



## Coastside Child Care Needs Met for Some, Parents Get Proactive

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Shortfalls in meeting child care needs for San Mateo County Coastside families are a growing community concern. The Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education (ISKME) recently completed a study to assess parental satisfaction with Coastside child care, including existing challenges and suggestions for future change. Initiated and supported by Coastside Children's Programs, and with additional support from the San Mateo County Office of Education and the San Mateo County Human Services Agency, the study looked at both English and Spanish speaking parents of children ages 0-12 from Montara to Pescadero. Results from this study are based on an analysis of survey and focus group data representing 541 Coastside parents and their 792 children, and include the key findings below.

First, the study found that most parents draw on a combination of formal and informal types of child care because one type of care does not meet all of their needs. The most commonly reported child care arrangements were informal care by parents themselves, relatives and individuals who are not relatives, followed by formal care, which includes infant and toddler, preschool, after elementary school care, and family child care homes. Cost and convenience, as well as concerns about children's welfare and development were reported as the primary factors influencing parents' child care choices.

Second, the predominant type of care used varies by parent populations. For example, high-income parents were more likely to report using infant and toddler care and preschool care than middle- and low-income parents.

Third, parents on the whole reported that they are satisfied with their current childcare arrangements. Parents using formal, licensed care reported being satisfied with all aspects of care, but are most satisfied with facility location, staff experience and staff-parent communication. Other parents, however, reported less satisfaction with their child care arrangements. In particular, low-income parents and parents from the South Coastside (San Gregorio, La Honda, Pescadero) reported greater dissatisfaction, as did parents using older siblings or non relatives for child care. This dissatisfaction reportedly stems from lack of child care options overall, lack of flexible and affordable care options, and lack of perceived child development opportunities with current arrangements.

Finally, parents in the study indicated that they are proactively addressing family and child care

needs in their community, such as baby-sitting cooperatives, playgroups, and support networks for low-income parents. Parents also indicated that they will actively continue to seek ways to connect with other parents, in order to support the development of grassroots child care solutions as well as to find out about alternative child care options.

On the whole, the study revealed opportunities for policy makers, support organizations, school districts, child care providers and parents to improve support for Coastside child care, especially among underserved populations. These opportunities include the development of flexible care services (such as early morning care), improved channels for information sharing among parents, and school-community partnerships for funding and advocacy around Coastside child care.

A copy of the full report—Informing Child Care on the San Mateo County Coastside: A Study of Parents' Child Care and Development Needs—can be viewed and accessed at [www.tinyurl.com/ChildCareStudy](http://www.tinyurl.com/ChildCareStudy). For more information about the study, please contact Cynthia Jimes, Director of Research, ISKME, at [cynthia@iskme.org](mailto:cynthia@iskme.org).