

**For Immediate Release**

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## **New Survey: Vast Majority of PA Child Care Centers Currently Experiencing Staffing Shortage**

*Swift action needed by PA officials to stabilize sector and ensure families can return to work*

HARRISBURG, PA (August 16, 2021)—Four out of every five child care providers in Pennsylvania are currently experiencing a staffing shortage, according to a [recent survey of 7,500 early childhood educators nationwide from the National Association for the Education of Young Children \(NAEYC\)](#). The survey demonstrates how the child care sector is struggling to recruit and retain teachers and essential staff, as well as maintain financial stability. The current state of child care poses a major obstacle to working families and rebuilding the economy from the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The child care sector is critical to recovering from COVID-19,” said Jen DeBell, the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Association for the Education of Young Children, NAEYC’s Pennsylvania affiliate. “Federal relief funds have helped programs weather the worst of the pandemic. However, Pennsylvania has not yet distributed \$1.2 billion in American Rescue Plan funds dedicated for child care, of which more than \$700 million is focused on child care program stabilization. We have to stop the bleeding and get the funds into the hands of programs.”

306 respondents from Pennsylvania participated in the survey; among the [survey’s key findings for the commonwealth](#):

- 79 percent of respondents from child care centers said that they had a staffing shortage, with 60% of programs serving fewer children, 41% with longer waiting lists, 30% unable to open classrooms and 27% reducing operating hours.

- 78 percent of respondents identified low wages as the main obstacle to recruitment of educators and 64 percent said that insufficient pay is the main reason educators leave the field.
- Nearly one in every five respondents said they are considering leaving their program or closing their family child care within the next year with another 21% saying maybe they would leave or close.
- In the context of programs facing staffing challenges and parents facing ongoing pandemic uncertainty, programs that are open are operating at an average enrollment rate of 62% of their licensed capacity, with 56% of enrolled children attending on an average day.

Survey respondents said federal relief funds have been crucial, and they predicted that increased federal funding would help to address current staffing struggles and keep programs open and operating, providing parents with quality options in all program settings that help them stay in or rejoin the workforce.

“Unfortunately, emergency relief funds will not fix the underlying economic conditions in early childhood education that has led to the crisis with more than 850 child care programs closing in the state since the onset of the pandemic,” said DeBell. “This is the moment to address systemic issues within the sector, like subsidy rates that reflect the true cost of providing services and livable wages for teachers. Congress has the opportunity to make significant and sustainable investments in child care and pre-k right now so that early childhood education is on sound footing for decades to come for Pennsylvania’s families.”

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*The Pennsylvania Association for the Education of Young Children is a statewide, non-profit membership organization of over 2,500 early childhood care and education professionals. As the Pennsylvania affiliate of NAEYC, we are part of a network that includes 52 affiliates and nearly 60,000 individual members nationwide. Through policy development, advocacy and professional development and supports for early childhood professionals we work to achieve the vision that all Pennsylvania families will have access to high-quality, affordable early childhood care and education opportunities for their children provided by a profession that is valued, well-compensated and supported. PennAEYC is a proud principal partner of the Start Strong PA and Pre-K for PA nonpartisan, statewide advocacy campaigns to increase access to high-quality, affordable child care and pre-k.*

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