

CHILD CARE SHORTAGES WEIGH HEAVILY ON PARENTS AND PROVIDERS

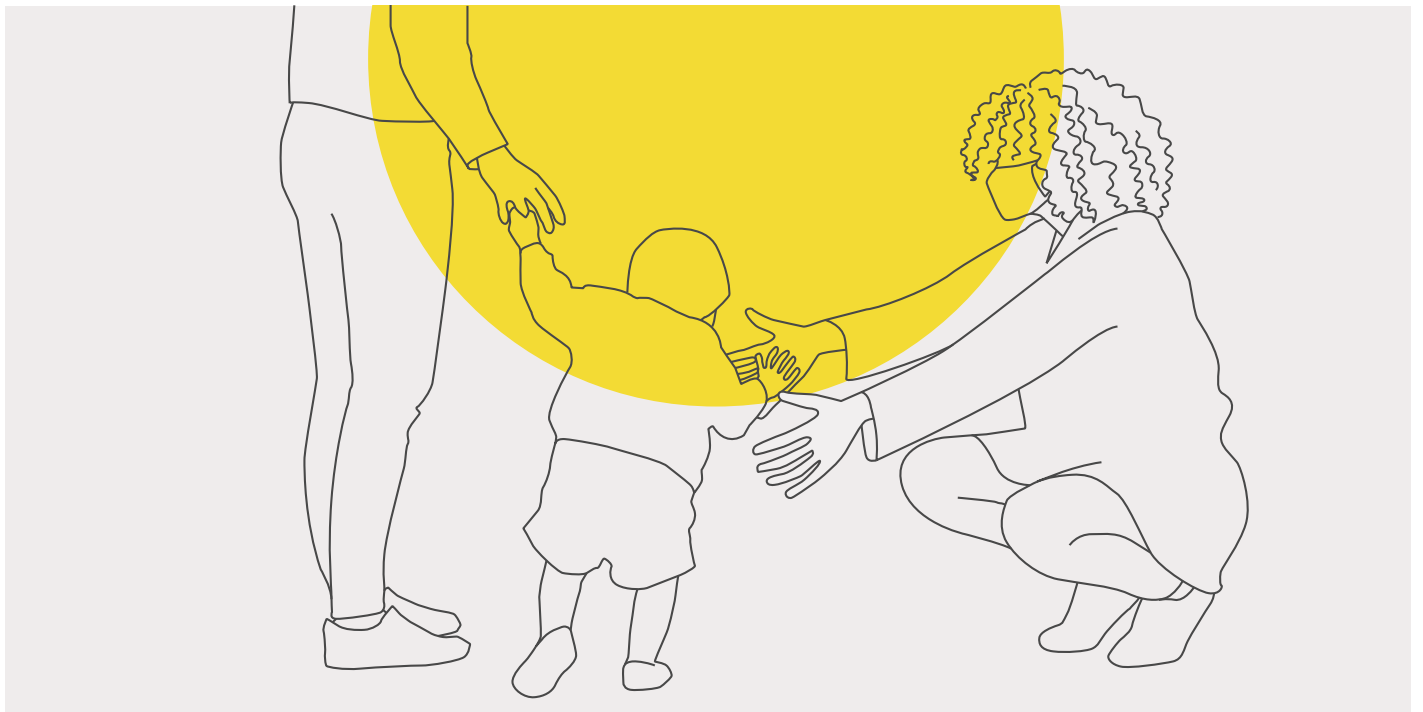
In previous fact sheets, we described challenges that child care workers are facing during the pandemic, such as difficulty paying for basic needs, food insecurity, and unstable work schedules.

These challenges are associated with pronounced emotional distress among child care providers and may be contributing to some providers leaving the field and to severe child

care shortages during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this fact sheet, we look at child care staffing issues from both parents' and child care providers' perspectives.

"Lack of staffing and the ability to pay a livable wage is the main challenge at the moment. Our area is having a huge crisis finding qualified staff and retaining the ones we currently have."

Center director
from Indiana



designbysoapbox.com

DISRUPTIONS IN CARE LINKED TO PARENT AND CHILD EMOTIONAL DISTRESS

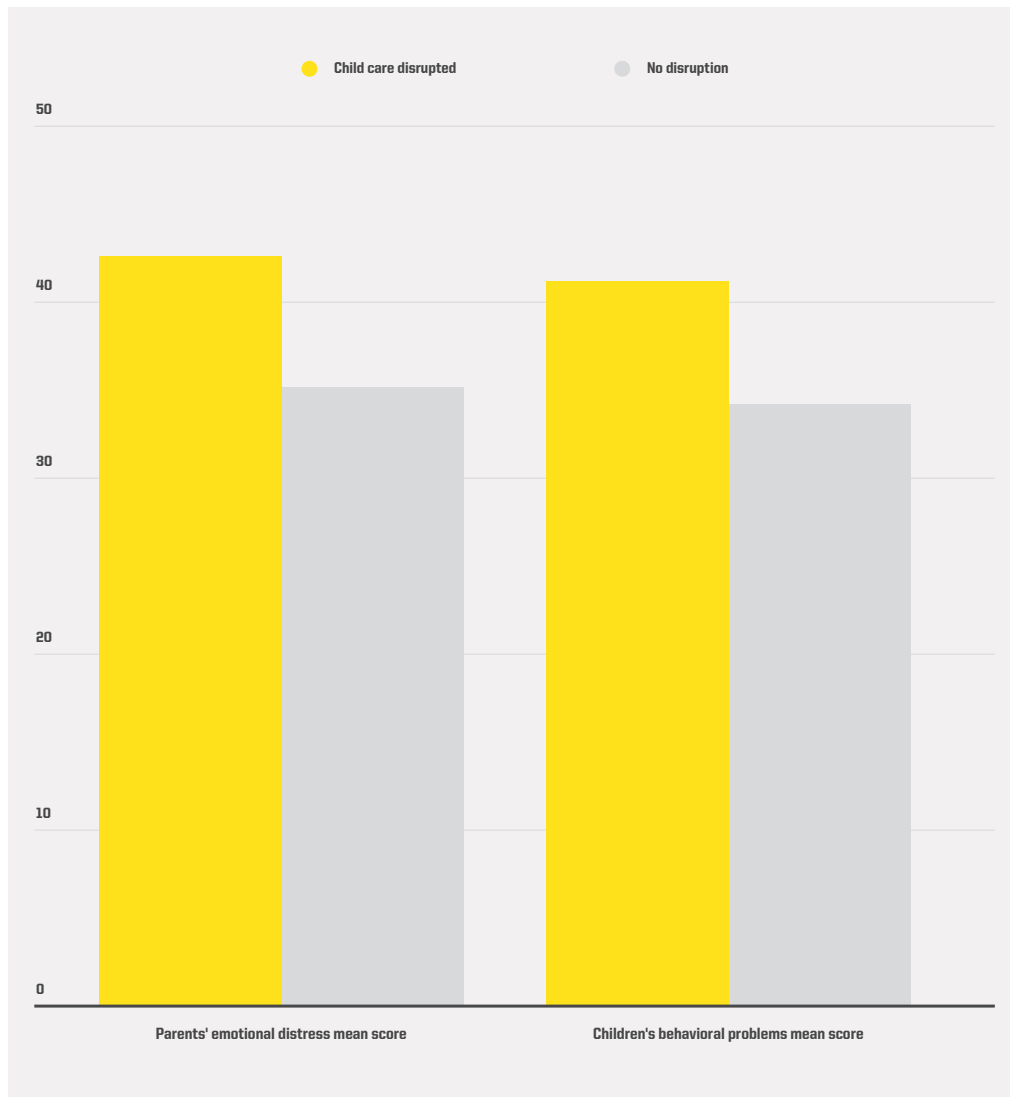
In our household survey, 19% of parents who use center- or home-based child care report experiencing disruptions* in care for their children. These disruptions, the majority of which are due to staff shortages (68%), are taking a toll on parents' and children's emotional well-being.

- Parents who experience child care disruptions report higher levels

of emotional distress (a composite of depressive, anxiety, stress, and loneliness symptoms).

- In households that experience child care disruptions, parents also report increased behavioral problems in their young children (a composite of fear/anxiety and fussiness), compared to households with no care disruptions.

Associations between child care disruption and emotional distress among parents and children**



* We define child care disruptions as child care providers canceling/closing for any reason (e.g., not enough staff, COVID-19 exposure, other) and parents having to make another child care arrangement.

** We ask parents about their experiences with four symptoms of emotional distress: stress, loneliness, anxiety, and depression. Responses for each symptom were averaged to create a single score and transformed to a range of 0-100 for each parent. The child behavior composite was calculated in the same manner.

“Daycare staff shortages have caused them to cancel daycare at short notice.”
Parent from Virginia

“[My biggest challenge is] staffing and stress. No one is applying for jobs so it’s hard to keep the classrooms afloat. Everyone is stressed and turnover is high.”
Center director from Washington

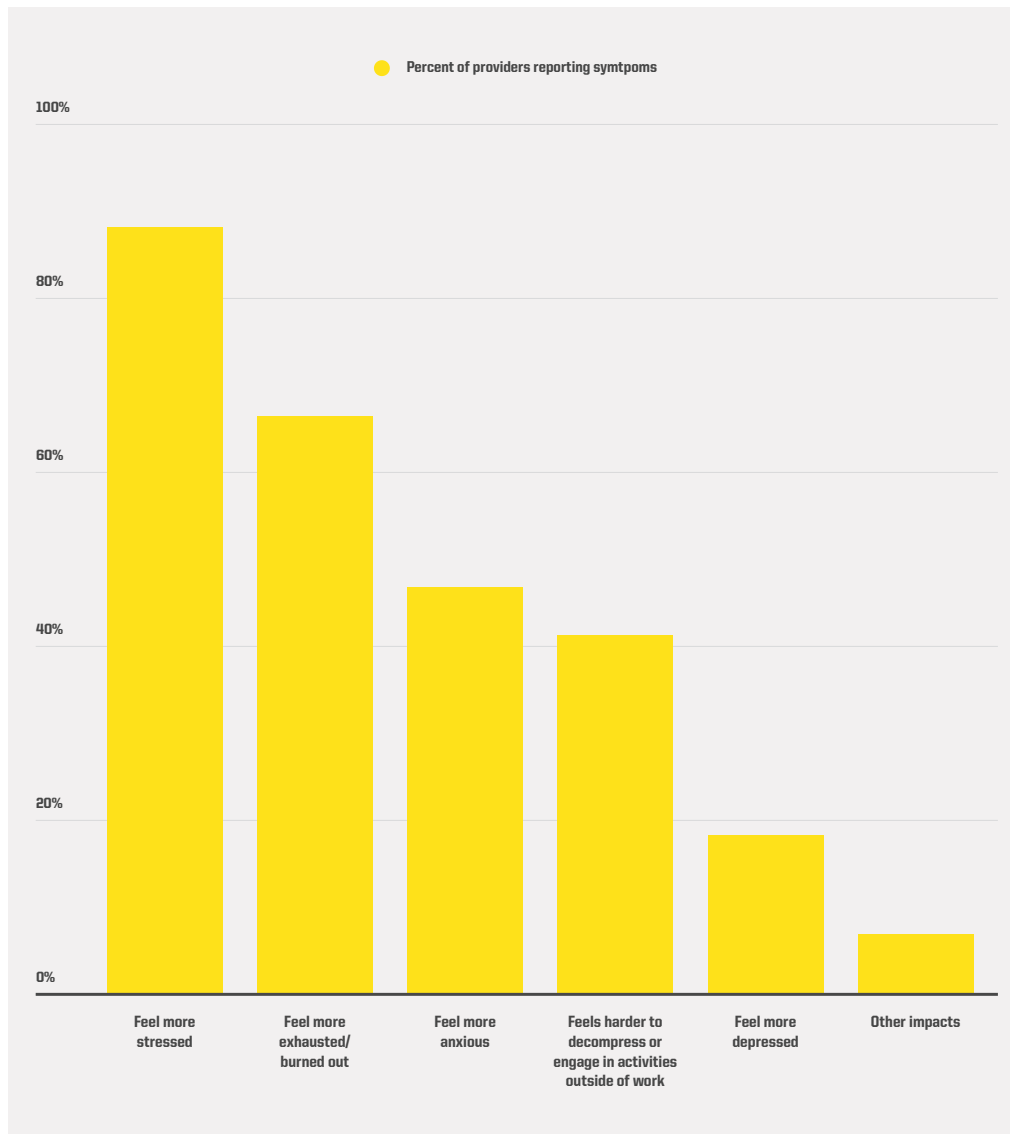
STAFFING CHALLENGES PUT ADDITIONAL PRESSURE ON CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

Child care providers themselves also report that severe staff shortages are negatively affecting their emotional well-being.

- 59% of center- or home-based child care providers are experiencing staff shortages, which is a significant increase from before the pandemic (36%).

- The vast majority of child care providers indicate that staff shortages make them feel more stressed and burned out. Approximately half of the providers in our survey also report that they feel more anxious, or that it is harder to decompress and engage in activities outside of work because of staff shortages.

The impact of child care staff shortages on child care providers' well-being



“[My biggest challenge is] finding childcare for the baby I’ll be having next month. Between staffing shortages and knowing they won’t be safe from COVID, I’m unsure if I’ll be able to return to work full time.”

Parent in Tennessee

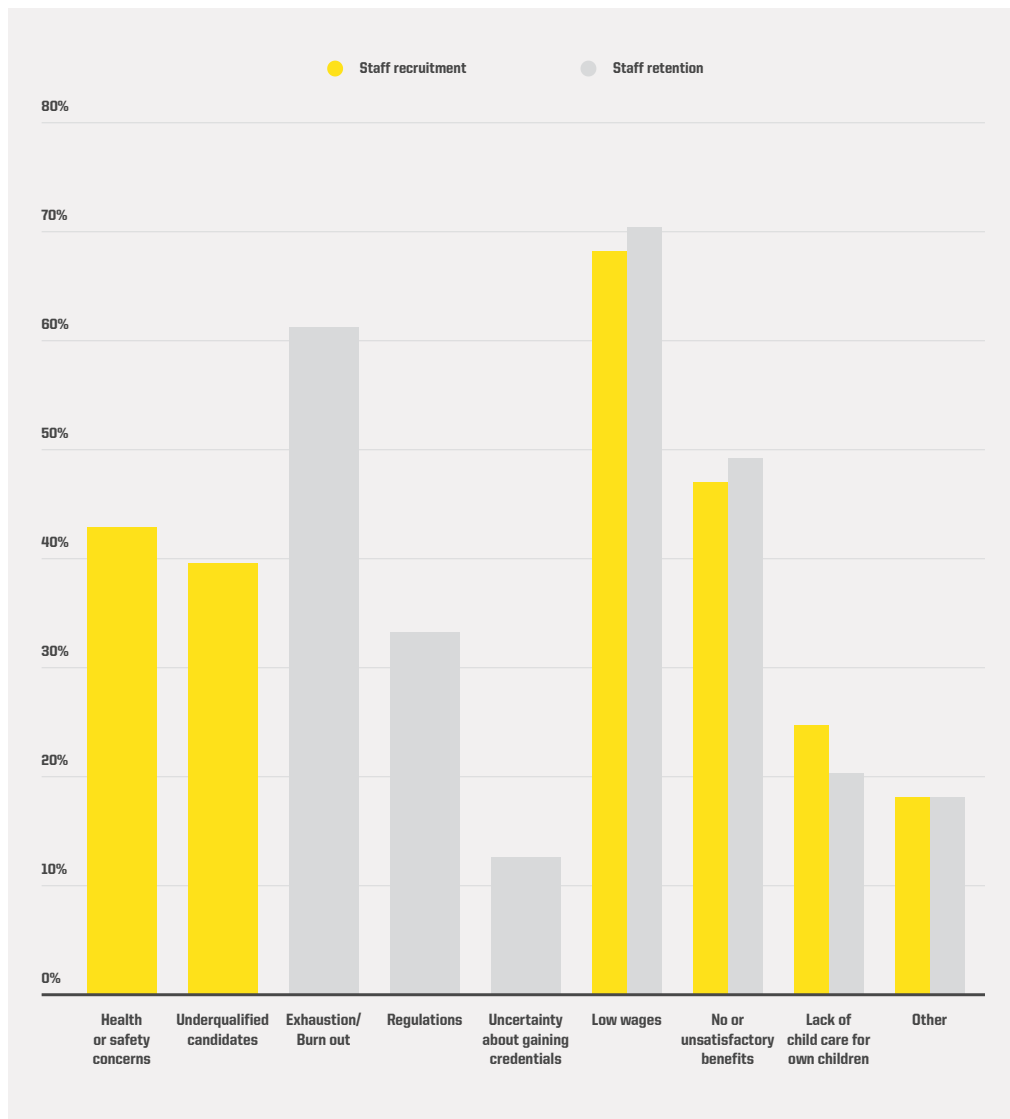
“I just had to completely close a center because all of the staff left for other better paying or less stressful jobs. Hiring new staff is proving impossible.”

Center director from Michigan

CHILD CARE STAFF SHORTAGES ARE PARTLY DUE TO DIFFICULTY RECRUITING AND RETAINING QUALIFIED STAFF DURING THE PANDEMIC

- 87% of child care center directors report that it's more difficult to recruit and retain qualified staff now, compared to before the pandemic. Similarly, 72% of home-based providers indicate increased difficulty in staff recruitment and retention.
- Child care providers indicated that the main challenges to recruiting and retaining qualified staff are low wages, followed by burn out, no or unsatisfactory benefits, and health and safety concerns. More than one in five providers also indicate that a lack of child care for their own children is a challenge.

Challenges in child care staff recruitment and retention



“The center my child attends makes it possible for me and my husband to work. The center was closed for a week due to COVID-related staffing issues and I had to take most of the week off work.”
Parent in Pennsylvania

“We are not valued. We do not make enough money to support ourselves and we are not treated as educators.”
Center director from Nebraska

CONCERN THAT CHALLENGES WILL CONTINUE

As the pandemic continues and staff shortages put increasing pressure on child care providers, many providers are considering leaving the workforce or closing their child care programs.

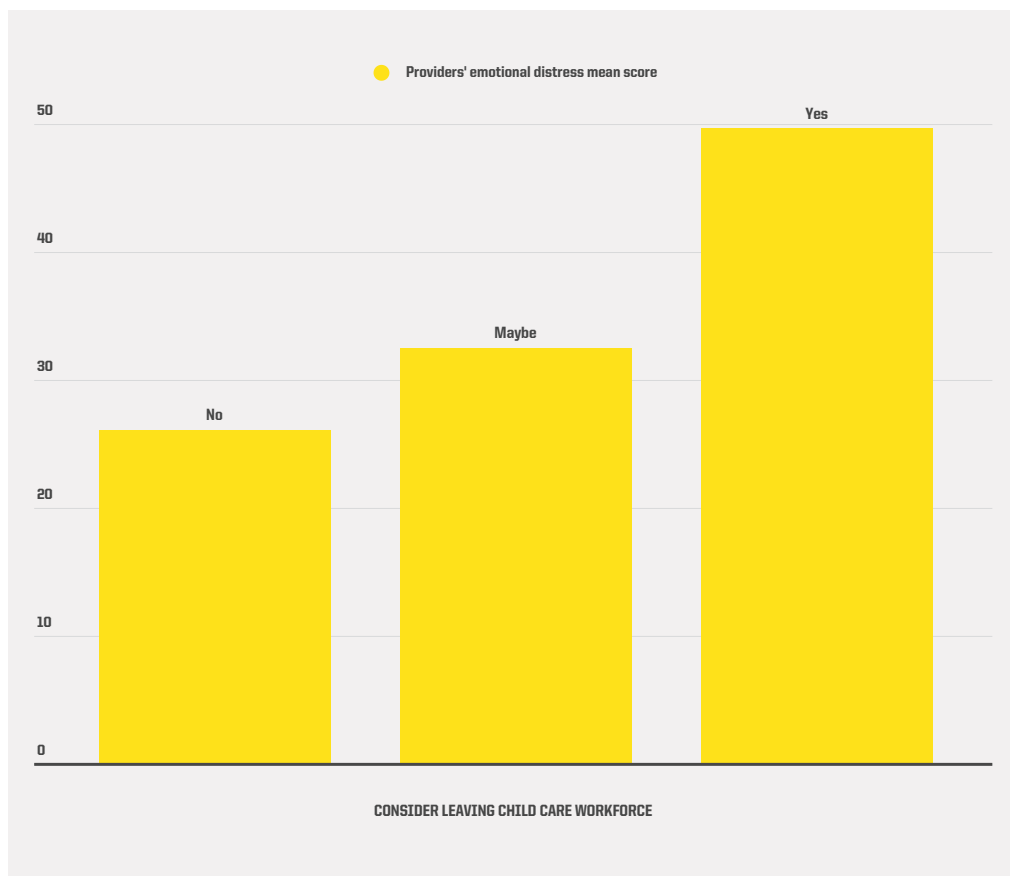
– 18% of child care providers report that they are considering leaving their child care job or closing their programs in the next year. Another 20% of providers are considering leaving the child care field entirely. These numbers are likely an underestimate, as there have been many reports showing that a large number of providers have already left the child care workforce before we asked these questions.

– Child care providers who are considering leaving the child care workforce also report more severe emotional distress compared to those who are not considering leaving the workforce.

As staff shortages continue during the pandemic, many child care providers are experiencing emotional distress and are choosing to leave the field, meaning that staff shortages will likely continue and possibly increase. Further, staffing, recruitment and retention challenges will likely continue to cause disruptions to care and emotional distress for parents of young children who rely on child care.

“We have understaffed and over-enrolled classrooms. I’m unable to take time off.”
Center teacher from Minnesota

Associations between considering leaving child care workforce and providers’ emotional distress*



* We ask providers about their experiences with four symptoms of emotional distress: stress, loneliness, anxiety, and depression. Responses for each symptom were averaged to create a single score and transformed to a range of 0-100 for each provider.

ABOUT THE RAPID-EC PROJECT

These analyses are based on both RAPID household and child care provider surveys. Analyses of the household survey data are based on responses collected from 3,583 caregivers between May and October 2021. These caregivers represent a range of voices: 5.27% are non-Latinx Black/African American, 12.02% are Latinx, and 46.16% live at or below 200% the federal poverty level. Analyses of the child care provider survey data are based on responses collected from 538 providers between September and October 2021. These providers represent a range of voices: 7.06% are non-Latinx Black/African American, 8.55% are Latinx, and 51.92% live at or below 200% of the federal poverty level. Proportions/percentages are calculated based on the item-level response rates, not out of the total sample. The data for these analyses are not weighted.

The RAPID-EC project includes a survey of caregivers with children under age 6 and a survey of child care providers and other adults who care for children under age 6.

These surveys are designed to gather essential information continuously regarding the needs, health-promoting behaviors, and well-being of children and their families and important adults in their lives during the COVID-19 outbreak and recovery period in the United States.

Twice per month, RAPID-EC collects data from 1,000 caregivers and child care providers in all 50 states. The surveys are national in scope, though not technically nationally representative. RAPID-EC collects snapshots of data across time and can also assess trends longitudinally.

For more information about RAPID-EC study design and methods, see [here](#).

RAPID-EC is under the direction of Philip Fisher, PhD, Director of the Center for Translational Neuroscience at the University of Oregon

1,000+

surveyed bi-weekly

85

surveys

11,000

unique households

50

US states

