

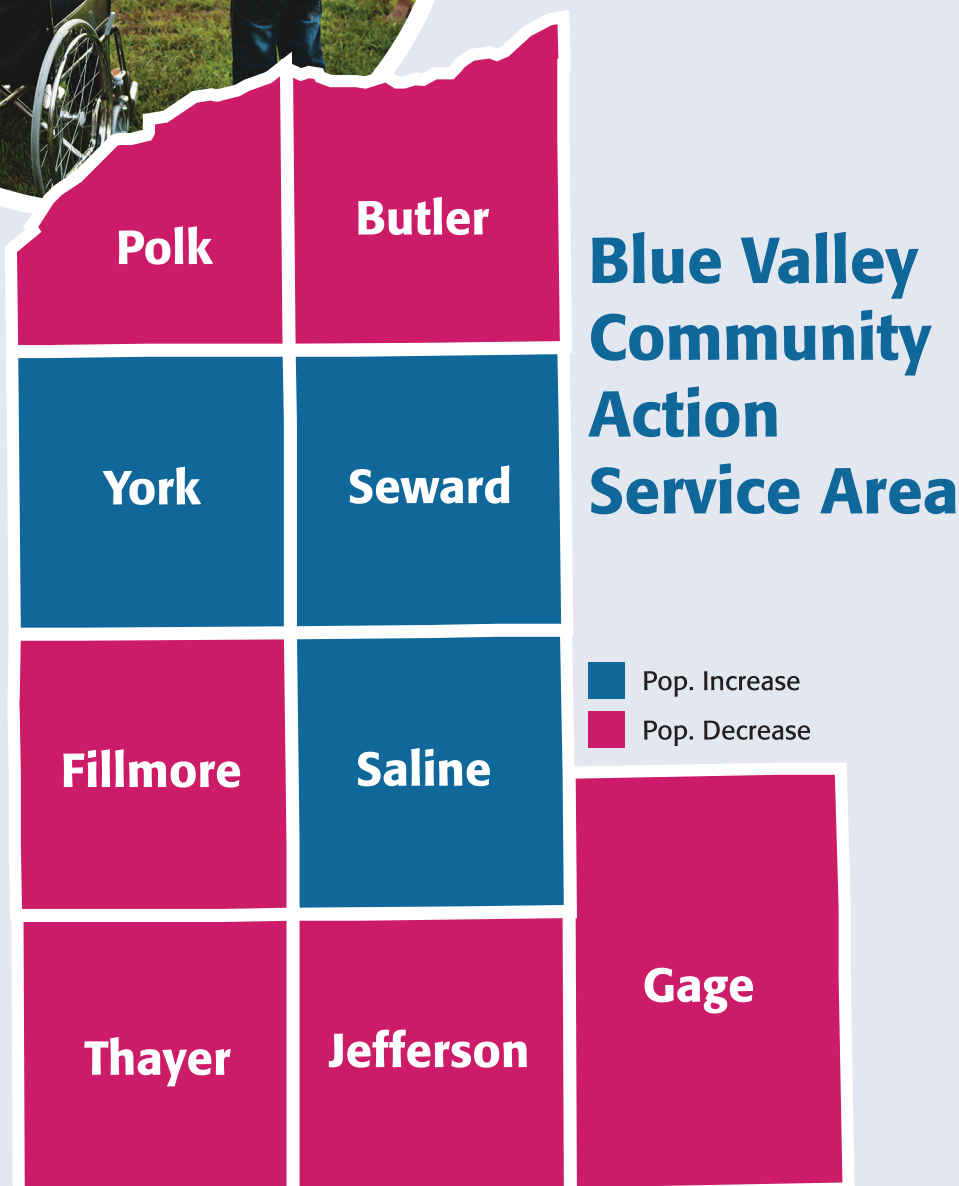


# Community Strengths & Challenges

## Moving Toward a Shared Vision

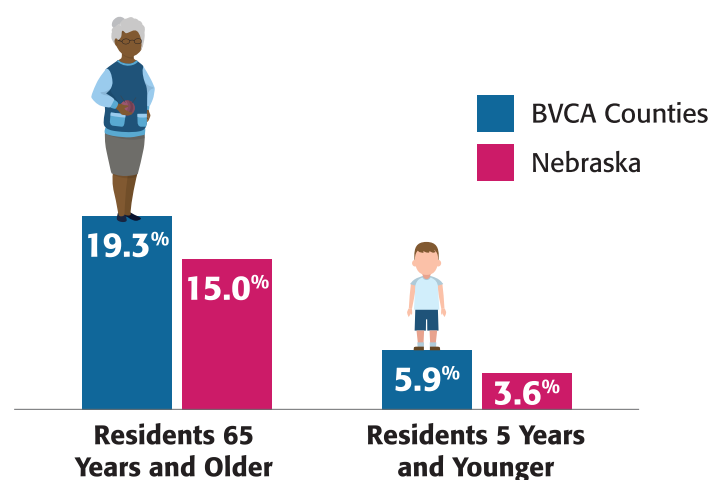


From September 2019 – May 2020, Blue Valley Community Action (BVCA) conducted a comprehensive needs assessment of its nine-county service area to support strategic planning. This infographic of key findings and related strategic goals is designed to stimulate community conversations and action as we all work together to build stronger communities<sup>1</sup>.

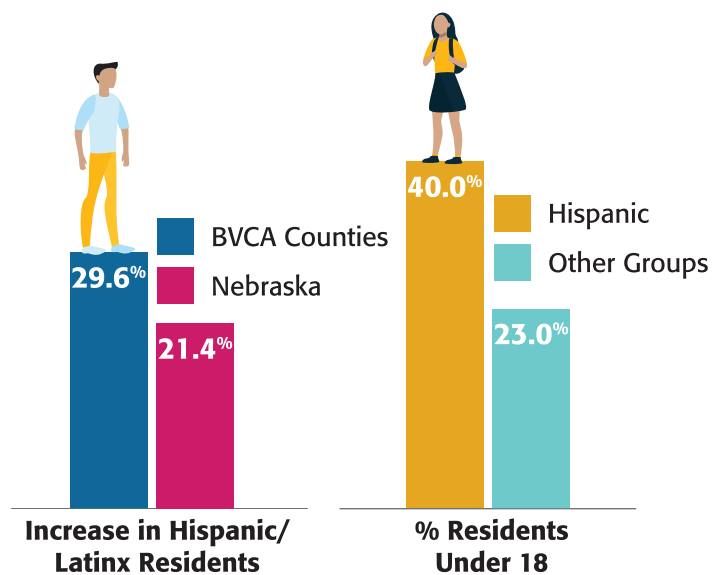


While three of our counties posted population increases, the remaining counties show population declines from 2010 to 2018.

### Resident Characteristics

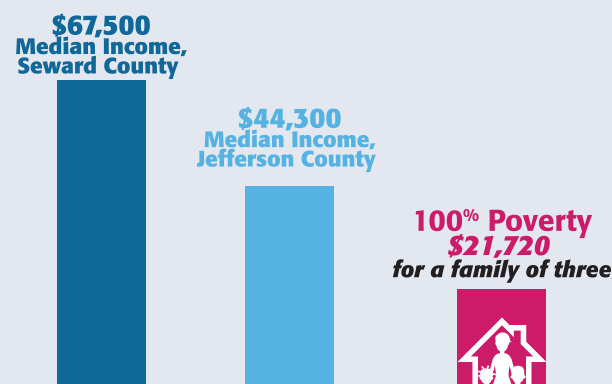


Our area has more preschool-aged children and residents ages 65+ than Nebraska.

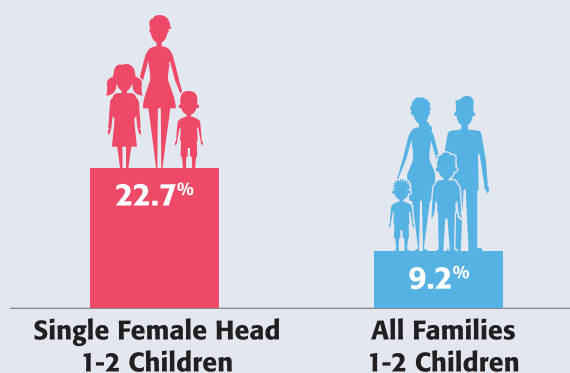


The Hispanic/Latinx population in our service area increased almost 30% since 2010 and is proportionally younger than other residents.

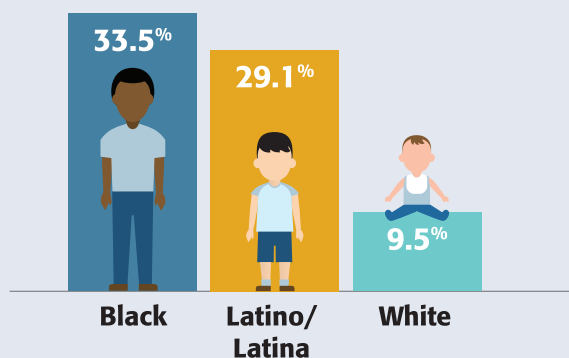
### Poverty Profile



In our communities, 1 in 10 households live below the 100% poverty threshold, which is \$21,720 for a family of three in 2020.



Female-headed households are more likely to live in poverty.



Black children are 3 times more likely to live in poverty than White children. Hispanic and Latino/Latina children are more than 2.5 times as likely to live in poverty.

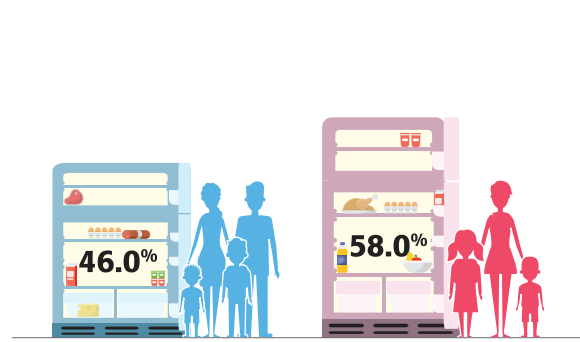
<sup>1</sup>Unless otherwise noted, data in this summary are from the US Census 2000, 2010, and American Community Survey Estimates 2014-2018.

#### Agency Vision:

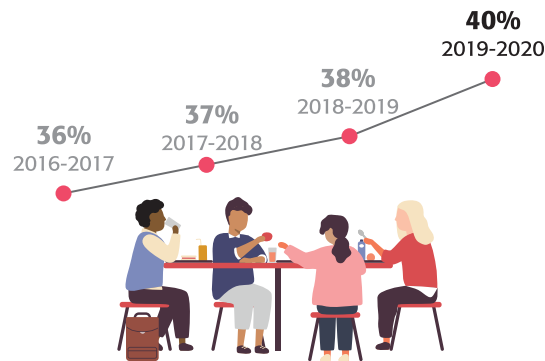
Our communities are safe and supportive, differences and traditions are respected, individuals and families are financially secure, and everyone has opportunities to develop their potential.

## Food Insecurity

Food insecurity describes a household's inability to provide enough food for every person in the household to lead an active and healthy life.



46% of BVCA clients reported not having enough food at least sometimes, increasing to 58% for single parent households<sup>2</sup>.



The percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch has increased in most of our communities with 40% of students qualifying in the 2019-2020 school year<sup>3</sup>.



**Related BVCA Strategic Goal:** Increase food security in our communities through enhanced collaborations, communications, and outreach.

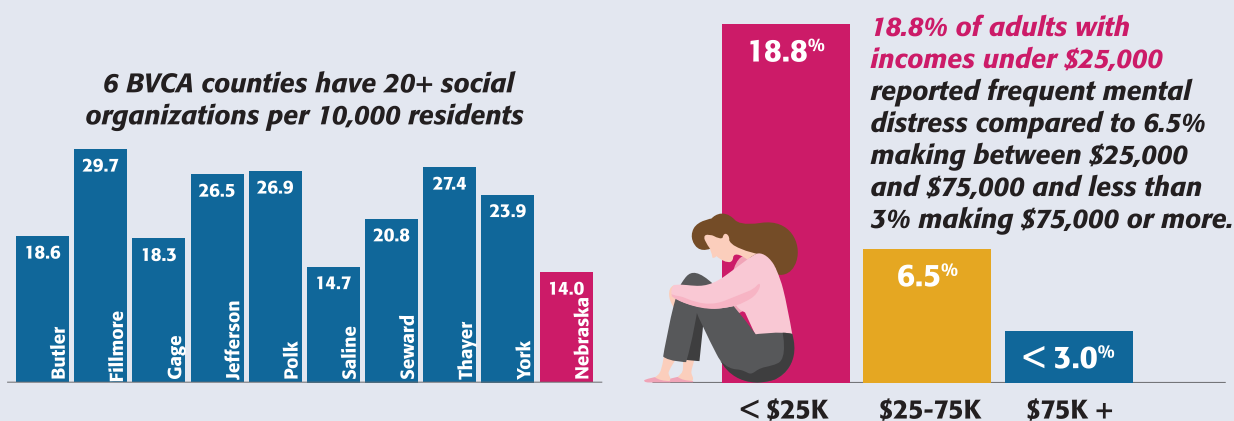
## Health

The recent pandemic highlights the need for equity, accessibility, and adequate, sustainable capacity in healthcare service delivery. As communities confront these concerns, a focus on prevention becomes even more important.

Residents in our counties are dying prematurely from causes that are preventable. More than 34% of Nebraska adults are classified as obese and the percentage is rising. Most BVCA counties have a slightly higher percentage of obese adults compared to Nebraska<sup>4</sup>.

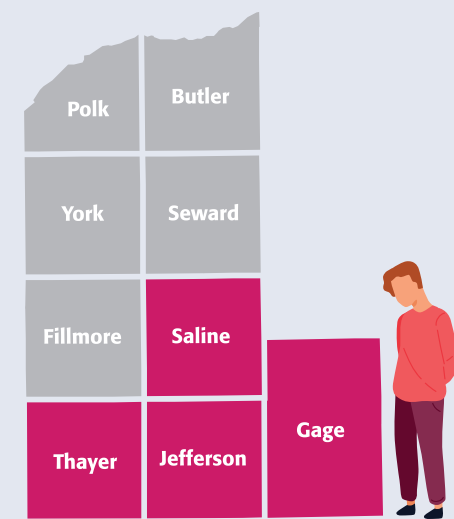


Good mental health is critical to our overall wellbeing. While our rural communities offer a variety of opportunities for social support, we also face many mental health challenges.



Many BVCA counties rank far above the state average of 14 social associations for 10,000 residents<sup>4</sup>.

Mental health issues are more common among people with lower incomes<sup>5</sup>.



Youth in several BVCA counties have a very high risk of suicide and ideation attempts<sup>6</sup>.

**Related BVCA Strategic Goal:** Increase client access to healthcare and other services by developing online connectivity within agency facilities and loaned "hot spots."

**"We have a lot of people who are unable to access services. It could be a money issue or barrier with time or stigma... for whatever reason they are not seeking help. They aren't connected to the community."**

Excerpt from Stakeholder Interview

<sup>2</sup>BVCA Client Survey, 2019

<sup>3</sup>NE Department of Education, Free and Reduced Lunch Counts by School District and County, 2013-2020, alternate years used for trend.

<sup>4</sup>County Health Rankings and Roadmaps 2020

<sup>5</sup>Community Health Assessment - Community Health Improvement Plan for Fillmore, Gage, Jefferson, Saline, and Thayer Counties 2018-2023 Public Health Solutions, 2018. Based on NE BRFSS data 2011-2015

<sup>6</sup>America's Health Rankings and CDC, National Center for Health Statistics based on Nebraska Risk and Protective Factors Surveillance System in 2016

# Housing

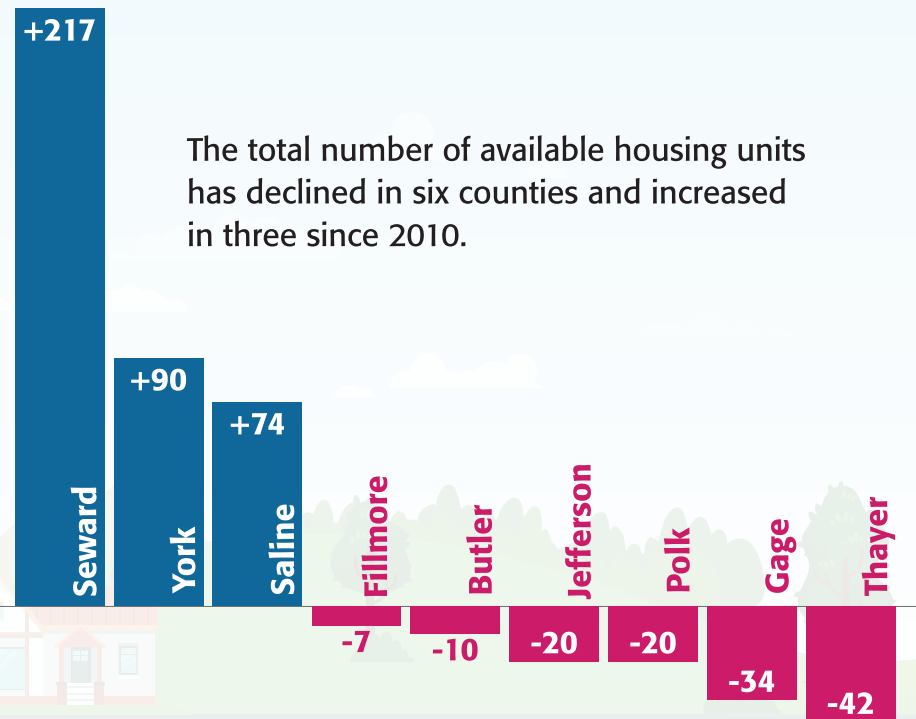
Housing quality is a major issue across the BVCA area. Poor upkeep increases utility costs and can lead to serious health problems from mold, lead-based paint, and other factors.

Much of the housing in our counties is over 50 years old and 3000 single-family homes are classified as “badly worn” or “worn out.”<sup>7</sup>



Quality affordable housing, especially rentals with more than two bedrooms, are very limited in our communities.

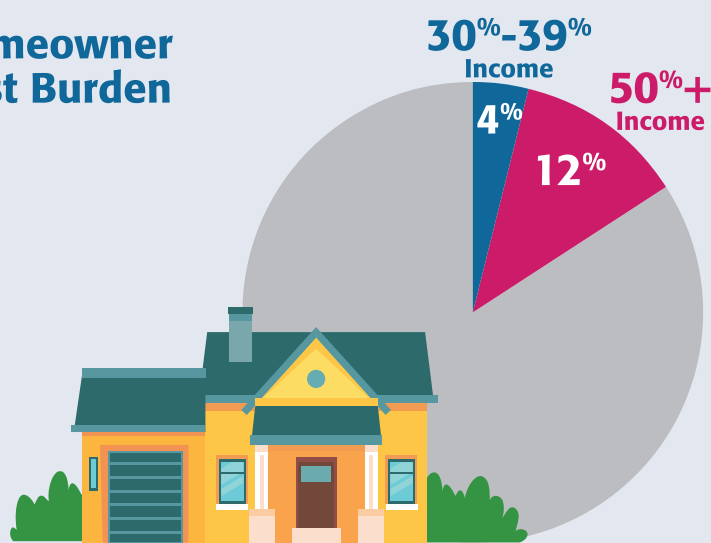
Construction rose sharply in the area from 2015-2017. While communities have added single-family homes and duplexes, the number of units in larger rental properties has declined<sup>7</sup>.



The total number of available housing units has declined in six counties and increased in three since 2010.

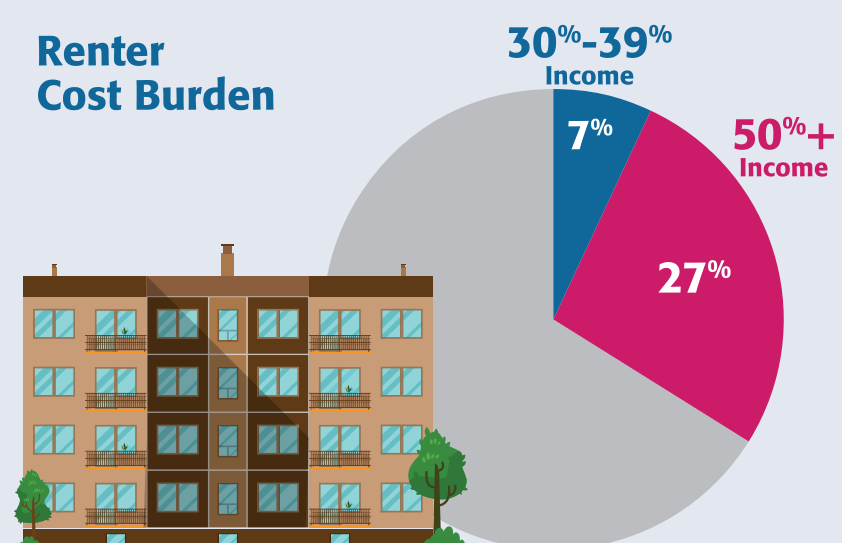
Some homeowners and renters pay a large portion of their income for housing, even if the quality is poor.

## Homeowner Cost Burden



About 16% of homeowner households in our area pay over 30% of their income on housing. 12% pay more than 50% of their monthly income for housing.

## Renter Cost Burden



One in three renters in our communities pay more than 30% of their monthly income on housing; 27% pay more than 50% on housing.

**Related BVCA Strategic Goals:**  
Increase affordable housing opportunities and homeownership in our area by implementing more lease-to-own housing arrangements.

Improve existing affordable housing in our communities by establishing a weatherization repair grant program for income-eligible homeowners who apply for weatherization but need home repairs done first in order for weatherization work to be done.

Collaborate with other economic and housing development organizations to develop new affordable rental housing units.

*“It seems like a lot of houses are available but many are in disrepair, quite a few apartments are also available but not in great condition.”*

*“We do have some good models for housing and I think this can be part of the systems change - communities putting better standards in their codes and holding landlords to those standards. This has to be done at the local level.”*

Excerpts from Stakeholder Interviews

<sup>7</sup>Nebraska Investment Finance Authority (NIFA) 2019 County Profiles

## Financial Education

Many people have not been educated in budgeting and sound money management. Successful programs that help people escape from poverty include this component and focus on the long-term.



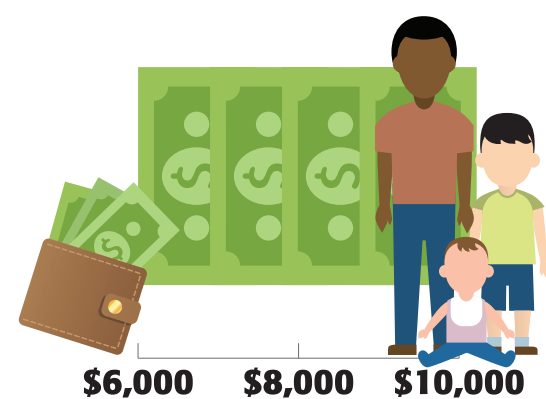
- Between 30-50% of client survey respondents reported engaging in negative financial behaviors (paying credit card minimum, using credit card to pay monthly bills, etc.).
- 15% reported using payday loans in the last 12 months.
- 43% said that understanding their credit score was a concern, but only 1% reported getting help in this area.

**Related BVCA Strategic Goal:**  
Increase the money management skills of residents in our communities by providing financial literacy coaching to residents over 25 years of age.

## Child Development

Early childhood education is crucial to a child's future success, but quality childcare services that include strong educational components are not accessible to all families. Established quality improvement programs for childcare providers help strengthen educational offerings with additional resources and support.

- The market rate for full-time, unsubsidized childcare can range from \$6,650-\$9,200 per year<sup>8</sup>.
- As of January 2020, eighteen (10%) licensed childcare providers in our counties were participating in Nebraska's Step Up to Quality Program. Another eleven providers were part of BVCA's *Infant Toddler Quality Initiative*.



**Related BVCA Strategic Goals:**  
Enhance the quality of affordable childcare in our service area by increasing the number of childcare providers participating in established quality improvement programs.

Determine the feasibility of offering early childhood education services for children from birth to age three in Polk County.

## Jobs

Some jobs do not pay enough for families to afford the additional costs of working, including transportation and childcare. Helping our residents prepare for and obtain living wage employment should reduce pressure on other assistance programs.



Most working people living in poverty are working part-time or part-year jobs.



Forty percent of BVCA clients reported job-related concerns (training, finding a job, transportation to a job) on the client survey; none reported receiving help finding a job.

**"We have a lot of people who don't have transportation, have low-paying jobs, work more than one job, can't afford childcare - a lot of important things that help people to thrive are missing."**

*Excerpt from Stakeholder Interview*

**Related BVCA Strategic Goals:**  
Improve the economic future of our communities by collaborating with local educational institutions and business partners to explore ways to help prepare and enroll area residents in job training and placement opportunities.

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www.bvca.net

<sup>8</sup>Childcare Market Rate Survey Report 2019, Buffet Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska.