

Uncertainty Ahead Means Instability Now

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

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MONTANA



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 Montana:

"The stabilization grant money allowed our center to approve raises for all current staff and implement a new wage scale for all future staff. One of my newer co-workers literally cried tears of happiness last week when she opened her paycheck and said, "I can afford to pay rent this month and get groceries!" It's a year of growing pains for sure, but our staff knows that they are valued, respected, and can afford to stay in this industry they love."—Early childhood educator

"If stabilization grants end, I will be unable to continue to provide high quality early care and learning, I will be unable to retain high quality staff, my family will go back to poverty income level and qualify for food stamps and our housing situation will be in jeopardy again."—Family child care owner

"The stabilization grant money has been a great help to stay open and keep my rates down for my hard-working parents. Figuring out how to budget costs to stay open and still make a decent living for myself to make it worth staying in the field is a big concern."—Child care center director

"Without additional support, child care cannot keep up with the wage increases without raising tuition substantially. Parents cannot afford to pay much more for child care. The stabilization grant helps to maintain wage increases for staff without substantially increasing rates for families."—Program Director/Administrator

Here's a brief summary of the survey data from Montana.

Note that due to the small sample size, Montana's data is reported using numbers, while the national data is reported using percentages.

	MONTANA	NATIONAL
Sample Size	46	12,897
Child Care Center	20	47.7%
Family Child Care	17	18.6%
STABILIZATION GRANTS¹		
Total reporting that their program would have closed without grants	21	34.0%
Total reporting that they believe their last payment will be in 2023	39	61.0%
When stabilization grants end:		
Total reporting their programs will have to cut wages or be unable to sustain wage/salary increases	17	23.0%
STAFFING AND SUPPLY		
Current Challenges		
Total reporting that their program is currently experiencing a staffing shortage	25	67.0%
Among respondents in programs with a staffing shortage:		
› Reporting they are serving fewer children	17	45.4%
› Reporting a longer waitlist	14	37.4%
Future Challenges		
Total indicating "yes" or "maybe" to considering leaving their job or closing their family child care home	15	29.2%
Number one thing needed to stay	Competitive wages	Competitive wages
ECE WORKFORCE WELL-BEING		
Total respondents experiencing financial insecurity in the last year	16	29.5%
Total respondents who received more money from a wage increase or supplement in the last year	21	49.4%
Total indicating that burnout/exhaustion are "greatly" or "to some extent" contributing to problems retaining teachers	37	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 in Montana, please see ACF's state profiles. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/occ/Montana_ARP_Child_Care_Stabilization_Fact_Sheet.pdf