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

PENNSYLVANIA

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 Pennsylvania:

"Child care is on the brink of collapse. We are having a very difficult time finding and maintaining staff. We have phone calls from parents interested in space, but are unable to take their children."—Family child care owner/operator

"Because of the stabilization and workforce grants, we were able to increase the number of full-time teaching positions and attract and hire teachers who are more highly qualified in ECE than if we had been hiring for part-time positions. We were also able to reopen our second preschool classroom to focus more on the needs of the increasing number of developmentally delayed children we are seeing."—Program Director

"Child care is still not a stable business. Recruitment and retention of qualified employees is challenging when salaries aren't on the same level as professionals, or even retail jobs. Starting wages between $10 and $15 are not competitive enough with other careers."—Program Director

"How can we continue to pay the staff the wages we needed to offer? We will need to raise our tuition costs and hope this will not create a hardship for families. Unless we offer competitive wages, we cannot recruit staff and that would ultimately close down our center. Staffing remains a HUGE issue."—Program Director

"I would have been closed a long time ago if not for the stabilization funds. But, my center is still in jeopardy of closing if I am unable to find and keep staff to get back to capacity. I'm not bringing in enough funds from subsidy and private pay alone. I will soon not be sustainable, even though I am very grateful for all funds received."—Program Director

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

	PENNSYLVANIA	NATIONAL
Sample Size	941	12,897
Child Care Center	73.6%	47.7%
Family Child Care	11.3%	18.6%
STABILIZATION GRANTS[1]		
Child care directors/administrators who report receiving grants	84.2%	73.9%
Family child care owner/operators who report receiving grants	92.5%	85.7%
Total reporting that their program would have closed without grants	41.6%	34.0%
Total reporting that they believe their last payment will be in 2023	32.2%	61.0%
Total reporting that they do not know when their last payment will be	49.3%	27.0%
When stabilization grants end:		
Child care center directors saying their programs will have to raise tuition	62.2%	42.8%
Total reporting their programs will have to cut wages or be unable to sustain wage/salary increases	29.1%	23.0%
STAFFING AND SUPPLY		
Current Challenges		
Child care center directors reporting they are serving fewer children than they would like to serve	57.7%	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	65.8%	67.0%
Among respondents in programs with a staffing shortage:		
› Reporting they are serving fewer children	65.9%	45.4%
› Reporting a longer waitlist	63.2%	37.4%
Future Challenges		
Total indicating "yes" or "maybe" to considering leaving their job or closing their family child care home	33.7%	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	31.5%	45.0%
› Family child care providers considering leaving	45.8%	36.4%
› In minority-owned businesses considering leaving	35.4%	43.7%
› In non-minority-owned businesses considering leaving	33.7%	25.0%

1. For more state-level information about the receipt of stability grants, please see ACF's state profiles. According to the profile for Pennsylvania, providers in 99% of Pennsylvania's counties received funds as of 6/30/22. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/occ/Pennsylvania_ARP_Child_Care_Stabilization_Fact_Sheet.pdf

	PENNSYLVANIA	NATIONAL
Number one thing needed to stay	Competitive wages	Competitive wages
ECE WORKFORCE WELL-BEING		
Total respondents experiencing financial insecurity in the last year	34.9%	29.5%
Total respondents who received more money from a wage increase or supplement in the last year	54.7%	49.4%
Total indicating that burnout/exhaustion are "greatly" or "to some extent" contributing to problems retaining teachers	78.6%	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