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Study assesses child care subsidies in Monroe County

POSTED BY JEREMY MOULE ON FRI, NOV 7, 2014 AT 10:52 AM

The need for child day care subsidies is growing locally and the availability of the subsidies is dwindling. Yet Monroe County is serving a higher percentage and number of eligible children than other urban counties in New York, outside of New York city.

Child care subsidies are the subject of a Center for Governmental Research report released this morning. The report was commissioned by the Rochester area League of Women Voters and funded by the organization's Beatrice Bibby Endowment.

The report looked at the availability of and need for subsidies in Monroe County; federal, state, and local funding trends; relevant policies in Monroe and similar counties; and child day care costs.

And it makes clear that child care subsidies aren't just a city issue. The number of families in need of the subsidies is growing fastest in the suburbs, particularly in Irondequoit, Henrietta, and Greece, the report says. The need is still greatest in the City of Rochester, however.

Child care is an enormous expense for working parents, and is a particular burden for low-income parents and parents whose children aren't in school, the report says. Full-time care for an infant costs an average of \$12,800 a year, while a full-time minimum wage worker earns \$16,640 a year before taxes.

The report says that serving all eligible families would be expensive, but targeting the assistance to families with incomes under the poverty level or children younger than 3 may be effective. But the county and children's advocates should discuss any such effort thoroughly before taking action, the report says.

"Subsidies are thought to serve the twin goals of providing a support for poor families to lift themselves out of poverty through work and of making high-quality child care accessible to families who likely would be unable to afford it," the report says.

The report says that the number of child care subsidy slots in Monroe County declined by 17 percent between 2007 and 2013. But the county served 22 percent of eligible children, which is higher than the 20 percent rate statewide. Erie and Onondaga Counties both served a lower percentage, though the two counties set their eligibility thresholds at 200 percent of the federal poverty rate, compared to 165 percent in Monroe, the report says.

County officials have put their emphasis on continuing subsidies for families already receiving them, and then adding new families as slots open up. They've resisted calls to increase eligibility levels. In the 2014 budget, the county reduced local spending on day care assistance by \$1.3 million; the state also cut funding by approximately \$725,000. County officials said that the state needs to boost spending on the program since Monroe already puts up far more child care subsidy funding than other Upstate counties.

Earlier this year, State Assembly Democrats issued a report calling for an increase in state funding for child care subsidy programs.

CGR's full report is attached below.

[Child Care Subsidies in Monroe County](#)

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