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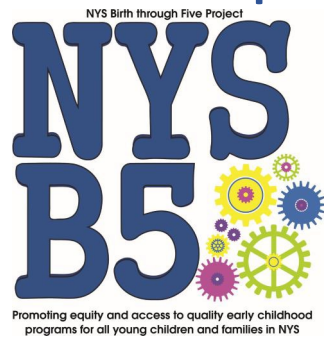
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NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

NEW YORK STATE BIRTH THROUGH FIVE (NYSB5-R)

PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANT

Needs Assessment Update Report



DECEMBER 2022

Conducted by



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Executive Summary

Overview

In 2019, the New York State Council on Children and Families (CCF), in partnership with the Center for Human Services Research (CHSR) at the University at Albany, State University of New York, conducted a comprehensive Needs Assessment of the state's Early Childhood Care and Education system (ECCE). As noted in the 2019 *New York State Birth Through Five (NYSB5) Preschool Development Grant Needs Assessment Report*, the state's expanded investment in ECCE infrastructure reflects a strong commitment to supporting young children and families. See https://www.ccf.ny.gov/files/4915/7773/1159/nysb5_na_report.pdf.

In both 2020 and 2021, the statewide initial (2019) Needs Assessment was updated to reflect the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the ECCE system. (see https://www.ccf.ny.gov/files/2416/6577/3654/2020_Needs_Assessment_Update_Graphically_Designed_v3.pdf and https://www.ccf.ny.gov/files/3616/6577/3553/2021_Needs_Assessment_Update_Graphically_Designed_V3.pdf.) The 2020 update focused on the impacts on ECCE program administration, funding, operations, and staff, and provided corresponding and responsive program- and state-level recommendations. The 2021 update provided additional insight on how the disruptions in the ECCE system due to the pandemic affected parents, caregivers, and their children (aged birth through five).

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) provided NYS with \$1.1 billion for its Child Care Stabilization program as of June 2022.ⁱ OCFS made *“significant improvements to their distribution and data collection systems based on lessons learned from administering CARES II and CARES III grants.”*ⁱⁱ Based on these changes, in the late summer of 2021, NYS began the distribution of stabilization grants to child care providers, reaching centers and home-based providers. As of June 30, 2022, 5,855 child care centers had received stabilization payments, and 9,040 home-based providers received payments.ⁱⁱⁱ

Beginning on August 1st, 2022, the eligibility threshold for the CCAP was raised from 200% of the Federal Poverty Level to 300% of the standard. A family of four making below \$83,250 became eligible to receive the subsidy, instead of the previous income threshold of \$55,500.

As the pandemic continues, this 2022 Needs Assessment update expressly focuses on the provision of home-based and legally exempt child care and the historic investment to stabilize and expand access to child care. In addition, this update presents findings on the access and use of the internet by parents. While not meant to be a comprehensive overview of the entire ECCE system, it adds context and background to what we already understand about the strengths and needs of the child care system.

Methodology

An online survey of parents and caregivers of young children engaged in the ECCE system in New York State was conducted between September and July of 2022. The survey was hosted in

Qualtrics and distributed via snowball sampling through CCF's and CHSR's program contacts and social media channels, and by OpAd, a media campaign company contracted by CCF for their Parent Portal distribution efforts. Survey distribution began in mid-July and ended in mid-September. After extensive data cleaning, 4,870 responses were included in analyses. The number of responses represents a significant increase from previous Needs Assessment survey, likely due to increase snowball sampling and the inclusion of the survey in a statewide paid media campaign (see details below). Respondents were from across NYS. Using these methods resulted in an increase of over 4,000 respondents from the first parent/caregiver survey conducted in 2019 for this research.

Focus groups and interviews with home-based providers of child care (licensed family, group family, and CCR&R staff who work with legally exempt providers) across New York State's 10 Regional Economic Development Council regions were conducted via Zoom from July to September 2022. Focus groups were conducted in English, Spanish, and Mandarin. In total, 37 individuals participated in focus group sessions or interviews; sixteen of these held a single-family license while 15 possessed a group family license. Outreach to legally exempt providers was attempted, but no legally exempt providers participated in focus groups. CHSR staff were able to collect some second-hand data related to legally exempt provider experiences by interviewing six Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agency staff who work specifically with these providers.

Summary of Key Findings

Parents continue to express concern about the cost and availability of child care where they live. Similar to past Needs Assessment findings, parents reported that child care remains expensive and difficult to find. At the same time, 93% of parents reported that their child care meets their child's needs. Also, it is important to note that since this Needs Assessment was conducted, NYS has made significant and historic investments in child care through and beyond the pandemic, including providing Child Care Stabilization and Child Care Desert grants and expanding New York's Child Care Assistance Program eligibility to 300% above the federal poverty level.

Parents generally have access to reliable, high-speed internet where they live, with some variations due to location and income level. The data indicate that a majority of parents have access to affordable, high-speed internet across New York State. However, these data should be interpreted with much caution due to it being an online survey with primary distribution also being online. A future survey to better understand the internet availability and access needs of New Yorkers should focus on parents who may not have access to these services.

Home-based providers love their work caring for children. A universal theme throughout provider focus groups was that providers chose to enter the ECCE field because they love and care for young children, but while they love their work, they need to be able to earn a stable income. They don't want to be put in the position of having to choose between their families' financial stability and their work as a child care provider.

Home-based providers experience frustration with the process of obtaining and maintaining their licenses. Providers indicated that the process of obtaining and maintaining their license is cumbersome and difficult. From background check fees to the time it takes for their paperwork to be reviewed, the process has caused providers to leave the business altogether. Focus group respondents and professionals working with legally exempt providers both expressed frustration in the amount of time it takes (sometimes months) for provider's initial paperwork to be reviewed and approved so they can begin accepting payments.

Home-based providers experience barriers to maintaining a profitable business providing child care. The amount providers can charge parents is often barely more than the money they need to pay out of pocket for required home improvements, ongoing material costs, etc. Furthermore, some providers experience a lag in receiving payments from their counties (those who accept child care assistance payments). These lags make it very difficult to begin or maintain a profitable business as an early childhood care provider.

Conclusions

Over the course of the three years of the NYSB5 grant, New York State has dealt with a worldwide pandemic that sickened and killed thousands of New Yorkers and strained an already overburdened and under-funded ECCE system. Although gains have been made since then, parents and providers still face the realities of a system that does not have the necessary quantity of slots available at an affordable cost to allow parents the peace of mind that their young children will have a safe, nurturing, and enriching environment in which to learn the important skills they need as they enter kindergarten.

Overall Recommendations

Three overall recommendations resulted from the focus groups, interviews, and survey conducted as a part of this Needs Assessment.

Continue Stabilization Grant Application Procedures

Home-based providers struggled with what they described as a lack of understanding of how their businesses work and the feeling that they were undervalued. This was underscored by the way the initial CARES funding was made available to ECCE businesses during the pandemic.

When the pandemic came, if it wasn't for us providers taking care of those kids, none of those doctors or nurses or whatever would have been able to go to work. We do a lot. Some people call me a babysitter... We are an essential service. Not a babysitter.
(Southern Tier home-based provider)

The funding that was made available to providers early in the pandemic was reimbursement-based. Providers were required to spend their own money initially and then wait for reimbursement. This requirement changed with the Stabilization funding, and some providers reported that it saved their businesses. Many small home-based providers do not have access to enough funds to make purchases and wait for reimbursement. The advance funding to

already established ECCE businesses was extremely helpful and reduced the amount of time and money they needed to spend.

[Streamline Documentation and Reimbursement Processes for Child Care Providers](#)

A common challenge for providers is the amount of administrative time needed to apply for grants, seek reimbursement for food expenditures, participate in CCAP, and document compliance with licensing requirements. While such paperwork is necessary, simplification of these processes would improve the working environment for providers and enable them to focus on providing care to the children in their charge.

Also, in the future, the state could consider establishing an emergency reserve fund that would provide advance funding to already established child care businesses in emergency situations. Documentation of expenditures could be required, as well as other safeguards to ensure funds are used appropriately.

[Improved Communication between the State, CCR&Rs, and Providers](#)

Providers need to be better informed about programs and services that are available to them.

Introduction

In 2019, the New York State Council on Children and Families (CCF), in partnership with the Center for Human Services Research (CHSR) at the University at Albany, State University of New York, conducted a comprehensive, statewide Needs Assessment of the birth through five early childhood care and education (ECCE) system. The 2019 Needs Assessment reported the research findings from surveys and interviews with parentsⁱ and caregivers, administrators, and direct care and instructional staff, as well as with key New York State (NYS) agency staff. An environmental scan was conducted, and census data were used to identify vulnerable populations across NYS. This research provided critical information about the status, accomplishments, challenges, and further needs of the NYS ECCE system.

Between the initial Needs Assessment and December 2022, NYS dealt with a worldwide pandemic that sickened, hospitalized, and has, to date, taken the lives of over 70,000 New Yorkers.^{iv} Essential supplies, such as groceries, formula, diapers, and medications were difficult to obtain; and, although schools and child care programs were not required to close, COVID quarantines caused disruptions in programming and services for New York's youngest population. The first and second Needs Assessment updates (2020 and 2021) reported findings from research conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic with key informants, program administrators, parents, caregivers, and center-based child care providers. These Needs Assessments found that the impact of the pandemic was devastating for both ECCE providers and parents who needed care. NYS took numerous measures to help, including providing child care scholarships for the children of essential workers, funding for closed child care facilities to reopen, support for technology, cleaning supplies, and numerous other measures to expand access to child care. In the NYS enacted 2022-2023 budget, \$7 billion was committed to being invested in the state's child care system over the next four years, to support expanded access for low-income families and support providers. Beginning in 2021, \$2.3 billion in funds were distributed through CARES Act funding.

While the pandemic is still with us, vaccines and boosters have made it possible for child care programs to return to pre-pandemic levels of functioning. Nevertheless, many parents either lost or had to leave jobs during the height of the pandemic to care for their young children. Some child care providers closed because participation declined, and they couldn't remain financially viable. Others who received funds from the CARES II, III, and stabilization grants (see Table 1) were able to stay open or reopen.

This current report presents an updated Needs Assessment focused on home-based providers based on findings from research conducted in 2022 with parents and caregivers, licensed home-based child care providers, and CCR&R agency staff who work with legally exempt providers.

ⁱ Throughout this report, we will refer to primary caregivers for children as parents, though the term encompasses guardians and other caregivers.

Background and Context

Overall Number of Child Care Providers in New York State

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a shortage of child care providers in some parts of NYS. The pandemic exacerbated that shortage.

The number of available child care slots for children decreased most in the case of home-based family child care providers — maximum capacity decreased by 5,511 slots, a 21% decrease, from 2019 to 2022. Home-based group family child care providers saw a decrease of 8,711 slots from 2019 through 2021. By 2022 the number of available slots increased, although it remained below 2019 levels (4,818 fewer slots available in 2022, a 4% decrease from 2019). For child care centers, there was an increase in slots from 2019 to 2020, and a decrease between 2020 and 2021 of 1,837 slots. By 2022, the number of available slots exceeded those available in 2019.^v

Although child care programs were categorized as an essential service and not forced to close during the pandemic, many programs could not remain financially viable during this time. Both the federal government and New York State recognized that something was needed to help recover lost child care capacity and began a series of financial infusions into the system

Beginning in 2021, grants became available to help stabilize the child care system in New York State. As of December, 2022 \$284 million had been awarded to 12,840 providers across the state to help support and grow their programs.^v According to a survey of providers who had received stabilization grant money, a majority of the money (94%) was spent as direct payments to new or existing staff in the form of wages/salaries, raises, and bonuses.^{vi} Additionally, beginning in 2021 New York State began offering grants to help new programs open in areas of the state identified as child care “deserts” or areas with an insufficient supply of licensed child care.^{vii} As of December 2022, roughly 200 providers have become licensed since receiving grant money through this channel.^{viii}

New York State has recognized the need for large investments in early childhood care and education programs and has invested millions of dollars in the child care system since the pandemic began. Results from these investments are beginning to show in the number of new programs being opened, and money being invested in personnel. The data presented in the remainder of this report suggests, however, that there are still needs and gaps in the system.

Ongoing Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic

While the worst of the pandemic is over and the state has relaxed restrictions, the pandemic continues to impact child care in NYS in the following key ways:

- Rising inflation and costs associated with the pandemic have affected child care providers’ ability to maintain and expand their businesses, resulting in reduced child care availability and increased costs to parents. In a recent poll, administered by Raising

New York in September of 2022, 49% of parents from all racial and ethnic groups indicated that *“Issues with child care have affected their ability to attend work, school, or other commitments.”*^{ix}

NYS’s economic recovery from the pandemic has been slower than that of other states. According to the Empire Center, *“New York State has now regained more than 80 percent of the nearly 2 million private-sector jobs the state lost in the immediate aftermath of the March 2020 COVID-19 outbreak and lockdowns shutdowns. However, even counting New York’s loss, employment in the U.S. as of July 2022 has risen much further to 471,000 jobs above the pre-pandemic total.”*^x

New York State Measures to Support Child Care During the Pandemic

In response to the threat of long-term damage to the child care system in the U.S., a first set of measures to support child care was taken by the federal government early in the pandemic. In March 2020, the CARES act provided \$3.5 billion in additional discretionary funding for the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG).^{xi} CARES funding was distributed in three phases, sometimes referred to as CARES I, II, and III. Table 1 details the funding received by NYS. OCFS distributed approximately \$1 billion in stabilization funds starting August 2021 which slowed closures and helped support family copays.

Table 1: CARES Act funding provided much needed financial support to providers during the COVID 19 pandemic.^{xii, xiii, xiv, xv}

Date	Description	Amount
April 2020 (CARES I)	Funding was earmarked for full child care scholarships to all income-eligible essential workers at regulated child care providers and for supplies for programs that remained open.	\$25 million ^{xvi}
June 2020 (CARES II)	Funding assisted closed child care programs to reopen or expand under new social distancing guidelines. It also provided money for associated supplies and activities (e.g., partitions, technology to support remote learning, broadband access, and cleaning and classroom supplies).	\$20 million
June 2020 (CARES II)	Funding provided to child care providers to pay for half of the cost (up to \$6,000) to reopen up to three classrooms as an incentive to restore pre-pandemic enrollment.	\$45 million
September 2020 (CARES III)	Additional funding provided to assist child care providers through NY Forward grants as they adjusted their programs amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.	\$88.6 million (\$20 million of this allocation was repurposed funds from CARES I and CARES II underspending)

While the funding provided a critical lifeline for many providers, it also presented several challenges. The CARES Act funds were structured as a reimbursement-based model; this structure resulted in challenges for providers who were already experiencing financial

difficulties. Delays in reimbursement and decreasing enrollment also provided fiscal challenges to providers. Home-based providers received only a small proportion of CARES funding, with most going to child care centers.^{xvii}

Stabilization Grants

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) provided NYS with \$1.1 billion for its Child Care Stabilization program as of June 2022.^{xviii} OCFS made “*significant improvements to their distribution and data collection systems based on lessons learned from administering CARES II and CARES III grants.*”^{xix} Based on these changes, in the late summer of 2021, NYS began the distribution of stabilization grants to child care providers, reaching centers and home-based providers. As of June 30, 2022, 5,855 child care centers had received stabilization payments, and 9,040 home-based providers received payments.^{xx}

Table 2: ARPA Stabilization Grants provided funding to providers in New York State to help keep them financially stable. ^{xxi}

Date	Description	Amount
Stabilization 1.0 August 2021	Funding earmarked for OCFS licensed programs, including DCC, GFDC; OCFS registered programs including SACC, FDC, SDCC; NYCDOHMH permitted programs and enrolled legally exempt group programs.	\$1.074 billion
Stabilization 2.0 Ongoing (as of Oct. 2022)	Stabilization 2.0 for Workforce Supports allocates funds to child care providers to strengthen their infrastructure and support their workforce. At least 70% of each grant is to be spent on workforce support.	\$208 million

Changes to the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)

Beginning on August 1st, 2022, the eligibility threshold for the CCAP was raised from 200% of the Federal Poverty Level to 300% of the standard. A family of four making below \$83,250 is now eligible to receive the subsidy, instead of the previous income threshold of \$55,500.^{xxii} In addition to raising the income threshold, the requirement that a parent or caretaker attending a post-secondary education program work a minimum of 17.5 hours a week was rescinded. As of June 1, 2022, the payment rate was revised for children with special needs.^{xxiii}

Child Care Desert Grants

In April of 2022, New York State announced that \$70 million in grant funding would become available to newly licensed, registered, or permitted child care programs in areas of the state without sufficient child care slots (commonly referred to as “child care deserts”). Over 3,000 applications were received, and pre-approval granted to 418 programs. There were 297 final awardees.^{xxiv} An additional \$30 million was awarded to existing licensed, registered, or permitted child care programs beginning in October 2022. There were 240 final awardees for this grant.^{xxv}

Grant for Payment of Retroactive Absences

The 2022-2023 New York State enacted budget authorized OCFS to issue payments for absences on or after April 1st of 2020 and before December 1st of 2022. Payments will range from \$480 to \$3,312, depending on provider type, county, and the age group of the youngest child served.

Methodology

Data included in this report were gathered from a review of available reports and statistics, and three primary sources:

- the parent survey,
- focus groups and interviews with licensed home-based child care providers, and
- interviews with staff from Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies who work with legally exempt child care providers.

Parent Survey

The parent survey was primarily designed to measure difference in parents' experiences with, and opinions about, early childhood programs and services, since the initial NYSB5 grant began in 2019. Additionally, the survey asked questions specific to parents' use of, and access to, high-speed Internet. The goal of these questions was to better understand the perceived "digital divide" for parents with young children living in NYS. The target population for this survey was NYS caregivers (parents and others who care for young children) with children under the age of six who were attending an early child care or education program and/or receiving a qualifying service at the time of the survey. The survey took approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete.

The survey was offered online using the Qualtrics platform; it was available in English, Spanish, Russian, Korean, Bengali, Creole/Haitian, Simplified Chinese, and Yiddish.

An anonymous link to the electronic survey was disseminated between mid-July and early September 2022. CCF's distribution plan involved emailing NYSB5 partners and other stakeholder groups with an initial message containing the survey link, and then utilizing a snowball sampling method to increase respondent numbers (i.e., requesting that recipients distribute the link to any parents they knew who might be eligible to complete the survey). NYSB5 partner agencies also posted the survey link on their websites, e-newsletters, and social media. Additionally, 32 Facebook parenting groups and 13 Instagram parenting pages were contacted to post the survey information and links. Beginning in late August, OpAd Media, a media planning and marketing solutions firm, distributed the survey link through a variety of paid advertisements on social media platforms (including Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter) as part of a campaign to increase participation in the survey. The OpAd campaign specifically targeted individuals who primarily speak a language other than English. As a result of this campaign, an additional 3,879 responses were obtained out of a total of 4,870.

Participation was voluntary, and all personally identifiable information was removed prior to analysis. A variety of data cleaning methods were utilized to ensure all participants met survey

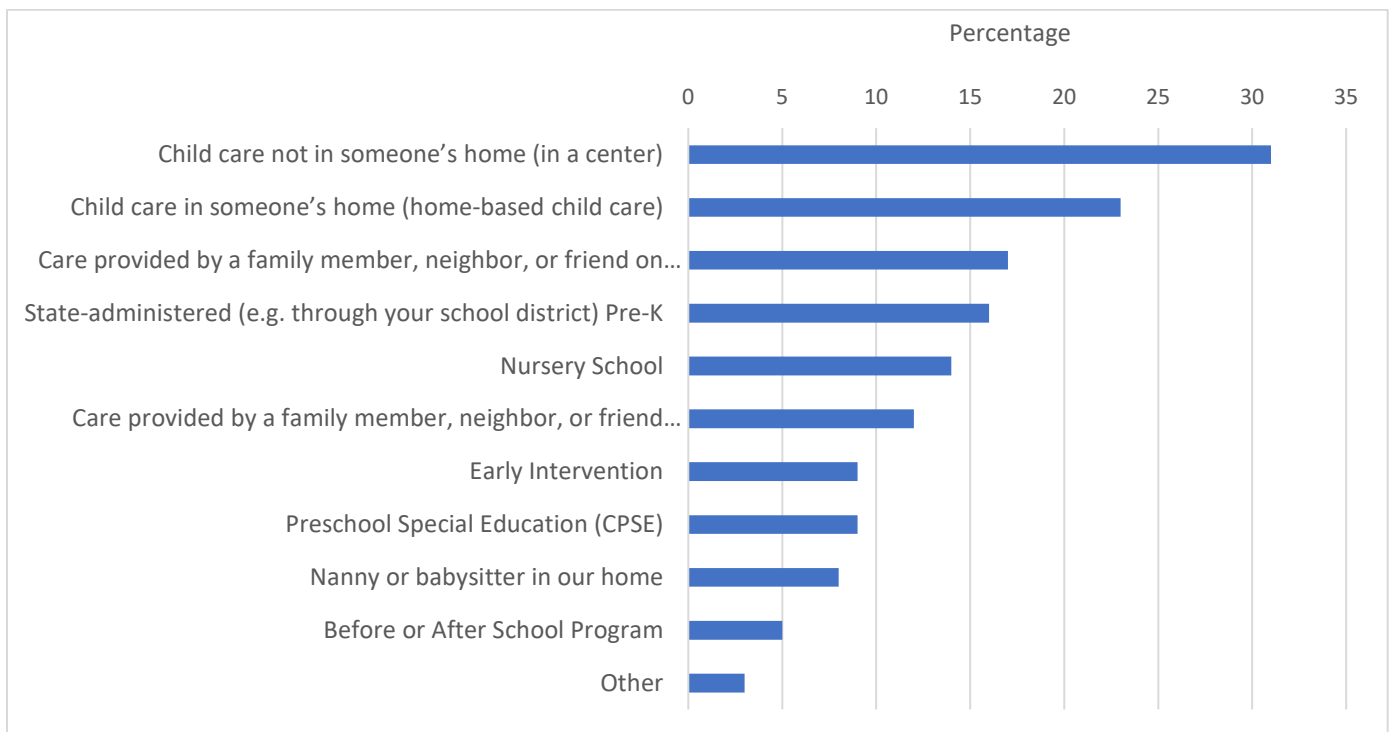
participation criteria. These methods included ensuring that the respondent was a resident of NYS; had a child under the age of six participating in a qualifying program/receiving a qualifying service; answered at least one substantive question; and were not flagged as suspicious or fraudulent responses (e.g., suspected bot behavior such as outlier response times, duplicative or non-New York State IP addresses, etc.). The final number of responses was 4,870. For complete survey results, see Appendix A.

Parent Respondent Characteristics

Of the caregivers who provided demographic information, the majority identified as female (86%), non-Hispanic or Latinx (77%), and white (72%). Eleven percent of respondents identified as Black or African American. The U.S. Census estimates that the population of New York State is 80% non-Hispanic, 69% white, 18% Black or African American, and 20% Hispanic or Latino,^{xxvi} so Black or African Americans were underrepresented in this survey. (See Appendix B for a detailed breakdown of racial identity and Hispanic/Latino identity of respondents).

Most respondents to the parent survey had children who were in center based (31%) or home-based (23%) child care; over two thirds were enrolled in Head Start, nursery school, or prekindergarten (67%). Less than a third were cared for by a family member, neighbor, or friend, either regularly (17%) or occasionally (12%). For this question, parents were allowed to select all types of services or care their child received; therefore, the percentages do not add up to 100% (e.g., a child may attend Head Start for part of the day, and either attend a center-based program or be cared for by a family member for the remainder of the day).

Figure 1. Most respondents’ children were in center-based or home-based care*

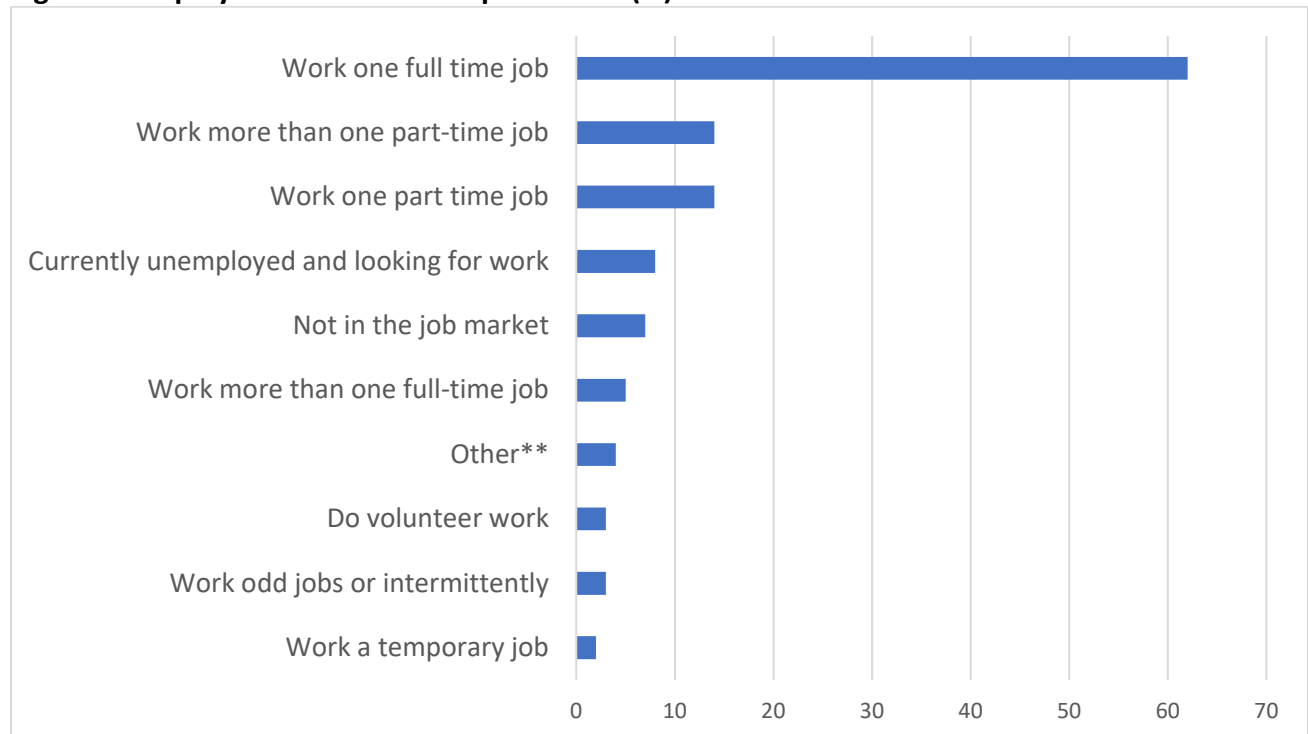


*Percentages do not total 100%, due to participant’s ability to select multiple options

Other respondent characteristics included:

- Most caregivers reported that English was their primary language (85%). Spanish (10%) and Chinese (2%) were the most common other primary languages.
- Most caregivers had attended some college (84%); over half had obtained a bachelor’s or graduate degree.
- Ninety-five percent of caregivers were employed part- or full-time, and 65% had an annual household income of \$50,000 or higher.
- The majority of surveyed caregivers did not receive any government assistance (76%) or unemployment insurance benefits (93%). Additionally, most survey respondents indicated that they did not receive (72%) nor qualify for (58%) a child care subsidy to help pay for child care.
- The three most prevalent NYS economic regions represented in the survey were New York City (35%), Western New York (10%), and the Capital Region (10%). See Appendix D for a map of survey respondents.

Figure 2. Employment Status of Respondents* (%)



*Percentages do not total 100%, due to participant’s ability to select multiple options.

**Top “Other” responses included stay at home parents / parents on maternity leave, self-employed individuals, full-time students, homemakers, disabled individuals, and individuals who cannot work due to lack of available/appropriate/affordable childcare options.

While the recruitment and sampling methods were the best option for reaching the intended target population, they presented limitations. Both snowball sampling and targeted outreach through paid media advertisements were utilized to maximize a representative sample of New Yorkers with young children. The snowball sampling method enabled engagement with a diverse sample of caregivers across NYS, who would have been difficult to sample with alternative methods. A limitation of this method was that it was non-random and therefore the representativeness of the sample is not guaranteed, and results may have limited generalizability. Utilizing paid media advertisements helped to increase the reach and impact of the survey without relying on known and trusted messengers to get the word out. Using both of these methods presented the most efficient and effective method to sample a large number of individuals from the general public. While it is impossible to calculate a response rate using either of these recruitment methods, survey respondents represented a diverse group racially, ethnically, geographically, educationally, and financially. A challenge of all online surveys are responses submitted by bots or individuals who are not a part of the target population. CHSR developed sophisticated cleaning procedures consisting of evidence-based best practice strategies for removing fraudulent responses and ensuring the best possible data integrity.^{xxvii} Future surveys will employ these, and emerging methods of data cleaning to continue to ensure data integrity.

In short, while the total sample was Whiter, more English speaking, more educated, and higher income than the population of NYS parents of young children as a whole, the total number of respondents provided sufficient numbers of parents from other demographics to conduct breakdown and crosstab analyses, which are detailed in this report. Tables representing the breakdown of survey responses by a variety of variables can be found in Appendix B.

Licensed Home-Based Provider Focus Groups

To add context and details about the experiences of licensed family and group family child care providers, CCF and CHSR developed a focus group protocol to collect primary data related to providing care in NYS within a home environment. The full protocol can be found in Appendix C. Focus groups were held over Zoom primarily on weeknights and Saturday mornings. Focus groups were scheduled in English, Spanish, and Mandarin.

To supplement the focus groups, individual licensed providers were contacted using the NYS Child Care, After School, and Parent Support Programs Locator on the NYS Parent Portal (<https://www.nysparenting.org/>). Additional individual interviews were held primarily during “nap time” (often around lunchtime) during the work week, for those who were not able to attend a scheduled focus group timeslot.

A flyer was created and distributed using a snowball sampling method consistent with previous Needs Assessment recruitment. The flyer was distributed through email listservs, posted on social media, and in some cases printed and posted within the community in addition to being

shared with specific community members and organizations connected to vulnerable populations. CHSR staff also called individual home-based providers from under-represented regions (Western New York and Southern Tier). Providers from these two regions were randomly chosen from among OCFS licensed child care programs. Again, while snowball sampling allowed for potential recruitment from a wider network than that directly known by the evaluation team, there was potential for subsequently uneven information spread and self-selection bias, leading to a non-random sample. However, this concern was outweighed by the advantage of being able to recruit a great number of participants.

Focus groups were organized geographically by Regional Economic Development Council region:

- Capital Region: Albany, Columbia, Greene, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Warren, and Washington counties (three focus groups)
- Central New York: Cayuga, Cortland, Madison, Onondaga, and Oswego counties (three focus groups)
- Finger Lakes: Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming, and Yates counties (three focus groups)
- Long Island: Nassau and Suffolk counties (four focus groups)
- Mid-Hudson: Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster, and Westchester counties (four focus groups)
- Mohawk Valley: Fulton, Herkimer, Montgomery, Oneida, Otsego, and Schoharie counties (one focus group)
- North Country: Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence counties (one focus group)
- New York City: Brooklyn, Bronx, Manhattan, Staten Island, and Queens boroughs (five focus groups)
- Southern Tier: Broome, Chemung, Chenango, Delaware, Schuyler, Steuben, Tioga, and Tompkins counties (one focus group)
- Western New York: Allegany, Cattaraugus, Erie, and Niagara counties (three focus groups)

Where multiple focus groups were scheduled for a region, the days and times were varied (weekday, weeknight, and weekend) to ensure individuals with various schedules could participate.

Focus groups and interviews were held over Zoom from mid-July through mid-September. No pre-registration was required; participants simply clicked on the Zoom link to enter at the scheduled time and date for their region or language group. In the main room, a CHSR focus group moderator asked participants two qualifying questions, verifying the county of residence

and confirming that they were licensed family child care providers before they were allowed to move forward with participation. This process relied on self-report, which allowed the possibility of unqualified individuals (e.g., not a licensed provider, not a resident within NYS, etc.) participating, but facilitators felt confident they were able to eliminate all non-qualifying individuals. Future focus groups will rely more heavily on trusted and vetted individuals referring potential participants to better ensure that individuals are appropriately qualified to give their input.

Participants were encouraged to participate via video conferencing, when possible, although audio-only participation was also allowed to enable participation by those with technical difficulties or limitations. A \$25 Target gift card was offered to each participant who completed the focus group.

In total, 31 individuals participated in a focus group session. Sixteen of the participants had a family license, while 15 possessed a group family license. All but one participant identified as female. Participants resided in a variety of geographic regions of the state. Roughly half of the participants identified themselves as Black/African American (see Figure 3), with a wide variety of both education (see Figure 4) and income level (see Figure 5). This sample was a strong demographic representation of home-based providers state-wide. While focus group data by its nature (limited sample size, qualitative responses) is limited in generalizability, the diverse nature of the groups allows for a more complete picture of the home-based child care landscape across the state.

Figure 3. Most focus group participants identified as Black/African American or White.

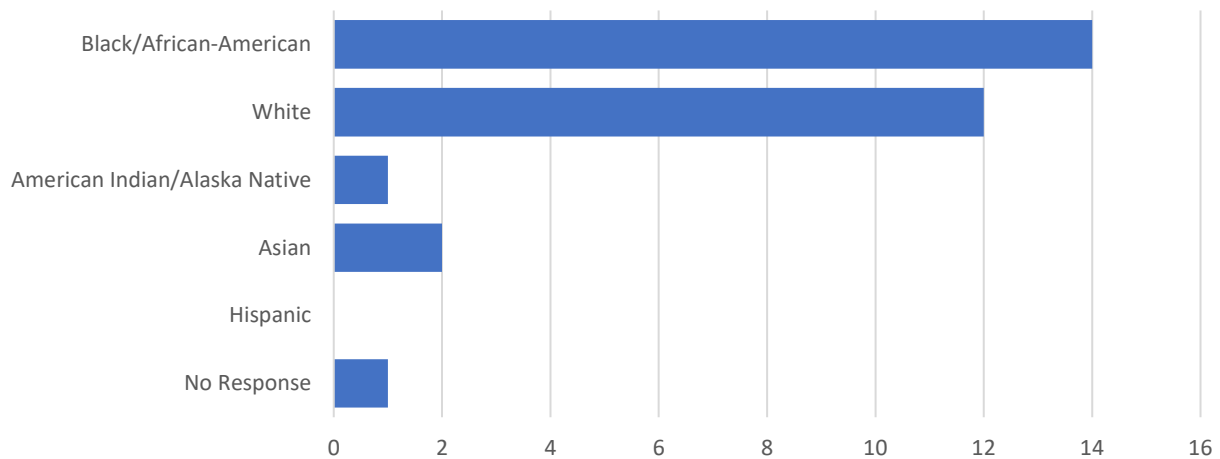


Figure 4. Most focus group participants had completed some college credits or held a bachelor’s degree.

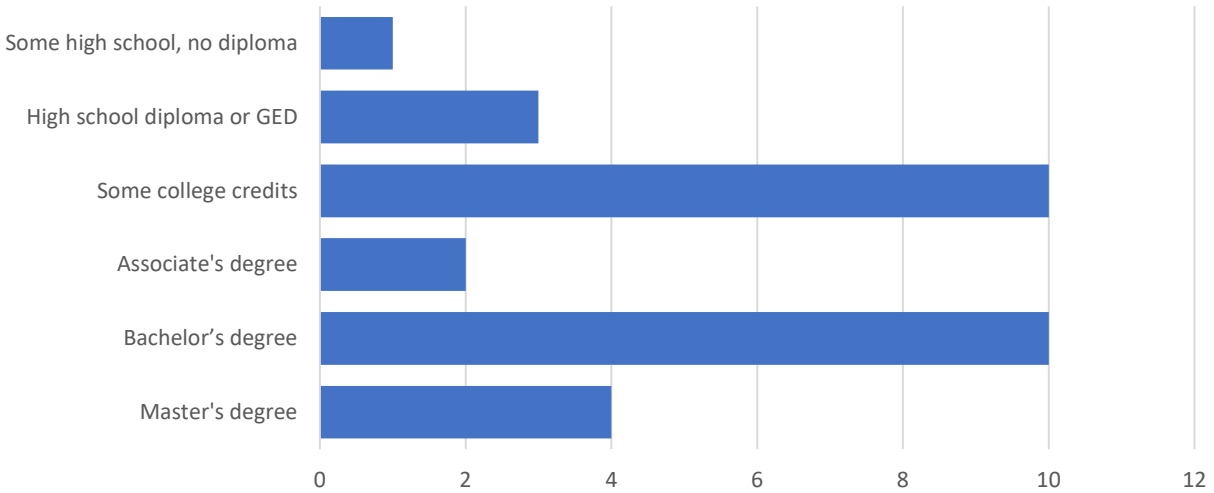
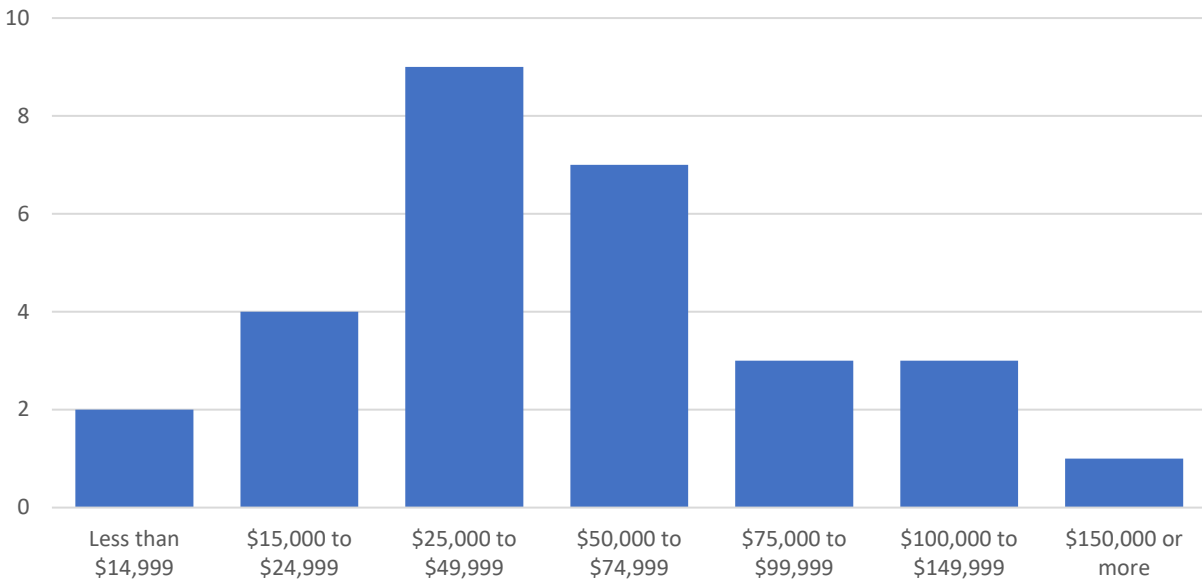


Figure 5. Most focus group participants reported household incomes between \$25,000 and \$75,000 per year.



Key Informant Interviews

Legally exempt providers, a group that has historically been overlooked when it comes to Needs Assessment primary data collection, are also the largest group of at-home providers of child care across NYS. These providers are exempt from most of the training and licensing requirements of family and group family providers but are still eligible for child care assistance payments. They typically care for a small number of children and are often related to, or live close by, the children for whom they care. This group is difficult to engage in focus groups and other data collection efforts, in part because they do not necessarily view themselves as typical child care providers. To attempt to gather some data about the experiences of these providers,

CHSR reached out to four CCR&R agencies in the Capital Region, Mid-Hudson, Finger Lakes, and Central NY regions, and interviewed a total of six staff members who primarily work with legally exempt providers. Participating staff were able to provide detailed information about the needs of this group and contributed rich data to inform this report.

Results

The findings from primary data collection efforts are organized into two main categories: parents and home-based providers.

Parent Survey Findings

The Top Five Parental Concerns

Parents’ top concerns mirror what was found in the initial NYSB5 statewide Needs Assessment in 2019—cost, availability, and quality. In the current survey, parents were asked to choose the top five challenges in the early childhood care and education system where they live. The most frequently chosen challenges were cost of care (72%), number of programs/services in their area (55%), length of waitlists (48%), availability of non-traditional hours (42%), and quality of care or services available (39%) (see Table 3).

Table 3. Top Five Challenges in the NYS Early Childhood Care and Education System.

	n	%
Cost of care	3,484	72
Number of programs/services in my area	2,683	55
Length of waitlists	2,308	48
Availability of care at non-traditional hours (evenings/nights, weekends, early morning)	2,031	42
Quality of care or services available	1,887	39
Staff keeps changing	1,524	31
Trust-building between staff and parents	1,217	25
Transportation	1,183	24
Supportive services for my child	963	20
Ability of programs/services to accommodate different backgrounds of families in care	802	17
Other	232	5
I don’t see any challenges	136	3

Note: Percentages do not total 100%, due to participants’ ability to select multiple options

Cost of care was the most frequently cited challenge (72% of respondents). The survey was distributed in July/August of 2022 before the CCAP eligibility threshold was raised from 200% of the Federal Poverty Level to 300%. Respondents were probably not yet aware of this significant change.

Previous research with parents has shown that the lack of child care available for workers who work non-traditional hours falls disproportionately on parents of color, Latinx parents, and low-

income parents.^{xxviii} The results of the current survey, however, suggest that many parents, regardless of race/ethnicity or income level struggle to find child care at non-traditional hours. For example, 39% of parents of color and Latinx parents identified availability of care at non-traditional hours as a top challenge as did 44% of white parents. Additionally, 37% of respondents with a household income of less than \$50,000 per year identified availability of care as a top challenge as did 44% of respondents with a household income of \$50,000 or more. These results suggest that non-traditional hourly care is needed generally across New York State.

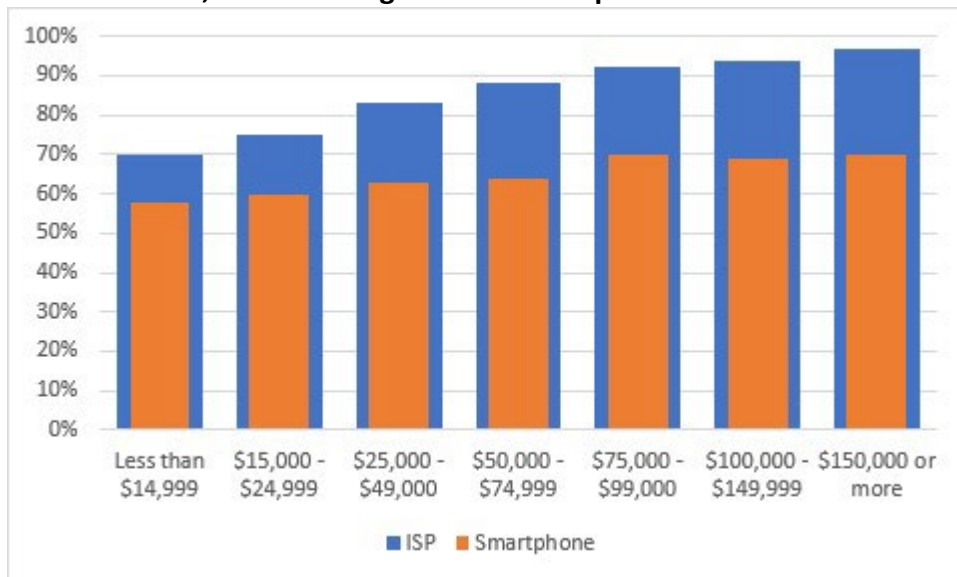
Parents' Access to High-Speed Internet

As information technology becomes more ubiquitous, an increasing number of parents are relying on the internet to access information about early childhood care and education programs and services. Parents connect with each other and their child's provider via email, social media, and smartphone applications. Using these technologies effectively requires a consistent, high-speed means of accessing the internet. This survey attempted to better understand parents' access to high-speed internet.

Most respondents (87%) accessed the internet via an Internet Service Provider (ISP); 65% also accessed the internet through their cell phone data plan. Less than 1% reported that they did not connect to the internet for personal use. Of the 12 respondents who reported no access to the Internet, 10 indicated that they couldn't afford either internet access or a computer or smartphone.

Figure 6 (below) shows a breakdown of how respondents of varying income levels connect to the internet. Many fewer lower income respondents reported having access to the internet. The higher the reported income of the respondent, the higher the percentage who typically connected via an ISP. In contrast, the percentage of respondents who typically connected by mobile phone didn't show as dramatic an increase as income increased.

Figure 6. While only about two-thirds of lower-income respondents reported having access to the internet, almost all higher-income respondents did.



Similar relationships between access and income level were seen for speed and reliability of respondents’ internet connections and whether respondents always had an internet connection when they needed one. See Appendix B for complete results on internet connectivity, reliability, and speed.

Family, Group Family, and Legally Exempt Provider Focus Groups and Interviews

Previous Needs Assessments have primarily been informed by center-based providers; however, home-based providers (including legally exempt providers) make up 76% of child care providers in NYS.^{xxix} The current Needs Assessment found that the advantages of being a home-based provider include the ability to react quickly to a changing child care landscape (including remaining open at a reduced capacity when larger centers closed), greater scheduling flexibility, and the ability to care for one’s own children. Disadvantages include a more precarious business model (generally smaller providers have less money saved to protect their business against loss) and balancing professional needs against working in one’s home (e.g., the need to keep a home space current on safety requirements in order to operate a child care business).

Respondents also noted additional advantages of being a legally exempt provider, including the ability to care for and be paid for caring for relatives (e.g., grandchildren). Disadvantages centered around more precarious financial situations (including having a lower amount of savings to draw on when enrollment decreases), lack of administrative help, and extensive documentation required, and challenges accessing some COVID-19-related grant monies.

The Path to Becoming a Home-Based Child Care Provider

Reasons for Becoming a Home-Based Provider

Respondents reported a range of reasons for becoming home-based child care providers. The most frequently mentioned reason was a love of children and wanting to stay home with their own children while earning an income. This reasoning was particularly important for parents whose income didn't considerably exceed the cost of child care in their region. Circumstances, such as losing a job, having a child with special needs, or the unavailability of child care, also contributed to the decision to become a home-based provider.

Some relatives and other legally exempt providers, who wanted or needed to care for their own children or other relatives, were also able to provide care and receive payment through the child care assistance program. CCR&R staff who worked with legally exempt providers reported that parents wanted someone familiar to care for their child and were able to find a relative or neighbor through this mechanism.

While a small number of respondents reported that they had wanted to become child care providers early in life, most made the decision later, often as a secondary career choice.

I had two office closures that I went through. I got into this because my three grandchildren needed reliable child care... I had really wanted to do child care after I graduated from high school... it just so happened to come back full circle. (Central NY family provider)

I wanted to be home with my kids, so quit my job and everybody knew I was home and wanted me to care for their kids. (Finger Lakes family provider)

In some cases, older providers (grandparents, aunts) stepped in to care for children in their own families when the parents couldn't. Other providers started by caring for their children and then adding one or two children from their neighborhoods. In two cases, providers had a family member who had a child with a disability; when they couldn't find care that met their child's needs, the respondents decided to become providers themselves.

CCR&R staff who work with legally exempt providers noted that these providers almost always knew the child they cared for but were unable to care for the child for free. Being able to receive a child care subsidy allows the provider to earn an income and the parent to maintain employment. Becoming a child care provider allowed for more flexibility in scheduling. Providers were usually parents or grandparents who needed to be able to control their work schedules to some extent. The flexibility also allowed some providers to care for children outside of normal working hours. Five providers who were interviewed for this report provided late evening or overnight care.

Obtaining a License

Respondents reported the process of obtaining a license to open a home-based child care program in NYS was difficult, overwhelming, and complicated. Although the process is complex and time-consuming (most reported that it took between four and six months), providers reported receiving support and assistance from their licensors and/or local CCR&R agencies. Almost all providers spoke very positively about the assistance they received: they were walked through the process, and when they contacted county or state representatives with questions and problems, they received prompt responses.

I wouldn't say it was easy, but I didn't have to find my way by myself which would've been stressful for me. (Mid-Hudson home-based provider)

It wasn't a hard process, but it took a little time to get everything I needed done. I really didn't understand all the things you needed to do. I'm more of a hands-on type [of] person. And at that time, the registrar I had—if it wasn't for her, I probably wouldn't have finished the process. (Central NY home-based provider)

It was really easy. The Family Enrichment in Norwich was very helpful. I set up time off from my other job that I was doing at the time and got my classes in and everything I needed—the CPR and all that. And then I had to do things around the house and have my water tested. Everything went pretty smooth. (Southern Tier home-based provider)

CCR&R staff who work with legally exempt providers reported they worked with providers in their regions to provide technical assistance and help with requirements. Assistance was provided over the phone, through email, and most effectively, through home visits. In addition, staff often brought resources for providers, reached out to county representatives, and generally assisted providers in meeting the requirements to receive payment.

A few participants (7 out of 37, or 19%) said the process took too long and was too complicated. Some providers mentioned that different state licensing agents (licensors) had different interpretations of the regulations and that it was confusing and frustrating to get different instructions from different licensors.

CCR&R staff working with legally exempt providers reported that providers are sometimes frustrated with the process of getting set up to receive child care assistance payments. Once a provider meets the requirements, the parent needs to complete paperwork through the county. The communication between the CCR&R (working with the provider) and the county (working with the parent) can sometimes be difficult, which can result in a lag in payment to the provider.

Overall, many more providers reported positive experiences with their licensors than negative ones. Licensors often went out of their way to help providers comply with regulations and receive funding.

Enrolling Families

According to focus group participants, one of the challenges of starting a home-based child care business was finding families with young children looking for care. Parents looked for providers they could trust, which was a challenge for providers without experience. Providers who had worked in the child care field in other capacities, or who had contacts with other providers, had an advantage. Once providers had been in operation for some time they could rely on their clients for referrals.

The most widely mentioned methods of finding clients were through word-of-mouth and Facebook. Providers used their social networks, including family, friends, and former co-workers to reach families who needed child care. Many created Facebook pages to advertise their services; some took out advertisements on Facebook. Provider Facebook groups and group chats were another source of referrals. Some providers made flyers and posted them locally and some advertised in free publications, such as pennysavers.

I put an ad in our Penny Saver, and I have a sign up in front of my house, and I did do a [Facebook] page at the beginning, so it sits there, but a lot of people contact me using [Facebook] messenger, so I still use it. (Southern Tier home-base provider)

A New York City provider reported receiving referrals directly from the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), which is the agency in New York City which oversees children and family services. This provider also reported that she informed families who contact her that they could apply for a subsidy through ACS to receive money for child care if they qualified.

They can't pay, so they need to go to ACS. If they qualify, ACS will pay, but if not, they have to pay themselves. Not all parents qualify, and not all parents can pay privately. They don't have the resources. (NYC home-based provider)

Other providers reported that they receive referrals through their CCR&R, but none mentioned this as a primary source. Twitter was mentioned by a few providers as a resource, and one mentioned that she set up a website and used Google to track the number of visitors.

Up and Running: Operating a Home-Based Child Care Business

Providers who participated in the focus groups and interviews provided a wealth of feedback on the rewards and challenges of operating a home-based child care business.

Inspectors/Licensors and Periodic Inspections

Several providers shared that they thought licensors who came for periodic inspections failed to see the "big picture" regarding the child-centered, high quality care they were providing.

When the state inspectors come in, it's like they're looking to get you with something. (Western NY, home-based provider)

Kids can't be out of sight, but you have to go to the bathroom... [and can't] take seven kids to the bathroom with you. They totally lose reality. Always looking for something wrong even when you have everything right, a licenser will find something, and you have to post [it] on your wall and on the internet forever. (Southern Tier, home-based provider)

I have to sign in and out every day in my home... I understand if you have employees, having them sign in and out because it's not their home. (Southern Tier, home-based provider)

Some providers reported feeling like an “enemy” or a “criminal,” rather than a member of their community who is trying to provide a vital service. They also reported that they are being held to unrealistic standards, with little to no flexibility or understanding that the business they are running is also where they live. They would like inspectors to be more flexible in their interpretations of the regulations, and in certain situations to hold off on issuing violations so that the provider can fix the problem. They expressly wanted to meet the requirements and, in lieu of punitive measures, would like more support from officials in fulfilling these requirements.

CRR&R staff reported making it a point to offer help, technical assistance, and suggestions when possible. Staff who were interviewed reported bringing “goody bags” to providers which included games, books, and other activities for children. They also helped providers purchase safety equipment, and in some cases were able to provide such equipment.

Regulations

A minority of respondents said that they received confusing answers about regulations from different licensors.

Every day there's emails saying this has changed, that has changed. They change the rules every few days. (Finger Lakes home-based provider)

I do know different fire inspectors, different licensors ... [differ] on what they require you to do, which can be frustrating, because where one says yes, you can, the next person says, no, you can't. (Southern Tier home-based provider)

One of the most salient issues, raised by child care providers, was the shortage of infant child care slots. Providers reported receiving numerous calls from parents seeking care for their infants. For many of these providers, taking on more infants was not possible. The staff-to-child requirements for infant care for home-based providers make it necessary for them to either care for fewer children or take on additional staff. Providers reported neither one of these options was a financially viable option, therefore leading to some providers not taking infants into their care.

Cost of Care

Some home-based providers mentioned that their costs have risen significantly in the past year, making it difficult for them to stay in business. Several providers reported that the income they make is very low after expenses are deducted.

I went from a job where I made a decent salary, \$20 an hour and now I'm making about \$11 an hour. There was a month where I barely made anything because I was only watching two kids. (Southern Tier home-based provider)

The cost of both food and utilities have increased drastically in the last two years, which adds to increased overhead for providers.

Feeding the children has become so expensive and I have not raised my rates and have to pay employees so much more. Expenses have really jumped! (NYC home-based provider)

Everything has gotten way more expensive, right down to the utilities. So, your bottom line has changed. ...it's a low socioeconomic area. We know what the rates are supposed to be, but we could never charge that. (Southern Tier home-based provider)

Even before the pandemic, providers reported that the cost of starting and maintaining a home-based child care business were high compared to the profit they made. While grants and loans were available, they were reported to not cover the adaptations and repairs to their home before opening. Play equipment and supplies were another start-up cost incurred before opening.

The expenses; buying things for the program, like our arts and crafts. It seems to be constant, replenishing. (Southern Tier home-based provider)

Insurance is an additional cost for providers; they are expected to have liability insurance for their business and disability insurance for their employees.

I tried to go through NY State of Health, but they wanted \$690/month for no deductible, and \$450/month for, I think, a \$4,500 deductible, so that wasn't affordable. (Southern Tier home-based provider)

The Impact of Changes to Child Care Assistance Program Market Rates

Many providers reported that the increase in the market-related payments rate for child care assistance has had some unintended consequences. Because providers must charge all parents the same rate, families who don't qualify for CCAP may not be able to afford the full rate. As a

result, providers reported being reluctant to charge these parents the full amount because they feel empathy towards them and don't want to lose families (income).

I feel so guilty; I went up from \$165 before COVID to \$235. Then a survey went out [local market rate survey mandated by the federal government] and when it came back it said \$275. (Capital Region home-based provider)

Some providers who are being reimbursed for families receiving child care assistance reported there are long waits to receive the reimbursement. Other providers have mentioned that the process of applying for reimbursement is cumbersome.

I'll take any subsidy kid here, but a lot of people won't take that because of how long it takes to get the payment. (Southern Tier home-based provider)

Subsidized kids in Alleghany County are hard to get reimbursed for. It was easier in Steuben. Every week you have to mail your timesheet to a DSS mailroom. You never get a confirmation. (Western NY home-based provider)

Paperwork and Record-Keeping

While there are a variety of administrative supports for child care providers in the form of programs and grants offered by the state and the child care provider union (CSEA Voice of Organized Independent Child Care Educators), each one of these has different requirements and often require applications and documentation. For example, the New York Early Learning Alliance (<https://www.nyearlylearning.org/>) offers access to free software and business support to help providers save time and money. However, already overworked and exhausted home-based providers may be overwhelmed by the thought of filling out another application or completing more paperwork, even if it is a program that may reduce their administrative burden in the long term. If CCR&R staff, however, can help these providers with these requirements and paperwork, it would allow providers to potentially save money and streamline their administrative tasks.

Parent Relationships

The relationship between parents and care providers was necessarily one of trust. Parents often chose providers based on recommendations from other parents, and providers reported that one of their responsibilities was to assure parents of their children's safety. Several providers described being considered by parents as part of their families. In the case of legally exempt providers, these relationships were often already established since the provider was a neighbor or family member. Focus group participants stated that these pre-existing close relationships were one of the benefits of home-based care, and that there was more of an opportunity to strengthen these relationships in a smaller, home-based setting.

Providers generally expressed positive feelings about relationships with parents and also described challenges in these close relationships, such as:

Conveying concerns about a child’s development to parents is a challenge (e.g., parents are in disbelief or feel offended with a referral to a specialist).

Asking for payment from parents. One provider reported that when parents had difficulty paying fees, it was difficult to ask for payment because they understand their situation.

Other Benefits of Home-Based Care

The structure of home-based care supports interaction between children of different ages. While child care centers are larger and children are grouped by age, allowing for more focus on developmentally appropriate activities, home-based care provides more opportunity to “copy the big kids.”

The Role of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies

Providers repeatedly stated that they received critical support from their local CCR&Rs. As described in the above section on licensing, almost all providers stated that they would not have been able to obtain their licenses without extensive support. The packet that is sent to would-be providers is long and complicated. CCR&R technical support teams around the state walked providers through the process, helped them comply with state regulations, and helped them to locate and attend training sessions.

Professional Development Needs

Most respondents agreed that there were a lot of training opportunities available to them. One provider mentioned that she would have joined QUALITYstarsNY, the NYS Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) for early childhood programs, providing support and resources to improve and sustain high quality across New York State (<https://qualitystarsny.org>) earlier if she had known about it.

Providers agreed that the biggest barrier to further professional development was time and indicated that they needed trainings to be scheduled after typical work hours. While a few providers felt negatively about virtual training, most saw it as an advantage because of time savings and accessibility.

Specific suggestions and requests for training included the following:

- information on how to detect and speak to parents about special needs concerns (such as suggesting a child be evaluated) and overall best practices for working with children with special needs,
- business training such as how to complete payroll and manage employees,
- ongoing training on changing regulations and policies,

- more advanced training. Some experienced providers noted that they're expected to attend a certain number of trainings per year and have attended some of the basic trainings several times.
- training on the regulations and how to interpret them,
- trainings offered at no cost to providers,
- training offered in the evenings and on weekends,
- more virtual training ("Zoom classes are great"),
- in-person training to help providers make connections and form networks, and
- training on how to apply for grants.

Providers also described leaning on other professionals for support. Some providers described regularly using their licensors as mentors by contacting their licensor if they had questions or problems. Some found that other providers were a rich source of information and support, sometimes accessed through provider networks.

The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Licensed Providers

Overall, providers who managed to stay open or reopen throughout the pandemic were slowly getting back to a "new normal." Unless they primarily served essential workers who needed to continue working regardless of COVID-19, many, if not most, lost some or all their clients during the pandemic. Decreased enrollment caused many providers to temporarily close (for a period of one to three months).

The biggest thing is, basically, I opened in 2019, [and] struggle[d] [to get] the kids in here, to begin with. And then when I finally did, I mean, this whole thing has been a struggle. Because then COVID hit, and then because they canceled after-school programs for that following year, I was full with kids. But they're all school-aged kids. So of course, this past year, when they opened up school programs after school, I again lost everyone. It's been a big struggle. (Western New York home-based provider)

Several providers reported that the number of calls they received from parents who were interested in their services decreased since the beginning of the pandemic. Some parents are still reluctant to enroll their children in child care outside the home or need less child care due to working from home more than they had prior to the pandemic. This situation is changing gradually as parents are required to return to in-person work and others find new jobs. One provider felt some parents were now more inclined to send their children to small child care providers because fewer children meant less chance of exposure to COVID-19.

One provider reported that she changed her payment structure to require that parents pay for a weekly spot, regardless of whether their child was in care for only part of the week. As this

provider explained, program finances require all spots to be filled and it is administratively difficult to fill an entire schedule with part-time slots.

Finally, the extra cleaning and the accompanying requirements for documentation that started during the pandemic have continued and added to an already heavy workload for providers.

Communication Between Providers Moved Online

Before the onset of the pandemic, some providers mentioned that they participated in support groups with other providers, or simply met up to share stories and tips which they found beneficial. In-person meetings stopped during the pandemic, but providers found other ways to communicate. Some joined Facebook groups, and some joined group chats. Some CCR&R agencies assisted providers to form these types of groups, and some found them on their own.

CARES and Stabilization Grants

While the CARES grants were reported to be difficult to access by many providers, the stabilization grants, described as being more accessible, reached many more providers. As of December 2022, 11,677 providers had received assistance from Round 2 of the stabilization grants.^{xxx} Several providers mentioned the difference made in their situations by the stabilization grants.

All of a sudden, I felt like I could breathe. I just can't tell you what a gift that was; it was really huge. ([Southern Tier home-based provider)

The stabilization grant: without it, I would not have been able to sustain. (Southern Tier home-based provider)

Some providers requested that the stabilization grants continue in some form. See the “Financial Concerns of Licensed Home-Based Providers” section for more details.

Suggestions From Home-Based Providers to Agencies

Providers offered important feedback for the agencies that create or influence child care policies.

Support to Care for Children with Special Needs

Some providers wanted training for working with children with special needs to support their ability to accept these children and successfully integrate them into their programs. One also mentioned that it was difficult for parents to access services from the New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD).

They need more training on how to help kids with special needs and help parents realize that kid has special needs. No parent wants to hear that their kid has special needs. It is very difficult. So maybe more training and brochures to help. All these daycares that terminate these special needs kids' care and make parents and kids

feel like failures, and schools have extra funding and daycare does not. (Southern Tier home-based provider)

Several home-based providers discussed wanting to provide care for children with disabilities but would need additional help. Providers who have worked previously with children with special needs wanted help supporting inclusion. A few mentioned that service providers come to their homes to work with children that qualify for early intervention services.

The only need I've seen is for more assistants for children with disabilities so they can get more one-on-one attention. It really made me sad that I had to turn away two different families where the kids had autism. They need to do something. I can't afford to hire an assistant for just one child. They only make \$150 - \$200 a week and no one wants to work for that. Some kind of funding for children with disabilities. The two little girls that I had to turn away, their grandmother had to hire someone to come into their home and watch them. (Southern Tier home-based provider)

More Communication About Regulations and Policies

Providers reported that they felt training that covered policies and changes in regulations would help providers be on the same page as licensors. In addition, some providers shared that they wanted specifically to be kept updated on changes to payment structures and processes.

Provide Startup Funding

Some providers described how expensive it was to start their businesses. They thought it would be helpful if startup loans or grants were more readily available.

If someone has to make thousands of dollars of repairs to their home just to get started... a grant or loan program to help them. (Western NY home-based provider)

Similarly, if home-based providers want to expand to open centers, they could benefit from both technical and financial assistance to make this change. While some of these supports may already be available, the providers surveyed were not aware of them.

Shortage of Infant Slots Linked to Financial Considerations

The introduction and expansion of PreK for 3-year-olds has caused financial challenges for some home-based providers, as the hours of needed care have been significantly reduced. Children who attend NYS funded Prekindergarten programs often just need a few hours of care (until their parents' get off work). Parents want to pay only for the actual time their children are in care, but this means reduced income for providers.

Some providers couldn't afford to provide flexibility/reduced hours to parents.

That's been an issue with a lot of the parents because if they're going to go to PreK all day, they don't want to pay your rates, but I'm not going to open it up to people

that are not paying the full-time rate. If they want them to go to preschool, they have to pay the same rate everybody else does. (Finger Lakes home-based provider)

If a child goes from my day care into UPK, they're at school all day, yet I have to count them as one of my kids during the day. They're not counted as not being there. I don't charge my parents my full-time rate because I feel bad doing that. Right now, I have five kids there, but six slots are taken. (Southern Tier home-based provider)

Continue Grants to Providers

Providers described how grants helped support their businesses and the importance of funding opportunities continuing to be made available.

I got a grant during COVID because I never closed down. I had to fill out a weekly report every Wednesday to Albany... The money had to be used for things in your house to improve, like new carpet, flooring, toys, and resources to pay employees. A wide range of things that the money was appropriated for... It's very strict and you have to provide proof, but it was great, and I hope they continue it. (Finger Lakes home-based provider)

Pay for Child Care Through Taxes

Several providers commented that if both parents need to work, the state should pay for child care. Others said that parents couldn't afford child care, especially if they have more than one child. According to another provider, this situation makes it more likely that parents will leave their children with unlicensed providers who charge less. Making child care more affordable would increase parents' ability to work and improve the quality-of-care children receive.

I'm not saying that every licensed day care is good, there are plenty of stories out there. But if someone is sending their kid to unlicensed care, there's no guarantee that they're not just sitting there watching TV all day. (Western New York home-based provider)

Increased Funding for Food and Supplies

Child care providers reported often buying food and supplies for families who couldn't afford them, but that the grants and reimbursement that they get are insufficient to address the needs of these families.

Like for me, I go out every week and I buy paper plates, and paper cups for the kids. I go out and buy my own Wet Ones; some of these parents can't afford Wet Ones. They don't bring diapers. I buy my own diapers. I buy paper plates and cups. I buy cleaning supplies. (Southern Tier home-based provider)

One of my kids came to the daycare and they're supposed to leave at a certain time. They don't eat dinner here, and the kid was always demanding dinner, and I'm like 'no, you don't eat dinner here, you eat dinner at home...' So, the mom came, and I'm like 'do you know your kid is always asking to eat dinner?' and I just wanted to let them know that we don't eat dinner here. And the mom says to me, 'well, we don't have food at home.' (Southern Tier home-based provider)

Overall Recommendations

Three overall recommendations resulted from the focus groups, interviews, and survey conducted as a part of this Needs Assessment.

Continue Stabilization Grant Application Procedures

Home-based providers struggled with what they described as being undervalued and misunderstood by state agencies. Respondents focused on some of the initial funding that was made available during the pandemic. Initial CARES funding, for example, was reimbursement-based, requiring providers to front the money for reimbursable expenses. Respondents shared that their budgets are often so tight they do not have funds available to make this investment and were relieved when subsequent funding dropped the reimbursement requirement.

This requirement changed with the Stabilization funding, and some providers reported that it saved their businesses. The advance funding to already established ECCE businesses was extremely helpful and reduced the amount of time and money they needed to spend.

Focus group participants also mentioned that CCAP only pays for days when children are present. They reported they can't make up for this lost income. They recommended that payment be made for registered children, and not based on the number of days they are in attendance.

Streamline Documentation and Reimbursement Processes for Child Care Providers

A common challenge for providers is the amount of administrative time needed to apply for grants, seek reimbursement for food expenditures, participate in CCAP, and document compliance with licensing requirements. While such paperwork is necessary, simplification of these processes would improve the working environment for providers and enable them to focus on providing care to the children in their charge.

The state could consider establishing an emergency reserve fund that would provide advance funding to already established child care businesses in emergency situations. Documentation of expenditures could be required, as well as other safeguards to ensure funds are used appropriately.

Improved Communication between the State, CCR&Rs, and Providers

Providers need to be better informed about programs and services that are available to them.

Appendix A

Parent Survey Protocol

Introduction

Q1. The New York State Council on Children and Families and the Center for Human Services Research need your help to learn more about early childhood care and learning in New York State. All parents and their children should be able to find the best care for their children and we want to know what you think. In New York state children go to nursery school, day care, Head Start, Prekindergarten and some children have services from Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education.

We have put together a survey with questions that ask about.

1. How you use the Internet
2. What you think about child care programs and services where you live.
3. What you think the biggest child care problems are in our state.

The survey should take about 10 minutes. You don't need to take the survey if you don't want to. We do not share any information about you or your child; we will take the information we learn from people all over New York State and put it together. It will not include anything personal.

You will receive a \$5 digital Target gift card through email if you enter your email address at the end of the survey. If you have questions about this survey, please contact Erin Beral, Assistant Director of the Center for Human Services Research at eberical@albany.edu or (518) 591-8615.

Q2. IF YOU ARE THE PARENT, GUARDIAN, OR PRIMARY CAREGIVER OF ONE OR MORE CHILDREN AGE BIRTH THROUGH 5 YEARS OLD, PLEASE DO THE FOLLOWING:

Complete the survey for the child age birth through 5 years old who has spent the most time in early childhood programs and services in the last year. For the remainder of the survey, this child will be referred to as "your child."

You may complete the survey again for additional children if you would like. However, you can only receive one \$5 digital gift card per family.

Q3. What is your child's age?

- Year
 - 2022
 - 2021
 - 2020
 - 2019
 - 2018

- 2017
 - 2016
 - Before 2016
- Month
 - January
 - February
 - March
 - April
 - May
 - June
 - July
 - August
 - September
 - October
 - November
 - December

Survey logic if birthdate is prior to 06/01/2016, not eligible.

Q4. We are surveying parents and caregivers with children five years old or younger. The birthdate you entered is for a child older than this. Please enter the birthdate of your child who is within this age range, or let us know if your child is older.

- Enter a new date of birth
- My child is over 5 years, 11 months old

Q5. What is your child's age?

- Year
 - 2022
 - 2021
 - 2020
 - 2019
 - 2018
 - 2017
 - 2016
 - Before 2016
- Month
 - January
 - February
 - March
 - April
 - May
 - June
 - July

- August
- September
- October
- November
- December

Survey logic if “my child is over 5 years, 11 months old” not eligible.

Q6. Select the program(s) your child attends, or service(s) your child receives. *(Please select all that apply)*

- Child care not in someone’s home (in a center)
- Child care in someone’s home (home-based child care)
- Early Head Start
- Migrant and Seasonal Head Start
- Head Start
- Nursery School
- State-administered (e.g., through your school district) PreK
- Other PreK
- New York City Department of Education Preschool (Pre-K for All and 3-K for All)
- Preschool Special Education (CPSE)
- Early Intervention (EI)
- Home Visiting Program (e.g., Healthy Families, Nurse Family Partnership, HIPPPY, Parents as Teachers, ParentChildPlus, etc.)
- Before or After School Program
- Nanny or babysitter in our home
- Care provided by a family member, neighbor, or friend on a regular basis (every day, once a week, etc.)
- Care provided by a family member, neighbor, or friend occasionally
- Other (please specify): _____
- Don’t know
- My child does not participate in any programs or services

Survey logic if only “Before or After School Program,” and/or “Nanny or babysitter in our home,” and/or “Care provided by family member, neighbor, or friend occasionally,” and/or “don’t know,” and/or “my child does not participate in any programs or services” Not eligible.

Section 1: Digital Divide

Q7. **The first set of questions asks about your personal internet use.**

Q8. How do you typically connect to the internet for your own personal use? *(Please select up to 3)*

- Internet service provider (for example, wired or Wi-Fi connection from cable or phone company) where you live
- Internet service provider where you work
- Phone (cell phone data plan)
- Friend or neighbor's house with internet access
- Public place with internet access (library, park, business)
- Hotspot
- I do not have any way to connect to the internet for personal use (Exclusive Answer Choice- SKIP TO Next Question. All other responses skip to “how often do you have a connection to internet...:)
- Other (please specify): _____

Q9. What are the reasons you do not have any way to connect to the internet? *(Please select all that apply):*

- I can't afford internet access
- I can't afford a computer or smartphone
- The internet speeds I can access at my home are not worth the money
- There is no reliable internet access where I live

Q10. How often do you have a connection to the internet when you need it?

- Always
- Usually
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

Q11. How fast is the internet connection you use most?

- Fast (reliably stream movies, videos, downloads quickly, etc.)
- Medium (movies/videos glitch or reload, downloads take time, etc.)
- Slow (not able to stream videos, basic downloads are time consuming, etc.)

Q12. How reliable is the internet connection you use most?

- Reliable (there is full service, rarely an outage)
- Somewhat reliable (there is ok service, sometimes outages)
- Unreliable (very limited service, or constant outages)

Q145. How is the internet service where you live paid for?

- I am responsible for paying for internet service where I live
- I am responsible for paying for internet service where I live, but receive a subsidy or discount based on my household income
- Internet service where I live is included in my rent
- Internet service where I live is provided at no charge to me
- Other (please specify)

Display only to respondents who indicated in Q8 that they connect to the internet using an internet service provider where they live.

Q13. How affordable is your internet service?

- Very affordable - no strain on your budget
- Affordable - little strain on your budget
- Somewhat affordable - some strain on your budget
- Difficult to afford - large strain on your budget
- Unaffordable - you cannot keep your service
- I do not pay for my internet service

Q14. What do you use most to connect to the internet? *(Please select all that apply)*

- Desktop computer
- Laptop
- Tablet
- Smartphone
- Other (please specify)

Section 2: Child Care Access

Q15. **The next few questions ask about accessing child care in your area.**

Q16. How did you find out about child care options in your area? *(Please select all that apply)*

- Family
- Friends
- Coworkers/employer
- Another one of my children went or goes to child care
- Child Care Resource & Referral Agency (CCR&R)
- Community services (church, library, etc.)
- Health care provider (doctor, nurse, clinic)
- Social Services Department (local DSS office)
- School district
- NYS Child Care Locator
- NYS Parent Portal
- Google or general internet search
- Social media (parent group, advertisement, etc.)
- Pamphlet/Flyer
- Recruited by program
- Other (please specify):

Q17. Did/does your child's programs or services meet your needs?

- Yes
- Mostly

- No

Skip logic: If “Yes” skip next 2 questions.

Q18. What has stopped you from getting the child care you need? *(Please select all that apply)*

- There are not enough child care providers near me
- The child care near me doesn't have any open spots
- The child care near me has open spots, but not during the times I need care
- The child care near me is too expensive
- The people who work at the programs near me don't have the skills or qualifications to care for my child
- I do not have reliable transportation to get my child to a program
- The program's transportation options are not appropriate for my child
- My child was removed from a program or service
- I do not think it's safe to have my child go to in-person services
- Other (please specify):

Q19. Has not getting the child care you need affected your job? (e.g., you couldn't take a job because you didn't have care, you had to cut back hours, you had to quit a job, etc.)

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Q20. How far do you and/or your child have to travel each way to get to his/her child care program or service where he/she spends the most time?

- Less than 10 minutes
- 11-30 minutes
- 31-59 minutes
- An hour or more
- My child gets in-person services in our home
- My child gets virtual services
- Other (please specify):

Q146. Is your child currently on a waitlist for a program or services?

- Yes
- No

If no, skip to next block.

Q147. How many waitlists is your child currently on?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4 or more

Display only to respondents who indicated that their child is on a waitlist.

Section 3: Child Care Affordability

Q21. The next set of questions ask about the cost of your child's program or services.

Q22. About how much do you pay out of pocket for your child's **primary** program(s) or service(s) per month?

- The program is provided at no cost to me (Universal Pre-Kindergarten)
- The program is provided at no cost to me (Head Start / Early Head Start)
- The program is provided at no cost to me (Home Visiting program)
- The program is provided at no cost to me (other program)
- \$1 - \$100 per month
- \$101-\$500 per month
- \$501 - \$1,000 per month
- \$1,001 - \$1,500 per month
- \$1,501 – \$2,000 per month
- More than \$2,001 per month
- I don't know

Skip logic- if "program is provided at no cost to me" or "I don't know" skip next question.

Q23. How affordable is this cost for you, given your current income?

- Very affordable - no strain on your budget
- Affordable - little strain on your budget
- Somewhat affordable - some strain on your budget
- Difficult to afford - large strain on your budget
- Unaffordable - you cannot keep your child in this program

Q24. Do you get help from any of the following to help you pay for the programs or services?
(please select all that apply)

- A friend or family member
- Employer
- Community or religious group
- School District
- County (child care subsidy paid either to you or the program)
- Child care tax credit
- Other government program
- Medicaid/Medicare/Child Health Plus
- Private health insurance
- Other (please specify)

- None of these

Section 4: Does program meet family’s needs

Q25. The next few questions ask about how important certain things are to you and how much the services meet your needs. Please rate how much you agree with each statement and indicate if this is an important part of your child’s program to you.

Q26. How much do you agree or disagree with the statements about the program or service your child has spent the most time in over the last year?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable	This is an important part of my child’s program to me
The program or service meets my child’s individual needs						
The program or service meets my needs as a parent/caregiver						
The program teaches my child the social and emotional skills (playing with others, learning about feelings, sharing toys, etc.) s/he will need as s/he gets older						
The program teaches my child the academic skills (letters, numbers,						

etc.) s/he will need as s/he gets older						
I am usually satisfied with the outcome of meetings and talks that I have with staff						
The people who work or care for my child in my child's program represent my race, ethnicity, and/or community						
The people who work or care for my child speak my child's primary language						
The staff care about my child						
Program staff are well trained to meet my child's needs						

Q27. In your opinion, what are the **top 5** challenges right now in the early childhood care and education system where you live?

- Cost of care
- Number of programs/services in my area
- Length of waitlists
- Availability of care at non-traditional hours (evenings/nights, weekends, early morning)
- Transportation
- Quality of care or services available
- Staff keeps changing
- Ability of programs/services to accommodate different backgrounds of families in care
- Support services for my child
- Trust-building between staff and parents
- Other (please specify):
- I don't see any challenges

Q28. Is there anything else that is important for us to know that you haven't already mentioned?

Section 5. Respondent Demographics

Q29. **Thank you for your patience completing this survey; you are almost done. There are just a few demographic questions left.**

Q30. In what zip code do you live? _____

Q31. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

- Never attended high school
- Some high school, no diploma
- High school diploma or GED
- Some college credits
- Associate's degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree

Q32. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- Prefer to self-describe _____

Q33. Are you Hispanic or Latinx?

- Yes
- No

Q34. Which describes your racial identity? *(Please select all that apply)*

- American Indian/Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black/African American
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- White
- Other: _____

Q35. Is English your primary language?

- Yes
- No

Survey logic if "no"

Q36. What is your primary language? _____

Q37. Which best describes your employment status? *(please select all that apply)*

- Not in the job market
- Currently unemployed and looking for work
- Work one full-time job
- Work more than one full-time job
- Work one part-time job

- Work more than one part-time job
- Work a temporary job
- Work odd jobs or intermittently
- Do volunteer work
- Other: _____

Q38. Which of the following income categories best describes your total annual household income before taxes?

- Less than \$14,999
- \$15,000 to \$24,999
- \$25,000 to \$49,999
- \$50,000 to \$74,999
- \$75,000 to \$99,999
- \$100,000 to \$149,999
- \$150,000 or more

Q39. Does anyone in your household receive any government assistance such as rent assistance, disability, SNAP, etc.?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Q40. Does anyone in your household receive unemployment benefits?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Q41. Does your family qualify for a child care subsidy based on your income?

- Yes, we receive a subsidy
- Yes, but we don't received a subsidy (on a waitlist)
- Yes, but we don't receive a subsidy (not on a waitlist)
- No
- Don't know

Q43. In the past 12 months, have you and your family experienced homelessness?

- Yes
- No

Q44. Is your child Hispanic or Latinx?

- Yes
- No

Q45. What describes your child's racial identity? *(please select all that apply)*

- American Indian/Alaska Native
- Asian

- Black/African American
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- White
- Other: _____

Q46. Is English your child's primary language?

- Yes
- No

Survey logic if "no"

Q47. What is your child's primary language? _____

Q48. If you would like to receive a \$5 digital Target gift card, please enter your email address below.

Please note that it may take up to 5-7 days for the gift card to arrive in your inbox.

As a reminder, you are welcome to complete the survey more than once if you have multiple children, however, you can only receive one \$5 digital gift card per family.

Appendix B

Parent Survey Response Information

Survey language administration and response rate		
	n	%
English	4,193	86
Spanish	378	8
Chinese	288	6
Russian	7	<1
Bengali	3	<1
Korean	1	<1
Haitian/Creole	0	0
Yiddish	0	0
Total	4,870	100

Demographic Information

Respondent Characteristics

Respondent region ^a	n	%
New York City	1,717	35
Western New York	499	10
Capital District	484	10
Finger Lakes	453	9
Mid-Hudson	437	9
Long Island	425	9
Central New York	301	6
Southern Tier	241	5
North Country	158	3
Mohawk Valley	155	3
Total	4,870	100

^a Respondents were asked "In what zip code do you live?" Zip codes were converted to counties, and counties to economic regions.

Are you Hispanic or Latinx?	n	%
Yes	1,093	23
No	3,749	77
Total	4,870	100

Which best describes your racial identity? (Select all that apply) ^a	n	%
American Indian / Alaska Native	140	3
Asian	348	7
Black/African American	539	11
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	54	1
White	3,451	72
Other	405	9

^a Percentages do not total 100%, due to participants' ability to select multiple options

Non-White and Hispanic respondents

	n	%
Non-White or Hispanic	1,970	40
White or Non-Hispanic or Unknown	2,900	60
Total	4,870	100

Note: Non-White and Hispanic includes 1) All respondents who reported that they are Hispanic, regardless of their race, and 2) All respondents who reported they are non-White, regardless of their ethnicity.

Is English your primary language?

	n	%
Yes	4,119	85
No	740	15
Total	4,859	100

What is your primary language? ^a

	n	%
Spanish	519	70
Chinese	91	12
Russian	20	3
Arabic	12	2
Korean	10	1
Other	86	12
Total	738	100

^a This was an open-ended response item that was only asked of respondents who reported that English was not their primary language. Primary languages reported by less than 10 respondents are reported here as "Other".

What is your gender?

	n	%
Female	4,127	86
Male	651	14
Non-binary	17	<1
Prefer to self-describe	6	<1
Total	4,801	100

What is the highest level of education you have ever completed?

	n	%
Less than high school diploma or GED	238	5
High school diploma or GED	596	12
Some college (including Associate's degree)	1,293	27
Bachelor's degree	1,342	28
Graduate degree (Master's, Doctorate)	1,394	29
Total	4,863	100

Which best describes your employment status? (Select all that apply) ^a

	n	%
Work one full time job	3,033	62
Work one part time job	670	14
Work more than one full-time job	243	5
Work more than one part-time job	670	14
Currently unemployed and looking for work	369	8
Not in the job market	342	7
Work odd jobs or intermittently	151	3
Do volunteer work	133	3
Work a temporary job	93	2
Other	194	4

^a Top "Other" responses included stay at home parents / parents on maternity leave, self-employed individuals, full-time students, homemakers, disabled individuals, and individuals who cannot work due to lack of available/appropriate/affordable childcare options.

Which of the following income categories best describes your total annual household income before taxes?

	n	%
Less than \$14,999	459	9
\$15,000 to \$24,999	475	10
\$25,000 to \$49,999	817	17
\$50,000 to \$74,999	793	17
\$75,000 to \$99,999	713	15
\$100,000 to \$149,999	919	19
\$150,000 or more	634	13
Total	4,810	100

Does anyone in your household receive any government assistance, such as rent assistance, disability, SNAP, etc.?

	n	%
Yes	1,079	22
No	3,700	76
Don't Know	74	2
Total	4,853	100

Does anyone in your household receive unemployment benefits?

	n	%
Yes,	274	6
No	4,511	93
Don't Know	74	1
Total	4,859	100

Does your family qualify for a childcare subsidy based on your income?

	n	%
Yes, we receive a subsidy	460	10
Yes, but we don't receive a subsidy (on a waitlist)	372	8
Yes, but we don't receive a subsidy (not on a waitlist)	307	6
No	2,804	58
Don't know	916	19
Total	4,859	100

In the past 12 months, have you and your family experienced homelessness?					
Region	Yes		No		n
	n	%	n	%	
Capital District	11	2	473	98	484
Central New York	6	2	295	98	301
Finger Lakes	15	3	437	97	452
Long Island	17	4	408	96	425
Mid-Hudson	16	4	418	96	434
Mohawk Valley	1	1	154	99	155
New York City	136	8	1,574	92	1,710
North Country	6	4	152	96	158
Southern Tier	4	2	237	98	241
Western New York	14	3	485	97	499
Total	226	5	4,633	95	4,859

In the past 12 months, have you and your family experienced homelessness?						
	Yes		No		Total	
<i>Race</i>	n	%	n	%	n	%
American Indian / Alaska Native	16	11	124	89	140	100
Asian	3	1	343	99	346	100
Black / African American	63	12	476	88	539	100
Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	8	15	46	85	54	100
White	117	3	3,328	97	3,445	100
Other	28	7	375	93	403	100
Total	235	5	4,692	95	4,972	100
Note: Percentages and totals are based on respondents						

In the past 12 months, have you and your family experienced homelessness?						
	Yes		No		Total	
<i>Preferred Language</i>	n	%	n	%	n	%
English	178	4	3,937	96	4,115	100
Non-English	47	6	687	94	734	100
Total	225	5	4,624	95	4,848	100
Note: Percentages and totals are based on respondents						

In the past 12 months, have you and your family experienced homelessness?						
	Yes		No		Total	
<i>Gender</i>	n	%	n	%	n	%
Female	155	4	3,962	96	4,117	100
Male	63	10	587	90	650	100
Non-Binary	3	18	14	82	17	100
Prefer to self-describe	0	0	6	100	6	100
Total	221	5	4,569	95	4,790	100
Note: Percentages and totals are based on respondents						

Child Characteristics

Specify your child's age		
	n	%
Less than 1	304	6
1	551	11
2	857	18
3	1,215	25
4	1,179	24
5	740	15
6	24	1
Total	4,870	100

Which best describes your child's racial identity? (Select all that apply) ^a		
	n	%
American Indian / Alaska Native	154	3
Asian	388	8
Black/African American	653	14
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	57	1
White	3,504	73
Other	420	9

^a Percentages do not total 100%, due to participants' ability to select multiple options

Is your child Hispanic or Latinx?		
	n	%
Yes	1,129	23
No	3,722	76
Total	4,851	100

Non-White and Hispanic children ^a		
	n	%
Non-White or Hispanic	2,193	44
White or Non-Hispanic or unknown	2,731	56
Total	4,870	100

^a Non-White and Hispanic includes 1) All respondents who reported that their child is Hispanic, regardless of their race, and 2) All respondents who reported that their child is non-White, regardless of their ethnicity.

Is English your child's primary language?

	n	%
Yes	4,471	92
No	390	8
Total	4,861	100

What is your child's primary language? ^a

	n	%
Spanish	250	65
Chinese	54	14
Russian	15	4
Other	68	17
Total	387	100

^a This was an open-ended response item that was only asked of respondents who reported that English was not their child's primary language. Primary languages of children reported by less than 10 respondents are reported here as "Other".

All Questions Breakdown

Program Type

Select the program(s) your child attends, or service(s) your child receives. (*Select all that apply*)^a

	n	%
Child care <i>not</i> in someone's home (in a center)	1,487	31
Child care in someone's home (home-based child care)	1,116	23
Care provided by a family member, neighbor, or friend on a regular basis (every day, once a week, etc.)	840	17
State-administered (e.g., through your school district) Pre-K Nursery School	758	16
Care provided by a family member, neighbor, or friend occasionally	702	14
Early Intervention	583	12
Preschool Special Education (CPSE)	437	9
Nanny or babysitter in our home	416	9
Before or After School Program	364	8
Other	251	5
Don't Know	130	3
My child does not participate in any programs or services	0	0

^a Percentages do not total 100%, due to participants' ability to select multiple options

Digital Divide

How do you typically connect to the internet for your own personal use? *(Select up to 3)*^a

	n	%
Internet service provider (for example, wired or Wi-Fi connection from cable or phone company) where you live	4,230	87
Phone (cell phone data plan)	3,190	65
Internet service provider where you work	1,450	30
Public space with internet access (library, park, business)	344	7
Hotspot	289	6
Friend or neighbor's house with internet access	219	5
I do not have any way to connect to the internet for personal use	12	<1
Other	8	<1

^a Percentages do not total 100%, due to participants' ability to select multiple options

What are the reasons you do not have access to connect to the internet? *(Select all that apply)*^{a, b}

	n	%
I can't afford internet access	8	67
I can't afford a computer or smartphone	2	17
The internet speeds I can access at my home are not worth the money	2	17
There is no reliable internet where I live	0	0

^a Percentages do not total 100%, due to participants' ability to select multiple options

^b This question was only displayed to respondents who reported that they did not have any way to connect to the internet for personal use

How often do you have a connection to the internet when you need it?

	n	%
Always	3,202	66
Usually	1,429	29
Sometimes	209	4
Rarely	25	<1
Never	3	<1
Total	4,868	100

How fast is the internet connection you use the most?

	n	%
Fast (reliably stream movies, videos, downloads quickly, etc.)	3,287	68
Medium (movies/videos glitch or reload, downloads take time, etc.)	1,438	30
Slow (not able to stream videos, basic downloads are time consuming, etc.)	110	2
Total	4,835	100

How reliable is the internet connection you use the most?

	n	%
Reliable (there is full service, rarely an outage)	3,205	67
Somewhat reliable (there is ok service, sometimes outages)	1,473	31
Unreliable (very limited service, or constant outages)	99	2
Total	4,777	100

How is the internet where you live paid for? ^a

	n	%
I am responsible for paying for internet service where I live	3,655	87
I am responsible for paying for internet service where I live, but I receive a subsidy or discount based on my household income	317	8
Internet service where I live is included in my rent	139	3
Internet service where I live is provided at no charge to me	62	1
Other	19	1
Total	4,192	100

^a This question was only displayed to respondents who reported that they connected to the internet via an internet service provider

How affordable is your internet service?

	n	%
Very affordable – no strain on your budget	846	17
Affordable – little strain on your budget	1,810	37
Somewhat affordable – some strain on your budget	1,612	33
Difficult to afford – large strain on your budget	459	10
Unaffordable – you cannot keep your service	30	1
I do not pay for internet service	80	2
Total	4,837	100

What do you use to connect to the internet? *(Select all that apply)* ^a

	n	%
Smartphone	4,476	92
Laptop	3,244	67
Tablet	2,430	50
Desktop computer	1,468	30
Other	197	4

^a Percentages do not total 100%, due to participants' ability to select multiple options

Digital Divide by Region

How do you typically connect to the internet for your own personal use *(Select up to 3)* ^a

<i>Region</i>	Internet service provider (for example, wired or Wi-Fi___33 connection from a cable or phone company) where you live		Phone (cell phone data plan)		Internet service provider where you work		Public space with internet access (library, park, business)		Hotspot	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Capital District	454	94	305	63	135	30	30	6	20	4
Central New York	281	94	199	66	81	27	11	4	9	3
Finger Lakes	414	91	284	63	139	31	17	4	12	3
Long Island	369	87	282	66	140	33	24	6	20	5
Mid-Hudson	391	89	280	64	117	27	29	7	17	4
Mohawk Valley	141	91	96	62	39	25	7	5	1	1
New York City	1,354	79	1,150	67	553	32	181	11	167	10
North Country	142	90	105	67	44	28	7	4	6	4
Southern Tier	226	94	153	64	70	30	9	4	12	5
Western New York	458	92	336	67	132	27	29	6	25	5
Total	4,230	87	3,190	66	1,450	30	344	7	289	6

^a Percentages and totals are based on respondents

How do you typically connect to the internet where you live? (Select up to 3) ^a **Continued**

<i>Region</i>	Friend or neighbor's house with internet access		I do not have a way to connect to the internet for personal use		Other		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Capital District	14	3	0	0	0	0	484	10
Central New York	9	3	0	0	0	0	301	6
Finger Lakes	12	3	1	<1	0	0	453	9
Long Island	19	4	2	1	0	0	425	9
Mid-Hudson	13	3	1	<1	2	1	437	9
Mohawk Valley	2	1	0	0	1	1	155	3
New York City	124	7	6	<1	4	<1	1,717	35
North Country	3	2	0	0	0	0	158	3
Southern Tier	7	3	1	<1	0	0	241	5
Western New York	16	3	1	<1	1	<1	499	10
Total	219	4	12	<1	8	<1	4,870	100

^a Percentages and totals are based on respondents

What are the reasons you do not have access to the internet (*Select all that apply*)^{a, b}

<i>Region</i>	I can't afford internet access		I can't afford a computer or smartphone		The internet speeds I can access at my home are not worth the money		There is not reliable internet where I live		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Capital District	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Central New York	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Finger Lakes	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	8
Long Island	2	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	17
Mid-Hudson	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	8
Mohawk Valley	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
New York City	2	33	2	33	2	33	0	0	6	50
North Country	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sothern Tier	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	8
Western New York	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	8
Total	8	67	2	17	2	17	0	0	12	100

^a Percentages and totals are based on respondents

^b This question was only displayed to respondents who indicated in a previous question that they do not have any way to connect to the internet for personal use.

How often do you have an internet connection when you need it?

<i>Region</i>	Always		Usually		Sometimes		Rarely		Never		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Capital District	324	67	148	31	10	2	2	<1	0	0	484	100
Central New York	198	66	93	31	10	3	0	0	0	0	301	100
Finger Lakes	286	63	152	34	12	3	1	<1	1	<1	452	100
Long Island	287	68	114	27	21	5	3	1	0	0	425	100
Mid-Hudson	291	67	128	29	13	3	4	1	1	<1	437	100
Mohawk Valley	109	70	41	27	5	3	0	0	0	0	155	100
New York City	1,109	65	484	28	107	6	15	1	1	<1	1,716	100
North Country	106	67	45	29	7	4	0	0	0	0	158	100
Southern Tier	155	64	80	33	6	3	0	0	0	0	241	100
Western New York	337	68	144	29	18	4	0	0	0	0	499	100
Total	3,202	66	1,429	29	209	4	25	1	3	<1	4,868	100

How fast is the internet connection you use the most?

<i>Region</i>	Fast (reliably stream movies, videos, downloads quickly, etc.)		Medium (movies/videos glitch or reload, downloads take time, etc.)		Slow (not able to stream videos, basic downloads are time consuming, etc.)		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Capital District	355	74	120	25	6	1	481	100
Central New York	209	70	89	30	3	1	301	100
Finger Lakes	310	69	133	30	8	2	451	100
Long Island	276	65	134	32	12	3	422	100
Mid-Hudson	302	70	125	29	6	1	433	100
Mohawk Valley	104	67	49	32	2	1	155	100
New York City	1,087	64	557	33	52	3	1,696	100
North Country	116	73	39	25	3	2	158	100
Southern Tier	177	73	55	23	9	4	241	100
Western New York	351	71	137	28	9	2	497	100
Total	3,287	68	1,438	30	110	2	4,835	100

How reliable is the internet connection you use the most?

<i>Region</i>	Reliable (there is full service, rarely an outage)		Somewhat reliable (there is ok service, sometimes outages)		Unreliable (very limited service, or constant outages)		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Capital District	340	71	136	28	4	1	480	100
Central New York	205	69	90	30	3	1	298	100
Finger Lakes	301	67	137	31	9	2	447	100
Long Island	275	66	137	33	6	1	418	100
Mid-Hudson	283	67	134	32	7	2	424	100
Mohawk Valley	103	67	49	32	3	2	155	100
New York City	1,081	65	534	32	51	3	1,666	100
North Country	109	70	42	27	5	3	156	100
Southern Tier	159	67	75	31	5	2	239	100
Western New York	349	71	139	28	6	1	494	100
Total	3,205	67	1,473	31	99	2	4,777	100

How is the internet where you live paid for? ^a

	I am responsible for paying for internet service where I live		I am responsible for paying for internet service where I live, but I receive a subsidy or discount based on my household income		Internet service where I live is included in my rent		Internet service where I live is provided at no charge to me		Other		Total	
<i>Region</i>	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Capital District	411	91	16	4	14	3	7	2	2	<1	450	100
Central New York	253	92	15	6	2	1	2	1	3	1	275	100
Finger Lakes	359	87	37	9	8	2	4	1	3	1	411	100
Long Island	318	87	22	6	23	6	4	1	0	0	367	100
Mid-Hudson	342	88	23	6	18	5	4	1	2	1	389	100
Mohawk Valley	127	90	9	6	3	2	1	1	1	1	141	100
New York City	1,094	82	147	11	57	4	32	2	5	<1	1,335	100
North Country	137	97	4	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	142	100
Southern Tier	196	87	20	9	5	2	3	1	1	<1	225	100
Western New York	418	92	24	5	8	2	5	1	2	<1	457	100
Total	3,655	87	317	8	139	3	62	2	19	<1	4,192	100

^a This question was only displayed to respondents who indicated in a previous question that they connected to the internet for their own personal use via an internet service provider.

How affordable is your internet service?

<i>Region</i>	Very affordable – no strain on your budget		Affordable – little strain on your budget		Somewhat affordable – some strain on your budget		Difficult to afford – large strain on your budget		Unaffordable – you cannot keep your service		I do not pay for internet service		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Capital District	70	15	180	37	178	37	44	9	1	<1	8	2	481	100
Central New York	41	14	102	34	115	29	34	11	1	<1	6	2	299	100
Finger Lakes	67	15	170	38	163	36	40	9	4	1	8	2	452	100
Long Island	79	19	161	38	137	33	38	9	3	1	4	1	422	100
Mid-Hudson Valley	72	17	163	38	140	32	46	11	3	1	9	2	433	100
Mohawk Valley	14	9	45	29	73	47	19	12	0	0	3	2	154	100
New York City	390	23	657	39	456	27	153	9	15	1	28	2	1,699	100
North Country	16	10	55	35	69	44	15	10	0	0	3	2	158	100
Southern Tier	33	14	91	38	87	36	23	10	2	1	5	2	241	100
Western New York	64	13	186	37	194	39	47	9	1	<1	6	1	498	100
Total	846	18	1,810	37	1,612	33	459	9	30	1	80	2	4,837	100

What do you use to connect to the internet (*Select all that apply*)? ^a

<i>Region</i>	Smartphone		Laptop		Tablet		Desktop computer		Other		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Capital District	455	94	382	79	270	56	138	29	19	5	482	10
Central New York	289	96	214	71	169	56	87	27	21	7	301	6
Finger Lakes	438	97	334	74	241	53	131	29	17	4	451	9
Long Island	388	92	266	63	220	52	146	35	13	3	423	9
Mid-Hudson	402	92	316	73	203	47	146	34	13	3	436	9
Mohawk Valley	147	95	111	72	84	54	33	21	12	8	155	3
New York City	1,509	89	959	56	747	44	564	33	35	2	1,706	35
North Country	152	96	110	70	81	51	29	18	13	8	158	3
Southern Tier	233	97	179	74	136	56	55	23	22	9	241	5
Western New York	463	93	373	75	279	56	144	29	32	6	499	10
Total	4,476	92	3,244	67	2,430	50	1,468	30	197	4	4,852	100

^a Percentages and totals are based on respondents

Digital Divide by Household Income

How do you typically connect to the internet for your own personal use (*Select up to 3*)^a

<i>Household Income</i>	Internet service provider (for example, wired or Wi-Fi___33 connection from a cable or phone company) where you live		Phone (cell phone data plan)		Internet service provider where you work		Public space with internet access (library, park, business)		Hotspot	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Less than \$14,999	319	70	268	58	26	6	30	6	47	10
\$15,000 - \$24,999	356	75	283	60	69	15	42	9	36	8
\$25,000 - \$49,000	676	83	513	63	205	25	78	10	55	7
\$50,000 - \$74,999	700	88	509	64	255	32	63	8	47	6
\$75,000 - \$99,000	656	92	500	70	292	41	54	8	34	5
\$100,000 - \$149,999	866	94	636	69	357	39	47	5	47	5
\$150,000 or more	614	97	445	70	240	38	28	4	17	3
Total	4,187	87	3,154	66	1,444	30	342	7	283	6

^a Percentages and totals are based on respondents

How do you typically connect to the internet where you live? (Select up to 3) ^a...**Continued**

	Friend or neighbor's house with internet access		I do not have a way to connect to the internet for personal use		Other		Total	
<i>Household Income</i>	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Less than \$14,999	27	6	5	1	3	1	459	10
\$15,000 - \$24,999	30	6	2	<1	0	0	475	10
\$25,000 - \$49,000	42	5	2	<1	2	<1	817	17
\$50,000 - \$74,999	45	6	1	<1	0	0	793	16
\$75,000 - \$99,000	33	5	0	0	2	<1	713	15
\$100,000 - \$149,999	25	3	0	0	1	<1	919	19
\$150,000 or more	15	2	0	0	0	0	634	13
Total	217	5	10	<1	8	<1	4,810	100

^a Percentages and totals are based on respondents

What are the reasons you do not have access to the internet (*Select all that apply*)^{a, b}

	I can't afford internet access		I can't afford a computer or smartphone		The internet speeds I can access at my home are not worth the money		There is not reliable internet where I live		Total	
<i>Household Income</i>	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Less than \$14,999	3	60	2	40	0	0	0	0	5	50
\$15,000 - \$24,999	2	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	20
\$25,000 - \$49,000	1	50	0	0	1	50	0	0	2	20
\$50,000 - \$74,999	0	0	0	0	1	100	0	0	1	10
\$75,000 - \$99,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
\$100,000 - \$149,999	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
\$150,000 or more	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	6	60	2	20	2	20	0	0	10	100

^a Percentages and totals are based on respondents

^b This question was only displayed to respondents who indicated in a previous question that they do not have any way to connect to the internet for personal use.

How often do you have an internet connection when you need it?

	Always		Usually		Sometimes		Rarely		Never		Total	
<i>Household Income</i>	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Less than \$14,999	253	55	150	33	46	10	9	2	1	<1	459	100
\$15,000 - \$24,999	274	58	154	33	41	9	4	1	0	0	473	100
\$25,000 - \$49,000	501	61	272	33	41	5	3	<1	0	0	817	100
\$50,000 - \$74,999	494	62	263	33	32	4	4	1	0	0	793	100
\$75,000 - \$99,000	483	68	207	29	19	3	4	1	0	0	713	100
\$100,000 - \$149,999	667	73	234	26	18	2	0	0	0	0	919	100
\$150,000 or more	492	78	135	21	6	1	1	<1	0	0	634	100
Total	3,164	66	1,415	29	203	4	25	1	1	<1	4,808	100

How fast is the internet connection you use the most?

	Fast (reliably stream movies, videos, downloads quickly, etc.)		Medium (movies/videos glitch or reload, downloads take time, etc.)		Slow (not able to stream videos, basic downloads are time consuming, etc.)		Total	
<i>Household Income</i>	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Less than \$14,999	209	47	201	45	37	8	447	100
\$15,000 - \$24,999	244	52	203	43	21	5	468	100
\$25,000 - \$49,000	447	55	342	42	25	3	814	100
\$50,000 - \$74,999	517	65	265	34	9	1	791	100
\$75,000 - \$99,000	527	74	177	25	6	1	710	100
\$100,000 - \$149,999	749	82	161	18	6	1	916	100
\$150,000 or more	563	89	67	10	4	1	634	100
Total	3,256	68	1,416	30	108	2	4,780	100

How reliable is the internet connection you use the most?

	Reliable (there is full service, rarely an outage)		Somewhat reliable (there is ok service, sometimes outages)		Unreliable (very limited service, or constant outages)		Total	
<i>Household Income</i>	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Less than \$14,999	194	45	205	47	35	8	434	100
\$15,000 - \$24,999	228	50	210	46	16	4	454	100
\$25,000 - \$49,000	452	56	337	42	17	2	806	100
\$50,000 - \$74,999	526	67	251	32	8	1	785	100
\$75,000 - \$99,000	496	70	203	29	5	1	704	100
\$100,000 - \$149,999	733	81	168	18	8	1	909	100
\$150,000 or more	541	86	88	14	2	<1	631	100
Total	3,170	67	1,462	31	91	2	4,723	100

How is the internet where you live paid for? ^a

	I am responsible for paying for internet service where I live		I am responsible for paying for internet service where I live, but I receive a subsidy or discount based on my household income		Internet service where I live is included in my rent		Internet service where I live is provided at no charge to me		Other		Total	
<i>Household Income</i>	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Less than \$14,999	240	77	40	13	12	4	15	5	4	1	311	100
\$15,000 - \$24,999	277	79	53	15	15	4	5	1	2	1	352	100
\$25,000 - \$49,000	513	77	99	15	40	6	13	2	2	<1	667	100
\$50,000 - \$74,999	602	86	55	8	23	3	16	2	2	<1	698	100
\$75,000 - \$99,000	585	89	34	5	29	4	4	1	2	<1	654	100
\$100,000 - \$149,999	808	94	28	3	16	2	3	<1	4	1	859	100
\$150,000 or more	599	98	7	1	3	1	2	<1	2	<1	613	100
Total	3,624	87	316	8	138	3	58	1	18	<1	4,154	100

^a This question was only displayed to respondents who indicated in a previous question that they connected to the internet for their own personal use via an internet service provider.

How affordable is your internet service?

	Very affordable – no strain on your budget		Affordable – little strain on your budget		Somewhat affordable – some strain on your budget		Difficult to afford – large strain on your budget		Unaffordable – you cannot keep your service		I do not pay for internet service		Total	
<i>Household Income</i>	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Less than \$14,999	59	13	138	31	129	29	84	19	15	3	25	6	450	100
\$15,000 - \$24,999	68	15	161	34	155	33	76	16	3	1	7	1	470	100
\$25,000 - \$49,000	100	12	274	34	291	36	121	15	6	1	19	2	811	100
\$50,000 - \$74,999	139	18	271	34	293	37	74	9	0	0	14	2	791	100
\$75,000 - \$99,000	123	17	263	37	276	39	38	5	3	<1	5	1	708	100
\$100,000 - \$149,999	172	19	400	44	301	33	38	4	1	<1	6	1	918	100
\$150,000 or more	177	28	279	44	155	25	20	3	0	0	2	<1	633	100
Total	838	17	1,786	37	1,600	34	451	9	28	1	78	2	4,781	100

What do you use to connect to the internet (*Select all that apply*)? ^a

	Smartphone		Laptop		Tablet		Desktop computer		Other		Total	
<i>Household Income</i>	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Less than \$14,999	416	92	171	38	178	40	53	12	24	5	450	9
\$15,000 - \$24,999	425	90	198	42	190	40	96	20	16	3	472	10
\$25,000 - \$49,000	727	89	468	57	365	45	247	30	38	5	816	17
\$50,000 - \$74,999	714	90	545	69	372	47	273	34	36	5	793	17
\$75,000 - \$99,000	661	93	536	75	372	52	266	37	26	4	711	15
\$100,000 - \$149,999	872	95	738	80	518	56	312	34	31	3	919	19
\$150,000 or more	614	97	562	89	413	65	210	33	24	4	634	13
Total	4,429	92	3,218	67	2,408	50	1,457	30	195	4	4,795	100

^a Percentages and totals are based on respondents

Child Care Access

How did you find out about child care options in your area? *(Select all that apply)*^a

	n	%
Friends	2,174	45
Family	1,506	31
Google or general internet search	1,499	31
Social media (parent group, advertisement, etc.)	1,097	23
Coworkers / employers	971	20
School district	670	14
Another one of my children went or goes to child care	583	12
Child Care Resources & Referral Agency (CCR&R)	534	11
NYS Child Care Locater	433	9
Community services (church, library, etc.)	411	9
Health care provider (doctor, nurse, clinic)	337	7
Social Services Department (local DSS office)	266	6
Pamphlet / Flyer	238	5
NYS Parent Portal	213	4
Recruited by program	73	2
Other	195	4

^a Percentages do not total 100%, due to participants' ability to select multiple options

Did / Does your child's programs or services meet your needs?

	n	%
Yes	2,586	53
Mostly	1,940	40
No	340	7
Total	4,866	100

What has stopped you from getting the child care you need? (Select all that apply) ^{a, b}

	n	%
There are not enough child care providers near me	901	40
The child care near me doesn't have any open spots	827	37
The child care near me has open spots, but not during the times I need care	416	19
The child care near me is too expensive	1,329	59
The people who work at the programs near me don't have the skills and qualifications to care for my child	375	17
I do not have reliable transportation to get my child to a program	225	10
The program's transportation options are not appropriate for my child	156	7
My child was removed from a program or service	62	3
I do not think it's safe for my child to go to in-person services	148	7
Other	196	9

^a Percentages do not total 100%, due to participants' ability to select multiple options

^b This question was only displayed to respondents who reported that their child's programs/services are not meeting their needs

Has not getting the child care you need affected your job (e.g., you couldn't take a job because you didn't have care, you had to cut back hours, you had to quit a job, etc.)? ^a

	n	%
Yes	1,553	69
No	598	27
Don't know	104	5
Total	2,255	100

^b This question was only displayed to respondents who reported that their child's programs/services are not meeting their needs

How far do you and/or your child have to travel each way to get to his/her child care program where he/she spends the most time?

	n	%
Less than 10 minutes	1,746	36
11-30 minutes	2,206	45
31-59 minutes	493	10
An hour or more	161	3
My child gets in-person services in our home	200	4
My child gets virtual services	27	1
Other	32	1
Total	4,865	100

Is your child currently on a wait list for a program or service?

	n	%
Yes	1,379	29
No	3,382	71
Total	4,761	100

How many wait lists is your child currently on? ^a

	n	%
1	610	44
2	494	36
3	161	12
4 or more	112	8
Total	1,377	100

^a This question was only displayed to respondents who reported that their child is on a wait list for a program or service.

Child Care Affordability

About how much do you pay out of pocket for your child's primary program(s) or service(s) per month?

	n	%
The program is provided at no cost to me (Universal Pre-Kindergarten)	801	16
The program is provided at no cost to me (Head Start / Early Head Start)	338	7
The program is offered at no cost to me (Home Visiting program)	93	2
The program is provided at no cost to me (other program)	337	7
\$1 - \$100 per month	326	7
\$101 - \$500 per month	787	16
\$501 - \$1,000 per month	981	20
\$1,001 - \$1,500 per month	745	15
\$1,501 - \$2,000 per month	248	5
More than \$2,001 per month	107	2
I don't know	101	2
Total	4,864	100

How affordable is this cost for you, given your current income? ^a

	n	%
Very affordable – no strain on your budget	293	9
Affordable – little strain on your budget	661	21
Somewhat affordable – some strain on your budget	1,086	34
Difficult to afford – large strain on your budget	1,077	34
Unaffordable – you cannot keep your child in this program	81	2
Total	3,198	100

^a This question was only displayed to respondents who reported that they are paying out-of-pocket for their child's primary programs or services.

Do you get any of the following to pay for programs or services? *(Select all that apply)*^{a, b}

	n	%
Child care tax credit	627	20
Employer	351	11
County (child care subsidy paid either to you or the program)	208	7
Medicaid/Medicare/Child Health Plus	200	7
Other government program	126	4
Other	71	2
Private health insurance	68	2
None of these	1,507	49

^a Percentages do not total 100%, due to participants' ability to select multiple options

^b This question was only displayed to respondents who reported that they are paying out-of-pocket for their child's primary programs or services.

Do Program(s) and Service(s) Meet Families’ Needs?

How much do you agree or disagree with the statements about the program or service your child has spent the most time in over the last year?

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
The program or service meets my child’s individual needs	1,897	39	2,360	50	381	8	112	2	4,750	100
The program or service meets my needs as a parent/caregiver	1,648	35	2,399	51	543	12	131	3	4,721	100
The program teaches my child the social and emotional skills (playing with others, learning about feelings, sharing toys, etc.) s/he will need as s/he gets older	2,154	46	2,066	44	389	8	106	2	4,715	100
The program teaches my child the academic skills (letters, numbers, etc.) s/he will need as s/he gets older	1,960	42	2,043	44	505	11	134	3	4,642	100
I am usually satisfied with the outcome of meetings and talks that I have with staff	1,765	39	2,162	48	505	11	115	2	4,547	100
The people who work or care for my child in my child’s program represent my race, ethnicity, and/or community	1,926	42	2,025	44	491	11	163	4	4,605	100
The people who work or care for my child speak my child’s primary language	2,547	55	1,745	37	291	6	93	2	4,676	100
The staff care about my child	2,459	53	1,913	41	215	5	74	2	4,661	100
Program staff are well trained to meet my child’s needs	1,995	43	2,102	45	472	10	111	2	4,680	100

This is an important part of my child's program to me.		
	n	%
The program teaches my child the social and emotional skills (playing with others, learning about feelings, sharing toys, etc.) s/he will need as s/he gets older	756	17
The program or service meets my child's individual needs	662	15
The staff care about my child	618	14
The program teaches my child the academic skills (letters, numbers, etc.) s/he will need as s/he gets older	584	13
Program staff are well trained to meet my child's needs	532	12
The program or service meets my needs as a parent/caregiver	485	11
I am usually satisfied with the outcome of meetings and talks that I have with staff	299	7
The people who work or care for my child speak my child's primary language	287	6
The people who work or care for my child in my child's program represent my race, ethnicity, and/or community	262	6
Total	4,485	100

In your opinion, what are the top 5 challenges right now in the early childhood care and education system where you live? ^a		
	n	%
Cost of care	3,484	72
Number of program/services in my area	2,683	55
Length of waitlists	2,308	48
Availability of care at non-traditional hours (evenings/nights, weekends, early morning)	2,031	42
Quality of care or services available	1,887	39
Staff keeps changing	1,524	31
Trust-building between staff and parents	1,217	25
Transportation	1,183	24
Supportive services for my child	963	20
Ability of programs/services to accommodate different backgrounds of families in care	802	17
Other	232	5
I don't see any challenges	136	3
^a Percentages do not total 100%, due to participants' ability to select multiple options		

Region

In your opinion, what are the top 5 challenges right now in the early childhood care and education system? (Table 1 of 2)		
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	Cost of care		Number of programs / services in my area		Length of waitlists		Availability of care at non-traditional hours (evenings / nights, weekends, early mornings)		Transportation		Quality of care or services available		Staff keeps changing	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Capital Region	420	21	310	15	319	16	206	10	77	4	204	10	213	11
Central NY	253	21	212	17	189	16	136	11	53	4	129	11	86	7
Finger Lakes	364	20	248	14	243	13	177	10	91	5	197	11	215	12
Long Island	311	21	187	13	144	10	168	11	105	7	146	10	113	8
Mid-Hudson	339	20	243	15	190	11	186	11	103	6	184	11	119	7
Mohawk Valley	118	19	125	20	101	16	75	12	26	4	56	9	41	7
New York City	963	16	806	13	668	11	680	11	533	9	631	10	415	7
North Country	117	18	128	20	87	14	79	12	26	4	73	12	42	7
Southern Tier	199	21	170	18	117	12	110	12	57	6	93	10	73	8
Western NY	400	21	254	13	250	13	214	11	112	6	174	9	207	11

Note: Percentages and totals are based on respondents.

In your opinion, what are the top 5 challenges right now in the early childhood care and education system? (Table 2 of 2)						
	Availability of programs / services to accommodate different background of	Support services for my child	Trust-building between staff and parents	Other (Please specify)	I don't see any challenges	Total

	families in care											
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Capital Region	54	3	79	4	104	5	31	1	4	<1	2,021	100
Central NY	26	2	46	4	66	5	15	1	7	1	1,218	100
Finger Lakes	67	4	84	5	112	6	24	1	7	<1	1,829	100
Long Island	78	5	81	5	122	8	21	1	13	1	1,489	100
Mid-Hudson	61	4	77	5	126	8	28	2	9	1	1,665	100
Mohawk Valley	10	2	24	4	37	6	8	1	4	1	625	100
New York City	392	6	431	7	443	7	44	1	67	1	6,073	100
North Country	13	2	28	4	28	4	11	2	3	1	635	100
Southern Tier	29	3	37	4	47	5	18	2	5	1	955	100
Western NY	72	4	76	4	132	7	32	2	17	1	1,940	100

Note: Percentages and totals are based on respondents

Race

In your opinion, what are the top 5 challenges right now in the early childhood care and education system? (Table 1 of 2)														
	Cost of care		Number of programs / services in my area		Length of waitlists		Availability of care at non-traditional hours (evenings / nights, weekends, early mornings)		Transportation		Quality of care or services available		Staff keeps changing	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
American Indian / Alaska Native	77	56	79	57	62	45	55	40	46	33	53	38	30	22

Asian	222	6 4	186	5 4	148	4 3	139	4 0	94	27	151	4 4	96	2 8
Black / African American	366	6 8	280	5 2	232	4 3	240	4 5	174	32	220	4 1	140	2 6
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	23	4 3	28	5 2	22	4 1	22	4 1	16	30	20	3 7	15	2 8
White	2,63 0	7 6	2,04 1	5 9	1,75 9	5 1	1,50 4	4 4	764	22	1,37 3	4 0	1,21 8	3 5
Other	229	5 7	139	3 5	135	3 4	123	3 1	107	27	109	2 7	55	1 4
Total	3,43 2	7 2	2,65 3	5 6	2,27 8	4 8	2,01 1	4 2	1,163	24	1,87 1	3 9	1,51 4	3 2
Note: Percentages and totals are based on respondents.														

In your opinion, what are the top 5 challenges right now in the early childhood care and education system? (Table 2 of 2)													
	Availability of programs / services to accommodate different background of families in care		Support services for my child		Trust-building between staff and parents		Other (Please specify)		I don't see any challenges		Total		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
American Indian / Alaska Native	36	26	48	35	42	30	8	6	3	2	138	3	
Asian	75	22	86	25	90	26	12	4	14	4	346	7	
Black / African American	126	23	148	28	158	29	15	3	16	3	538	11	
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	22	41	22	41	15	28	2	4	3	6	54	1	

White	509	15	608	18	845	25	184	5	72	2	3,447	72
Other	58	14	66	16	105	26	22	5	22	5	402	8
Total	793	17	953	20	1,205	25	229	5	129	3	4,770	100

Note: Percentages and totals are based on respondents

Preferred Language

In your opinion, what are the top 5 challenges right now in the early childhood care and education system? **(Table 1 of 2)**

	Cost of care		Number of programs / services in my area		Length of waitlists		Availability of care at non-traditional hours (evenings / nights, weekends, early mornings)		Transportation		Quality of care or services available		Staff keeps changing	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
English	3,074	75	2,399	58	2,066	50	1,796	44	961	23	1,681	41	1,424	35
Non-English	406	56	279	38	238	33	230	31	219	30	201	27	100	14
Total	3,480	72	2,678	55	2,304	48	2,026	42	1,180	24	1,882	39	1,524	31

Note: Percentages and totals are based on respondents.

In your opinion, what are the top 5 challenges right now in the early childhood care and education system? **(Table 2 of 2)**

	Availability of programs / services to accommodate different background of families in care		Support services for my child		Trust-building between staff and parents		Other (Please specify)		I don't see any challenges		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
English	683	17	828	20	1,045	25	209	5	28	2	4,115	85
Non-English	116	16	135	19	169	23	23	3	38	5	731	15

Total	799	16	963	20	1,214	25	232	5	136	3	4,846	100
Note: Percentages and totals are based on respondents												

Gender

In your opinion, what are the top 5 challenges right now in the early childhood care and education system? (Table 1 of 2)														
	Cost of care		Number of programs / services in my area		Length of waitlists		Availability of care at non-traditional hours (evenings / nights, weekends, early mornings)		Transportation		Quality of care or services available		Staff keeps changing	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Female	3,109	76	2,297	56	1,979	48	1,733	42	910	22	1,569	38	1,268	31
Male	314	48	343	53	292	45	259	40	241	37	282	43	232	36
Non-Binary	16	94	10	59	7	41	6	35	9	53	10	59	2	12
Prefer to self-describe	4	67	2	33	2	33	2	33	0	0	1	17	2	33
Total	3,443	72	2,652	55	2,280	48	2,000	42	1,160	24	1,862	39	1,504	31
Note: Percentages and totals are based on respondents.														

In your opinion, what are the top 5 challenges right now in the early childhood care and education system? (Table 2 of 2)						
	Availability of programs / services to accommodate different background of families in care	Support services for my child	Trust-building between staff and parents	Other (Please specify)	I don't see any challenges	Total

	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Female	602	15	746	18	1,014	25	219	5	106	3	4,115	86
Male	181	28	196	30	178	27	10	2	26	4	650	14
Non-binary	4	23	4	23	6	35	0	0	0	0	17	<1
Prefer to self-describe	1	17	1	17	2	33	0	0	2	33	6	<1
Total	788	16	947	20	1,200	25	229	5	134	3	4,788	100

Note: Percentages and totals are based on respondents

Appendix C

Focus Group Protocol: Licensed Family Child Care Providers- single and group

Welcome, everyone. Thank you for taking time out of your schedule to attend today's focus group. My name is [facilitator's name]. I will lead the discussion. This is [note taker's name]. She/he/they will observe and take notes. We are researchers from the Center for Human Services Research at the University at Albany, State University of New York.

During today's focus groups we will ask you questions about why you decided to become a child care provider, what challenges or barriers you faced when setting up your business, what has changed for you since COVID, and other questions about your experiences as a family care provider. Many of the events that happened for families and care providers over the last two years have been stressful and upsetting. Some individuals experienced symptoms of depression or anxiety and may continue to feel this way. [Note taker] is going to put a few resources in the chat box in case you or someone you know need help or support.

1-800-273-TALK (8255)

1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)

NY Project Hope: COVID Emotional Support Line 1-844-863-9314

I'm going to ask you questions, and I may have some follow-up questions too. If you do not feel comfortable answering a question, you do not have to. Your participation is voluntary, so you can leave at any time. There are no right or wrong answers and we appreciate your honesty.

In addition to taking notes, today's session will be audio recorded to make sure we don't miss anything. We don't use anyone's name or other identifying information in any of our notes or reports. If something comes up during the discussion that you do not want to be recorded, please let me know and we can turn off the recorder for that portion of the discussion. All notes and recordings will be destroyed at the end of the project. We ask you to keep what is said during this group to yourselves.

Before we start, we want to quickly review some "zoom" etiquette. Please mute yourself if you need to talk to someone in the background.* If you have a question, you can type it into the chat or use the "raise hand" feature. Please try not to talk over each other, it makes it hard for us to capture what everyone is saying.

Are there any questions before we get started?

QUESTIONS

Introduction

Let's start by going around the room and each of you can talk a little about your program. We are interested in knowing how long you have been a licensed care provider, how many young children you care for, the hours you are open, how many locations you have, if you employ anyone other than yourself, and anything else you think is important to note.

Part 1: Program Development

We would like to start by talking about how you first became a licensed care provider. Why did you decide to become a licensed family child care provider?

What was your experience with the licensing process? Probes: How long did it take you to become licensed? Was it difficult (bureaucratic hurdles, the quality of the training, accessibility of the training)

What challenges did you face when you were first setting up your business?

Did you have any resources available to you while setting up your business? Was there anyone or any resource that was particularly helpful to you during this time?

Probes: Formal resources: OCFS, ECLC, CCR&R; informal resources: friends, social media, family, etc.

How did families find out about your program before you opened? Probe: Do you or have you publicize(d) your services? If so, how?

Part 2: Program Operation

Now we would like to talk about how your program is operating now. You can think about the way things changed for you and the children/families you serve during COVID, but also think about how things are at this moment.

How are things different for your program now versus before COVID began? Probes: Do you serve fewer children now? More children? Is there a waiting list for your program?

What are some of the benefits you see for children attending your program, or a similar small, home-based program?

What are some of the challenges you face as a family childcare provider?

In your opinion, what are some of the challenges for the families you serve?

Why do you continue to work in this field?

What goals do you have for the future of your business?

Part 3: Program Funding

We want to make sure we cover not just the programmatic side, but also get your thoughts and opinions on the financial side of your program.

What are some of the fiscal or business challenges you face as a family childcare provider?

Probes: What kind of help do you need to manage your funds? Have you run into a situation where you weren't able to pay your bills- what did you do?

Who are the people or resources you typically go to when you have a challenge or problem regarding the financial or business side of your program?

Probes: what resources are you using to help you manage the revenue (money in) and expenses (payments) for your program (e.g., an accountant, organization, business software or system)? Are these resources enough to support your program? Have you ever participated in any business trainings for a CCR&R, NY Small Business Development Center or Community Development Financial Institution?

Part 4: Future of Child Care

If you could send a message to the agencies who create or influence the child care policies (other than funding) under which you operate, what would you want them to know?

If you could send a message to the people who fund or oversee the funding of home-based child care programs, what would you want them to know?

Are there particular trainings or professional development opportunities that would help you run your program? (Probes: business training courses, etc.) If so, how would you want to participate in them (virtually, in-person, on the weekend, etc.)

Is there anything else you would like us to know that we haven't already covered?

Focus Group Protocol: Exempt, Unlicensed, or Informal Child-Care Providers

Welcome, everyone. Thank you for taking time out of your schedule to attend today's focus group. My name is [facilitator's name]. I will lead the discussion. This is [note taker's name]. She/he/they will observe and take notes. We are researchers from the Center for Human Services Research at the University at Albany, State University of New York.

The Center is meeting with people who care for young children ages birth through 5 across New York State. We want to learn about your experiences as a child care provider- what goes well and what you struggle with. We are doing this through online focus groups. We held focus groups before COVID with parents and providers, and that feedback was used to make recommendations to the governor about changes needed in the system. A lot has changed since we did our first round of focus groups, so we wanted to get your feedback to add to our understanding of what is going well and what is needed to help support you as you do the really hard and important work of caring for New York's youngest population.

Today's group is specifically for people who care for young children outside of a formal child care setting. This means you do not have a license through OCFS to care for children in your home or another residence, but you watch a child between the ages of birth to 6 years old on a regular basis. You might care for a relative's, neighbor's, or someone else's child for money or exchange of services. We want to know why you decided to care for someone else's child, what challenges you face, what has changed for you since COVID, and if you have ever been interested in expanding the care you provide to a licensed business.

I'm going to ask you questions, and I may have some follow-up questions too. Some of the questions have to do with your experience with COVID. Many of the events that happened for families during the COVID pandemic have been stressful and upsetting. Some of you may have experienced depression, anxiety, or thoughts of suicide as a result of COVID-19. If you are still feeling this way, please call the suicide prevention hotline, the number is provided in the chat. If you do not feel comfortable answering a question, you do not have to. Your participation is voluntary and anonymous, no one outside of this group will know any information about you. There are no right or wrong answers and you are free to leave at any time. We appreciate your honesty and your willingness to participate.

In addition to taking notes, today's session will be audio recorded to ensure that we don't miss anything. The recording, along with the notes, helps us catch all the important details. We don't use anyone's name or other identifying information in any of our notes or reports. If something comes up during the discussion that you do not want to be recorded, please let me know and we can turn off the recorder for that portion of the discussion. All notes and recordings will be destroyed at the end of the project. We ask you to keep what is said during this group to yourselves.

At the end of the focus group, we will send you a link to claim a \$25 Target gift card. This is a one-time use link personalized for you, so please don't share it with anyone. It will also only

work once, so once you click on it please go all the way to the end to request your gift card. If you are joining by phone today, please email eberical@albany.edu after the focus group, or type your email address into the chat, and we will send you a link to the gift card signup.

We understand your need to stay connected to your family during the session, but please take a moment to silence your cell phone if you are joining by computer. If you need to make or take a call at any time, please leave the room to do so and come back when you are finished. If you are joining by phone and need to unmute yourself, dial *6. Dial *6 again to re-mute. If you have questions, please type them into the chat or unmute yourself. Please try not to talk over each other if you can, and be patient with all of us. We want to make sure we are able to get everyone's thoughts and opinions. Feel free to use the "hand raise" feature under "reactions" if you are using a computer.

Are there any questions before we get started?

QUESTIONS

Introduction

Let's start by going around the room and each of you can talk a little about who you are, and the number and ages of the children you care for. We are interested in knowing how you got started caring for children, if the children you care for are related to you, the hours you provide care, and anything else you think is important to note.

Part 1: Program Development

We would like to start by talking about how you first started taking care of children.

Why and how did you decide to care for a child or children? Probes: Were there any obstacles you faced when making this decision? How did you overcome these obstacles when making the decision to care for the child(ren)?

Part 2: Program Operation

How did things change for you and the child/children you care for during COVID?

What are some of the benefits for the child or children you care for being with you instead of in another child care setting?

What are some of the challenges you face in caring for the child or children you care for?

In your opinion, what are some of the challenges for the parents/caregivers of the child or children you care for?

Why do you continue to provide care?

How do you connect with other people who care for young children the same way you do (for example: meet up regularly in person, part of a group on social media, see people in the store or talk on the phone? How is their situation different or the same as yours?

Part 3: Program Funding

If you receive cash payments for the care you provide, what is the financial benefit it gives you?

What do you think about expanding your child care services to a more formal business?

What have you done to research this? What has currently stopped you from doing this?

Part 3: Future of Child Care

If you could send a message to the agencies who create or influence the child care policies in New York State, what would you want them to know?

If you could send a message to the people who fund or oversee the funding of child care programs in New York State, what would you want them to know?

What kind of training or professional development would help you? Probe: how would you want to participate in training (e.g., virtually, in-person, on the weekends, etc.)

Is there anything else you would like us to know that we haven't already covered?

QUESTIONS FOR CCR&R Staff Who Work with Legally Exempt Providers

Introduction

We are interested in knowing about the experiences of the providers you work with. Feel free to talk generally about experiences or offer individual stories (names are not needed), whatever is most comfortable. First off, do you only work with legally exempt providers or are there other types of providers? Are there any other type of unlicensed providers you typically communicate or network with?

Part 1: Program Development

Can you talk a little bit about how the providers you work with started out caring for children?

Probes: a relative or neighbor needed a care provider, etc.

What were the barriers or obstacles for the legally exempt providers you work with as they were getting set up to care for a child or children?

Part 2: Program Operation

How did things change for the providers you work with and the child/children you care for during COVID?

What are some of the benefits you hear for the child or children the providers you work with care for versus being in another child care setting?

What are some of the challenges the providers you work with face in caring for the child or children you care for?

In your opinion, what are some of the challenges for the parents/caregivers of the child or children the providers you work with care for?

Why do the providers you work with continue to do the work that they do?

How do the providers you work with connect with other people who care for young children the same way they do (for example: meet up regularly in person, part of a group on social media, see people in the store or talk on the phone)?

Part 3: Program Funding

Do the providers you work with receive financial benefit in caring for children? Is that a primary reason why they do this work?

Do the providers you work with ever express interest in expanding to a more formal child care arrangements? What have they done to research this? What has stopped them from doing this?

Part 3: Future of Child Care

What are the major concerns legally exempt providers express regarding the state of child care in New York State?

If you could send a message to the people who fund or oversee child care programs in New York State, what would you want them to know?

Is there anything else you would like us to know that we haven't already covered?

References

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- ⁱ Administration for Children & Families. (2022, June 30). *ARP Child Care Stabilization Funding State Fact Sheets*. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/map/arp-act-stabilization-funding-state-fact-sheets>
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