



## Employer Child Care Roundtable Discussion Notes

3/26/19

Leah Spangler, CEO of The Learning Lamp, reviewed statistics about the changing nature of families, the impact of lack of care for parents in the workforce, and the challenges of providing quality care. Information on the dependent care tax credit was also presented. Tiffany Sturtz, C.P.A./Partner, Barnes, Saly and Company, P.C. presented information the the Dependent Care Assistance Program.

Following the presentations, Debi Balog, Director, Workforce Development/JARI facilitated the discussion with attendees to obtain input on workforce issues related to the current state of child care in the region. Highlights include:

- It was identified that there are employee child care issues when children are sick or when school is closed due to weather. In addition, area child care centers are not open late enough to accommodate some shifts since few centers are open past 6 p.m. Employee absences occur when schedules are changed and the employee's child care program can't accommodate a later shift.
- Individuals are having a hard time finding available child care and child care located close to public transportation. Often, clients are spending half the day taking a child to or picking a child up from child care.
- An inquiry was asked regarding how many area child care programs are open at night. It was noted that there are only a few.
- It was reported that most child care programs are only open Monday through Friday, leaving employees with no care on weekends.
- It was identified that it is expensive for a center to provide care in the evenings and on weekends, and centers need a certain number of children attending to make it feasible to stay open.
- Debi Balog noted the county now has an average of 1,000-1,200 job openings a month, and the lack of child care is impacting our region's ability to grow.



The mission of The Learning Lamp is to engage all children in the support they need to succeed. The Learning Lamp is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, donations to which are tax deductible to the fullest extent permitted by law. The official registration and financial information of The Learning Lamp may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free with in Pennsylvania; 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

- It was remarked that child care was such an essential support for one family that the family selected the land to build a house based on its proximity to his children's child care center. The lack of facilities in Somerset County was also noted. An example was provided of a qualified candidate being unable to take a job just yesterday based on the lack of available care. The participant inquired about a way for area employers to work together to meet child care.
- It was stated that affordable, available child care was needed, as well as programs offering evening hours. A participant asked how she could find out who offered late hours.
- Child care combined with transportation issues make it especially hard for working parents. The example given detailed a mother who lives in Woodvale and has to walk downtown to access transportation. Because there is no available care in the downtown area, it is stressful and difficult for the mother to access care so she can work.
- It was mentioned that many employees move to Johnstown from Pittsburgh or Philadelphia and have no local support system to rely on for help with children.
- Another group member stated that there are too few child care centers located near public transit access points.
- It was suggested that employers could look for ways to help employees with young children or those relying on public transportation by adapting their schedules based on when transit allows them to arrive.
- A complicating issue is that some employees don't know how to manage money and would run out of money to pay bus fare before their next paycheck. In response, one company is purchasing bus passes for employees who rely on public transportation.
- One participant remarked that what she heard at the roundtable is similar to issues across the state.
- *Next steps identified include raising awareness of the issue, hosting a roundtable to discuss the transportation issues and meeting with legislators on the subject.*