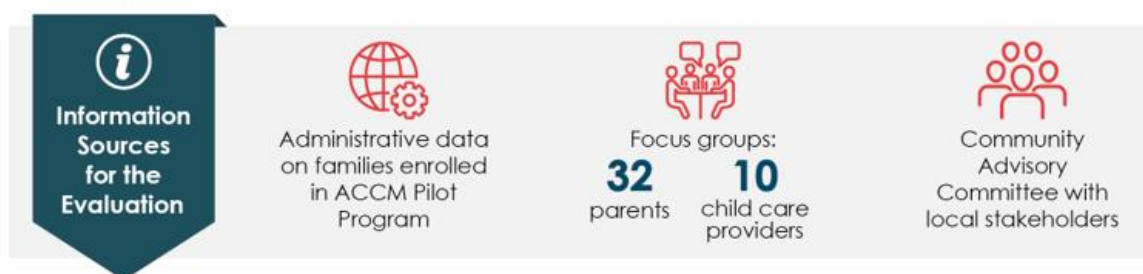


The Allegheny County Child Care Matters Pilot Program Evaluation

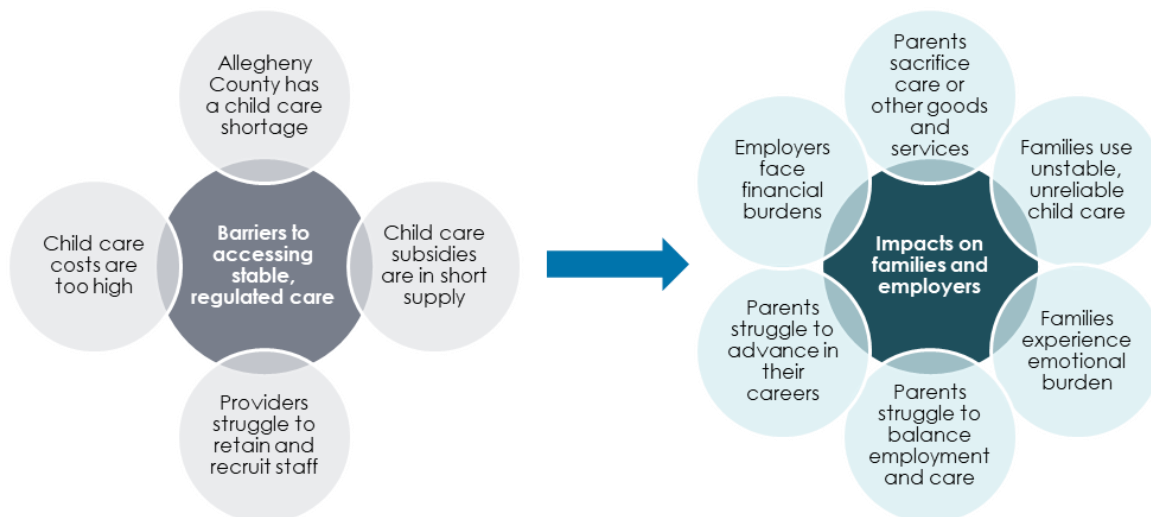
In 2022, the Allegheny County Department of Children Initiatives (DCI) launched the *Allegheny County Child Care Matters (ACCM) Pilot Program* to support working families in accessing stable early care and out-of-school time programs, and to improve adult workforce participation. MEF Associates evaluated the ACCM Pilot Program in 2024 using administrative data with participating families, focus groups with participating parents and providers, and a community advisory committee. This document highlights key findings from this evaluation. It is part of a larger report, which can be found [here](#).



Child care challenges in Allegheny County

Access to stable, regulated early learning and out-of-school time programs is critically important for both children’s development and family stability.¹ Yet, Allegheny County—like many communities throughout the United States²—has faced significant barriers to ensuring equitable access to stable, regulated child care for many working families in the county. Child care shortages, low supply of child care subsidies, staffing constraints, and high costs have been particularly significant barriers. These barriers hinder parents’ employment and workforce participation, impact family well-being, and burden employers. In response, Allegheny County launched the ACCM Pilot Program in 2022.

Child care Challenges in Allegheny County



“I was late for work a lot, waiting for my older kids to come over...I was on the brink of losing my job, actually, because you can only kind of use the excuse about daycare so long before your employer gets tired of it.”

– Participant from parent focus group

¹ Sources: [What does the evidence say about how early care and education supports children’s development and family well-being?](#) and [The latest research on the impact of afterschool and summer programs](#)

² Source: [Data Dashboard: An Overview of Child Care and Early Learning in the United States - Center for American Progress](#)

The ACCM Pilot Program

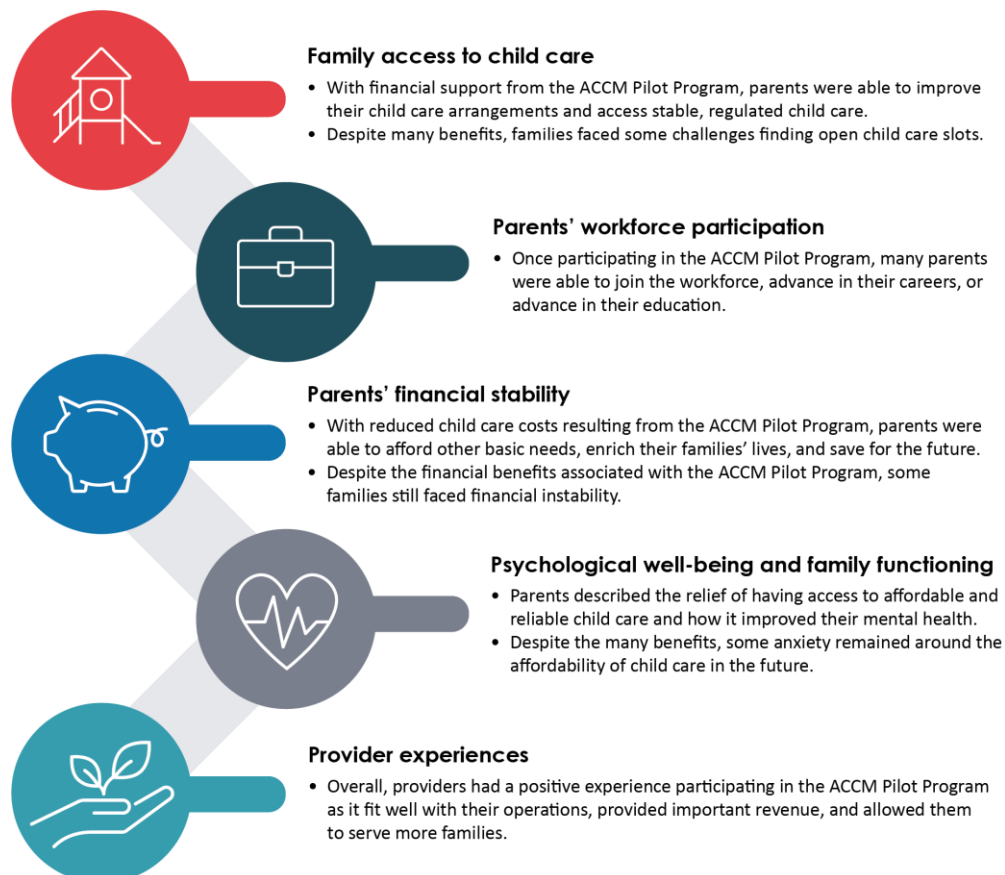
The ACCM Pilot Program was created to support equitable access to stable, regulated child care to allow working families to maintain or increase their participation in the workforce. The program targets families whose incomes exceed 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines (the threshold for Pennsylvania's Child Care Works subsidy) but remain below 300 percent of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines. Once a family is deemed eligible:

- The ACCM Pilot Program Population Specialist informs the family of their weekly copayment amount. Copayment amounts are based on family income and may not exceed seven percent of their annual income.
- Eligible families choose a provider and notify the Region 5 Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC). The provider must then complete an ACCM Provider Agreement.
- Once the child is enrolled, all child care subsidy payments go directly to the provider. If funding is not available at the time of application, eligible families may be placed on a waiting list.

Key Findings from the ACCM Pilot Evaluation

Overall, the evaluation findings suggest:

- **The ACCM Pilot Program is a valuable tool for improving working families' access to stable, regulated early learning and out-of-school time programs.** With stable care in place, parents reported feeling more reliable at work, earning raises and promotions, finishing their education, and exploring new career opportunities. The benefits extended beyond workforce participation. Families also reported positive impacts on their children's development and improved financial stability. Together, these changes improved parents' psychological health, well-being, and family functioning.
- **The ACCM Pilot Program confers benefits to providers and integrates smoothly into existing operations.** For example, providers reported benefits such as increased enrollment and stability thanks to the predictable revenue source.



"For a lot of parents to get a job and maybe get out of the welfare cycle... you're stuck between a rock and a hard place... you're in that situation where you don't have anybody to watch your kid while you're at work... [The ACCM Pilot Program] allows people to get unstuck and build their lives up." - Participant from parent focus group