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

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WISCONSIN

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 Wisconsin:

"There is a huge show of resilience taking place at the moment. Although providers are undergoing a big change, they continue to show up for the children, families and communities they serve."—Coach/Professional Development professional

"The child care stabilization grants have allowed myself and other employees to catch up on bills that we've fallen behind in because of the pandemic and inflation. Without them, I'm not sure my family would be the same."—Early childhood educator

"Since I've been receiving stabilization grant payments I've been able to make several upgrades to my center and cover the unexpected cost to the center as well. My playground was destroyed by a tornado last December and I was able to fix it using the extra payments. My woodshed burnt down with the wood stove inside it. When that happened we had no access to heat in the center. We had to have an emergency boiler installed into the in-floor heat in the center. The costs of both of those incidences were over $10,000 out of pocket. Thank goodness I was receiving the grant payments otherwise I would have had to close."—Family child care owner/operator

"It is already difficult to find and retain quality staff members. Without the stabilization grants it would be difficult to compensate staff for the extra hard work they are putting in. Keeping comparable with wages in the community is very important and the stabilization grants have allowed us to do that."—Early childhood educator

"I believe the childcare system as we know it will collapse when these programs end and that's just the beginning. Staff will leave without their bonuses. Centers will close without staff and the extra funding to pay basic rent, utilities, and supplies. Parents will have nowhere to go with their children and have no way to go to work to pay their bills. Businesses will close because they can't keep their employees and communities will collapse."—Family child care owner/operator

"During the worst of COVID, we needed it to subsidize the low enrollment. Then, we needed it to entice staff to come and to stay. Because we increased wages, we continue to need the funds to stay afloat as parent fees alone just will not do it! I don't know how we will be able to continue to pay what we pay without help. I can eliminate the bonuses given, but I can't cut wages—I'll lose the few staff I have. We still need more!"—Program Director/Administrator

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

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Sample Size	1,173	12,897
Child Care Center	66.8%	47.7%
Family Child Care	12.4%	18.6%
STABILIZATION GRANTS[1]		
Child care directors/administrators who report receiving grants	84.7%	73.9%
Family child care owner/operators who report receiving grants	84.8%	85.7%
Total reporting that their program would have closed without grants	27.1%	34.0%
Total reporting that they believe their last payment will be in 2023	45.5%	61.0%
Total reporting that they do not know when their last payment will be	46.3%	27.0%
When stabilization grants end:		
Child care center directors saying their programs will have to raise tuition	60.6%	42.8%
Total reporting their programs will have to cut wages or be unable to sustain wage/salary increases	33.6%	23.0%
STAFFING AND SUPPLY		
Current Challenges		
Child care center directors reporting they are serving fewer children than they would like to serve	49.1%	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	63.3%	67.0%
Among respondents in programs with a staffing shortage:		
› Reporting they are serving fewer children	45.6%	45.4%
› Reporting a longer waitlist	51.5%	37.4%

1. For more state-level information about the receipt of stability grants in Wisconsin, please see ACF's state profiles. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/occ/Wisconsin_ARP_Child_Care_Stabilization_FactSheet.pdf

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Future Challenges		
Total indicating "yes" or "maybe" to considering leaving their job or closing their family child care home	32.1%	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	29.4%	45.0%
› Family child care providers considering leaving	29.5%	36.4%
› In minority-owned businesses considering leaving	29.0%	43.7%
› In non-minority-owned businesses considering leaving	34.2%	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	34.6%	29.5%
Total respondents who received more money from a wage increase or supplement in the last year	62.2%	49.4%
Total indicating that burnout/exhaustion are "greatly" or "to some extent" contributing to problems retaining teachers	79.8%	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