



For Immediate Release
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**FIRST OF ITS KIND RESEARCH HELPS DEFINE CHILDCARE AND
EARLY LEARNING LANDSCAPE IN BEXAR COUNTY**

Results identify challenges and opportunities for improving access for children

(SAN ANTONIO) – Results from a comprehensive study commissioned by the City of San Antonio and conducted by the College of Education at Texas A&M University-San Antonio provides new insights into the availability, quality and affordability of childcare in Bexar County.

A first of its kind study for Bexar County includes data from 54 zip codes and all 10 City of San Antonio Council districts.

“This was a significant study for Bexar County to examine the state of early childhood education and early childhood systems,” said Melissa M. Jozwiak, Professor of Early Childhood at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. “These findings not only identify ways to improve childcare and economic development, but it begins to create a roadmap for those committed to the long-term success of our community.”

Key findings identify challenges and opportunities in five categories for improving access to childcare for families with children under the age of 5 and for cultivating economic mobility of residents of San Antonio.

Childcare Access

Findings show there are not sufficient seats to serve the number of children needing access to childcare. As reported by state licensing and regulatory agencies, the current supply of childcare seats (“Licensed Capacity”) is sufficient for only 66% of children under the age of 5 in Bexar County. The actual supply of seats offered by providers (“Operational Capacity”) is 30% lower than Licensed Capacity, resulting in 20,000 fewer seats in Bexar County than expected.

Additional barriers include staffing shortages to increase operational capacity, and 93% of childcare providers operating only during traditional work hours of 6 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. Data also indicate a limited supply of childcare seats in South Bexar County.

Quality of Care

In Bexar County, only 32.5% of childcare providers meet high-quality standards from a

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state or national accreditation. Furthermore, there is a critical shortage of high-quality seats for infants and toddlers with less than 2% of available seats designated for infants and toddlers in high-quality providers. With more qualified staff, there is an opportunity to increase quality of care.

Affordability

As a whole, high-quality childcare is often not accessible for low- to middle-income families. The data found most childcare providers rely on family-paid tuition models and only 16% offer income-adjusted rates. While 71% of providers across the county accept Texas Workforce Commission subsidies, the availability of subsidies is limited with extensive waitlists.

Workforce Challenges

The data confirmed that staffing shortages are critical, indicating that low wages and demanding work threaten staff retention. It also found that infant and toddler caregivers are the least educated and lowest paid compared to preschool educators.

Special Populations

The research found that providers lack knowledge of military subsidies and face administrative barriers to better serve the city's military families. It also indicated that the distance from military installations to providers that accept military subsidies was a challenge for military families.

For families with children who have exceptional or special needs, there are limited provider options with specialized training, as well as uneven resources for children with special needs across Bexar County.

"This long-anticipated study provides critical insights into the challenges of gathering comprehensive quantitative and qualitative data from providers, stakeholders, and agencies across Bexar County," said Sarah Baray, CEO of PreK 4 SA. "Its findings reaffirm the persistent issues we've encountered in childcare—ranging from affordability and staff shortages to limited infant care—while also underscoring the significance of the city's workforce development and early learning initiatives in fostering economic development."

The data from the study was gathered from a survey of licensed childcare providers, focus groups with childcare owners/administrators, childcare teachers, parents / guardians, and childcare advocates, in addition to figures reported by childcare regulatory agencies.

The study was sponsored by Ready to Work, Economic Development, Human Services, and Pre-K 4 SA. This data will help the City of San Antonio's Economic Development Department ensure San Antonio residents have accessible pathways to well-paying jobs and employers have access to a robust pipeline of talent well into the future.

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San Antonio is a vibrant city with a thriving economy, deep cultural heritage and communities that are compassionate, inclusive and proudly diverse. It is the seventh largest city in the United States and one of the strongest fiscally managed cities in the country, nurturing entrepreneurship, encouraging investment and funding infrastructure. The City fosters partnership and growth opportunities in aerospace, bioscience, cybersecurity, green technologies, healthcare, and information technology. San Antonio's famed River Walk and Alamo are the top tourist attractions in Texas, and its historic missions are a designated World Heritage Site – the first and only in Texas. Proudly called Military City, USA®, San Antonio is home to one of the largest populations of active-duty military and veterans, as well as mission-critical commands, including military medicine, cybersecurity, pilot training and basic training. For more information, visit SA.gov and follow @COSAGov on social.

About Pre-K 4 SA

Pre-K 4 SA is a comprehensive early childhood initiative aimed at changing the education and workforce trajectory of San Antonio in one generation. Pre-K 4 SA offers full-day prekindergarten for 3- and 4-year-olds living in the City of San Antonio. Pre-K 4 SA is free for qualifying students and accepts tuition-paying students. Breakfast, lunch and two snacks are included and free transportation is available to all students. Pre-K 4 SA has four Education Centers located throughout the city, and the Gardendale Early Learning Program, the first Pre-K 4 SA innovation site, was made possible through a partnership with Edgewood Independent School District. This program creates greater capacity for high quality early education with Pre-K through 2nd grade classrooms. Visit www.prek4sa.com for more information.

Media Contacts:

Jill Byrd, 210-501-4288

Jill.Byrd@sanantonio.gov

Mariah Contreras, 806-544-1315

Mariah@talk-strategy.com