Survey of Hartford Child Care Providers: Provider Stress Levels & Children’s Development

Cynthia Willner, CTData Collaborative
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Survey Purpose

Part of a larger study to understand the impacts of the pandemic on Hartford’s young children and the systems that serve them.

Gather child care providers’ perspectives on:

- Operational challenges
- Reasons for vacant slots
- Causes & consequences of staffing shortages
- Stress & burnout
- Concerns about children’s development
- Needs
Survey Sample

Emailed invitations to all child care providers in Hartford (excluding programs that only offer before & after school care)

49 responses collected from March 16th – April 10th, 2023:

• 22 administrators of child care centers (49% response rate)
  ➢ 12 Directors, 5 Executive Directors, 2 Assistant Directors, 2 Owners, & 1 District Lead for Early Childhood
  ➢ Reporting on 36 child care sites, including 11 public pre-K’s (59% of all center-based child care sites in Hartford)

• 27 family child care providers (30% response rate)
Provider Stress and Burnout
Child care center administrators say it’s hard to hire and retain qualified staff

86% say it is hard to hire and retain qualified staff

85% say staff seem stressed or burnt out on the job
Child care center administrators are stressed

84% say they are feeling stressed or burnt out on the job

55% say they are considering leaving the child care industry
Family child care providers are less likely to feel stressed

- 35% say they are feeling stressed or burnt out on the job
- 42% say they are considering leaving the child care industry
Providers say that parents seem stressed or overwhelmed

67% of center administrators

50% of family providers
Concerns about Children’s Development
Developmental progress for children under 3 years old

Respondents (must care for at least 3 children under 3 years old):
- 12 child care center administrators
- 11 family child care providers

5 developmental domains:
- Learning/thinking/problem-solving
- Language (understanding & communicating)
- Social awareness
- Fine motor skills
- Gross motor skills
For children under 3 years old, providers are most concerned about language development.

83% of center administrators are somewhat or very concerned.

64% of family providers are somewhat or very concerned.
67% of center administrators also express concern about social awareness for children under 3 years old

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Somewhat concerned</th>
<th>Very concerned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social awareness</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning/thinking/problem-solving</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross motor</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine motor</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: These percentages are out of the 12 center administrators who responded to each item.
Family providers express fewer concerns about the development of children under 3 years old

Note: These percentages are out of the 11 family providers who responded to each item.
Developmental progress for children 3 to 5 years old

21 child care center administrators who care for at least 3 children aged 3–5 years

(Only 2 family providers cared for at least 3 children aged 3-5 years & answered these questions, so they were excluded from these analyses)

7 developmental domains:

Learning/thinking/problem-solving
Language (understanding & communicating)
Literacy
Numeracy
Social skills
Fine motor skills
Gross motor skills
For children aged 3 to 5 years, center administrators are most concerned about the development of cognitive and language skills.

- 86% are somewhat or very concerned about cognitive development.
- 81% are somewhat or very concerned about language development.
Center administrators also express concern about social, literacy, and numeracy development for children aged 3 to 5 years.

![Bar chart showing concerns among center administrators](chart.png)

- **Learning/thinking/problem-solving**: 67% somewhat concerned, 19% very concerned.
- **Language**: 67% somewhat concerned, 14% very concerned.
- **Social skills**: 57% somewhat concerned, 19% very concerned.
- **Literacy**: 52% somewhat concerned, 19% very concerned.
- **Numeracy**: 52% somewhat concerned, 19% very concerned.
- **Fine motor**: 43% somewhat concerned, 10% very concerned.
- **Gross motor**: 48% somewhat concerned, 0% very concerned.

Note: These percentages are out of the 21 center administrators who responded to each item.
Providers reported on children’s emotional and behavioral problems

- Impulsivity or overactivity
- Attention
- Aggression or defiance
- Emotional expression & regulation
- Anxiety or fear
- Sadness, frequent crying or lack of joy
- Anger or irritability
Emotional & behavioral problems for children under 3 years old

Question Prompt:
“Thinking about the infants and toddlers (under 3 years old) who are in your care now... Are any of these children showing problems in the following areas (more than you would expect for children their age)?”

Respondents (must care for at least 3 children under 3 years old):
13 child care center administrators
12 family child care providers
85% of center administrators are noticing problems with emotional expression & regulation and attention in children under 3 years old

- Emotional expression & regulation: Some Problems - 54%; Many Problems - 31%
- Attention: Some Problems - 62%; Many Problems - 23%
- Aggression or defiance: Some Problems - 54%; Many Problems - 23%
- Impulsivity or overactivity: Some Problems - 54%; Many Problems - 15%
- Anger or irritability: Some Problems - 46%; Many Problems - 15%
- Sadness or lack of joy: Some Problems - 46%; Many Problems - 8%
- Anxiety or fear: Some Problems - 38%; Many Problems - 8%

Note: These percentages are out of the 13 center administrators who responded to each item.
58% of family providers are noticing problems with attention in children under 3 years old

Note: These percentages are out of the 12 family providers who responded to each item.
Emotional & behavioral problems for children
3 to 5 years old

Question Prompt:
“Thinking about the preschool-aged children (~3 to 5 years old) who are in your care now... Are any of these children showing problems in the following areas (more than you would expect for children their age)?”

20 child care center administrators who care for at least 3 children
3 to 5 years old
(Only 2 family providers cared for at least 3 children aged 3–5 years & answered these questions, so they were excluded from these analyses)
About 90% of center administrators are noticing problems with emotional & behavioral regulation, aggression/defiance, and anger/irritability in children ages 3 to 5 years.

Note: These percentages are out of the 20 center administrators who responded to each item.
Providers’ primary areas of concern regarding the children in their care

40 open responses (18 center administrators & 22 family providers)

• **17 (43%)**: Social & emotional skills / behavior problems (14 center administrators, 3 family providers)

• **8 (20%)**: Speech / language / literacy (3 center administrators, 5 family providers)

• **7 (18%)**: Special needs / autism / ADHD (4 center administrators, 3 family providers)

• **7 (18%)**: No concerns (all family providers)

• **3 (8%)**: Health & safety (all family providers)
Quotes from providers about their primary areas of concern regarding children

“Many [children] are coming in with significant deficits in social/emotional skills. Most of the children we are getting now have been home for 3 years and come into school with little developmentally appropriate skills.”

“...some children do need one-to-one assistance that we do not have the availability for.”
Providers’ requests for additional supports or services to address concerns about the children in their care

36 open responses (14 center administrators & 22 family providers)

• A variety of suggestions for helping with challenging behaviors:
  • 4: In-classroom special education support staff / paraprofessionals
  • 3: Expanding early intervention services (e.g., “Birth to Three” for 3- to 5-year-olds)
  • 2: Expanding ECCP availability
  • 2: Coaches
  • 2: Support from mental health counselors / therapists

• 4 providers requested more training (e.g., on child development or managing children with behavioral challenges)

• 2 family providers requested curricula or lesson plans
Quotes from providers about what they need to support children

“Mental Health Supports for children, families, and staff, something other than ECCP that works with children with social/emotional and behavior challenges”

“Being able to have an extra staff member in the classroom for an extra set of "eyes" and more one-on-one time for the children that need that.”

“Coaches, and other support in classrooms to provide teachers with techniques to handle behaviors”
Curricula, frameworks, or models providers are using to support children’s learning and development

43 open responses (20 center administrators & 23 family providers)

- 18 (42%) mentioned the CT ELDS (13 center administrators & 5 family providers)
- 14 (33%) mentioned the CT DOTS (11 center administrators & 3 family providers)
- 15 (35%) mentioned a formal curriculum (14 center administrators & 1 family provider)
  - 9 Creative Curriculum / Teaching Strategies, 3 Second Step, 1 RULER, 1 Abeka, 1 Your Baby Can Read
- 7 mentioned a framework or model (all center administrators)
  - 5 Pyramid Model, 1 Responsive Classroom, 1 Reggio Emilia Approach
- 4 mentioned the ASQ and/or Sparkler app
- 1 mentioned “trauma-informed practices”
Thank you

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