naeyc® National Association for the Education of Young Children

Child Care in Crisis

Understanding the Effects of the Coronavirus Pandemic

March 17, 2020

Just last month, Congress held two hearings on the crisis in child care and its impact on children, families, businesses, and our nation's economy. Now, the spread of the coronavirus is making this crisis and its impacts substantially worse, threatening to put this already-vulnerable industry into a tailspin that will compromise the country's ability to weather this storm, and get back on its feet after it is over.

To understand the breadth of the deepening crisis, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) shared a brief survey with child care programs to learn more about the challenges they are facing across states and settings, and the impact a closure without significant public support would have on a program moving forward.

From March 12–16, more than 6,000 providers responded to the survey, from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. 33 percent of respondents work in center-based child care, and another 53 percent work in family child care homes.

30% say they would not survive a closure of **more than two weeks** without significant public investment and support that would allow them to compensate and retain staff, pay rent or mortgages, and cover other fixed costs.

17% say they would not survive a closure of **any amount of time** without support.

16% would not survive **longer than a month**, and, because of the uncertainty of the situation, an additional

25% do not know how long they could close and still re-open without support.

Only **11%** of programs are confident they could survive a closure of an indeterminate length **without support**.

Nationally, while **49%** are **losing income** because of families who cannot pay, another 25% of respondents are losing income because they are reimbursed by the state based on attendance rather than enrollment for the low-income families they serve who receive child care subsidies. This data varies significantly by state, depending on state policy.

Without significant resources and clear guidance, child care programs are stuck between a rock and a hard place. Upwards of 70% of respondents are working with families who are keeping their children at home; yet half are also fielding requests from families needing space for their children due to school closures. As one provider notes, "We want to help but we are scared to help because we don't want to be responsible for the spread."

To flatten the curve and save lives, child care programs need to be able to close alongside K-12 schools in their states and districts, *with the confidence that they will be able to keep their space and make their staff whole,* just like the K-12 system will. **Significant, additional, and flexible federal and state funds for child care subsidy programs are crucial, alongside actions to protect the child care supply across settings and states,** including access to unemployment insurance, mortgage forbearance, rent deferrals, and access to capital through grants and zero-interest loans.

For those programs that must remain open to serve children of essential personnel, we need to ensure they have all the resources and support they need to keep children, families, and staff safe and healthy, including paid and sick leave, hazard pay, and funding to cover substitutes and provide 24-hour coverage. This is not the time to suspend or eliminate licensing rules or stand up new programs that will put our children, families, and communities at risk. Skilled and trusted early childhood educators are, indeed, essential — and are needed now more than ever.

For more on NAEYC's recommendations, see this statement urging state actions, and this letter to Congress, from NAEYC and dozens of national early childhood education groups.