

Child Care Conditions

- ***Licensed Childcare***
- ***Childcare Supply by Child Age Group***
- ***Affordable Childcare***
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PART VI.

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In 2003, according to the Child Care Resource & Referral Network, Madera County counted a total 3,238 child care slots in licensed facilities, almost evenly distributed between child care centers (1,746 slots) and home providers (1,492 slots). There were 35 licensed childcare centers around the county, and 158 licensed family childcare homes.

About The Challenge

“Poverty significantly impacts the daily choices of families in securing basic life needs, such as food, housing, and health care. The reality is that increased poverty in the community puts increased pressure on local government to provide for greater levels of health and social services assistance to families.”

*—Hubert (Hub) Walsh, Director,
Madera County Department of Social Services*

Figure 92. Number of Childcare Slots Available, Madera County, 2003

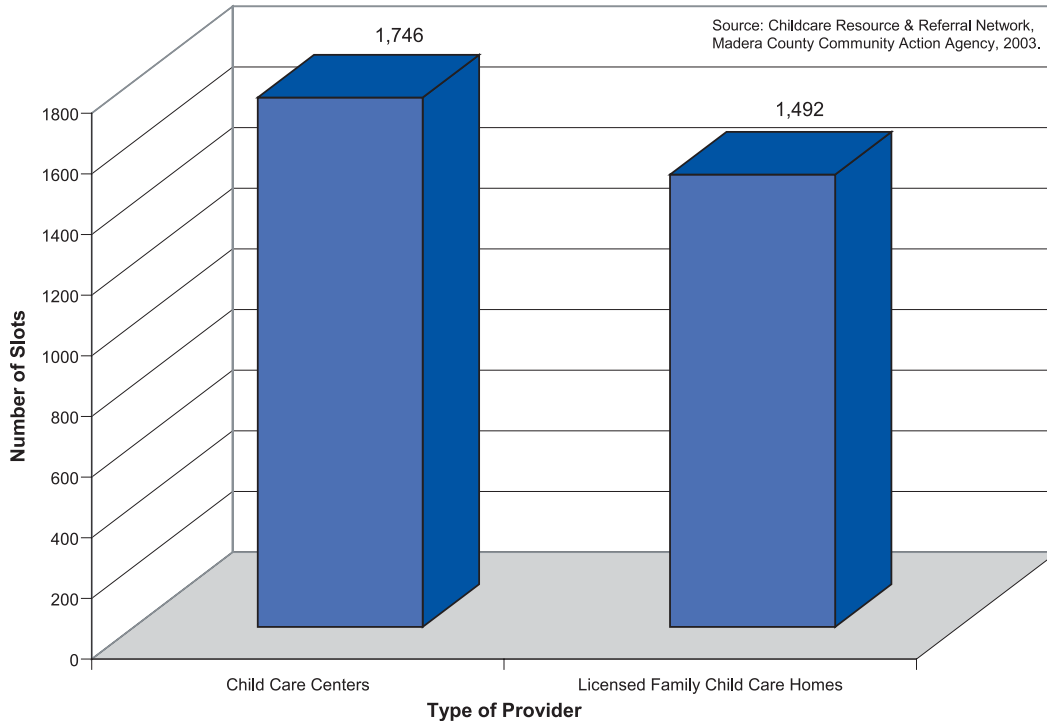
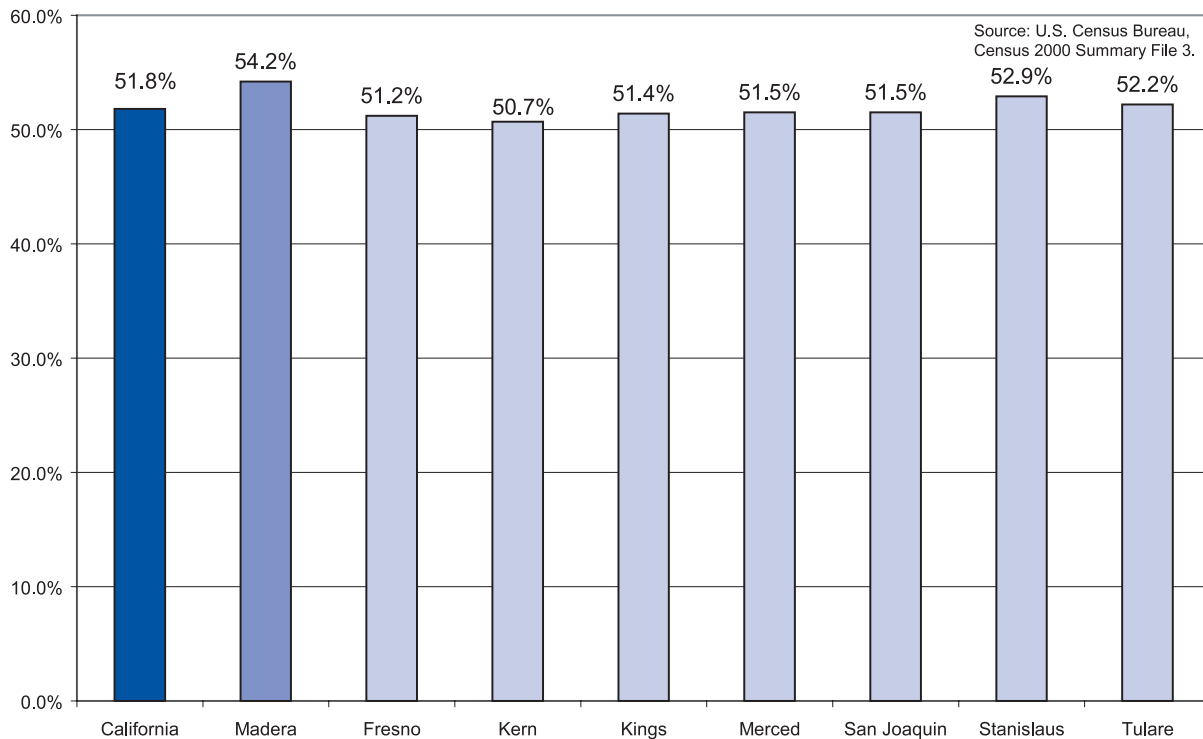
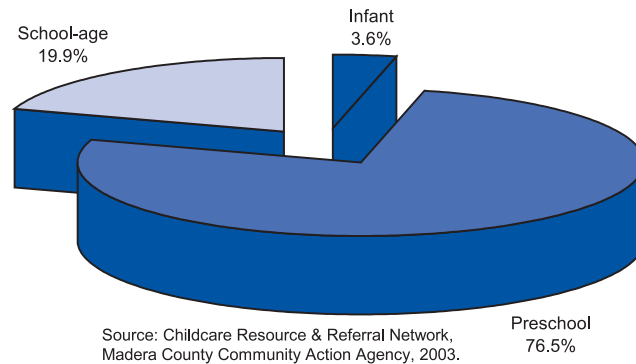
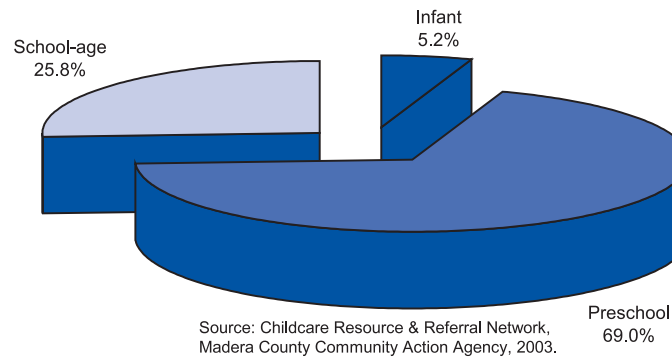


Figure 93. Percent Children Under 6 with Both Parents Employed, California and Central Valley Counties, 2000



Licensed Childcare (Figure 93)

Licensed childcare is available only for 23 percent of the children with one or two parents in the labor force. This is just below the State rate of 25 percent. Madera County ranks above the State average comparing the proportion of children under 18 with two parents in the labor force. These families represent 54.2 percent of Madera County children while statewide the proportion is 51.8 percent. Madera County nonetheless ranks highest among Central Valley Counties although there is little variation on this statistic. When two parents are working, the need for quality childcare is greater. As can be expected, an analysis of parents’ requests to resource and referral services in Madera County shows the overwhelming majority (89%) of requests are for full-time childcare for children 0 to 5. Eighty-four percent of parents state they need childcare because of work. Another 20 percent mention a need due to their enrollment in education programs. As demonstrated, however, the availability of childcare is seriously limited. Families then turn to unlicensed providers, or sometimes relatives who provide a lower quality of service. Yet, quality childcare is crucial for children to reach their developmental potential, and in the case of infants and preschoolers, quality care is extremely beneficial for school readiness.

Figure 94. Percent Child Care Slots in Child Care Centers by Age Group, Madera County, 2003**Figure 95. Percent Child Care Slots in Child Care Centers by Age Group, California, 2003**

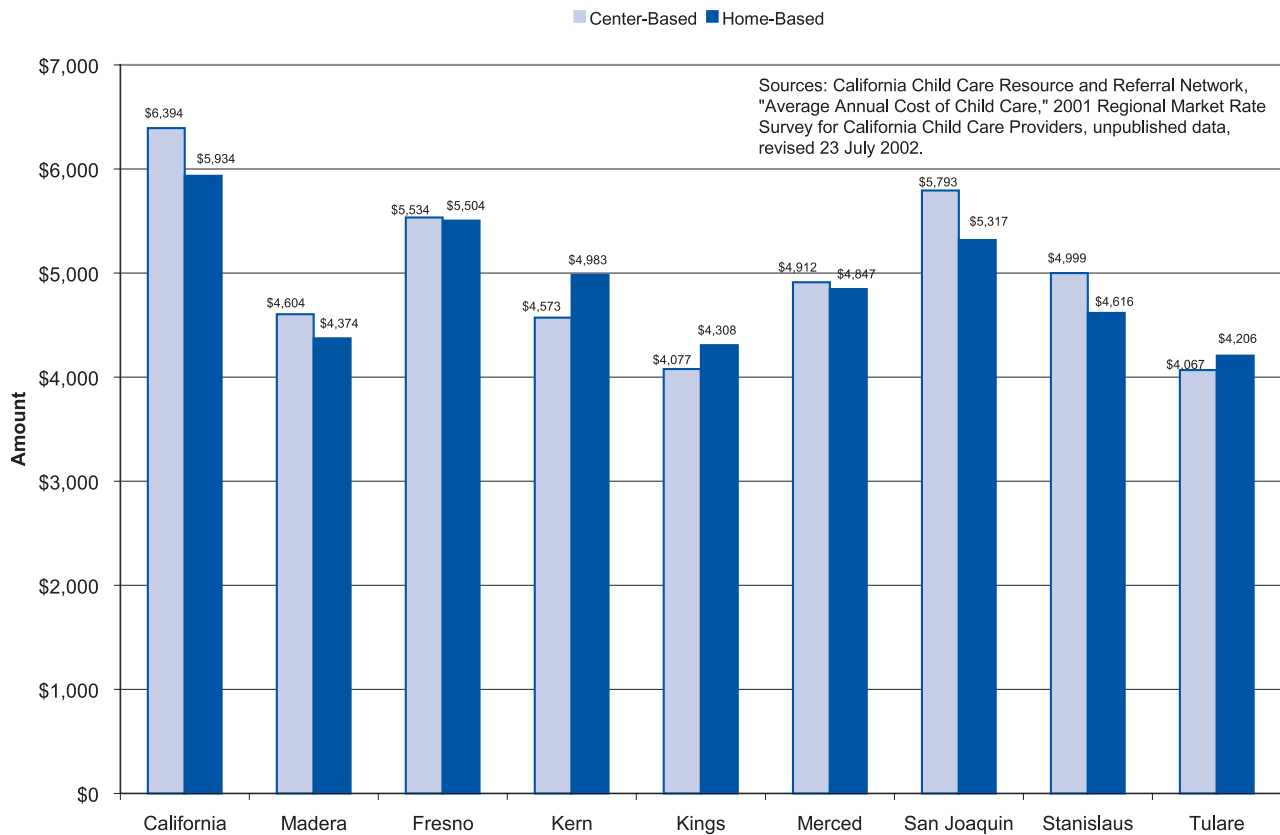
Childcare Supply by Child Age Group (Figure 94, 95)

Analysis of childcare availability by age group for childcare centers demonstrates further the need for more quality childcare slots. In Madera County, more than three quarters (76%) of all childcare slots in licensed childcare centers are for preschoolers (children 2 to 5 years of age). In California, the rate is lower, with 69 percent of slots going to preschoolers. However, the licensed childcare centers combine to supply slots for only 33 percent of Madera County preschoolers, and 42 percent for California overall. For infants (children under 2), childcare supply is quite dramatic. Only 4 percent of slots are directed to infant care in Madera County, and 5 percent for California. The supply in Madera County is sufficient for only 4 percent of the infant care demand. Statewide, supply satisfies only 7 percent of the need for infant care.

Madera County shows an acute need for licensed childcare. Analysis of public requests or calls to resource and referral services for childcare supplied by the Madera Community Action Agency, reveal 33 percent of parents requested services for infant and toddlers, 41 percent for preschoolers, and 25 percent for school-age children.

The availability of quality childcare may rise strongly as a public policy concern in Madera County, as it is in the rest of the State. The current trend of rapid population growth in Madera County, fueled partly by higher births rates, and partly by net in-migration, suggests the demand for full-time infant and preschooler childcare will only increase in the coming years.

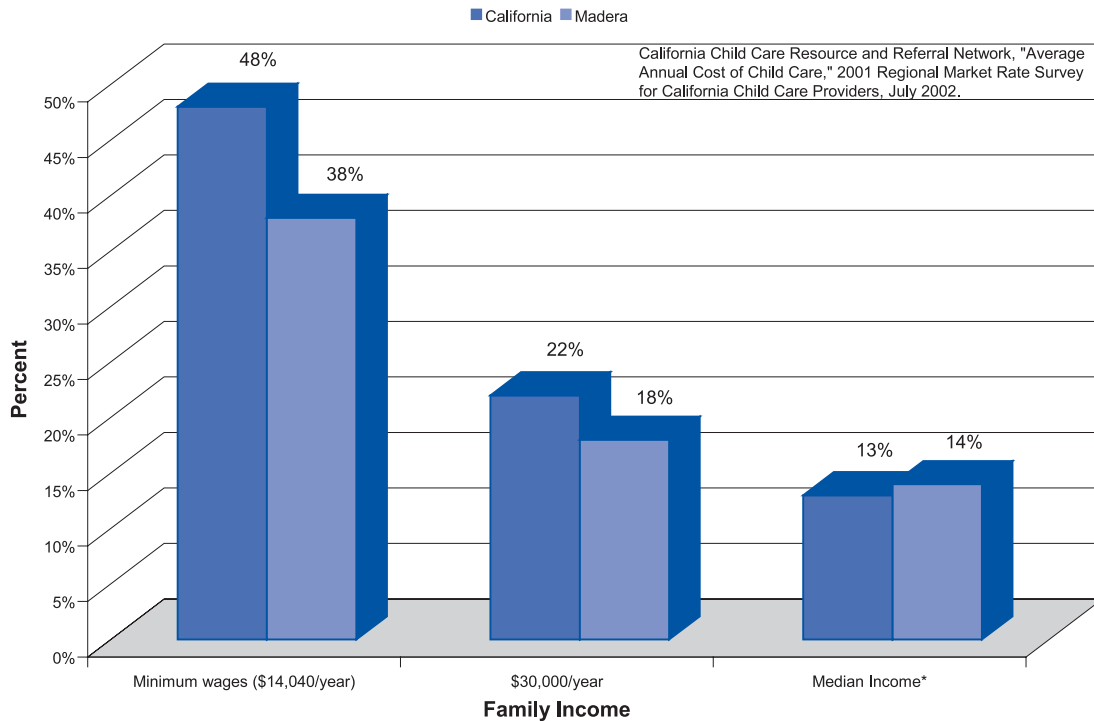
Figure 96. Cost of Childcare, California and Central Valley Counties, 2001



Affordable Childcare (Figure 96)

Another pressing issue is the cost of childcare. The cost of childcare can absorb a sizeable portion of the family income. On average, licensed childcare cost is lower in the Central Valley than for California as a whole. This is partly explained by the general trend of a lower cost of living in this region of the State. In addition, the cost of childcare in a home is always lower than in a center. The average annual cost of childcare for one child in California is \$6,394 for a licensed childcare center, and \$5,934 for licensed home childcare. On average Madera County costs are \$4,604 for a licensed childcare center, and \$4,374 for licensed home childcare respectively. For both types of care, the cost difference between the State average and the Madera average is more than \$1,500 per year.

Figure 97. Portion of Family Income Needed to Pay for a Preschooler in a Licensed Child Care Center, California and Madera County, 2003



*Note: Median income is \$53,025 in California, and \$39,226 in Madera County.

Family Income and Childcare Costs (Figure 97)

With the standard of living and with childcare costs being lower than average in Madera County than for California, it follows that childcare represents a smaller piece of a family budget than for the average California family. A California family earning minimum wages would have to dedicate almost half of their income (48%) to put a preschooler in a licensed childcare center, while a Madera County family would spend 38 percent of their income, or 10 percentage points less. For a family earning \$30,000 per year, the gap is reduced, with a California family spending 22 percent of its income, against 18 percent for the Madera County family. However, when we look at median family income, the tendency is reversed, with the Madera County family spending slightly more of its budget on childcare (14% for Madera County, versus 13% for California). This is mostly due to the large gap between the median income in California (\$53,025 per year) and Madera County (\$39,226 per year). The salary range is smaller in Madera County than in California. It is more difficult to make ends meet on a family income below the median in other parts of California than Madera County. However, the figures show that in both cases childcare is one of the major expenses for a family. What is more, the figures presented here are only for one child in his or her preschool years. Families with more than one child have to incur substantially higher expenses. Reforms that plan to limit access to childcare subsidies for people who are above the poverty line, but may not be at the median income, will make it even more difficult for families in California and in Madera County to send their children to quality childcare facilities. In addition to providing a large enough supply of quality childcare, Madera County needs to find a way of making this service affordable for families.