

ADVOCAP Childcare Incubator

Helping Grow the Future of Childcare in Wisconsin



Community Context & Challenges

Access to reliable licensed childcare has become a significant barrier to workforce participation and family stability across Winnebago County. Inadequate supply, high costs, and limited availability create persistent gaps between the needs of working families and the capacity of the current childcare system.

These challenges are reflected in both local and statewide conditions, including a significant share of Wisconsin children living in licensed childcare deserts, long local waitlists, and childcare costs that consume a substantial portion of household income. **As a result, families are often forced to make employment decisions based on childcare availability rather than opportunity or advancement.**

1,200+ childcare waitlist spots reported in Winnebago County, with **63%** of providers reporting waitlists. (UW Institute for Research on Poverty)

Childcare costs for one child account for **24%** of median individual income in Winnebago County (BLS), (MIT)

37% of Wisconsin children under age 6 live in licensed childcare deserts (Center for American Progress)

\$15,460 average annual cost of childcare for one child in Winnebago County (MIT)

Impacts of Childcare Shortages

Workforce & Employer Stability

Childcare shortages limit workforce participation across nearly every sector. Employers struggle to hire and retain staff not from lack of jobs, but from inconsistent access to care. This leads to reduced hours, missed shifts, and workforce exits that weaken productivity and stability.

Family & Financial Wellbeing

Childcare is one of the largest monthly expenses for many households and often consumes a significant share of income. These costs force families to reduce hours, delay advancement, or leave the workforce to manage care at home, limiting financial stability.

Education & Economic Mobility

Childcare access is essential for upward mobility. Parents pursuing education, training, or certifications often cannot participate without reliable care. Without it, individuals are unable to complete programs that lead to higher wages, creating a barrier to economic advancement.

The Need for Action

Childcare is essential infrastructure that supports workforce participation, family stability, and economic opportunity across our region. When access is limited, the effects are felt across employers, households, and communities, making childcare capacity a critical factor in both economic and social wellbeing.

An Innovative Solution

The **ADVOCAP Childcare Incubator** in Oshkosh is a business incubator designed to support new childcare providers while expanding local childcare capacity in Winnebago County. It creates a structured pathway for individuals to launch and operate licensed childcares with reduced startup barriers and ongoing business support.

Providers operate under in-home childcare licensing rules within a shared incubator model that combines low-cost startup space with business development support.

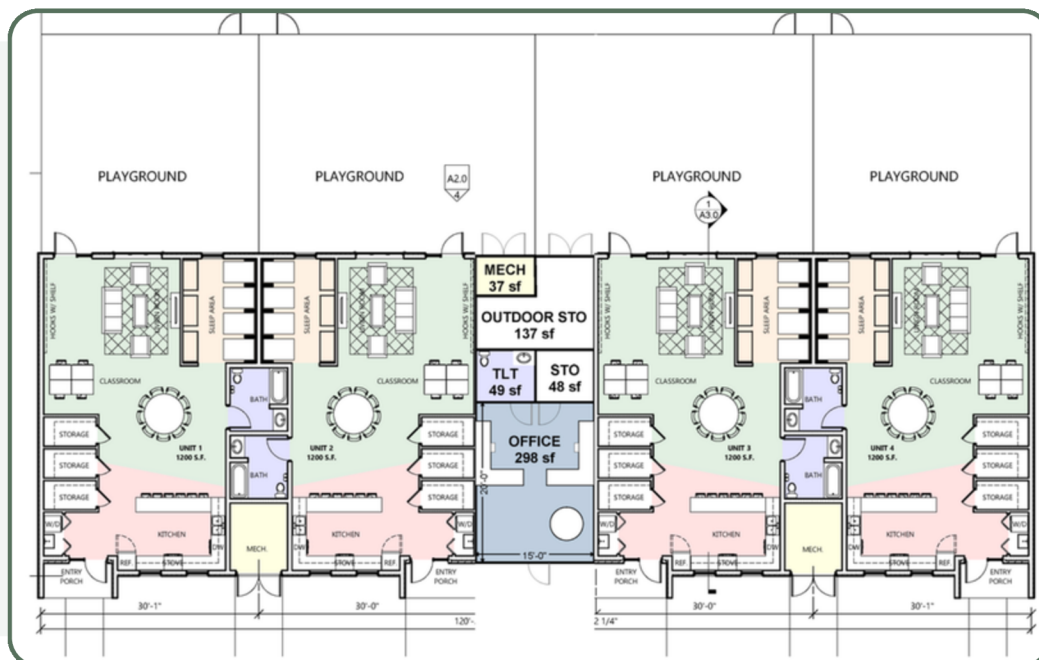
This structure is designed to make entry into the childcare field more accessible while expanding the supply of local childcare options.



As providers grow and transition into independent programs, new entrepreneurs enter the Incubator, creating a continuous pipeline of childcare capacity and supporting long-term system growth across Oshkosh and Winnebago County.

Inside the Childcare Incubator

The facility includes four individual units designed to reflect a home-like environment within a shared building. Each unit functions as a separate program space, allowing providers to operate in a familiar, residential-style setting while maintaining clear, independent areas.



The building also includes individual outdoor play spaces designed to support daily activities, movement, and learning. These areas are intended to enhance the overall environment while providing safe, functional space for both children and providers throughout the day.

Project Goals

Expand Childcare Capacity in Winnebago County

Increase the availability of licensed childcare by supporting new providers and expanding long-term opportunities for childcare businesses.

Strengthen the Local Workforce

Increase access to childcare so more parents can participate in the workforce and create opportunities for individuals to build self-sufficient businesses.

Support School Readiness

Support providers in implementing age-appropriate curriculum that prepares children to enter school ready to learn at grade level.

Reduce Poverty and Increase Stability

Support sustainable childcare businesses that create stable income and long-term self-sufficiency for entrepreneurs.

The ADVOCAP Childcare Incubator translates these priorities into a physical, structured model, which requires coordinated community investment to support development and operations, and sustain long-term impact.

Investing in the Future of Childcare

The childcare shortage is a community challenge that requires community solutions, built through partnership among nonprofits, businesses, foundations, government, and other community stakeholders.

The ADVOCAP Childcare Incubator is one part of this collective effort. **As a first-of-its-kind model in Wisconsin, the ADVOCAP Childcare Incubator represents an investment in workforce participation, economic opportunity, and long-term childcare capacity.**

Project Budget

Land Purchase	\$218,000
Site Preparation	\$379,528
Incubator Construction	\$846,087
Construction Finishes	\$160,400
Playgrounds and Fencing	\$44,171
Parking Lot and Sidewalks	\$81,895
Landscaping	\$132,466
Solar Panels and Electrical Systems	\$174,963
Furniture and Equipment	\$121,000
Fees, Permits, and Overruns	\$523,262
Total project costs	\$2,681,772

Sustainability Plan

The Childcare Incubator is designed with a phased sustainability plan that reduces long-term operating costs through active and passive solar integration, lowering ongoing utility expenses.

Its phased structure incorporates future revenue-generating components and ADVOCAP Business Development infrastructure to support long-term operational stability and growth.

Why ADVOCAP?

Founded in 1966, ADVOCAP supports communities across Winnebago, Green Lake, and Fond du Lac counties through programs focused on creating opportunities to increase self-sufficiency. **Through six decades of work supporting local families, businesses, and community needs, ADVOCAP is uniquely positioned to lead the Childcare Incubator project.**

In the 1960s, ADVOCAP helped launch Kindercare, the first childcare center in Fond du Lac County, and has since supported the development of numerous childcare businesses. ADVOCAP also brings early childhood education expertise through its Head Start program.

Over 40 years ago, ADVOCAP established its first business incubator, creating a long-standing foundation of supporting entrepreneurs and small business growth. Through its Business Development Program, ADVOCAP has supported more than 2,500 small businesses and helped create over 6,000 jobs through technical assistance and business development services.

2,500+

businesses created
through ADVOCAP
Business Development
Program

6,000+

jobs created through
businesses supported
by ADVOCAP Business
Development Program

60+

years of experience
supporting entrepreneurs
and helping new
businesses get started

ADVOCAP also brings established community partnerships to this project, including workforce development organizations, business development partners, childcare system partners, and multiple levels of government.

Together, these strengths position ADVOCAP to implement a structured, sustainable childcare incubator model that responds directly to regional workforce needs and the growing demand for accessible childcare.

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This program will be a huge asset in addressing the needs of both new and expanding child care providers in Winnebago Co. This opportunity will allow providers the stability to run their businesses in a professional and supported way like never before.

Lesa Alston, County Certifier, Child Care Resource & Referral

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Contact ADVOCAP

For additional information regarding the Childcare Incubator project, please contact Tanya Marcoe, ADVOCAP Executive Director.

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