

Living

Parents now have 'trilemma'

THE CHILD Development Resource Center has coined a new word for an old problem for anyone in Santa Cruz County who has young children.

Findings from a recent survey of parents who called the CDRC child-care switchboard led them to develop the term "trilemma," to describe the problem of finding available, affordable, quality child care.

Two-thirds of the 939 parents contacted reported they had problems in their search for child care. Troubles were mainly with scheduling, the cost of care and the quality of care available. Eighty-three responded that there were no openings at the care homes or centers they contacted, and 64 said the type of care they wanted (such as in-home versus a care center) wasn't available.

Parents with school-age children reported more problems with scheduling than those with children 5 and under. In fact, 46 percent of those with children ages 6 and over said they had scheduling problems. Parents with babies through pre-schoolers reported more problems with the high cost of child care than parents of older children. Poor quality child care was the reason given by about 20 percent of all parents for not having their child-care needs met.

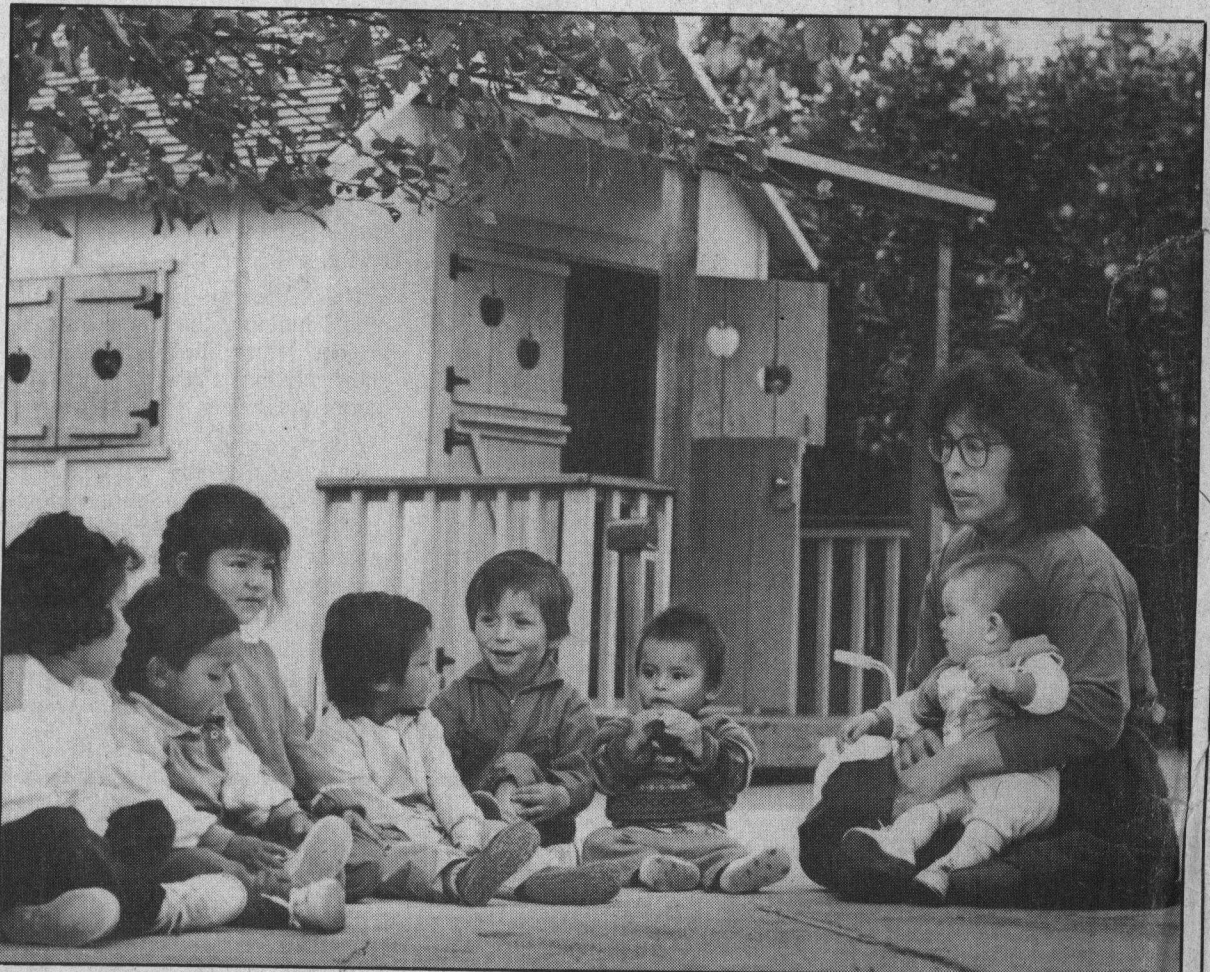
No available openings, meaning that while the parent's choice of care did exist, there were no openings, accounted for 20 percent of parents with infants to 23 months; for 27 percent for parents with children ages 2 to 5 years; and for 24 percent for parents with children 6 and over.

Parents of 257 children reported they had encountered significant problems finding child care. Of those children, 37 percent were infants, 36 percent were pre-schoolers and 28 percent were school-age.

Of the 511 parents who answered the question "Are you satisfied with the quality of the care you're using?" 318, or 62 percent, said the care was "very good"; 148 said the care was "good"; 30 felt the care was "satisfactory"; and one responded the care was "very poor." Four didn't respond.

Problems listed by those who couldn't find the child care they wanted included too many children at the site, a high degree of provider stress, lack of staff training and an unorganized environment.

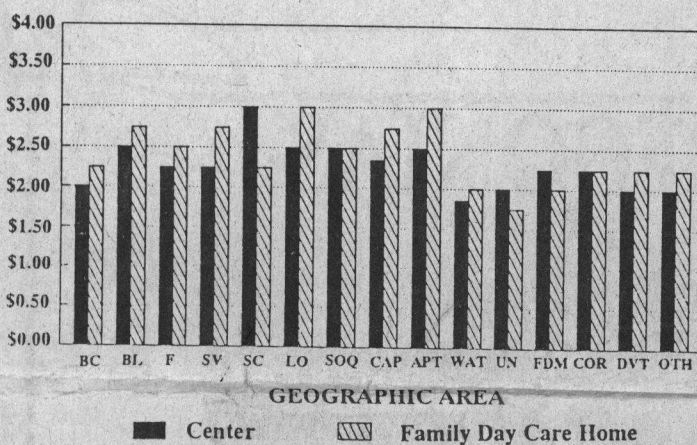
The CDRC conducted a survey of licensed day-care centers and licensed family day-care homes in January. Only licensed programs listed with the CDRC



Kurt Ellison

It's hard to find quality child care such as Rosa Clarin offers in Freedom.

Average geographical cost



Note: The cost of in-home child care is not included in this chart. Only licensed programs listed with the CDRC were studied.

Child Care Switchboard are included in the survey.

There is almost no care available for babies and toddlers within the CDRC listings. From Davenport to Watsonville, there were no openings in day-care centers for newborn infants to 12 months and there were only 20 licensed family day-care home openings on the CDRC list.

There was little improvement for ages 13 to 23 months, with five openings (four in Soquel and one in Felton) for care centers and six openings (one in

Live Oak, four in Soquel and one in Capitola) in day-care homes. Openings increased dramatically as children become older. There was one category that listed care-givers with age groupings that didn't fit the CDRC chart — openings exist for 70 children in day-care centers and for 544 in day-care homes.

The CDRC staff found that there is a huge need for infant care and a need for school-age care in areas such as Watsonville proper, unincorporated Watsonville, Freedom, Corralitos and certain parts of

Key to areas

- BC: Boulder Creek
- BL: Ben Lomond
- F: Felton
- SV: Scotts Valley
- SC: Santa Cruz
- LO: Live Oak
- SOQ: Soquel
- CAP: Capitola
- APT: Aptos
- WAT: Watsonville city
- UN: Unincorporated Watsonville
- FDM: Freedom
- COR: Corralitos
- DVT: Davenport
- OTH: Other

Aptos.

Most parents pay at least \$2 per hour for child care, with families with infants getting charged a mean figure of \$3.42 per hour in child-care centers and a mean figure of \$2.53 per hour for family day-care homes. Child-care centers charge from \$1.25 and \$4.35 per hour and family day-care homes charge between \$1.50 and \$5 per hour. The South County has the lowest average hourly rates.

Many families are on long waiting lists for subsidized child care.