

Uncertainty Ahead Means Instability Now

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

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ARIZONA



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 Arizona:

"I'm from Arizona, a state behind in childhood issues. During the pandemic, we heard "child care is an essential business and the basis of our economy!" That was a bright spot for me."—Early childhood educator

"The experience of the pandemic helped my center see the benefit of having lower ratios to increase quality. The staff are much more bonded than I've seen in years past. And we have been able to utilize grant funding to address situations that, before, we would have had to use and pay back loans for."—Child care center program director

"The stabilization grants have helped to give staff bonuses and raises, and pay for rent. It has been very helpful in maintaining staff and incentivizing new staff."—Child care center program director

"Now that we have received this money, how will we replace it once it's gone? All of our costs have increased. Staffing is still extremely difficult."—Child care center program director

"We are unable to sustain staffing with continued enrollment shortages because we need enrollment to pay salaries. Tuition rates cannot be raised to pay teachers without affecting families. Many will choose not to enroll children due to high tuition. It is a vicious cycle."—Child care center program director

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

	ARIZONA	NATIONAL
Sample Size	161	12,897
Child Care Center	41.0%	47.7%
Family Child Care	19.9%	18.6%
STABILIZATION GRANTS¹		
Child care directors/administrators who report receiving grants	79.2%	73.9%
Family child care owner/operators who report receiving grants	76.9%	85.7%
Total reporting that their program would have closed without grants	38.7%	34.0%
Total reporting that they believe their last payment will be in 2023	82.7%	61.0%
When stabilization grants end:		
Child care center directors saying their programs will have to raise tuition	52.6%	42.8%
Total reporting their programs will have to cut wages or be unable to sustain wage/salary increases	34.9%	23.0%
STAFFING AND SUPPLY		
Current Challenges		
Child care center directors reporting they are serving fewer children than they would like to serve	43.8%	46.4%
Most common reason they are under-enrolled?	Not enough staff	Not enough staff
Total reporting that their program is currently experiencing a staffing shortage	68.9%	67.0%
Among respondents in programs with a staffing shortage:		
› Reporting they are serving fewer children	45.0%	45.4%
› Reporting a longer waitlist	33.3%	37.4%
Future Challenges		
Total indicating “yes” or “maybe” to considering leaving their job or closing their family child care home	37.3%	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	51.1%	45.0%
› Family child care providers considering leaving	53.8%	36.4%
› In minority-owned businesses considering leaving	60.4%	43.7%
› In non-minority-owned businesses considering leaving	32.3%	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	32.9%	29.5%
Total respondents who received more money from a wage increase or supplement in the last year	59.6%	49.4%
Total indicating that burnout/exhaustion are “greatly” or “to some extent” contributing to problems retaining teachers	83.9%	78.0%

1. For more state-level information about the receipt of stability grants, please see ACF's state profiles. According to the profile for Arizona, providers in 100% of Arizona's counties received funds as of 6/30/22. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/occ/Arizona_ARP_Child_Care_Stabilization_Fact_Sheet.pdf

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