

Uncertainty Ahead Means Instability Now

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

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ALASKA



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 Alaska:

“With a loss of stabilization grant funding we will have significantly less money to use for staffing costs, and direct service work has incredibly high rates of turnover. We need help attracting and keeping staff without raising the cost of childcare in our community. We have 24,000 kids in our direct area that need care, and only 6000 placements available, less when staffing is low. The quality of care is also impacted by low wages and not enough access to professional development. In order to keep kids safe and in care, we can't go back to how things were before Covid.”—Coach/Professional Development professional

“What I am most worried about is that without the subsidy, I will face many unstable factors, which will cause my enterprise to be affected by various aspects, but the future is optimistic”—Early Childhood Educator

“We were able to support our community, providing care and normality to our children. In a middle of a chaotic situation, our children in care have a happy place to keep growing in all domains.”—Program Director/Administrator

“We are having a crisis trying to retain and hire well-qualified staff, and the prices for supplies and educational materials went up. Grants have helped to give incentives to the teachers and refresh the educational materials that damaged the constant cleaning after COVID.”—Program Director/Administrator

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

	ALASKA	NATIONAL
Sample Size	96	12,897
Child Care Center	51.0%	47.7%
Family Child Care	38.5%	18.6%
STABILIZATION GRANTS¹		
Total reporting that their program would have closed without grants	48.6%	34.0%
Total reporting that they believe their last payment will be in 2023	83.3%	61.0%
When stabilization grants end:		
Total reporting their programs will have to cut wages or be unable to sustain wage/salary increases	55.4%	23.0%
STAFFING AND SUPPLY		
Current Challenges		
Total reporting that their program is currently experiencing a staffing shortage	75.0%	67.0%
Among respondents in programs with a staffing shortage:		
› Reporting they are serving fewer children	41.7%	45.4%
› Reporting a longer waitlist	38.9%	37.4%
Future Challenges		
Total indicating “yes” or “maybe” to considering leaving their job or closing their family child care home	62.5%	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	67.9%	45.0%
Number one thing needed to stay	Competitive wages	Competitive wages
ECE WORKFORCE WELL-BEING		
Total respondents experiencing financial insecurity in the last year	16.7%	29.5%
Total respondents who received more money from a wage increase or supplement in the last year	63.5%	49.4%
Total indicating that burnout/exhaustion are “greatly” or “to some extent” contributing to problems retaining teachers	88.5%	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

1. For more state-level information about the receipt of stability grants, please see ACF's state profiles. According to the profile for Alaska, providers in 55% of Alaska's counties received funds as of 6/30/22. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/occ/Alaska_ARP_Child_Care_Stabilization_Fact_Sheet.pdf