Questions to ponder ... Is there adequate child care available to working parents? Is there sick child care? Or second or third shift child care? Are child care workers adequately trained and by whom? What happens to latch-key children when school is not in session? Who teaches adults the life skills necessary to parent children, maintain their homes and budget their money?

It is estimated that 70% of married women with children work outside the home. For widowed, divorced or separated women with children, the rate is even higher — 77%. With welfare reform, more mothers are entering the labor market. This begs the question: What is the adequacy and availability of child care for these working mothers? According to the FSSA, as of June 30, 1997, there was 1 licensed day care center and 22 licensed homes in Sullivan County, with a capacity for 279 children. The last census showed that in Sullivan County 583 children under age six were likely in need of child care. National research shows that most children are cared for by relatives (43%), by their mothers at their place of work or while working at home (31%), and in unlicensed homes (25%). Only 29% of preschoolers went to organized centers such as day care centers, nurseries, or nursery schools.

Welfare reform in Indiana has focused on the needs of welfare-to-work families in need of child care. A major change in child care services in state fiscal year 1998 created a single, integrated child care system. Guaranteed Child Care and Transitional Child Care, formerly Guaranteed Child Care Grant program and Subsidized Child Care Grant program, are now combined under the Child Care and Development Block Grant program. Subsidized child care services are available in Sullivan County to eligible families through voucher programs. The voucher agent determines eligibility based on established criteria. Reports indicate that this new voucher system has become quite successful in many counties throughout the state (county voucher data will become available by early 1999).

Sullivan County also provides services to children in need of residential or foster care. In 1997, 11 homes were licensed by the Division of Families and Children and an additional 3 homes were licensed by Child Placing Agencies. Sullivan County has no residential facilities.

What we know about Sullivan County...