



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

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Agenda Item Number: 3

Agenda Date: January 31, 2025

In Control: Economic and Workforce Development Committee Meeting

DEPARTMENT: Pre-K 4 SA

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Dr. Sarah Baray

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: Citywide

SUBJECT:

Findings from the Child Care Study conducted by Texas A&M University-San Antonio regarding access, quality, and affordability of childcare in Bexar County.

SUMMARY:

Presentation on the findings of a comprehensive study conducted by Texas A&M University–San Antonio which analyzed access, quality, and affordability of early learning and care for children under the age of five in San Antonio and Bexar County.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Before the pandemic, 99% of low-income children in Bexar County lived in a quality childcare desert. A quality childcare desert is defined as any zip code with more than 30 low-income children under the age of 5 and more than three times as many children as available seats in providers with a high-quality rating (i.e., Texas Rising Star 4 or national accreditation). The pandemic

exacerbated the problem. From March 2020 to September 2021, childcare deserts across the state grew by 50%. In Bexar County alone, 236 childcare providers closed during this period (Children at Risk, 2021). While many industries have recovered since the end of the pandemic, the early learning and care system has not.

In order to determine how to best to expand access to high-quality early learning and care in San Antonio and Bexar County, the City issued a call for proposals to obtain the services of a local research university to conduct a comprehensive study of access, quality, and affordability of early learning and care in San Antonio and Bexar County. Texas A&M University-San Antonio was awarded the contract, with Drs. Melissa Jozwiak and Hatice Zeynep Inan serving as the lead researchers.

ISSUE:

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the landscape of early learning and care in Bexar County through a mixed-methods approach that combined a survey of licensed childcare providers Head Start programs, and other early education program, such as Pre-K 4 SA, with focus-group interviews with stakeholders, including families, providers, and advocates. The study includes data from 54 zip codes and all 10 City Council districts, with a specific emphasis on assessing childcare capacity, available hours of care, affordability, and quality.

Key findings from the study include:

- A significant gap between the reported capacity of providers and their actual operating capacity, particularly in infant and toddler care.
- An underrepresentation of high-quality care options, particularly for infants.
- A shortage of affordable childcare options, especially for families relying on subsidies or low-income households.
- Staffing shortages and low wages for early childhood educators, which have exacerbated both capacity and quality issues.

Findings will be discussed in greater detail during the briefing.

FISCAL IMPACT:

N/A

ALTERNATIVES:

N/A

RECOMMENDATION:

N/A