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

MASSACHUSETTS

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 Massachusetts:

"I work with an amazing group of professionals who take their jobs teaching the littlest members of society seriously. But we are tired."—Early childhood educator

"I think the pandemic brought to light the challenges of running an ECE program and retaining staff. I hope government agencies can see how broken our business model is without stipends or grant money. Running a high quality child care business is difficult and I'm hoping the powers that be see how vital we are to the economy and how underpaid and overworked our staff is."—ECE professional

"I have raised my staff base wages anywhere from 5% to 20% over the course of the distribution of the stabilization grants. It worries me that once the grant money runs out, I will not be able to sustain these wages or offer annual increases without raising tuition to parents yet again."—ECE professional

"Child care has changed and this stabilization grant has helped fill in the gaps while programs struggle to operate. Without this support, many more programs will close, making child care even harder for families."—Family child care owner/operator

"I have been very impressed with the dedication of the staff at my program. I am also so impressed with all ECE that have worked during the pandemic and after. It has been a very difficult time and the pay does not support the important work we do each day."—Program Director/Administrator

"We have started using a new curriculum which we were able to purchase with stimulus money. We have also started using a new communication app with the parents which has helped improve communications with parents!"—Program Director/Administrator

"For a lot of centers the stabilization grants have helped keep us financially sound while enrollment has been lower due to Covid. Without the grant we would have used up all of our reserves in order to pay staff because enrollment alone would not have covered the cost. We would not be open because we would have run out of funds"—Program Director/Administrator

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

	MASSACHUSETTS	NATIONAL
Sample Size	208	12,897
Child Care Center	48.6%	47.7%
Family Child Care	14.9%	18.6%
STABILIZATION GRANTS[1]		
Child care directors/administrators who report receiving grants	72.8%	73.9%
Family child care owner/operators who report receiving grants	88.9%	85.7%
Total reporting that their program would have closed without grants	27.7%	34.0%
Total reporting that they believe their last payment will be in 2023	64.1%	61.0%
Total reporting that they do not know when their last payment will be	27.2%	27.0%
When stabilization grants end:		
Child care center directors saying their programs will have to raise tuition	41.8%	42.8%
Total reporting their programs will have to cut wages or be unable to sustain wage/salary increases	29.2%	23.0%
STAFFING AND SUPPLY		
Current Challenges		
Child care center directors reporting they are serving fewer children than they would like to serve	31.5%	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	60.1%	67.0%
Among respondents in programs with a staffing shortage:		
› Reporting they are serving fewer children	43.2%	45.4%
› Reporting a longer waitlist	29.6%	37.4%

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

	MASSACHUSETTS	NATIONAL
Future Challenges		
Total indicating "yes" or "maybe" to considering leaving their job or closing their family child care home	23.6%	29.2%
› Family child care providers considering leaving	33.3%	36.4%
Number one thing needed to stay	Competitive wages	Competitive wages
ECE WORKFORCE WELL-BEING		
Total respondents experiencing financial insecurity in the last year	28.8%	29.5%
Total respondents who received more money from a wage increase or supplement in the last year	54.3%	49.4%
Total indicating that burnout/exhaustion are "greatly" or "to some extent" contributing to problems retaining teachers	76.9%	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