

Uncertainty Ahead Means Instability Now

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

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NEW JERSEY



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 New Jersey:

"I am proud of all we have done to support children and families in these 2+ years of a pandemic. We are not only ESSENTIAL workers, but we ARE Superheroes! Just wish our pay rates matched the same definition."—Program Director/Administrator

"What concerns me is if there is no more stabilization grants a lot of small business child care centers (including my center) will have a tough time to try and compensate without the extra funding."—Early childhood educator

"I will not have enough available money to pay staff and utilities without major tuition increase"—Family child care owner/operator

"We have been able to make many needed improvements to our facility and classrooms because of the stabilization grant money we have received. We have been able to purchase new furniture, curriculum, and supplies. We installed a security system. We were able to hire additional staff and increase their rate of pay. None of this would have been possible without the grant/subsidy money."—Program Director/Administrator

"The child care industry and its workers continue to struggle. I wonder how any of us will be able to keep own heads above water long term. It's so sad and worrisome. It's not the only solution, but stabilization grants are one thing that has been greatly appreciated. I pray they will continue."—Program Director/Administrator

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

	NEW JERSEY	NATIONAL
Sample Size	202	12,897
Child Care Center	60.4%	47.7%
Family Child Care	4.5%	18.6%
STABILIZATION GRANTS¹		
Total reporting that their program would have closed without grants	29.9%	34.0%
Total reporting that they believe their last payment will be in 2023	67.9%	61.0%
When stabilization grants end:		
Total reporting their programs will have to cut wages or be unable to sustain wage/salary increases	24.4%	23.0%
STAFFING AND SUPPLY		
Current Challenges		
Total reporting that their program is currently experiencing a staffing shortage	56.4%	67.0%
Among respondents in programs with a staffing shortage:		
› Reporting they are serving fewer children	43.9%	45.4%
› Reporting a longer waitlist	29.8%	37.4%
Future Challenges		
Total indicating “yes” or “maybe” to considering leaving their job or closing their family child care home	24.8%	29.2%
› In minority-owned businesses considering leaving	34.8%	43.7%
› In non-minority-owned businesses considering leaving	12.2%	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	30.2%	29.5%
Total respondents who received more money from a wage increase or supplement in the last year	34.7%	49.4%
Total indicating that burnout/exhaustion are “greatly” or “to some extent” contributing to problems retaining teachers	72.8%	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 New Jersey, providers in 100% of New Jersey's counties received funds as of 6/30/22. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/occ/New_Jersey_ARP_Child_Care_Stabilization_Fact_Sheet.pdf