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Expanding the business community and growing capacity: Oklahoma Human Services announces Child Care Desert Startup Grants

OKLAHOMA CITY (Sept. 13, 2022) – Oklahoma Human Services is pleased to announce a Child Care Desert Startup Grant to increase accessibility to quality child care in areas of significant need around the state. In Oklahoma, 34 of the state’s 77 counties are considered child care deserts. [Data from the Center for American Progress](#) (CAP) shows that 55% of the state’s population lives in a child care desert. By establishing new child care programs, Oklahomans will not only be helping to expand their local business community, but also to grow the industry’s capacity to provide additional child care for even more families.

Jackie Evans, owner of Aunt Jackie’s Childcare Home, has been a licensed child care provider in Oklahoma for 42 years. Her business is located in a child care desert. “My philosophy is daycare is my business, but my passion is these children,” said Evans. “That works for me and that’s why I’ve been successful in what I do.”

Child care deserts are defined by the [CAP](#) as counties where there aren’t enough licensed child care providers to meet the needs of working families. The startup grants will provide funding for new child care businesses located in child care deserts.

“We know there are significant needs in our communities for families to have a safe place for children to go while their parents work or pursue education,” said Brittany Lee, Director of Child Care Services. “With this startup grant, we are providing funding and startup capital for people to go into a child care desert and open up a new business by becoming a child care provider. Not only will this bring new jobs into communities across Oklahoma, but it will also enable parents and guardians to rejoin the workforce with the peace of mind that their child is in a safe and enriching environment.”

Child Care Desert Startup Grants are available to individuals who are considering becoming licensed child care providers **in identified desert counties**. These individuals will participate in Oklahoma Human Services Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) to create enriching,

quality early childhood learning environments that set children up for success to last their lifetimes.

[Applications for the Child Care Desert Startup grants](#) will be available until budgeted funds are depleted, or until July 31, 2023. Providers are required to complete an application and provide a Federal Tax Identification/Employer Identification Number. Applicants may receive a total of \$10,000 per child served, based on licensed capacity. An initial \$5,000 per child payment will be made at the time of approval, with the remaining \$5,000 per child distributed based on enrollment after 12 months.

To learn more or make application for a Child Care Desert Startup Grant, visit <https://okchildcaregrants.com>.

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Editor's note – Oklahoma counties considered to be child care deserts include the following:

Adair	Alfalfa	Beaver	Canadian
Cleveland	Comanche	Cotton	Creek
Delaware	Ellis	Garfield	Garvin
Grady	Grant	Harper	Johnston
Kingfisher	LeFlore	Lincoln	Logan
McClain	Okfuskee	Oklahoma	Okmulgee
Osage	Pawnee	Roger Mills	Rogers
Sequoyah	Texas	Tillman	Tulsa
Wagoner	Washita		