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

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MAINE

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 Maine:

"Covid taught us SO many things! We are much better as a leadership team at intentionally caring for our staff and one another. Our atmosphere is positive. We also learned that communicating with families virtually is very welcome so we continue to offer a mix of options. Hardship always leads to stronger teams, even though we are short staffed the ones who are here are fully dedicated and doing incredible work!"—Coach/Professional Development professional

"Having these stabilization grants has allowed me to charge below market rate which has been a huge help to the families that I provide care for. When these end I will need to raise my rates to over market rate in order to provide the same level of care that I do now."—Family child care owner/operator

"I was able to not raise my rates for the families I serve because of the stabilization grants. Fuel oil, food, electricity, and gas have gone up considerably in the last few years. The only way to offset the costs, without raising my rates, was by receiving the grant money."—Family child care owner/operator

"I am concerned that child care programs are not going to be able to retain employees. People are leaving this field in droves, and it is scary." —Program Director/Administrator

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

	MAINE	NATIONAL
Sample Size	102	12,897
Child Care Center	44.1%	47.7%
Family Child Care	26.5%	18.6%
STABILIZATION GRANTS[1]		
Child care directors/administrators who report receiving grants	80.0%	73.9%
Family child care owner/operators who report receiving grants	87.0%	85.7%
Total reporting that their program would have closed without grants	28.4%	34.0%
Total reporting that they believe their last payment will be in 2023	72.5%	61.0%
When stabilization grants end:		
Child care center directors saying their programs will have to raise tuition	67.9%	42.8%
Total reporting their programs will have to cut wages or be unable to sustain wage/salary increases	20.3%	23.0%
STAFFING AND SUPPLY		
Current Challenges		
Child care center directors reporting they are serving fewer children than they would like to serve	51.4%	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	57.8%	67.0%
Among respondents in programs with a staffing shortage:		
› Reporting they are serving fewer children	61.0%	45.4%
› Reporting a longer waitlist	52.5%	37.4%
Future Challenges		
Total indicating "yes" or "maybe" to considering leaving their job or closing their family child care home	24.5%	29.2%
› Family child care providers considering leaving	39.1%	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	30.4%	29.5%
Total respondents who received more money from a wage increase or supplement in the last year	66.7%	49.4%
Total indicating that burnout/exhaustion are "greatly" or "to some extent" contributing to problems retaining teachers	92.2%	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 Maine, providers in 100% of Maine's counties received funds as of 6/30/22. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/occ/Maine_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