

Report: Child care bills strain more suburban families



[David Riley](#), Staff writer 8:30 p.m. EST November 7, 2014



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More and more working parents in Rochester's suburbs are [struggling to afford day care](#), according to a [Center for Governmental Research report](#) released Friday.

While there are many more families in the city who qualify for [subsidies to help pay child care bills](#), the need has risen fastest recently in Monroe County's towns, said the report, which was funded by the Rochester-area League of Women Voters' Bee Bibby Endowment.

The number of children younger than 13 whose parents earned 200 percent or less of the federal poverty line has spiked 52 percent in Irondequoit, 31 percent in Henrietta and 17 percent in Greece, according to the study. Researchers compared Census Bureau data from 2000 to a four-year period covering 2008 to 2012.

[Parents: How to pick the right day care](#)

As the need rises, subsidies have become harder and harder to get in Monroe County, the report said. Only about one in five eligible families is receiving assistance.

It's no coincidence that the report arrived just five days before County Executive Maggie Brooks is expected to release her budget proposal for next year.

Advocacy groups [have pressed the county](#) in recent years to boost funding to help working families with child care costs. Brooks has defended the county's commitment, saying it already spends more than many others in New York, and called on the state to do more to help local government meet the need.

Katherine Smith, first vice president for the League of Women Voters, said her group sees early, high-quality child care as critical to closing the gap in educational success between children raised in poverty and those from middle-class families.

[Many families caught in child care squeeze](#)

"Study after study after study shows you cannot make that gap up when children are in elementary school," she said.

The league wants to see more of a public conversation on the subject, Smith said. The league, the Center for Governmental Research and The Children's Agenda will hold a forum to discuss the report's findings at 7 p.m. Thursday at Asbury First United Methodist Church, 1050 East Ave.

The report said full-time care for an infant at a day care center can cost a New York family \$246 a week, or nearly \$12,800 a year. A minimum-wage worker earns \$16,640 a year — before taxes.

Despite rising need, the number of Monroe County families receiving subsidies has fallen 17 percent since the recent recession.

RocDocs map: [Child care facilities in Monroe County](#)

"To see the number of subsidies decline since 2007, 2008, I think just demonstrates that it's more and more difficult for families that aren't getting good incomes to afford child care," said Erika Rosenberg of the Center for Governmental Research, the report's primary researcher and author.

The study gave Monroe County several good marks, too.

This county serves more eligible children than most similar counties, including Erie and Onondaga, according to the report.

Monroe County is not alone in struggling to keep up with the need. Two-thirds of the counties in New York have cut the number of subsidies they offer since the recession, and on average, they have cut more deeply than Monroe.

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