

2021 Child Care: A Workforce Discussion Summit Takeaways

Event held on Nov. 12, 2021

Facilitated by Huntsville/Madison County Chamber

Huntsville, Ala.

This was an open community discussion that included child care providers, company representatives, nonprofit agencies, educational institutions, and more.

Following presentations, attendees broke into small groups to focus on two key discussion topics:

- 1. Identifying what the biggest problem is that our region is trying to solve related to childcare.**
 - a. Two key problems were consistently noted:
 - i. Funding. Traditional business model does not work for childcare.
 1. Ex: Increasing cost to increase wages and revenue in order to attract more workers and new centers is not possible when cost of childcare is already high. Current funding model is not sustainable.
 - ii. Ownership. Region needs a central owner focused on childcare problems and solutions.
- 2. Identifying what actions can be taken by key groups to address the problem(s).**
 - a. Some of the potential actions noted by participants in each group are highlighted below.
 - i. Businesses & Employers**
 1. Awareness
 2. Be part of finding a solution
 3. Think of creative ways to partner with providers to solve problems
 4. Invest in workers/education
 5. Provide company friendly policies related to childcare
 - a. Invest in facilities in partnership with qualified providers; provide funding
 - b. Provide dependent care flexible spending accounts
 - c. Provide childcare credits for employees
 - d. Provide grants to childcare providers
 - ii. Community Leaders & Elected Officials**
 1. Create childcare vouchers for adult students
 2. Understand that parents are finding childcare solutions on their own even with a broken model, and that impacts the community and bigger workforce issues without a community-focused solution
 3. Put in place a person or program to be central coordination point for resources and programs
 4. Create land allocation so childcare centers can go where large housing developments are built
 5. Educate (with data) what the problems and solutions are, so they can be informed advocates

The Huntsville/Madison County Chamber will take this information to engage in some specific follow-up actions.

1. Identify opportunities to include childcare related issues in the Chamber's 2022 State and Federal Agendas to further engage elected officials and encourage legislative action
2. Further discussions with community partners to identify opportunities for a centralized childcare coordination effort
3. Identify individuals who would like to remain engaged in a childcare task force/working group