlicensed care or a combination of licensed and unlicensed care.
- Higher income families (income \geq \$60,000) were more likely to use licensed care than were lower income families (income $<$ \$60,000), 85.3% versus 76.8%.
- One in four families with an infant/toddler (aged birth to 2) in care used unlicensed care, either solely or partly, as did 13.2% of families with a preschooler (aged 3 to 5) in care.
- Families most likely to use licensed care had a child in care aged 3 to 5 and were higher income, 87.6%, and families least likely to use licensed care had a child in care aged birth to 2 and were lower income, 64.3%.
- Families with a special needs child in care were slightly less likely than were families with a non-special needs child in care to use licensed care, 78.8% versus 84.1%.
- An estimated 1,726 Boulder County families with one or more children aged birth to 5 used unlicensed care, either solely or partly.

A Note on the Analysis

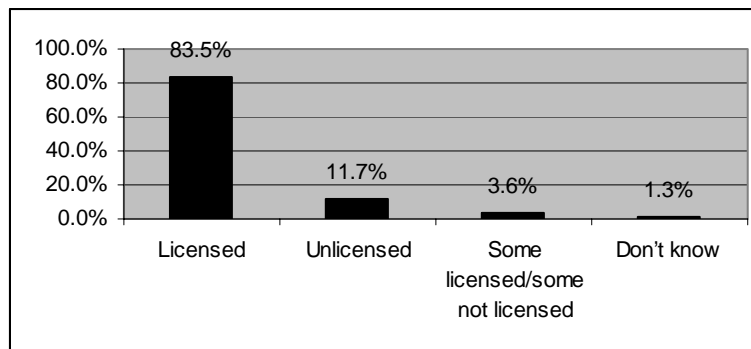
Because the telephone calling list contained only families with land lines and not those with cell phones only, there is a possibility that low-income families were underrepresented. The completed sample of 400 families included 24.0% with income below \$60,000 in 2008. There are no comparable income data for the population of Boulder County families with children aged birth to 5. However, in 2008, 29.8% of the county's families with children under age 18 had income below \$60,000 in the previous 12 months, suggesting that lower income families were in fact underrepresented in the sample, at least to some degree.¹

Because of this likely underrepresentation, sample weights were applied to estimates generated for this report in an attempt to make the sample more representative of the population of Boulder County families with regard to percent earning at/above \$60,000 or less than \$60,000. Virtually no differences were found between the weighted and unweighted estimates, usually one percentage point or less. However, had income data been available for the county's population of families with children age 5 and younger, weighting may have made a greater difference. Estimates included in this report were based on unweighted data so that they would match the estimates in the full report.

Use of Licensed and Unlicensed Care

Nearly all families with a child in care, 83.5%, used licensed care (Figure 1). However, 15.3% of families used either unlicensed care, or among families using more than one care provider, a combination of licensed and unlicensed care.

Figure 1. Percent of Families with Child in Care Using Licensed and Unlicensed Care



¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 American Community Survey, Table B19131.

Use of Licensed and Unlicensed Care by Family Income

Higher income families were defined as those with income of \$60,000 or more in 2008, and lower income families were defined as those with income of less than \$60,000 in that year. Higher income families were more likely to use licensed care than were lower income families, 85.3% versus 76.8% (Table 1).

Table 1. Use of Licensed and Unlicensed Care, by Family Income

	Income ≥ \$60,000	Income < \$60,000
Licensed	85.3%	76.8%
Unlicensed	10.1%	17.9%
Some licensed/some not licensed	3.4%	5.4%
Don't know	1.3%	0.0%
Total	100%	100%

Use of Licensed and Unlicensed Care by Age of Child

Families with a preschool-age child (3 to 5 years old) in care were more likely to use licensed care than were families with an infant/toddler (birth to 2 years old) in care – 85.7% versus 72.7% (Table 2). One in four (24.7%) families with an infant/toddler in care used unlicensed care, either solely or partly, as did 13.2% of families with a preschooler in care. These differences are consistent with findings reported in the previous supplementary analysis (August 2009) that families with infants/toddlers most frequently used home-based care, some of which may be unlicensed “family-friend-neighbor care” or legally exempt care. Families with preschool-age children most frequently used center or preschool care.

Table 2. Use of Licensed and Unlicensed Care, by Age of Child in Care

	Aged 0-2	Aged 3-5
Licensed	72.7%	85.7%
Unlicensed	23.4%	9.6%
Some licensed/some not licensed	1.3%	3.6%
Don't know	2.6%	1.2%
Total	100%	100%

Combining the two factors of family income and age of child in care, families most likely to use licensed care had a child in care aged 3 to 5 and were higher income, 87.6%, and families least likely to use licensed care had a child in care aged birth to 2 and were lower income, 64.3% (Table 3). The differences in percent using licensed care were slightly larger between age groups than between income groups.

Table 3. Use of Licensed Care, by Family Income and Age of Child in Care

	Aged 0-2	Aged 3-5
Income ≥ \$60,000	74.1%	87.6%
Income < \$60,000	64.3%	80.0%

Use of Licensed and Unlicensed Care among Children with Special Needs

Families with a special needs child in care were slightly less likely than were families with a non-special needs child in care to use licensed care, 78.8% versus 84.1% (Table 4). A higher percent of families with special needs children in care reported not knowing whether their care was licensed, 6.1% compared to 0.7%.

Table 4. Use of Licensed and Unlicensed Care, Special Needs and Non-Special Needs Children

	Special Needs	Non-Special Needs
Licensed	78.8%	84.1%
Unlicensed	15.2%	11.2%
Some licensed/some not licensed	0.0%	4.0%
Don't know	6.1%	0.7%
Total	100%	100%

Estimated Number of Families Using Unlicensed Care

An estimate of the number of Boulder County families with children aged birth to 5 using unlicensed care was generated with data from the needs assessment survey combined with census data (Table 5). These data and procedures resulted in an estimate of 1,726 families with one or more children aged birth to 5 using unlicensed care, either solely or partly.²

Table 5. Estimated Number of Boulder County Families Using Unlicensed Care

A. % families using unlicensed care* (of surveyed families with children in care)	15.3%
B. % of surveyed families with children in care	77.3%
C. % families using unlicensed care* (of all surveyed families, whether using care or not) (A x B)	11.8%
D. Estimated number of families in Boulder County with at least one child aged birth to 5**	14,625
E. Estimated number of Boulder County families using unlicensed care* (C x D)	1,726

* Defined as unlicensed only and some licensed/some not licensed.

** Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 American Community Survey, Table B11004.

² Estimates from both the needs assessment and census are based on sample surveys and have a margin of error due to random sampling.