

Chapter 9:
Child Care

9 Child Care

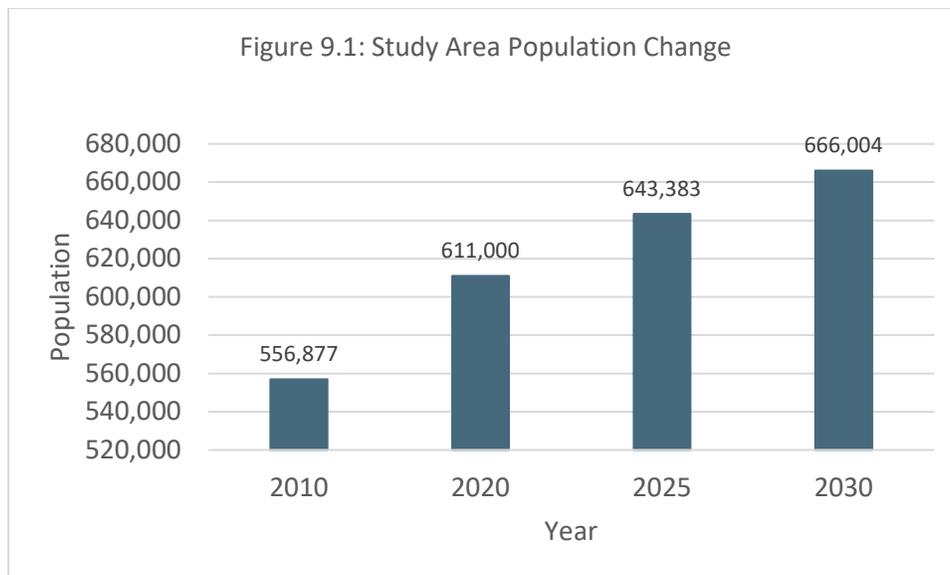
9.1 Overview

This chapters examines the impact of Fort Gordon expansion on child care in the Study Area. Richmond County is the core county that is home to the City of Augusta and Fort Gordon. However, 67 percent of the metropolitan area population is in the other six component counties, comprising one integrated economic and population center.

While recognizing that child care can constitute older children as well, the focus in on the core market of children under the age of six years old.

9.2 Demographic Overview

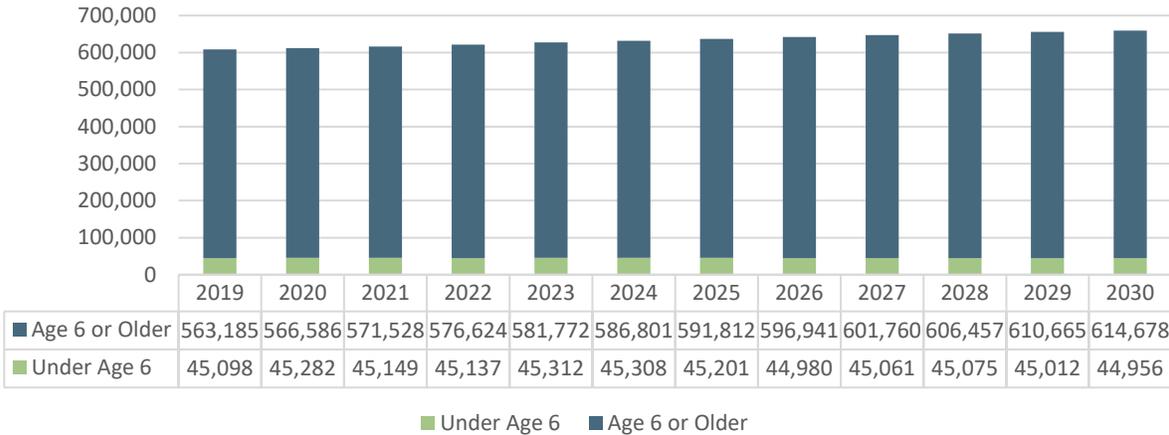
Historic population data shows an increase in the Study Area. From 2010 through 2020, the population grew by 9.72 percent. From 2019 to 2025, the population is projected to grow by 8.1 percent, nearly double the rate largely attributable to growth at Fort Gordon. The growth rate then slows down again to a rate of 3.4 percent over the next five years through 2030.



Source: Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, Series 2020 (GA) and Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Health and Demographics Section (SC)

The population growth rate has two components: a natural growth rate that occurs in the community in general, and a military expansion growth rate associated with Fort Gordon's expansion. In terms of the natural growth rate, it appears that, despite overall population growth, local population dynamics will not generate an increase in the population of children under the age of six, as shown below.

Figure 9.2: Study Area Natural Population Growth



Source: Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, Series 2020 (GA) and Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Health and Demographics Section (SC)

While the overall population is projected to increase by over 50,000 people, the population of children under the age of six will not increase, and in fact is projected to show a very slight decrease. Without Installation growth, children in this age group will decline from 7.4 percent of the population to 6.8 percent of the population through the planning timeframe. However, Installation growth will create a notable increase in demand that counteracts this flat overall trend.

The military population tends to be concentrated in age groups that are more likely than average to be parents of young children, therefore, military households are more heavily concentrated with young parents and young children. The following exhibit shows the age profile of the military population and military households in the Study Area.

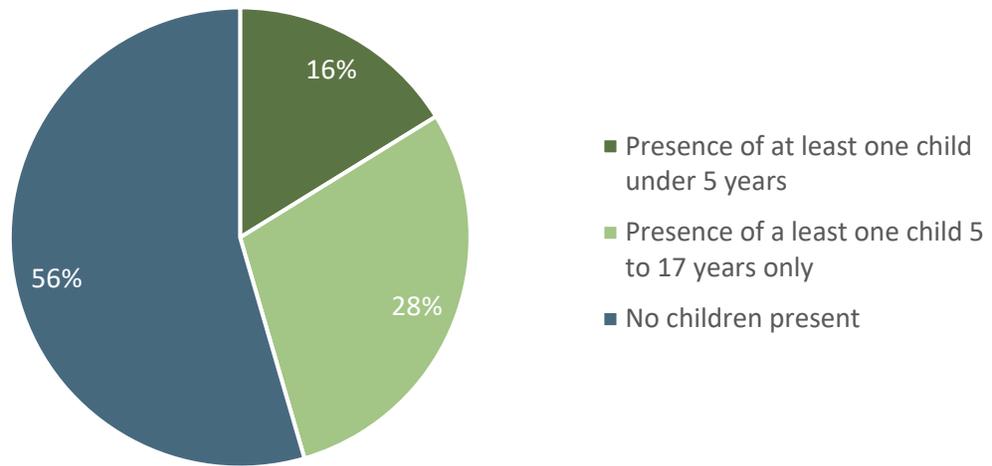
Figure 9.3: Study Area Military/Non-Military Age Profile



Source: American Community Survey, US Bureau of the Census, 2019

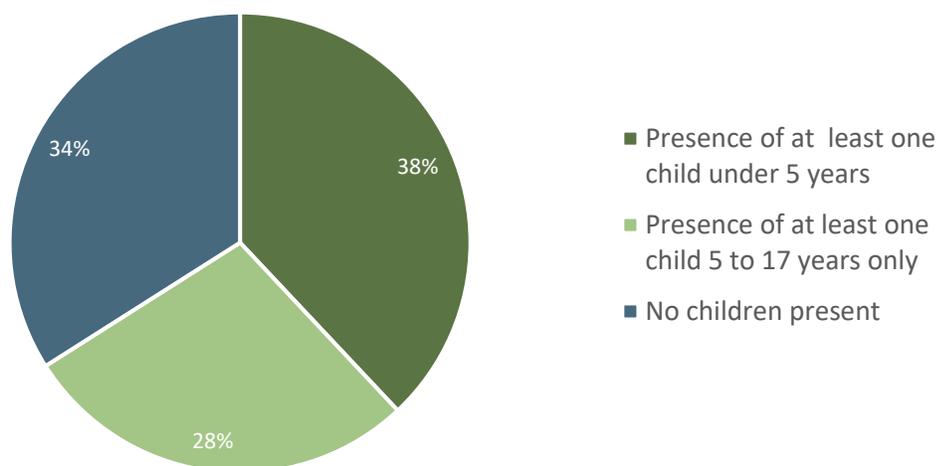
Children under the age of six constitute 12.1 percent of the population of military households in the Study Area. This is in line with national figures for military populations, which are notably more likely to have young children than are non-military populations. The figures below show that 21 percent of military households nationwide have at least one child in this age range, compared to 16 percent of non-military households. Therefore, a disproportionately large proportion of young children is a likely expectation of new military households arriving in the area and not just a local phenomenon.

Figure 9.4: Nationwide Civilian Population by Number of Children



Source: American Community Survey, US Bureau of the Census, 2019

Figure 9.5: Active Duty Military

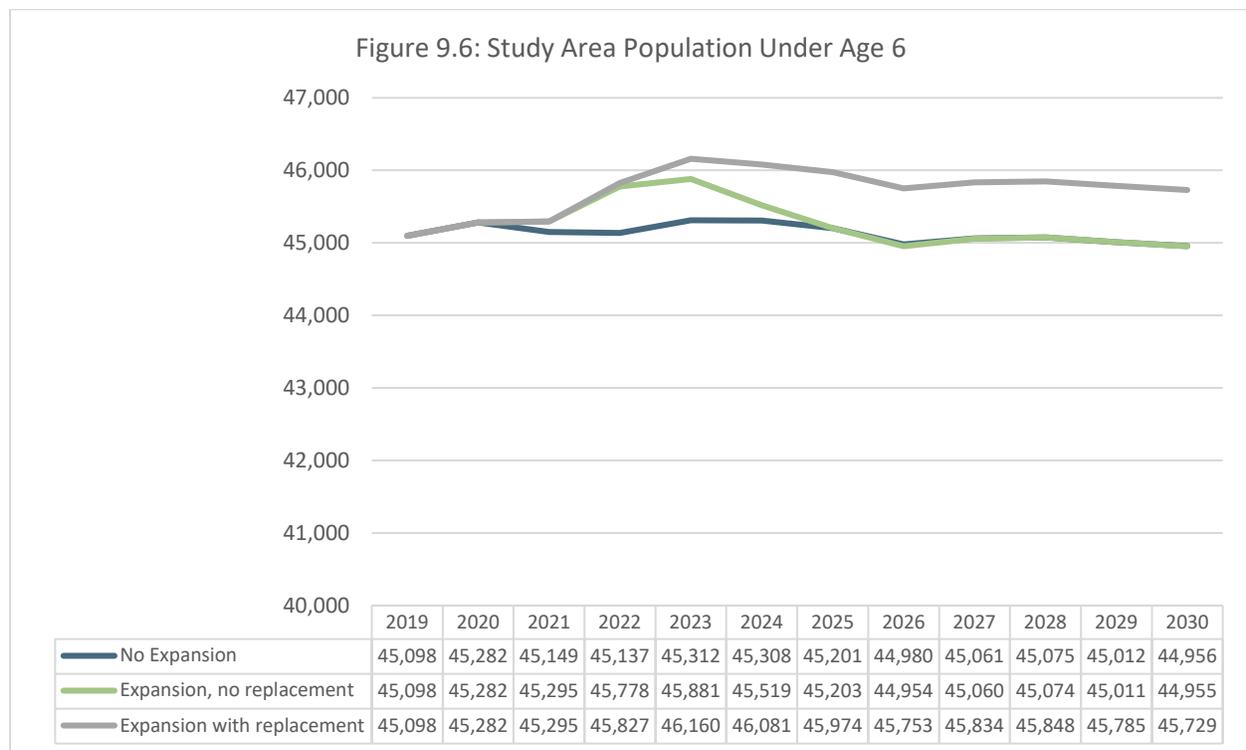


Source: American Community Survey, US Bureau of the Census, 2019

The addition of 6,370 military people and their households will add an estimated 773 children under the age of six into the local market. The number of new children will increase as the new population is phased in, and will then theoretically decrease as those children age out of prime child care needs although in practical terms a decrease is not anticipated to occur).

Figure 9.6 illustrates this pattern for an “expansion, no replacement” scenario. The number of young children in the Study Area will rise as the Fort Gordon expands, peaking in 2024 at slightly more than 46,000 children. As the new influx of military children ages out of the 0-5 age group, the number of children will then revert back to the baseline long-term projections presented earlier.

Some populations such as military populations can include unique migration characteristics. Rather than moving into the area and aging in place, military populations often rotate in and out of locations. Therefore, households are often being replaced by other households that share the same demographic traits. In that case, there will be a consistent supply of new young children while military households rotate into and out of the area, and the demographic profile essentially remains constant. The result of this rotation is that the impact of Fort Gordon growth never drops to zero as children age out of child care but rather is maintained indefinitely as children rotate in and out. This is shown below in the “Expansion with replacement” scenario. In this scenario a peak in 2024 that is maintained going forward with minor variation due to natural growth changes. This is the more likely scenario to occur. Some reduction of this pattern may occur if the military-related community growth does not rotate similarly to that of the military population.



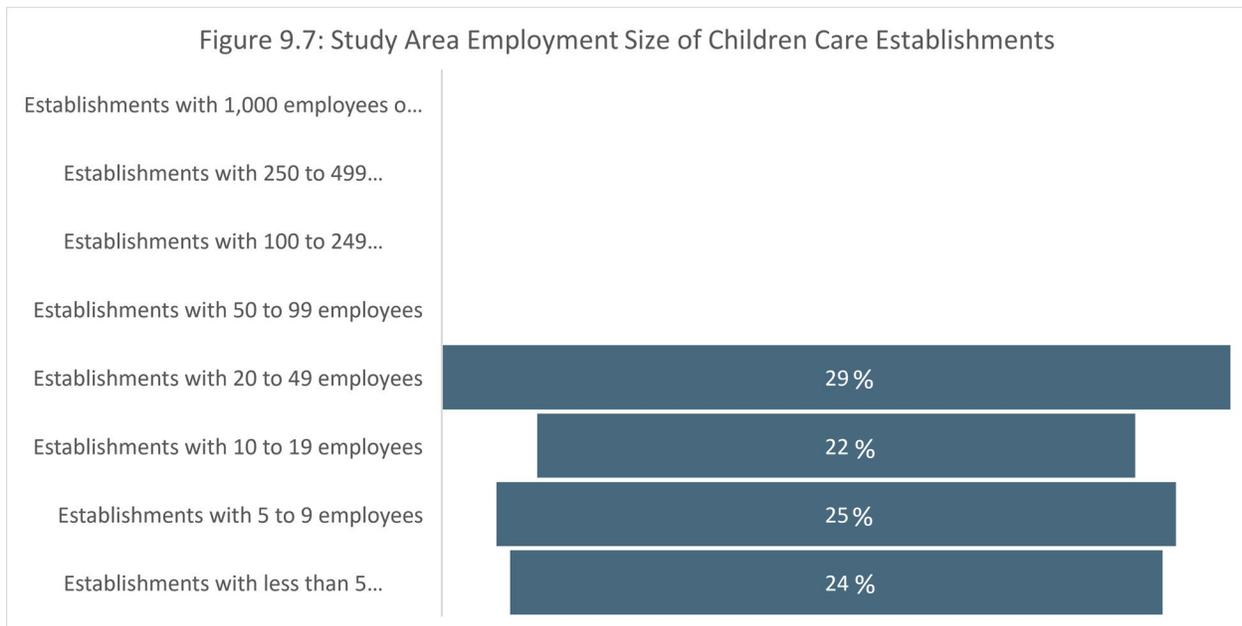
Source: Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, Series 2020

Of course, not all children will require child care. When considering capacity demand, a straightforward way of measuring demand is to examine the number of child care workers per 1,000 children in the Study Area. Recognizing that not all children will use child care, this technique will account for this factor and is examined in the following section.

9.3 Study Area Child Care Industry Analysis

Federal data shows the existence of 142 organizations whose main function is the activity of “Child Day Care Services” or “Child and Youth Services”. This would not include unlicensed or informal child care services, and excludes other types of services that might provide temporary child care, such as activity camps, after-school programs, “parents’ day off” programs, supervised child care while a guardian is engage on site (i.e., donating blood) and similar measures. A count including those types of programs would total 341 organizations that might provide some sort of child care.

All of the dedicated child care organizations have fewer than 50 employees.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2019). All Sectors: County Business Patterns, including ZIP Code Business Patterns, by Legal Form of Organization and Employment Size Class for the U.S., States, and Selected Geographies: 2019

The child care sector employs a total of 4,126 people in the Study Area. When considering that there were 45,098 children under the age of six during the year in which this data was collected, that would show that a ratio of 91 child care workers per 1,000 children is sufficient to meet demand for child care. (Note that this includes management, support staff, and others in addition to direct-care employees.) This ratio is on par with the two-state and national averages.

Table 9.1: Total Child Care Workers and Rate Per 10,000 Children

Industry	Study Area		Georgia-South Carolina		National	
	Workers	Per 10,000 Children	Workers	Per 10,000 Children	Workers	Per 10,000 Children
Child Care	4,126	915	97,634	868	2,124,849	910

Source: American Community Survey, US Bureau of the Census, 2019

Examining this ratio relative to the expected increase in child population implies that new child care capacity equivalent to (773 children*91 workers per 1,000 children), or 70 new child care workers. Since natural population growth is not anticipated to result in increases in the under 6 year old population, this represents a relatively small increase in relation to the Study Area’s overall population growth.

Employment figures in Table 9.1 are self-reported. It is likely that the figures include unlicensed child care or unregistered child care workers, therefore some growth in demand will be met outside the licensed care industry, although the extent cannot be determined from available data.

The types of workers in child care organizations can cross a variety of occupations, including direct care workers, administrators, support workers, managers, and others. However, the majority are direct-care workers, as shown in Table 9-2.

Direct care workers (child care and preschool teachers) constitute more than half of all jobs in the sector and would make up the majority of the needed expansion to account for future growth. Most other jobs exist broadly in the economy and can easily be recruited, while these fields are more specialized to child care.

Table 9.2: Study Area Child Care Worker Distribution

Occupation	Working in Child Day Care Services in Study Area	Total in Labor Force in Study Area	Percent working in Child Day Care
Education and Child care Administrators	38	1,091	3%
Food Service Managers	54	1,431	4%
Social Workers, All Other	69	1,014	7%
Social and Human Service Assistants	231	874	26%
Religious Workers, All Other	41	328	13%
Preschool and Kindergarten Teachers	1,135	1,394	81%
Teaching Assistants	603	2,897	21%
Registered Nurses	102	9,274	1%
Personal Care Aides	41	1,662	2%
Cooks	39	7,617	1%
Food Preparation Workers	135	1,974	7%
Child care Workers	1,464	2,327	63%

Occupation	Working in Child Day Care Services in Study Area	Total in Labor Force in Study Area	Percent working in Child Day Care
Word Processors and Typists	150	292	51%
Total	4,102	32,175	13%

Source: Derived from in-depth analysis of American Community Survey, US Bureau of the Census, 2019

9.3.1 Study Area Child Care Past Patterns

Patterns of child care in the Study Area over the past several years were examined to understand overall staffing trends. The total number of business establishments in the 2011 to 2019 time frame by county are detailed in Table 9.3.

Table 9.3: Child Care Business Establishments by County, 2011 and 2019

	Number of Establishments	
	2011	2019
Burke, GA	6	3
Columbia, GA	25	29
Lincoln, GA	1	3
McDuffie, GA	8	8
Richmond, GA	56	64
Aiken, SC	31	31
Edgefield, SC	3	4
Total in Study Area	130	142

Source: US Department of Commerce County Business Patterns Data, 2011, 2019

Employment levels at child care business establishments are detailed in Table 9.4.

Table 9.4: Child Care Businesses Employment by County, 2011 and 2019

	Total Employment at Establishments	
	2011	2019
Burke, GA	36	40
Columbia, GA	462	599
Lincoln, GA	0	7
McDuffie, GA	75	59
Richmond, GA	712	936
Aiken, SC	231	287
Edgefield, SC	N/A	54
Total in Study Area	1,516	1,982

Source: US Department of Commerce County Business Patterns Data, 2011, 2019

The data show a slight increase in the licensed facilities as well as the number of employees in the child care field. While this rate of increase is not as high as the population growth with the Fort Gordon growth, it is encouraging that the field is trending upward rather than downward. It is important to note that the U.S Census Bureau will remove information from small communities in order to preserve business confidentiality.

In order to directly account for the impacts of Installation growth at the current level of service, the changes are nominal since no natural expansion of the young child population is predicted – 30 to 40 employees in Columbia County, 20 to 30 in Augusta-Richmond County, and fewer than 10 in Aiken County.

Employment at child care establishments is lower than the reported employment in the industry overall (4,126). This is likely due to a number of factors, which can include turnover (with people listing their last job on census forms even if they're not currently employed), unlicensed child care providers working in the industry, and organizations providing child care when child care is not the primary function of the business (i.e., a manufacturing firm providing on-site child care). Therefore, expanding the number of child care workers per child may not be as important as ensuring the quality standards of affordable child care.

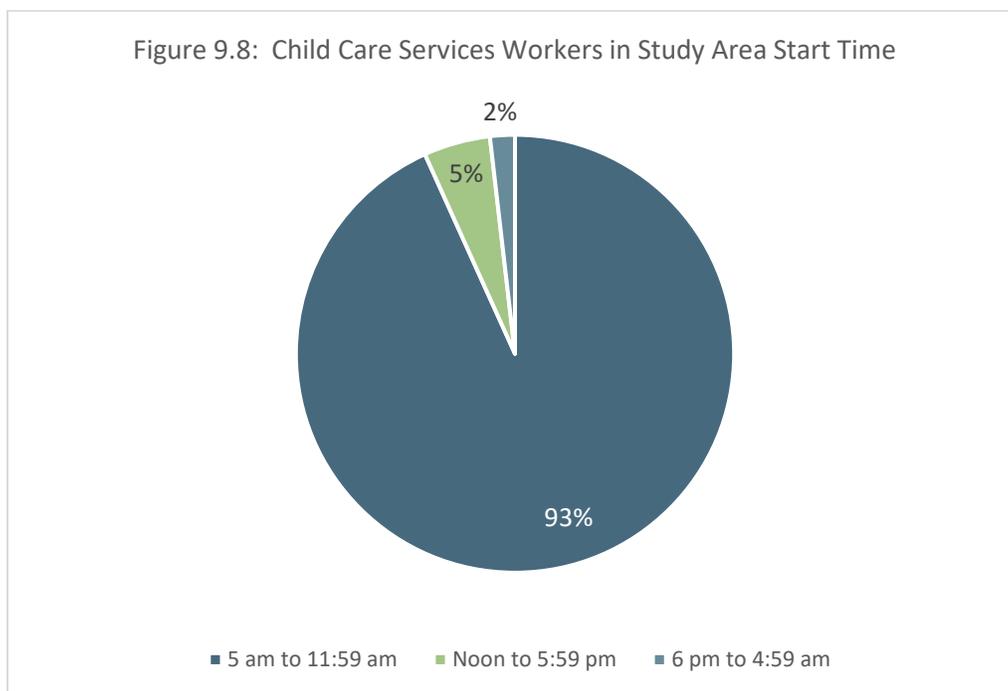
9.4 Recommendations

Interviews were conducted with nine local child care practitioners and experts with the aim of understanding challenges and opportunities associated with growth at Fort Gordon. During the course of these interviews other challenges and opportunities were discussed that might impact the ability to meet increased demand for child care services.

9.4.1 Challenge 1 – Shortage of 24-hour capacity for military personnel

"We even provided night care overnight care in my home just so we could meet the needs of the family because they needed it. It's a vast need, you know?"

- Grovetown Family child care provider



Source: Derived from in-depth analysis of American Community Survey, US Bureau of the Census, 2019

Among the off-post family child care providers, all had military families enrolled in their care. Several mentioned shortages of 24-hour care for military families. There were no on-site centers that offered 24-

hour care or related accommodations for military personnel that worked early mornings or nights. Some family child care providers would be flexible and work with each individual family's needs by being available for 5 am shifts and or even providing all night care to be as accommodating as possible.

In order to meet this need, several of the family child care providers sought to revive connections that they previously had with Fort Gordon as off post family child care providers. One interviewee discussed expanding from her home to a brick-and-mortar center located near the Installation and wanted to develop a partnership with Fort Gordon to assist military families with their unique child care needs. Partnering with local child care centers and family child development centers to direct military personnel to them, especially in times of Covid closures, would be beneficial.

Several child care providers expressed concern about lack of communication with military families which also affected them. They noted that in order for families to be more adequately prepared, the military needed to give them more notice so they could find a child care provider and put their children on a waitlist if necessary. One local family child care provider also wanted parents to communicate temporary service needs to manage waitlists for an on post child care center. She expressed that lack of overall communication was a problem.

9.4.2 Challenge 2 – Maintaining financial sustainability with COVID closures

"I think the daycares need a little bit more support from the state. You know, if we have more support, just like how we have quite a bit of support now because of the COVID relief funds and all that kind of stuff. But, you know, that was a big travesty that happened in order for us to even be recognized as an essential worker. But what about all the times that before the travesty, and after this is over... if we have more support from the state, recognizing our worth and our value on what we represent, [and] the importance of child development."

- Child care provider in the process of opening a center

Many providers interviewed considered themselves small businesses and like many others were highly impacted by COVID-19 pandemic closures. Child care providers received both Payroll Protection Program loans as well as other grants and subsidies specifically for child care providers throughout the pandemic, but they still currently need financial assistance. Child care providers anticipate the pandemic and resulting challenges lasting for months to come. Some of the direct costs that providers noted in interviews were the costs of purchasing Personal Protective Equipment and cleaning supplies to comply with guidelines. They also mentioned the decrease in subsidies and overall revenue from decreased attendance both from COVID containment guidelines, closures, and safety concerns from parents.

Closures were among the biggest concerns due to continued requirements to pay rent and other fixed costs. According to the 2020 Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students report, approximately half of child care providers would be unable to reopen after being closed for two weeks. Pandemic-related nationwide shutdowns significantly reduced enrollment in child care facilities to 13% of previous levels, and although enrollment has recovered somewhat, overall numbers are still down due to attendance inconsistencies caused by COVID closures. All child care experts interviewed believe that providing financial assistance to locally owned child care businesses to sustain the industry through the enduring uncertainties of COVID is crucial. Keeping facilities operating by enacting policies and procedures that keep providers resilient to COVID-related shutdowns or other types of disruptions is important to

maintaining an adequate supply of child care facilities and services. In turn, a healthy child care industry can accommodate future population growth.

9.4.3 Challenge 3 – Affordability

Child care providers mentioned challenges in providing affordable child care for both the general population and military families. Even though there are programs that offer subsidies to help with the cost of child care such as Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS), the eligibility requirements are too limited to help all the families that need it according to interviewees. Many families earn just above the income threshold needed to qualify for subsidies yet still need the assistance. As of October 2020, the CAPS threshold for initial eligibility is 50% of the state median income - \$33,688 for a family of three and \$40,105 for a family of four. According to one child care provider, another challenge is that even if families qualify under the CAPS threshold, they still need to afford the initial costs of settling into a facility pay costs for a few weeks until CAPS or other financial assistance is processed. A provider recalled one military family that needed help but was unable to afford the initial cost of enrolling at a child care facility. Child care providers mentioned a lack of education among new military families on resources available to help them such as Child Care Aware of America, which will provide financial assistance to military families based on their income.

For Child Development Centers (CDCs) on-post, the cost of child care is usually based on the family's total income. Interviewees commented on how waitlists for on-post centers could be anywhere from a few weeks to several months, according to conversations they have had with parents. There are three CDCs on base that care for children under 6 years old at Fort Gordon.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), child care is affordable if costs are no higher than 7% of a family's income.

Interviewees noted that families that cannot afford the quality child care that is regulated will resort to finding options that may be subpar to the standards set by Quality Rated, and even more so the standards set by the military. Quality Rated is Georgia's system for managing child care quality ratings and improvements. The quality management system in South Carolina is called ABC Quality. Many of the providers did not know specifics of unregulated child care in the area but were sure that it existed. The few interviewees that had more knowledge offered stories of local unregulated sitters that had upwards of a dozen children in their care and others that had alarmingly low daily rates.

According to the Economic Policy Institute, in Georgia the average annual cost of infant care is \$8,530 or \$711 per month. Child care for a 4-year-old costs \$7,306, or \$609 per month. In South Carolina, the average annual cost of infant care is \$7,007 or \$584. Child care for a 4-year-old is \$6,006 or \$500 per month. The estimated average cost of child care in the area is \$160 per week per child with a higher cost for infants. The average income of a family with a child six years of age or younger in the study area is \$45,186. If they are spending \$160 a week on child care, 18% of the family's yearly income is spent on child care.

Even assuming the lowest cost above of \$500 per month, only 21 percent of families with children under the age of 5 meet the threshold of affordability, spending 7 percent or less of their income on child care. At the high end cost of \$711 per month, the percent of families meeting the income threshold for affordability is only 10 percent.

9.4.4 Challenge 4 – Employee hiring and retention

“One of the biggest challenges in child care right now is workers and workers making enough money.”

- Child care provider

Among the child care providers that had recent experience trying to hire staff all reported challenges in finding and retaining quality workers. This was more of a concern among the child care directors, with some directly attributed shortages in child care (e.g. long waitlists) due to a lack of eligible workers. One child care center director stated that she is short 2-3 teachers, and as a result, can only accept certain age groups and has a waitlist. Among child care experts that had recently hired or were going through the process, all stated that having higher wages combined with benefits would be the best way to attract high quality workers and retain them. All interviewees agreed on the importance of consistency for the children being cared for and having a high turnover of workers was a major quality concern. Child care providers recognize the importance of paying higher wages to compete with larger businesses but were unable to compete because it would directly increase the cost of their services. One child care center director that had not recently hired said it was because she has had the same teachers working with her for nearly two decades, which according to her was very uncommon.

The majority of family child care providers did not have experience with hiring staff because they either worked on their own or had help from household members. Family child care programs are operated by child care providers in their own private residential home and enroll between three to six children. A few of the family child care providers had previous experience working in child care centers, some even at on-post centers at Fort Gordon. Of those that had previously worked at centers, they recalled high turnover and retention problems as a result of low wages and lack of benefits. Family home child care providers generally kept the number of children in their care to limited enrollment and range of ages that was manageable for them even though they could have accommodated more. By keeping a manageable number, these providers avoided hiring help.

High turnover and retention challenges among child care workers are historical concerns nationwide. Policy experts suggest increasing wages of child care providers to at least those of teachers with similar education levels such as preschool and kindergarten teachers. Based on the profiles of the average teacher and child care worker, there is a difference of approximately \$6,000 dollars in median yearly earnings with preschool teachers working a median of ten more hours a week.

Table 9.5: Profile of Child Care Industry Workers

	Preschool And Kindergarten Teachers	Child Care Workers
Median Age:	39 Years old	23 Years Old
Education:	52% have 2 year degree or higher	24% have college experience
Sex:	All or nearly all female	All or nearly all female
Median income:	18,000/year	\$12,000/year
Median hours worked per week:	40 (40 percent are part-time)	30 (68 percent are part-time)
Average Annual Hourly Wage:	\$13.19	\$7.62
Health insurance Coverage:	81%	84%

Source: American Community Survey, US Bureau of the Census

9.4.5 Challenge 5 – Quality of Child Care

“I learned a lot from the military and the military base and their daycares and their procedures and they have the highest standards.”

“I’m telling you, their [on base child care] policies and standards are higher than the state. We are state certified as well in our home, but the base, their standards and their policies are way higher than the state’s standards and policies.”

- Prior lead at on base child care center

Quality of child care is heavily influenced by the challenges noted above. For example, challenges in affordable child care can cause parents to seek out unregulated options that are more affordable. Accessibility challenges such as shortages caused by COVID-19 can also lead to an increased use of unregulated child care according to some interviewees. Family home child care providers noted that the military families and area residents in general needed more education on what quality child care looks like. Interviewees mentioned that families did not necessarily know about the difference between licensed and unregulated providers. A couple of interviewees mentioned that families had gone to child care providers who they thought were licensed but were not. Providers highlighted the importance of education and raising general awareness of resources available to families such as Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) Quality Rated, local Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies, and other military specific sources such as Child Care Aware of America.

Many professional development opportunities and resources are also available to current child care providers. There are also resources for residents with aspirations to become licensed providers. Scholarships and other financial assistance are available through state programs such as DECAL for current and future child care workers that want to be certified and/or acquire a college degree. Educating current babysitters/nannies or unlicensed providers about the benefits of becoming licensed and certified through working with Bright from the Start (also known as DECAL) to be quality rated would be beneficial to everyone.

According to interviewees that had worked with military child care noted the high quality standards for providers and specific procedures for both parents and providers to follow. While DECAL’s Quality Rated also has high standards, interviewees noted the newness of the program and implied that there was room for improvement. Respondents also noted the need for improved standards and practices in South Carolina.

The recommendations summarized above have been divided into a timeline. Short-term actions should be undertaken within 1-3 years; mid-term actions should be undertaken within 4-5 years, and long-term actions should be undertaken within 5+ years. Ongoing indicates activities that should be undertaken annually or regularly within the planning timeframe.

9.5 Implementation Plan

Identification of Issues, Goals, and Strategies		Timeline	Responsible Party
Increase the amount and coverage of child care			
Goal	Increase the number and coverage hours of child care in the community.		
Strategy 9.1	Incentivize the expansion of operating hours of current off-post centers and/or on-base family child development centers to operate 24 hours (or to the needs of the parent).	Mid-term	Fort Gordon
Goal	Retain capacity of child care that is at risk.		
Strategy 9.2	Partner with other off-post centers and child care providers as “extensions” to military child care that have the same policies and regulations as onsite centers.	Short-term	Fort Gordon
Strategy 9.3	Inform local providers of upcoming demand increases so they can make growth decisions.	Short-term	Local Governments
Increase affordability and access of child care			
Goal	Increase the ability of families to afford child care.		
Strategy 9.4	Communicate with new arrivals to facilitate placement of children.	Short-term	Fort Gordon
Strategy 9.5	Consider pilot programs such as the In-Home Child Care Fee Assistance Pilot to help military families.	Long-term	Fort Gordon
Strategy 9.6	Educate and raise awareness to families that there are resources available to them to help them get quality affordable child care.	Short-term	Fort Gordon
Strategy 9.7	Increase CAPS threshold to allow more families to be eligible to receive help, including military families who are barely ineligible to receive help but need it.	Long-term	Federal Government/ U.S Army
Support staff hiring and retention			
Goal	Increase the sustainability of careers in child care to support having experience child care providers who earn sufficient wages.		
Strategy 9.8	Provide support for small businesses to increase competitiveness and retention.	Long-term	State/Local Governments
Strategy 9.9	Support the addition or enhancement of benefits for workers.	Mid-term	Fort Gordon

Identification of Issues, Goals, and Strategies		Timeline	Responsible Party
Strategy 9.10	Promote existing and/or enhanced state funded scholarships that will fully or partially pay for the education of child care workers.	Short-term	Fort Gordon
Increase quality of child care			
Goal	Ensure that families and providers are aware of quality issues.		
Strategy 9.11	Educate military families about quality child care differentiators, for example, licensed versus unlicensed providers.	Short-term	Fort Gordon
Strategy 9.12	Educate current babysitters/nannies or unlicensed providers about the benefits of becoming licensed and certified and working with Bright from the Start to be quality rated.	Short-term	Local Governments/ Child Care Industry

9.5.1 Summary of Near Term Strategies (1-3 years):

Near-term strategies should focus on communications and protecting current capacity related to COVID-19

- Communicate upcoming growth so local providers can consider growth plans.
- Provide support (technical and financial) to keep providers viable during COVID-19.
- Develop an education plan to help families identify quality measures and to help providers move up the quality scale.
- Encourage entry into the field via scholarships and other training support.
- Communicate on-base standards and policies so off-base centers and collaborate.
- Communicate affordability options to families.

9.5.2 Summary of Mid Term Strategies (4-5 years):

Mid-term activities should focus on filling gaps in local capacity and constraints to growth and/or sustainability.

- Incentivize expansions of operating hours and on-post capacity.
- Explore methods to improve career conditions for child care workers (pay and benefits)
- Work with partners to identify financial incentives to encourage enrollment in medical technology fields (including pharmacy technology).

9.5.3 Summary of Long Term Strategies (More than 5 years):

Long-term activities should focus on building a strong business community and affordable provision of care.

- Technical and business support for local providers.
- Increase thresholds for financial assistance to families.

9.5.4 Potential Partners and Funding Sources

Potential Partners

- Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS): GEEARS can help inform policy decisions. They conduct regular research on child care in Georgia.
- Georgia Association for the Education of Young Children, District 4 : Provides a variety of services and support to families with children ages 0-5 years old.
- South Carolina Association for the Education of Young Children: Can provide a contribution similar to the Georgia Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Childcare Aware of America: Can contribute educational and financial resources both to families and child care providers. Child Care Aware of America provides up to date state level research on child care.
- ABC Quality (South Carolina): Supports both child care providers and families. Families can receive information and referrals for child care.
- SC Endeavors: Provides professional development for child care workers.
- DECAL Bright from the Start – Georgia’s Department of Early Care and Learning: Supports both child care providers and parents. Families can receive information and referrals for child care.
- Quality Rated and DECAL Scholars : Professional development resources for child care providers.
- CSRA Kids is an online community guide for kid/family activities and resources in the CSRA area. <https://csrakids.com/>: Can contribute by assisting CSRA families with information of local child care.
- Child Care Resource and Referral of Central East Georgia – Augusta University/ Leap Early Learning Partners

Potential Funding Sources

- The Community Foundation for the CSRA – (Local): The region’s philanthropic partner, they connect donors and nonprofits. Community Grants program which provides funding for nonprofit projects and programs serving residents in Augusta-Richmond, Columbia, McDuffie and Burke counties in Georgia and Aiken and Edgefield County in South Carolina.
- The Central Savannah River Area Economic Opportunity Authority, Inc. (CSRA EOA) – (Local): A Community Action Agency, a private non-profit, tax-exempt organization. The primary mission is the easing of human suffering and the elimination of poverty.
- Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS) – (State): A statewide advocacy organization that focuses on bridging the gap between Georgia’s families, business community, and policy leaders as it promotes school readiness for young children.
- SC Endeavors (South Carolina) – (State): The professional development system for South Carolina’s child care workforce.
- DECAL Bright from the Start – Georgia’s Department of Early Care and Learning – (State): Georgia’s agency for licensing and monitoring child care in the state. Bright from the Start Quality Rated is an optional program for child care providers. They offer a variety of professional development resources to current and aspirational child care providers. DECAL also provides resources to assist families in their search for child care and pre-k programs that meet their needs.

- DECAL Scholars: A program that offers professional development resources to child care providers. They also offer scholarships and other programs to both current and aspirational students.
- Georgia Department of Human Services Division of Family & Children Services - (State): investigates reports of child abuse; finds foster and adoptive homes for abused and neglected children; issues SNAP, Medicaid and TANF; helps out-of-work parents get back on their feet; and provides numerous support services and innovative programs to help families in need.
- The Southern Early Childhood Association (SECA): Association committed to improving the quality of care and education for young children and their families through advocacy and professional development.
- South Carolina Department of Social Services – (State): Offers a COVID grant program COVID-19 Support Grants for Child Care Providers (scchildcare.org)
- Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) program – (State/Federal): Federal funding for improving child care and providing subsidies for families with low income.
- Federal (IRS) Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) – (Federal): Helps low- to moderate-income workers and families get a tax break. Those who qualify can use the credit to reduce taxes owed – and maybe increase their refund.
- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding – (Federal): Stimulus bill passed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic to provide relief for Americans.
- Child Care and Development Block Grant – (Federal): Federal funding for improving child care and providing subsidies for families with low income.
- Child Care Stabilization Grants – (Federal): Part of the American Rescue Plan Act funding that targets child care.