

Uncertainty Ahead Means Instability Now

Why Families, Children, Educators, Businesses, and States Need Congress to Fund Child Care

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ALABAMA



The problems are clear: Families can't find or afford child care because compensation is too low to attract and retain early childhood educators. As federal relief dollars that have saved the sector from complete collapse begin to dry up, the stability those dollars brought to programs will disappear with the funding.

The solutions are clear: The public benefits from public investments in child care and early learning. Congress needs to build on the successes of child care funding to prioritize additional, sustainable investments that ensure programs and educators can meet the needs of families, children, and businesses, and states can continue to build towards an early childhood education system that works.

In October 2022, more than 12,000 early childhood educators from all states and settings – including faith-based programs, family child care homes, Head Starts, and child care centers—responded to a new ECE field survey from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The results of this survey continue to show that relief helped, but uncertainty about the future is impacting the present.

Here are some reflections from survey respondents in Alabama:

“Further improvement and expansion of educational facilities, along with the improvement of teaching quality and enrollment rate, staff benefits will also be improved.”—Early childhood educator

“The grant helps keep my employees excited about coming to work and doing a great job when they are here.”—Family child care owner/operator

“What is going well with my program is that our doors are still open to serve the families that needs childcare, and we are still searching for quality staff members.”—Family child care owner/operator

“Not sure if we can make it if things continue to cost more because if I have to raise tuition, I will lose kids that families can not afford to pay more.”—Family child care owner/operator

“What concerns me the most about the ending of stabilization grant is not affording a staff members, the upkeep of my business, Not being able to complete or provide facility improvements for handicap accessible areas, not being able to contribute to my staff members retirement, unable to pay staff members for sick leave and other incentives.”—Family child care owner/operator

Here's a brief summary of the survey data from Alabama:

	ALABAMA	NATIONAL
Sample Size	101	12,897
Child Care Center	41.6%	47.7%
Family Child Care	24.8%	18.6%
STABILIZATION GRANTS¹		
Total reporting that their program would have closed without grants	36.9%	34.0%
Total reporting that they believe their last payment will be in 2023	92.1%	61.0%
When stabilization grants end:		
Child care center directors saying their programs will have to raise tuition	25.0%	42.8%
Total reporting their programs will have to cut wages or be unable to sustain wage/salary increases	53.8%	23.0%
STAFFING AND SUPPLY		
Current Challenges		
Total reporting that their program is currently experiencing a staffing shortage	60.4%	67.0%
Among respondents in programs with a staffing shortage:		
› Reporting they are serving fewer children	39.3%	45.4%
› Reporting a longer waitlist	19.7%	37.4%
Future Challenges		
Total indicating “yes” or “maybe” to considering leaving their job or closing their family child care home	32.7%	29.2%
› In the field 5 years or less indicating “yes” or “maybe” to considering leaving their job or closing their family child care home	40.9%	45.0%
› In minority-owned businesses considering leaving	46.3%	43.7%
› In non-minority-owned businesses considering leaving	37.3%	25.0%
Number one thing needed to stay	Competitive wages	Competitive wages
ECE WORKFORCE WELL-BEING		
Total respondents experiencing financial insecurity in the last year	21.8%	29.5%
Total respondents who received more money from a wage increase or supplement in the last year	64.4%	49.4%
Total indicating that burnout/exhaustion are “greatly” or “to some extent” contributing to problems retaining teachers	82.2%	78.0%

Methodology This online survey, created and conducted by NAEYC using SurveyMonkey, represents the responses of a non-randomized sample of 13,037 individuals working in early childhood education settings who completed the survey in English or Spanish between October 5-23, 2022. To generate a more representative national sample from the pool of responses, a probability proportional to size (PPS) methodology was used to pull samples by state that are benchmarked to the share of the total early childhood workforce by state. These shares were calculated by the authors from the Bureau of Labor Statistics May 2021 Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (Codes: 11-9031, 25-2011, 25-2051, 39-9011). The final sample size for the national-level analysis is 12,897. In contrast, for the state-level analysis, the entire sample of responses from each state were used. We are unable to supply detailed analysis in states for which there are very small sample sizes across sub-groups. Respondents were asked to select any setting that applied to them. They could choose from the following list: child care center, family child care home, non-profit, for-profit, school-based, Head Start, faith-based, multi-site. For this brief, only the percentages for child care center and family child care are reported.

The survey links were shared widely through email newsletters, listservs, social media, and via partnerships, and 10 randomly selected respondents were provided with a \$100 gift card for participation in a sweepstakes. Given the constantly changing and widely varying nature of the crisis, the broad analysis from this survey is intended to present the experiences of the respondents, as captured in the moment that they take the survey, with extrapolations for the experiences of the field and industry at large. Additional information available at www.naeyc.org/pandemic-surveys

1. For more state-level information about the receipt of stability grants, please see ACF's state profiles. According to the profile for Alabama, providers in 99% of Alabama's counties received funds as of 6/30/22. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/occ/Alabama_ARP_Child_Care_Stabilization_Fact_Sheet.pdf