naeyc® National Association for the Education of Young Children

Uncertainty Ahead Means Instability Now

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

December 2022

CALIFORNIA

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 California:

"Despite the exhaustion, every teacher I work with is still a consummate professional who shows up for the kids every single day. This impresses me daily."—Early childhood educator

"Children are thriving and enjoy being with their classmates. Parents tell me how much their child is growing emotionally and socially. We always show up for the kids and give everything we have."—Early childhood educator

"Conversations about pay equity and wages for early education are starting to gain momentum. We cannot avoid the wage disparity anymore."—Child care program director

"My biggest concern is that the legislature and the public think that these stabilization grants are the answer and "solved" something. The stabilization prevented programs from closing and were lifelines during the pandemic, but without permanent long-term increased funding, high-quality early education programs serving children 0-5 will close. Short-term grant funding is not a solution. The perilous ECE system is built on the backs of the amazing workforce (the majority of whom are women of color) who accept poverty wages to serve the nation's youngest and most vulnerable children. I am tired of talking about equity and access – for true equity and to increase access, the government must adequately fund programs and support competitive wages for the early childhood education workforce."—Child child center director

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

	CALIFORNIA	NATIONAL
Sample Size	1,387	12,897
Child Care Center	44.3%	47.7%
Family Child Care	21.8%	18.6%
STABILIZATION GRANTS[1]		
Child care directors/administrators who report receiving grants	56.9%	73.9%
Family child care owner/operators who report receiving grants	68.2%	85.7%
Total reporting that their program would have closed without grants	27.1%	34.0%
Total reporting that they believe their last payment will be in 2023	54.3%	61.0%
Total reporting that they do not know when their last payment will be	37.8%	27.0%
When stabilization grants end:		
Child care center directors saying their programs will have to raise tuition	37.9%	42.8%
Total reporting their programs will have to cut wages or be unable to sustain wage/salary increases	26.0%	23.0%
STAFFING AND SUPPLY		
Current Challenges		
Child care center directors reporting they are serving fewer children than they would like to serve	41.1%	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	56.7%	67.0%
Among respondents in programs with a staffing shortage:		
› Reporting they are serving fewer children	45.9%	45.4%
› Reporting a longer waitlist	26.6%	37.4%
Future Challenges		
Total indicating "yes" or "maybe" to considering leaving their job or closing their family child care home	29.3%	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	32.9%	45.0%
› Family child care providers considering leaving	31.3%	36.4%
› In minority-owned businesses considering leaving	35.6%	43.7%
› In non-minority-owned businesses considering leaving	20.5%	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	35.7%	29.5%
Total respondents who received more money from a wage increase or supplement in the last year	38.2%	49.4%
Total indicating that burnout/exhaustion are "greatly" or "to some extent" contributing to problems retaining teachers	76.1%	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 California, providers in 100% of California's counties received funds as of 6/30/22. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/occ/California_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