T Lab, Tipping Point's R+D team, researches, prototypes, and tests new social services in partnership with our grantees and the Bay Area community at large.

T LAB REPORT: DISCOVERY PHASE

Exploring New Childcare Avenues for Working Parents in Partnership with Restaurant Opportunities Centers United (ROC)

THE CONTEXT: FINDING AFFORDABLE, QUALITY CHILDCARE

Quality childcare doesn't just prepare children to succeed in school – it makes it possible for parents to get to work and earn the income they need to get on the road out of poverty. Many low-income parents have to miss out on support services and opportunities for education and training if childcare is not provided.

In T Lab's exploration of this complex issue, we've engaged with a variety of community members—from experts running successful childcare businesses to parents themselves—to challenge assumptions around childcare and explore new models.

In the first year of this work, we discovered the tremendous need for affordable care. San Francisco alone has 2,749 children on the wait list for subsidized care. The many working parents waiting on these opportunities must then turn to other sources for care that are often much more expensive than they can afford.
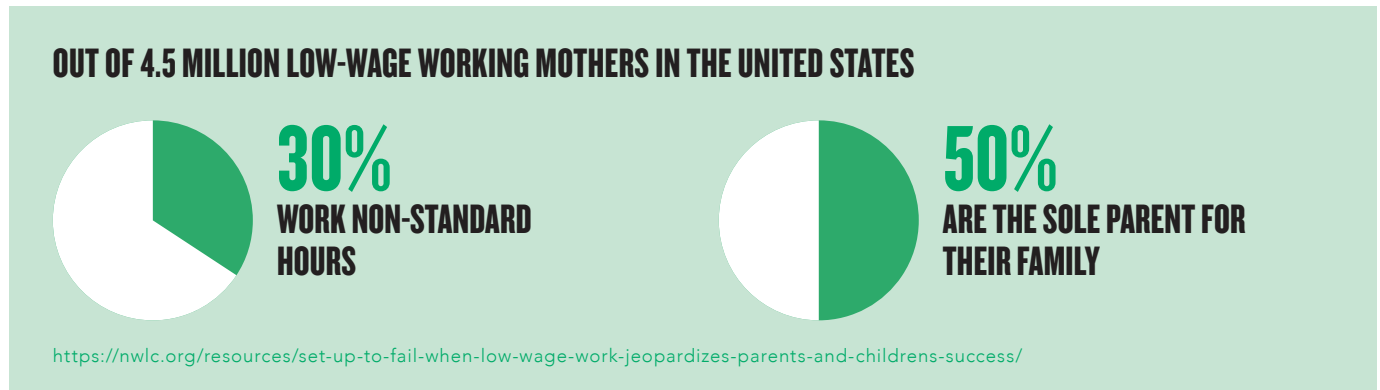
2018 ANNUAL MINIMUM WAGE INCOME VS. CHILD CARE COSTS IN SAN FRANCISCO

$31,200 INDIVIDUAL EARNING MINIMUM WAGE

$22,560-$29,508 LICENSED INFANT CHILD CARE

http://www.childrenscouncil.org/families/understanding-child-care/child-care-costs/

The need for childcare is deepened by the terms under which many low-income parents and caregivers are employed. The recent growth of low-wage part-time jobs with non-standard (night and weekend), irregularly-scheduled hours has disproportionately affected low-income wage-earners, leaving many low-income parents struggling to find childcare last minute or at times when it is less commonly available.

OUT OF 4.5 MILLION LOW-WAGE WORKING MOTHERS IN THE UNITED STATES

30% WORK NON-STANDARD HOURS

50% ARE THE SOLE PARENT FOR THEIR FAMILY

https://nwlc.org/resources/set-up-to-fail-when-low-wage-work-jeopardizes-parents-and-childrens-success/

Because the cost of licensed care is so expensive, T Lab decided to spend our second year re-imagining how informal childcare networks of family and friends could meet the need. We tested a service concept we called Gma Village that mobilized trusted grandmothers as a network of available caregivers using a digital platform.

While we learned a great deal from this micro-pilot, by our third year we became increasingly aware of the fragmented nature of childcare solutions. Given the considerable amount of work and time required to piece together formal childcare with informal support from friends and family (which is reportedly the most common care option for 49% of California families), low-income parents are far too often forced to choose between either holding steady employment or providing care for their children.

Very few licensed childcare centers provide the kind of after-hours drop-in care that low-income parents need. Government funding for subsidized childcare spots is limited, and many parents cannot take advantage of traditional childcare because of the hours it is available.

Photo courtesy of Daphne Doerr Photography

THE OPPORTUNITY:
ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGE AROUND THE CLOCK + BRINGING IN PARTNERS

After exploring the existing limitations of childcare, T Lab is now looking toward new scalable childcare models and focusing specifically on low-wage shift workers who need 24-hour childcare.

We're currently partnering with Restaurant Opportunities Centers United (ROC) to dig into this issue. ROC's mission is to ensure that all people who work in restaurants can achieve financial independence and improve their quality of life. Based in New York City, ROC has 10 local chapters across the country, including a Bay Area office in Oakland.

We've chosen to focus on restaurant workers in particular because, as ROC's research has documented, many restaurant employees exemplify the challenges of maintaining shift work that keep low-income workers, people of color and women locked in a cycle of poverty. Adding to these challenges is the increasing cost of living in the Bay Area, where wages don't go as far as they would in other parts of the country.

This problem will only persist as the restaurant industry continues to grow. A recent ROC report estimates that 1 in 11 Americans work in the industry, an extremely high numbers of low-wage workers working non-standard work hours. The same report details how the need for childcare regularly causes restaurant workers to drop out of stable employment to care for young children, recommends the formalization and regulation of night care for these workers, and calls on the restaurant industry itself to play a larger role.

UP NEXT: COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH AND CO-DESIGN

By teaming up with ROC, T Lab will now partner with a robust community of low-income workers who are motivated to find childcare solutions. While we don't know yet what solutions will emerge from the process, we do know that through incorporating restaurant workers, business owners and childcare providers every step of the way, we'll have community buy-in, bring equity and inclusion to an overlooked but critical issue, and get a sense of which ideas will thrive in the real world.

Follow along at
tippingpoint.org/what-we-do/tlab.

TIPPING POINT COMMUNITY   **T LAB**

Tipping Point works to break the cycle of poverty for individuals and families in the Bay Area by focusing the resources of our community towards nonprofits and public systems providing housing, education, early childhood wellness, and employment services. Since 2013, Tipping Point has invested in Research and Development to fill gaps in the nonprofit sector and develop new poverty-fighting ideas. Known as **T Lab,** our R+D team researches, prototypes, and tests new social services in partnership with our grantees and the Bay Area community at large.