

ERS Peer Review Plan

Preliminary Title: The Rural Childcare Landscape

Type of Report (ERR, EIB, EB) EIB

Agency: Economic Research Service [X] Influential Scientific Information
USDA [] Highly Influential Scientific Assessment

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Subject of Review: Childcare services provide an important building block for rural communities and the rural economy. High-quality, accessible childcare supports families, children, and economic activity. The temporary shut-down of many of these services during the COVID-19 Pandemic brought public attention to the childcare landscape while creating challenges for working individuals and families needing care. Limited availability of affordable childcare is a common challenge, especially in less populated rural areas. Utilizing a variety of data sources, this report examines the demand for childcare services, the supply of childcare establishments, the childcare workforce, and the affordability of childcare services in rural areas. Overall, nonmetro residents cited the lack of open childcare slots as the main reason they experienced difficulty finding care in 2019, and families said it was more difficult to find care in 2019 compared to 2016. The number of childcare establishments varies depending on the type of establishment. Nonmetro childcare centers declined prior to the pandemic, but have grown in number since 2016, while self-employed childcare workers have only decreased since 2022.

Purpose of Review: The purpose of the review is to ensure the high-quality of the economic analysis, transparent explanation of methods, objective interpretation of results, and effective communication to the intended audience.

Type of Review: [] Panel Review [X] Individual Reviewers

[] Alternative Process (Briefly Explain):

Timing of Review (Est.): Start: 9/2/2025 Completed:

Number of Reviewers: [X] 3 or fewer [] 4 to 10 [] More than 10

Primary Disciplines/Types of Expertise Needed for Review: Economists

Reviewers selected by: [X] Agency [] Designated Outside Organization

Opportunities for Public Comment? [] Yes [X] No

If yes, briefly state how and when these opportunities will be provided:

How:

When:

Peer Reviewers Provided with Public Comments?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No
Public Nominations Requested for Review Panel?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No