

**THE NEBRASKA COVID-19 EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION PROVIDER SURVEY
HIGHLIGHTS: PERSPECTIVES OF CHILD CARE PROVIDERS**

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The Nebraska COVID-19 Early Care and Education Provider Survey was designed to capture the perspectives of those providing early care and education in the early days of the pandemic. The goal of the survey was to identify provider needs and policy recommendations that could respond to those needs. Two primary questions were addressed:

1. ***How are early care and education providers experiencing the effects of COVID-19?***
2. ***Based on providers' experiences, what are some urgent needs and policy recommendations?***

Composed of 12 multiple-response items and one open-ended item, the survey was released on March 20, 2020 via multiple social media channels, partner organizations, and agencies. Within a week, 2,100 responses were received from professionals representing a variety of roles in early care and education. More than 750 providers responded to the prompt to “share any information or concerns you may have about the effects of the coronavirus on your child care program/business.” In this document responses are presented for family child care home providers (FCCH) and child care center providers (CCC), and further stratified by administrators and teachers. “Administrators” included owners, operators, directors, and managers. “Teachers” included teachers, teacher assistants, and aides. Overall, these groups consist of 1,515 respondents, or approximately 75% of the total.

Child Care Provider Respondents	Responses
Family Child Care Home (FCCH) Administrators	595
Child Care Center (CCC) Administrators	367
Family Child Care Home (FCCH) Teachers	196
Child Care Center (CCC) Teachers	357
Total Child Care Providers	1,515

Providers reported on a variety of their experiences in the context of COVID-19, the most frequently reported of which were: families keeping their children home; reduced income due to decreased attendance; increased family requests for care of school-age children; and increased requests to care for children of essential workers.

This document highlights integrated findings from multiple-choice and open-ended responses, and it reflects providers' need for information, economic relief, and health supports. Survey findings are highlighted in the table below.

The stress and high needs reported among our child care workforce in Nebraska are not simply the result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior research has documented poor working conditions and lack of support for the businesses and people who care for and educate young children so that families can work and maintain their economic and social well-being (IOM NRC, 2015; NASEM, 2018). The data from this survey support the imperative to act quickly to avoid the dissolution of the child care infrastructure while planning for how to build a more resilient child care system in the future. Key to this is recognizing the essential role of quality child care and supporting its workforce accordingly (Sarver, Huddleston-Casas, Charlet, & Wessels, 2020).

References

Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. 2015. *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/19401>.

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Sarver, S.L., Huddleston-Casas, C., Charlet, C., & Wessels, R. (2020). *Elevating Nebraska's Early Childhood Workforce: Report and Recommendations of the Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Commission*. Omaha, NE: Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska. <http://earlyyearsmatter.org/workforce>.

Concerns and Needs of Child Care Providers in COVID-19

SOURCE OF CONCERN	WHAT CHILD CARE PROVIDERS REPORTED	WHAT CHILD CARE PROVIDERS NEED
<p>Stress</p> <p><i>Providers are being forced to cope with an incredible amount of stress – linked to, economic uncertainty, the threat of health problems, and a lack of reliable information.</i></p>	<p>Providers are experiencing very high levels of stress.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child care center (69%) and family child care home (44%) administrators report that they and their staff are experiencing severe stress related to the virus. • 80% of child care center administrators are worried about staff coming in sick because they cannot afford to miss work. • 90% of CCC and FCCH administrators are worried about parents bringing sick children because they need to work. • More than two-thirds of all administrators and teachers are worried that the stress providers are experiencing could negatively affect the quality of care children are experiencing. 	<p><i>Providers see themselves as essential workers and need access to economic relief, health supports, and accurate information that is up to date.</i></p>
<p>Economic Stability</p> <p><i>Providers are concerned about the economic viability of their programs and day-to-day financial survival during the COVID-19 pandemic.</i></p>	<p>Providers are pessimistic about the survival of their businesses and the economic stability of their families and staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCC (15%) and FCCH (21%) administrators said their program would not survive a closure of any length. • Up to 57% of providers said they did not expect to be paid during a closure. <p>Providers explain that they cannot survive economically without their current wages.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 80% of administrators (both FCCH and CCC) reported that families were keeping their children at home. • Half of FCCH and 70% of CCC providers reported that children’s absences resulted in reduced program income. • Many shared that they would be unable to make their next mortgage/rent payment for their home and/or business. 	<p><i>Providers’ greatest need is for income replacement because of reduced enrollment and/or threat of closure.</i></p> <p><i>Providers need immediate guarantees that they will receive continued income from Title XX funds for child care subsidies. Payments must be changed so they are based on student enrollment, rather than attendance.</i></p>

SOURCE OF CONCERN	WHAT CHILD CARE PROVIDERS REPORTED	WHAT CHILD CARE PROVIDERS NEED
<p>Health Threats</p> <p><i>Child care providers are very concerned about their health. Not only is COVID-19 dangerous, but if they become ill it's likely they will not have health insurance or sick time to cover their health care and work absence.</i></p>	<p>Providers do not have health insurance or their insurance has very high premiums, co-pays, or deductibles.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seventy percent of CCC administrators report that staff do not have access to employer-sponsored health insurance. The percentage of providers without employer sponsored health insurance is much higher for FCCH, most of whom have to access health insurance on the open market. 	<p><i>During this period when the role of "essential" workforce is being defined, providers need their health care expenses and sick leave covered.</i></p>
	<p>Providers do not have paid sick time to cover an illness of two weeks or more.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less than 3% of FCCH respondents and less than 25% of CCC respondents have paid sick time. 	
	<p>Providers are very concerned about their own health and that of their families.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> They are worried about getting sick and bringing illness home to their families. 93% of CCC teachers are worried about families bringing sick children to care. 	<p><i>Due to their increased risk for COVID-19, providers need personal protective equipment (PPE), such as gloves, cleaning supplies, and masks.</i></p>
	<p>Providers expressed other health-related concerns.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers are experiencing food shortages in their programs. Providers are having difficulty accessing cleaning supplies in their communities and need help. 	<p><i>Providers need policy flexibility and access to resources in how to obtain food for the children in their care and cleaning supplies.</i></p>
	<p>Providers made it clear that social distancing is inappropriate in child care.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers indicated guidelines were not designed with child care in mind. 	<p><i>Providers need clarification on the 10-person and 6-foot rules, and applicable guidelines for child care.</i></p>
<p>Lack of Information</p> <p><i>Providers lack up to date public health information that is consistent with the type of care they offer (home vs. center).</i></p>	<p>Providers are getting their information from a variety of sources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two thirds of FCCH administrators are relying most heavily on media outlets for information, while 75% of CCC administrators are turning most to government websites for information (e.g. CDC, DHHS). Only half of administrators reported receiving personal emails from a licensing specialist or coach with guidance on COVID-19. 	<p><i>Providers need rapid, reliable access to information, ideally from their licensing specialist or a designee.</i></p> <p><i>They need information about unemployment compensation and small business loans/relief.</i></p>