

My name is Amanda Kelkenberg. I am the CEO of Child Care Resource Network, a non-profit child care resource and referral agency in Buffalo, New York. We help parents find child care, we open and close child care programs, and provide training for child care providers. Every day we see firsthand the powerful impact that lack of access to quality child care has on our families, community, and our children.

Successful employees who have children need child care. Not just any child care - but quality child care. Stable, quality child care programs are shown to increase employee attendance and productivity. On the flip side, unstable child care arrangements are shown to increase employee tardiness, absenteeism, and overall reduced the productivity of employees. In certain situations, an unstable child care arrangement can cost an employee his or her job¹¹.

In order for a family to find that safe, stable, high quality child care for their children, a parent needs to know their work schedule in advance to a reasonable degree of certainty. Licensed and regulated child care programs are businesses. In order to remain solvent and follow the state regulations related to staff-child ratios and group size, these programs can only operate by enrolling children on a consistent part-time or full-time schedule. Child care programs are businesses that need to plan and schedule so the children and families receive the best possible care.

Unfortunately, too many families in Erie County are responding to the erratic demands that employer scheduling practices including "just-in-time," "call-in" or "on-call" scheduling bring. These practices require an immediate response to go to work, and do not allow for a parent to

¹¹ "Why Quality Matters!", a 2016 survey conducted in New York State by the Early Care and Learning Council (ECLC),

schedule in advance that high quality, licensed child care needed for family stability. So what do families do?

In these instances, families are forced to “patchwork” their child care arrangements together – relying on multiple places and people at last minute notice to provide the critical care needed for their children. The issue: these arrangements are not often reliable for the parent and not often the best environments for children to grow and learn. These scheduling demands having a negative effect on parents – adding more chaos into an already chaotic work schedule. But they can also have a negative effect on the children these parents are working so hard to raise.

Decades of research on the developing brain tells us - that as a society - we should be making significant investments in our young children. High quality early interactions and environments that support a developing child will help each child reach his or her full potential. The now famous study, “*An Early Catastrophe*²²” is a prime example of why quality child care is not just important for children; it is imperative. The study explains that by age 3, there is a 30 million word gap between children from the wealthiest and poorest families. Without access to high-quality, affordable child care, we cannot provide the foundation for children in our communities that they deserve.

If our goal is healthy children, healthy families, and productive employees – the impact of these employer scheduling practices must be evaluated. Most families are desperately looking for solutions that allow them to keep their jobs and access high-quality child care. No parent should have to choose between work and the health and well-being of their child.

² The Early Catastrophe: The 30 Million Word Gap by Age 3, by Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley; Spring 2003; <https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/TheEarlyCatastrophe.pdf>