

THE GROWING ADVERSE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON LOUISIANA CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

Statewide Survey Findings from June 15 - June 22, 2020

The Louisiana Policy Institute for Children (LPIC) is conducting a series of surveys about the impact of COVID-19 on child care providers, in partnership with Agenda for Children, Child Care Association of Louisiana, Childcare Connections for Northeast Louisiana, Louisiana Association of United Ways, Northwestern State University, On Track by 5 Alliance, Pointe Coupee Early Childhood Coalition, United Way of Southeast Louisiana, and Volunteers of America.

Key Takeaways from June Survey Findings

Results from the June 15 - 22, 2020, survey show the continued challenges and realities facing child care providers in Louisiana as the COVID-19 pandemic stretched into summer and the state began reopening. Most notably:

Financial Losses for Providers Continued to Grow Substantially During the Pandemic

77% of providers who responded to the survey reported experiencing financial losses due to COVID-19, with losses averaging **\$110,000 per center** as of June 22, translating to an estimated **\$137.5 million** in collective losses statewide.

Majority of Open Providers Saw Reduced Enrollment Rates

81% of providers open during the survey window were serving fewer children in June than they did in January before the pandemic. On average, enrollment at open providers was **30% less** in June than it was in January.

Almost Half of Providers Had a Waiting List

45% of providers, including those that were closed during the survey window, had a waiting list of families hoping to enroll their children.

More Providers Experienced Challenges with Purchasing Needed Cleaning, PPE Supplies

Almost two-thirds of providers reported difficulty in obtaining needed supplies, including cleaning supplies and personal protective equipment, and **67%** of providers experienced increased costs for cleaning supplies.

Less Than 1-in-4 Open Providers Expected Being Able to Survive Long-Term Operations with Current Smaller Group Sizes

Only **22%** of providers open during the survey window, including those that had closed then reopened or remained open throughout the pandemic, responded that they could afford to operate with smaller group sizes for as long as necessary. By contrast, **35%** predicted their businesses could last six months or less, and another **42%** were unsure.



For more information visit www.policyinstitutelala.org/covid-19-impact-child-care.

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Overview

The first survey of child care providers was conducted March 16 - 23, 2020, one week after the first confirmed case of COVID-19 was diagnosed in Louisiana and one week prior to Governor John Bel Edwards issuing a stay-at-home order for all residents. The second survey of child care providers was conducted April 13 - 20, 2020, while Louisiana remained under a stay-at-home order, and K-12 school closures were extended through the remainder of the school year.

Louisiana moved into Phase One of reopening on May 15 and into Phase Two of reopening on June 5. Under Phase Two, teacher-to-child ratios and group sizes for early care and education providers returned to pre-pandemic levels for children ages 2 and under but remained below pre-pandemic level for children ages 3 and up.

The third survey was conducted June 15 - 22, 2020, over a week into Phase Two of reopening. The survey again asked child care providers what impact COVID-19 was having on their program or business, including financial losses and closure decisions, and what supports were needed to help providers respond to the public health crisis. *Additional questions about reopened centers and government grant programs were added.*

The Need Going Forward

- **The financial losses experienced by the child care sector are likely only going to continue to grow** as providers must balance maintaining healthy and safe environments for children with reduced enrollments – resulting, in part, from required lower teacher-to-child ratios – and increased costs.
- **With almost half of all responding providers reporting they have a waiting list of parents seeking child care, the need for child care clearly still remains.** At the same time, these survey results also suggest some parents are deferring when they return their children to child care, compounding the financial difficulties facing providers with fewer tuition-paying families. However, working parents will inevitably need to be able to put their children back in an early care and education setting. When that times comes, there must be enough open child care providers with available spots to serve those families.
- **If child care centers close or raise tuition in an effort to cover their losses, working parents will struggle to return to work** without ready access to affordable, quality care and education for their children, impacting employer productivity and economic recovery.
- **While federal and state relief fund programs helped many child care providers, these funds largely slowed, rather than fully addressed, the extensive financial losses experienced by providers.** Additional investments will be necessary to ensure there is a child care sector for working parents and their employers to rely on in the future. These investments include support to ensure providers can obtain necessary personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies, and maintain affordability for families.

LPIC developed and administered the survey online through Survey Monkey from June 15, 2020, to June 22, 2020. Of the approximately 1,624 licensed child care centers and family child care providers in the state, 666 providers representing 815 locations responded to the survey.



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