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Uncertainty Ahead Means Instability Now

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

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NEW YORK

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 York:

"I'm most concerned with maintaining daily operations. We greatly benefit from the help and I fear I won't be able to find the staff to accommodate more children because we can't afford to pay higher wages."—Child care center director

"I have been able to use some of my stabilization grant money to make child care affordable for some parents so that they could keep their jobs. It's a great feeling to pay it forward."—Family child care owner/operator

"It is incredibly challenging to find staff (full time hires; float teachers; substitutes) and retain new staff. When stabilization grants end, and centers no longer have subsidization to offer higher wages or retention bonuses, what will happen? How are we expected to compete with high hourly pay rates of companies like Amazon; Target; Chipotle; etc.? We are a professional and extremely important field, yet the lowest paid professionals in education. Early Educators have rewarding, busy jobs where they must be alert, engaged, and responsible. We do not have jobs that are clock in/ clock out with minimal responsibility. Stabilization grants need to continue, or there needs to be a system in place to help subsidize child care centers and child care staff."—Program Director/Administrator

"I'm barely making it. Paycheck to paycheck. No extra money at all to save for unexpected emergencies or retirement."—Family child care owner/operator

"The subsidy increase this year allowed us to take a breath for a brief second. We are grateful that elected officials have begun to pay more attention to this issue after years and years of work. I had three staff obtain Child Development Associate Credentials this year, who are now lead qualified. I am so proud of them. We continue to provide quality care, despite MANY roadblocks. I am extremely proud of my team, administration and children/families."—Program Director/Administrator

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

	NEW YORK	NATIONAL
Sample Size	614	12,897
Child Care Center	33.7%	47.7%
Family Child Care	41.2%	18.6%
STABILIZATION GRANTS[1]		
Child care directors/administrators who report receiving grants	73.6%	73.9%
Family child care owner/operators who report receiving grants	88.4%	85.7%
Total reporting that their program would have closed without grants	37.2%	34.0%
Total reporting that they believe their last payment will be in 2023	53.1%	61.0%
Total reporting that they do not know when their last payment will be	32.3%	27.0%
When stabilization grants end:		
Child care center directors saying their programs will have to raise tuition	49.2%	42.8%
Total reporting their programs will have to cut wages or be unable to sustain wage/salary increases	35.5%	23.0%
STAFFING AND SUPPLY		
Current Challenges		
Child care center directors reporting they are serving fewer children than they would like to serve	39.3%	46.4%
Most common reason they are under-enrolled?	Compensation is too low for recruitment/retainment	Not enough staff
Total reporting that their program is currently experiencing a staffing shortage	44.8%	67.0%
Among respondents in programs with a staffing shortage:		
› Reporting they are serving fewer children	54.2%	45.4%
› Reporting a longer waitlist	31.3%	37.4%
Future Challenges		
Total indicating "yes" or "maybe" to considering leaving their job or closing their family child care home	31.3%	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	26.6%	45.0%
› Family child care providers considering leaving	32.4%	36.4%

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

	NEW YORK	NATIONAL
› In minority-owned businesses considering leaving	34.0%	43.7%
› In non-minority-owned businesses considering leaving	19.9%	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	35.3%	29.5%
Total respondents who received more money from a wage increase or supplement in the last year	37.9%	49.4%
Total indicating that burnout/exhaustion are "greatly" or "to some extent" contributing to problems retaining teachers	73.6%	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