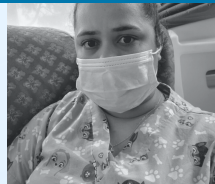


SAVE CHILD CARE.

Essential work.
Essential stories.



New York Association for the Education of Young Children

AUGUST 2020

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CHILD CARE WAS ALREADY IN CRISIS BEFORE THE PANDEMIC.

Child care in the United States has never been provided by a unified system that meets the needs of children, families, and early childhood educators. With several funding streams all intended to meet different goals, COVID-19 has accelerated systemic failures that resulted in child care deserts for working parents and programs on the brink of closure long before the pandemic.

Short-term funding is absolutely critical to get New York's child care industry through the COVID-19 crisis, but only sustained federal investment can put our nation on path toward an equitable early childhood care and education system that works for everyone.

CHILD CARE PROGRAMS HAVE STEPPED UP FOR FAMILIES.

Despite a lack of investment, guidance, and recognition, child care programs have committed to providing critical support for children and families for the duration of the crisis. They have adapted to ever-evolving best practices in disease prevention while simultaneously offering much-needed stability to the children of essential workers in these unprecedented, stressful times.

Family child care providers, who care for and educate children in their own homes, offer flexibility for families they serve while taking on great risks to themselves and their own families.

Child care centers that stayed open to serve essential workers did so at a tremendous financial cost, operating at a loss with minimal savings to cushion them.

THEIR WORK IS ESSENTIAL. THEIR STORIES ARE ESSENTIAL.

In April and May, NYAEYC conducted two surveys of child care providers across New York State. Those surveys provided the data featured in this report. The May survey concluded with the following question:

What do you want to tell your elected officials about providing child care during COVID-19?

As our workforce meets each challenge with courage and compassion, they need you to hear their stories and act. They implore Congress to fund child care now and commit to working towards a system that values their work as children's first teachers and the backbone of our economy.

Without at least \$50 billion in funding now and sustained support, these critical programs will not survive.



OUR CURRENT ENROLLMENT-BASED SYSTEM IS UNSUSTAINABLE. PROGRAMS CAN'T AFFORD TO STAY OPEN.

While New York was still in PAUSE, the programs that chose to serve only essential workers did so at a great financial cost. In May, half of these programs reported to NYAEYC that they were at less than 25% enrollment. Because child care is financed through inadequate parent fees and even lower subsidies, full enrollment is essential to programs' survival. Programs that served only essential workers were more likely to believe they could only survive for up to a month without government assistance. Now, three months later, local news across New York State covers programs at risk of closing their doors forever.



\$9.6 billion

PER MONTH IS NEEDED SO THAT OUR NATION'S CHILD CARE PROVIDERS CAN OPERATE AT LOW CAPACITY, KEEP THEIR STAFF ON PAYROLL, AND ADAPT TO NEW COSTS FROM COVID-19

Center for Law and Social Progress. <https://bit.ly/30XWw6P>

Programs that closed during the PAUSE face great uncertainty even as New York has reopened and parents are returning to work. With parents feeling understandably hesitant for their children to return to care, **enrollment is often too low to restart programming.**

Deferred rent will be due soon. This means center and community-based programs that want to reopen may lose their sites permanently. Family child care providers who have been unable to afford rent face eviction from their homes.

Without major investment from Congress, the child care programs parents trust and rely on won't be there for families when they feel safe return.

"My major concern is that as a result of the COVID-19 shutdown, my business may not survive the financial stress that has been placed upon it.

My landlord has decided to tack on a 30% increase on my rent effective April 1st, which I know I will not be able to afford without any financial assistance. My program is in the inner city and provides healthy meals and a safe, nurturing environment for children to thrive. It hurts me to know that my families have been thrown from normal positive routines into one of uncertainty and despair."

Desiree Watson

Owner/ Educational Director
Young & Unique Childcare
Newburgh, NY

"I know we are doing the right thing caring for essential workers' children, but I hope our essential workers' lives are changed for the better for their service to our community.

We are trying to survive monetarily, but when 90-92% of your income comes from parent tuition, we now need to reconfigure our center to work on how to survive with less income coming in and maybe downsizing staff. Child care was already in dire straits before COVID-19, and will continue to impact the youngest Americans in a negative way. Without governmental intervention, I do not see many centers being able to survive all of this."

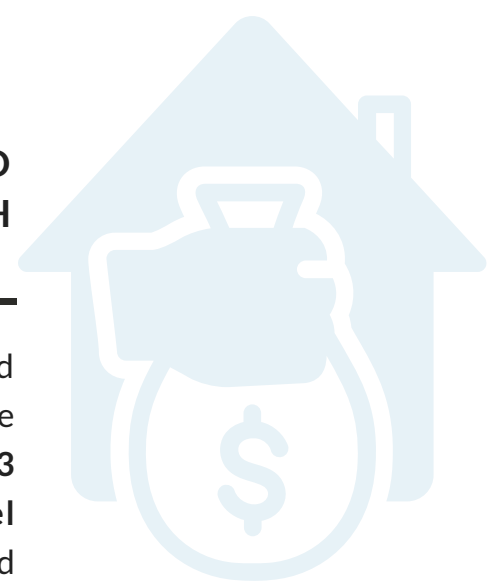
Stephanie Fritz

Director
SUNY Cortland Child Care Center
Cortland, NY



THE PPP HAS HELPED, BUT MANY CHILD CARE PROGRAMS HAVE FALLEN THROUGH THE CRACKS.

In our May survey, NYAEYC found that many family child care providers (28%) did not believe they could meet the requirements for PPP loan forgiveness. **Furthermore, 1/3 of those who received a PPP loan said they do not feel they understand the terms for loan forgiveness.** Child care providers know that taking out a loan is dangerous because with slim margins and no ability to increase revenue, they will not be able to pay it back. This has had a major chilling effect, discouraging many programs from even taking the first step of applying for a PPP loan.



Targeted, guaranteed levels of financial support to licensed and registered child care providers for the duration of the pandemic are a more efficient way to protect the supply of child care and meet the needs of our reopening economy.

Of the programs that applied for a PPP loan, major disparities are evident. According to our survey, while 85% of center- or community-based programs that applied have been awarded a PPP loan, only 56% of family child care programs that applied have been awarded one. Family child care programs are more likely to have remained open to serve families for the entire length of the crisis. Leaving family child care providers out of relief funding is a major blow to the women — often women of color — who own and operate these programs and the families who rely on them to work.

"We felt as though we were being 'punished' because we chose to stay open for our essential parents. We both drained our savings accounts and had to borrow money from family members to just survive.

We have been operating our Group Family Day Care for 25 years. At the start of the pandemic we had 11 children enrolled and were financially stable. When the shutdown started we had only two children, as the remainder stayed home with their parents who were deemed non-essential. This put a GREAT strain on us financially. We applied for the first round of PPP but did not get accepted as funds had run out. We applied for the PUA unemployment but were denied that because our center was open five days a week. We were told by both unemployment AND several politicians we had sought help from to just close our daycare and collect unemployment. We should think of ourselves at this difficult time.

Our hearts are with the families we serve so we persevered and finally when the second round of PPP came out we were accepted. **It was a very long 2 months without a salary and with no help in sight.** As those who are caring for the future of America, we felt unappreciated and forgotten. Without us those who are essential workers wouldn't be able to work. Yet, when we looked for assistance there was none to be found. We do not know how long it will take for our business to come back from this loss and hope the program we worked so hard to build will not be lost. If anything good comes out of this awful situation, we hope that it is a greater appreciation for those who work tirelessly to care for these children, those who are our future. Appreciation for those who put their lives and their livelihoods on the line so those who were deemed essential could continue to do their jobs."

Denise Dunham

Group Family Day Care Provider

Learning Bear Day Care

Troy, NY

"Without running our summer camp and without more funding, we might be forced to close completely.

We are a nonprofit afterschool program and summer camp serving the Queens community for almost 10 years. We were forced to close as we operate out of NYC public schools. Parents refused to continue to pay for tuition since they were not receiving any services, and many cancelled enrollment completely. We had to lay off most of our staff. We applied for PPP and were some of the lucky ones that received it, however, it only covers eight weeks of expenses and we are looking at many months of staying closed as per government orders. It has been an overwhelming situation, with almost no guidance or support from the city agencies."

Anonymous

Program Director

Superkickers After School and Summer Camp

Queens, NY

CHILD CARE PROGRAMS WANT TO PAY THEIR STAFF A WAGE THAT IS WORTHY OF THEIR ESSENTIAL WORK.

Child care directors and staff alike are frustrated that hazard pay is impossible to afford with the tight margins facing programs even in ordinary times. Parents can't afford to pay more, and subsidy market rates through the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) were already too low. Programs that struggled to keep up with minimum wage increases at full enrollment are now struggling just to maintain their staff. Hiring new staff to meet social distancing and group size requirements is close to impossible.



Early childhood educators deserve compensation that meets the risk they are taking on during the pandemic. They also deserve parity with similarly qualified K-12 teachers that meets the important role they play as children's first teachers.

New York's child care educators, who earned a median wage of \$12.38/hr in 2017 according to the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, are paid too little in ordinary times. This inadequate pay does not meet the reality of the complex work of early care and education, let alone compensate for the risk early educators have taken on for themselves and their families by working through the duration of the crisis.

"Our child care educators are underpaid as a nation and as a whole.

Remaining open caused fear and stress among some of our teachers. Some believed we should close. Most would have liked to receive 'hazard pay,' which is impossible for us to provide at this time. We are hopeful that by being deemed 'essential' in this time of crisis, our nation will recognize just how vital our early childcare educators are...Through all of the adaptations, one thing has remained consistent, our dedication to these children, the age-appropriate activities we plan and the unconditional, positive guidance that we give each and every day to our little ones."

Jean Emmons

Assistant Director
Children's Learning Center
Syracuse, NY

"The decision to stay open keeps me up at night. I wish I could afford to give my staff hazard pay.

It's hard to get up and go to work when we are inundated everyday with messages of, 'Stay home, stay safe.' By keeping our child care center open, am I putting my staff and the children in my care in harm's way? They are coming to work every day and risking their lives for minimum wage! They aren't even making their normal weekly wage because they aren't working their normal amount of hours, because our enrollment is down... All of this seems so unfair!"

Amy Tillinghast

Director
Salem Lutheran Preschool
Springville, NY



THE CHILD CARE WORKFORCE TENDS TO BELONG TO HIGHER-RISK GROUPS. THEY NEED BOTH THE CHOICE TO STAY HOME AND PPE IF THEY CHOOSE TO WORK.

The "Happy Teacher Project" funded by the Early Childhood Education Institute and the University of Oklahoma found that early childhood educators faced "significantly more physical health challenges than the general population."*

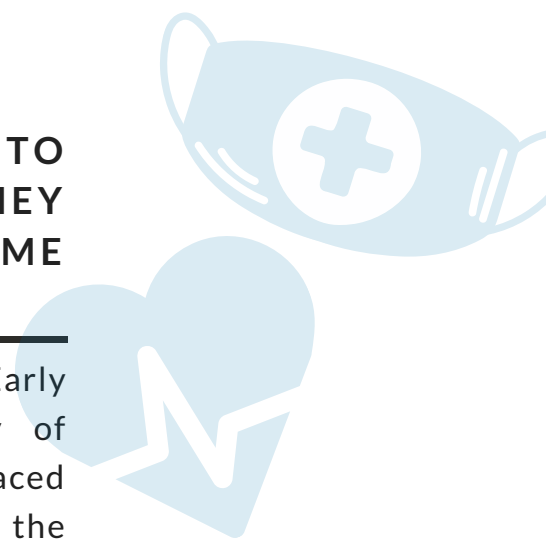
Individuals who feel comfortable working at this time need to be supported with funds for adequate PPE, disinfectants, and social distancing supplies for their programs. In our May survey, 64% of family child care owners reported still experiencing difficulty obtaining cleaning supplies.

44% of New York's child care programs report difficulties obtaining PPE.

NYAEYC SURVEY, MAY 2020

On the other hand, child care educators and staff who need to stay home for their own health and safety, or that of a family member, will experience a huge loss in income with the expiration of additional pandemic unemployment benefits. We do not believe in incentivizing work at the expense of the health and safety of our educators. Continued pandemic-specific unemployment benefits will allow educators to rejoin the children they care for when it is safe for them to do so.

*<https://www.edsurge.com/news/2019-10-09-are-early-childhood-teachers-happy-and-healthy-this-research-study-will-find-out>



"I would remain closed if I received any financial assistance, as I am immunocompromised. But financially, I have to open again to pay my bills.

I have been a family child care provider for over 35 years. I closed on March 20th but re-opened this week [early May]. The reason for re-opening is I have applied for unemployment, PPP, EIDL and have not received anything. Not even a confirmation that it is pending, in process or anything."

Joan Hallett-Valentine

Group Family Child Care Provider
Tiny Tykes Group Family Child Care
Lake Placid, NY

"Minimum wage without benefits isn't enough to risk your health.

Childcare is a vital aspect of the infrastructure of our communities and country. This pandemic brings childcare's importance to the forefront of politics. Without being melodramatic, childcare workers are now deemed essential workers and expected to risk their health to support our infrastructure. Our country needs to support childcare."

Janine Marks

Executive Director
Oyster Babies Early Childhood Center
Oyster Bay, NY and Huntington Station, NY

"I am 63 years old and have a family member with an autoimmune disease.

I love my job and would like to return to working in person with children but do not want to get COVID-19 nor risk bringing it home to my family. I work with 2-year-olds and know that there is no way to appropriately social distance nor keep safe from the children's adults who might be silently carrying the virus. Before opening up child care, we need to have good antibody testing to determine if the adults in the centers have the antibodies and therefore, might be protected from incurring severe cases of the disease and some effective strategies for treating the disease that will not diminish the quality of life after the procedures are implemented."

Anonymous Lead Teacher in a 2-Year-Old Classroom

New York, NY

New York's early childhood educators need you to hear their stories



and act.

"As the pandemic unfolds, I can't help but feel so alone. My staff and I are nothing but little lambs lead for slaughter.

I operate two child care programs — one group family serving a mixed age group of 12-16 kids for the past eight years in Clinton Hill; the other an infant/toddler center-based program in Bedford Stuyvesant only in operation a little less than three years. We complied with DOH's strong suggestions to close operation on March 16. With the financial ramifications and concern over health care issues of everyone still at the forefront of my mind, we reopened a week later. **When it came evident that no business will be coming in, I proceeded to lay off half of our work force as it was the only way I can see us surviving the next month let alone, two, three or more months to come.**

I pleaded to all my parents to let us keep March tuition and pay us for the entire month of April with an understanding that they will get credited for what they paid us once we are up and running again just to help us stay afloat. Almost half came through for us, but not enough to keep everyone on payroll and meet all of our financial obligations. As a small business, we don't have a lot of reserve and we are highly dependent on revenue that comes in month to month.

By the time the PPP money came, I already changed my staff status from salaried to hourly just to stay afloat and encouraged them to file for unemployment. Moreover, the funding under PPP is not enough to carry us through long term. At first glance it seems enough assuming the pandemic would only last a month. While the application process was helpful by being short, the formula used to calculate eligibility is not accurate to the current payroll situation the last three months, when I have more full time and better paid staff. Moreover, the fact that large companies got the bulk of the funding the first time around was heartbreaking for small business owners. For the entire month, I was nonstop filling out applications and scouring resources out there to apply for funding only to be told that my application was not processed on time. How is it possible that my application, completed and submitted less than a day after Chase Bank opened up their website did not get funded the first time around? There was no one to talk to and get information from. It was sheer hell for the next couple of weeks which fortunately ended with the PPP money coming in after the second round.

Looking ahead, dark clouds remain with a lot of questions about re-opening. How are we going to manage while observing social distancing in a child care setting, where close human interaction is a must for every healthy child development? What about the health of my staff? Do we have access to equipment to keep us safe and healthy? Would there be additional funding to help us get back on our feet? Are parents going to feel safe enough to use our services? When will I be able to pay off all of my loans, not to mention how will I be able to afford sending my child to college when our sole source of income is non-existent and colleges [are] not willing to [provide] more financial support? What about my staff and their families? Will I be able to bring them back full salary once more? More questions remain..."

Anonymous Center Director and Group Family Child Care Owner
Kings County, NY

"We are currently running at 12% and in danger of closing a 30-year-old nonprofit organization.

I have worked in the early childhood field for 20 years. Since the spread of COVID-19 the hardest part was deciding what was the right decision to make overall for the littlest members of our community and for staff. I felt there was very little guidance provided to the early childhood sector, a lot of attention was placed on K-12, and no mention of child care other than we were essential. It was a very emotional decision to make, with thoughts racing through my head: Do I compromise health and safety of myself and staff to deliver a service? Would this effect us in the long run? The emotions were difficult to manage at times and I felt my voice was not being heard. The challenges placed upon owners were heartbreaking, we tried multiple concepts staying open and enrollment tumbled, then we closed to flatten the curve and furloughed all employees, and lastly we reopened in hopes families would return.

The most frustrating part was unemployment was paying staff more to stay at home versus coming to work. **You can imagine the challenges I had trying to secure staff to commit working for essential families with no hazard pay.** It was like being punched in the stomach, you can come back to work, risk exposure for your normal paycheck. I had to sort through my emotions but this one was hard to manage, I kept telling myself I have values and morals and that's why I'm here not for just a paycheck. Things seems to be settling down a bit and it looks like we will be receiving a PPP loan so that will solve one of my many problems on hand at this time. What scares me most is the future of child care, you cannot social distance with babies and 2-year-olds so it makes it challenging to give families that sense of security we once had. What makes me most proud is my willingness to continue to fight the fight and taking it day by day in hopes things will slowly resume to some sort of normalcy."

Eileen

Director

Montrose Child Care Center

Montrose, NY

"In addition to the health effects of COVID-19 on our community, I am deeply concerned about the effects of business closures on the mental health of families with children, facing economic uncertainty, at the very time in the child's life when they need responsive, consistent, and gentle care.

First I would like to say that I am very proud to be assisting in the effort of providing a safe, secure experience for children of first responders, health care providers, and other parents. Our center has been a source of comfort and normalcy during a very stressful time. We have been on the forefront of developing programmatic and policy changes to our center to help increase safety and lower risk of exposure for staff and children.

Although I received the PPP loan, it is only for eight weeks. We are required to only use 25% of the loan to pay for rent and utilities. Our rent and utilities exceed 25%. Further the fact that I need to use all the funds in eight weeks, means that I am unable to have any funds available for the next few months. We are facing severe drops in enrollment (cancellations of contracts from parents) requests for parents to pay lower tuition, and the steep decline in our usual forecasted enrollment. **Our losses already exceed the amount of the PPP funds."**

K.T. Korngold

Director and Owner
Montessori Children's Center
White Plains, NY

"Families are struggling. Child care providers are being treated as invisible and disposable. It's an intensification of the indignity that is always there of having our work discounted, and treated as invisible.

We are supposed to feel happy that we are being listed as 'essential.' We already knew that. Where's the part where we are adequately resourced?

This has been so frustrating and upsetting. Child care providers work so hard in such difficult conditions all the time to take care of everyone. This crisis has been so hard because there's just no way to take care of everyone. The needs of families directly compete with the needs of staff, and it just reveals all of the underlying issues with our existing system. **We need leadership, and we need the necessary resources to do our work."**

Alanna Navitski

Catskill Wheelhouse
Catskill, NY

"Our frustration is that most of our children come from hard-working parents and minorities as Hispanic population.

We started a home group daycare together with a friend a year and a half ago. Both of us have years of experience and training working with children. Since the pandemic started, our daycare has stayed open to help essential parents, but our daycare has been impacted financially because most of our parents are not working and some are losing their jobs. We are scared that our enrolled children won't be able to come back because their parents lost jobs and can't afford to pay tuition anymore.

We have been surviving with few[er] numbers of children which allowed to us pay our utilities but **we aren't able to have a payroll since we don't have enough revenue.** We are a home daycare that helps our community to take care and educate children when most of them don't have the opportunity to go an expensive daycare setting. We just got a PPP loan that will allow us to keep our home daycare open for two months, but we are really scared that we won't be able to continue [to stay] open since parents can't afford to pay tuition since they are losing their jobs."

Rosa Rojas

Director-Owner

My Little World Corp Home Group Daycare
Ossining, NY

"Child care centers live on the edge in normal circumstances.

I have worked in this center for 22 years and have been the director for the last 10. We have faced many financial hardships over the years, but nothing compared to the uncertainty that we faced when this started. **Our enrollment dropped 70% in one week.** We were figuring out what we needed to do to close. Fortunately, our non-profit status made us eligible for an Emergency Grant from the Adirondack Foundation. This got us through one bi-weekly payroll and gave us time to expand a line of credit we had with our local bank and apply for EIDL and PPL. Without these four sources, we would not have survived.

Child care centers live on the edge in normal circumstances. You cannot possibly charge the amount of tuition it requires to care for children appropriately, particularly when minimum wage continues to increase at a dramatic rate every year. **Yes — we pay child care staff minimum wage — and cannot afford it.** Suddenly, we were forced to lose the little bit of income that we bring in with no warning or assistance. We were told we were essential and had to stay open if we could but had no help to do it. We watched child cares close all around us. Even now, we have a few months' worth of income due to these loans, however, we have no idea what will happen when this runs out. The child care industry has been ignored for too long, and this situation brought that to light."

Rebecca Filion

Director

Champlain Children's Learning Center
Rouses Point, NY

"Up until the COVID-19 pandemic, I was running a successful business for 16 years.

I want to let everyone know that I am a single black woman. I put myself through graduate school by eating beans, franks and whatever low-cost food that I could find. I later used this same money-saving tactic to open my own business.

My staff is made up of single women of color. Some of them have children and others are in school. I have always accommodated their unique work hours so that they can get their education or raise their children. We are all one big family at our program. This family includes our staff, students, and their families.

I am desperately seeking help for my staff and myself. We want to get back to doing the work that we love. We are helping our community's young children by providing a safe, nurturing environment where the children are happily learning and thriving.

Child care providers have been on the forefront of the women's liberation movement. Without child care providers, women would not have had the opportunity to make the choice between advancing their education and pursuing careers and having children. Child care providers paved the way for society to have female doctors, teachers, engineers, politicians, etc. Furthermore, child care providers are predominately women who employ other women. **This overall has created opportunities for millions of women to become financially independent.**

Child care providers have allowed women to be become strong, productive members of society. We inspire other women by being role models. In states like New York, it is difficult, if not impossible, for a family to survive on one paycheck. Most families in New York depend on both parents working in order to provide a half-way decent lifestyle for their children. Since we are community-based organizations, we serve as a source for information and resources which educate families about issues that they need to be informed about. We help parents find assistance for children who have developmental delays and learning disabilities. We provide parents with valuable information on the importance of good nutrition for their children and themselves. We educate families on the importance of providing lead-free environments at home for their children. We provide families with knowledge of proper parenting skills. Please know that I can continue on because the list of what child care providers do for society is extensive."

Dietra Middleton

Executive Director

Middleton's Early Learning Center

Laurelton, NY

THANK YOU

Pandemic relief for child care is just the beginning of tackling our nation's child care crisis.

Thank you for joining us on the path toward a system where all young children are supported by high-quality early childhood education,

all parents have access to child care that meets their needs,

and all early childhood educators are compensated fairly for the important work they do.

A more racially just, equitable, and economically prosperous future depends on your commitment to this issue.



New York Association for the Education of Young Children