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

NORTH CAROLINA

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 North Carolina:

"I am concerned that child care facilities will not be able to keep current staff. The bonuses were giving a little help to low paid teachers in the area."—Coach/Professional Development professional

"I was able to replace my very old playground with new equipment because of the stabilization grants. I have also been able to save for retirement for the first time in my 28 years in business."—Family child care owner/operator

"Our staff have been greatly impacted by the wage increases and bonuses we have been able to implement with the stabilization grant."—Program Director/Administrator

"I am worried we will not be able to keep the teacher wages up without doing a major increase in tuition. That in return will hurt many of our families."—Program Director/Administrator

"I think right now it's so difficult to get staff and retain staff in a climate especially when people are getting paid more for menial tasks. It would be so helpful if I could offer benefits and decent pay."—Program Director/Administrator

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

	NORTH CAROLINA	NATIONAL
Sample Size	203	12,897
Child Care Center	51.2%	47.7%
Family Child Care	10.8%	18.6%
STABILIZATION GRANTS[1]		
Child care directors/administrators who report receiving grants	82.9%	73.9%
Family child care owner/operators who report receiving grants	86.7%	85.7%
Total reporting that their program would have closed without grants	40.6%	34.0%
Total reporting that they believe their last payment will be in 2023	72.6%	61.0%
When stabilization grants end:		
Child care center directors saying their programs will have to raise tuition	48.5%	42.8%
Total reporting their programs will have to cut wages or be unable to sustain wage/salary increases	40.6%	23.0%
STAFFING AND SUPPLY		
Current Challenges		
Child care center directors reporting they are serving fewer children than they would like to serve	52.4%	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	62.1%	67.0%
Among respondents in programs with a staffing shortage:		
› Reporting they are serving fewer children	55.6%	45.4%
› Reporting a longer waitlist	48.4%	37.4%
Future Challenges		
Total indicating "yes" or "maybe" to considering leaving their job or closing their family child care home	22.2%	29.2%
› Family child care providers considering leaving	40.0%	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	30.0%	29.5%
Total respondents who received more money from a wage increase or supplement in the last year	56.7%	49.4%
Total indicating that burnout/exhaustion are "greatly" or "to some extent" contributing to problems retaining teachers	77.3%	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 North Carolina, providers in 99% of North Carolina's counties received funds as of 6/30/22. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/occ/North_Carolina_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