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Community Partners Launch Child Care Community Readiness Assessment

(EAU CLAIRE) - A new coalition of community leaders and child care experts is launching a project to learn more about Eau Claire's capacity to address local child care needs.

The Kids First-Eau Claire Action Team and Western Dairyland's Child Care Partnership recently announced the start of a Child Care Community Readiness Assessment. Through surveys, one-on-one interviews and community listening sessions, they hope to learn more about local child care needs and the community's capacity to address them.

The assessment begins with today's launch of the "Eau Claire County Child Care Survey." The primary audience for this 16-question survey is parents, grandparents, and caregivers of children ages birth to five. The anonymous and confidential survey will only take an average of 5-7 minutes to complete, and the results will help community agencies understand the child care landscape in Eau Claire and guide next steps moving forward.

There are currently 92 regulated child care providers able to care for 4,300 children in Eau Claire County, however, according to US Census Data, the population estimate for children ages 5 and under is over 6,000. Child care providers play a vital role in children's lives by providing not only basic care like feeding and diaper changes, but also by helping them reach developmental milestones through age-appropriate, educational activities.

Dotty Lillo, director of the Western Dairyland Child Care Partnership program, has worked with parents, children and child care providers for the past 30 years, and she knows how important child care is for families in western Wisconsin. "Many parents are telling us that child care is not readily available, affordable, or of the quality desired," she said. "This survey will help provide the information needed to address this triad and find out what is happening locally."

"Numerous studies have found that quality early child care and education helps to lay the groundwork for children's success in school and beyond," said Joe Luginbill, Co-chair of *Kids First* and President of the Eau Claire School Board. "Child care providers help parents engage their children and fuel healthy brain development. This assessment offers an opportunity for us to gain a better understanding of challenges and perceptions related to quality, affordable, accessible child care for all families in our community."

The Eau Claire County Child Care Survey will run from today until January 31, 2019, and can be found by visiting www.ChildCarePartnership.org. The survey will be available in English, Spanish, and Hmong translations.

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