

2024 PROVIDER PULSE CHECK

Annual Child Care Provider Survey



QUALITY CARE
for CHILDREN

Executive Summary:

A Note from Our CEO

Quality Care for Children conducted its [annual Provider Pulse Check survey](#) in March 2024 to collect a snapshot of the current landscape shared by child care providers across the state. These data and findings help us identify support opportunities and create partnerships to rally awareness for emerging needs.

A total of **578 providers** responded to the survey, representing 111 of 159 counties in Georgia, including 204 family (in-home) child care programs. The findings shed light on the ongoing struggles within the child care industry, particularly following the conclusion of stabilization funds in October 2023, which provided much-needed relief during the coronavirus pandemic. During this survey, we learned that Georgia dollars made a difference in child care. Fewer providers fear closing programs compared to the 25% of respondents in fall 2023.

The pandemic exacerbated existing issues within the child care sector, leaving providers and parents exhausted and overwhelmed. Since last year, **47% of child care programs have raised tuition rates or fees**, while nearly **61% of child care centers report increased waitlists**, with infants and toddlers being particularly affected. Access to high-quality early learning is especially critical during these first months and years of life with a whopping 80% of brain development occurring by age three, setting the groundwork for future learning before they enter school.

Staff shortages continue to pose a significant challenge, with **68% of center providers indicating they could serve more children** if they had more qualified teachers. Without the proper staff, providers are left with empty classrooms. We know that Georgia has incredible, nurturing staff members that child care needs. Pleasantly, **72% of programs attribute families choosing their programs to their warm and caring staff**.

The combination of increased tuition, low teacher wages, and staffing shortages have hindered families' access to quality child care in their communities. Looking ahead to June 2024, when stabilization funds are to have been expended, **65% of child care programs anticipate further tuition increases**, while **26% expect impacts on teachers' wages**, potentially leading to reduced benefits or scholarships for staff members' children. Providers also indicate **servicing fewer children (16%)** and **12% may have to completely close their child care program**.



In summary, the Provider Pulse Check highlights the urgent need for support and investment in Georgia's child care sector. Addressing these challenges requires collaborative efforts from policymakers, community leaders, and stakeholders to ensure access to affordable, high-quality child care for all families.

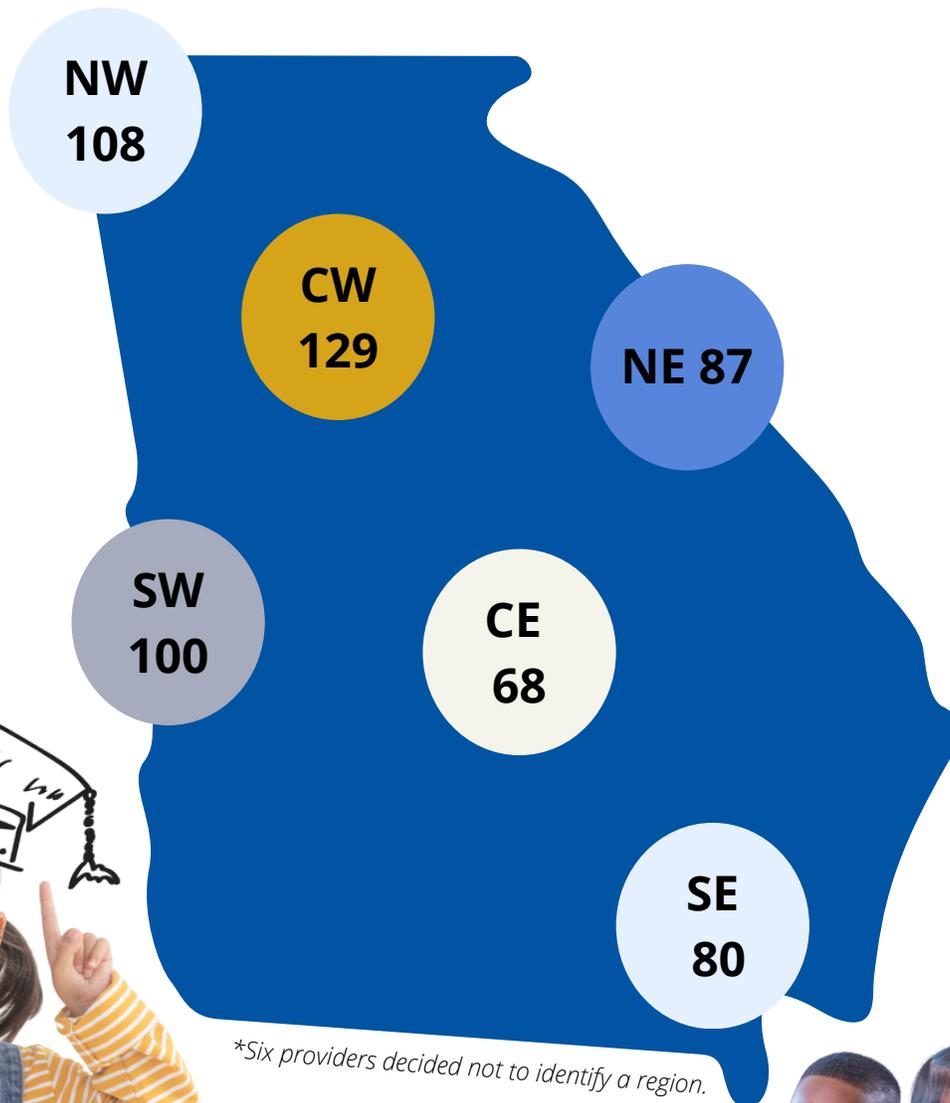
-Ellyn Cochran, President & CEO

2024 Survey Highlights

Provider Voices Across the Landscape

In March 2024, QCC [surveyed](#) licensed child care programs (centers and family child care) to gauge industry concerns and needs.

- 578 child care provider responses, representing 111 out of 159 counties across the state
- 66% were from child care center programs (for profit, not for profit, etc.) and 34% were from family child care

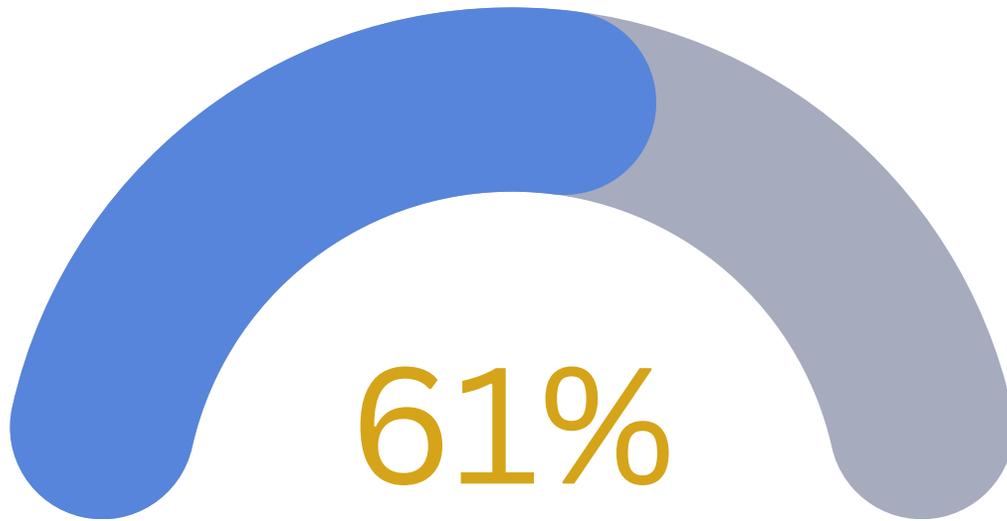


**Six providers decided not to identify a region.*



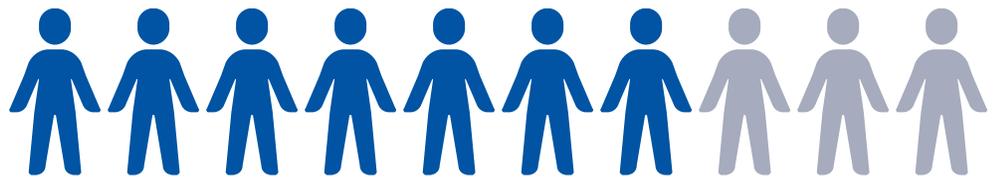
Provider Voices: Enrollment and Capacity

Access to quality child care continues to be a multifaceted issue that impacts thousands of families. **More than half of respondents (59%) report having a waitlist.** Around the state, the size of waitlists varies from as few as 6 to more than 20 children waiting for child care. Of the 312 providers who indicated that they have a waitlist, **156 of them have 20 or more children on the waitlist (50%).** Infants and toddlers (ages 1-3 years) are placed on waitlists more often than older children. This age group often requires specialized attention and resources, making the availability of suitable child care options even more crucial.



61% of those say their waitlists have increased over the past year

68% of child care centers indicate staff shortages prevents them from caring for more children.

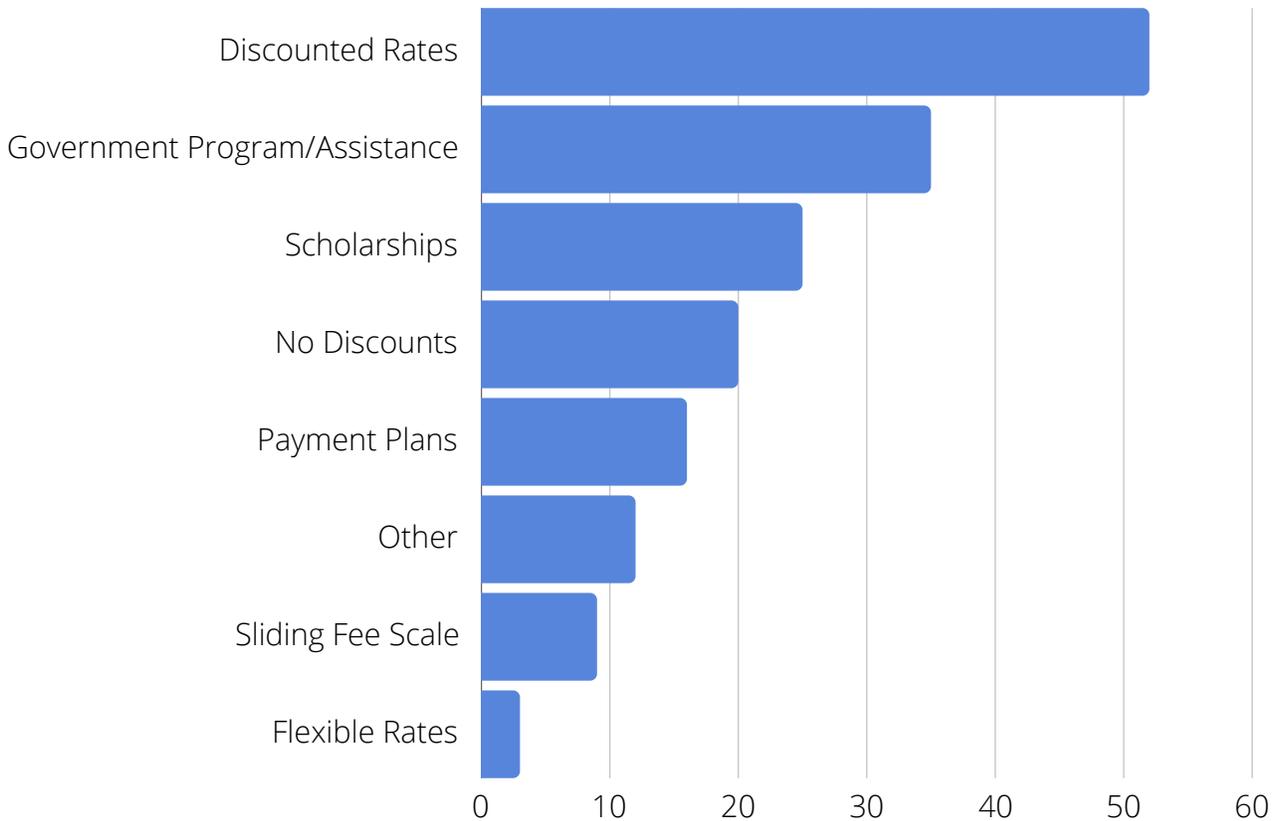


72% of programs report that families utilize their program due to their warm and caring staff.

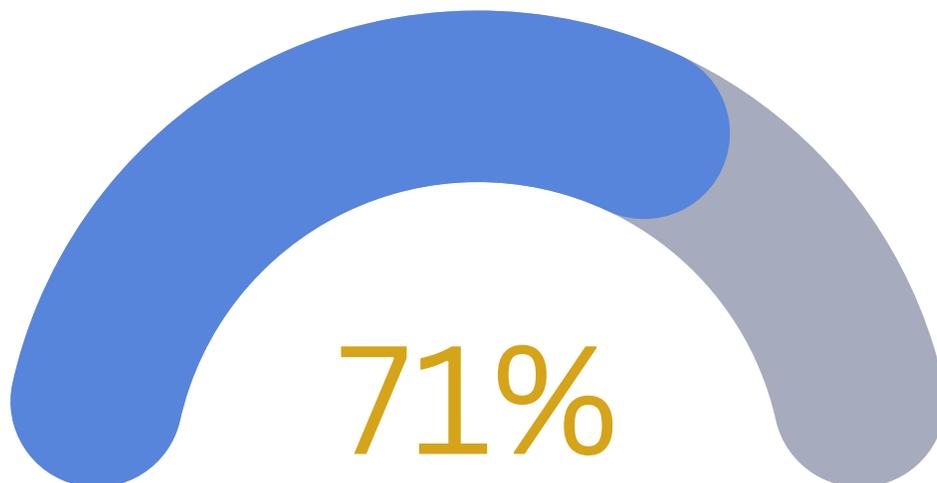
Provider Voices: Enrollment and Capacity

Since this time last year, 47% of providers report having increased tuition rates and fees. As child care costs continue to rise, the financial burden rests mostly on families. 33% of providers report receiving government funding, like the Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program and Georgia Pre-K scholarships. However, the largest single source of revenue - 59% - is parent-paid tuition and fees.

Providers understand the financial strain families face when paying for child care, and most provide resources to help make their programs more affordable for families in need.

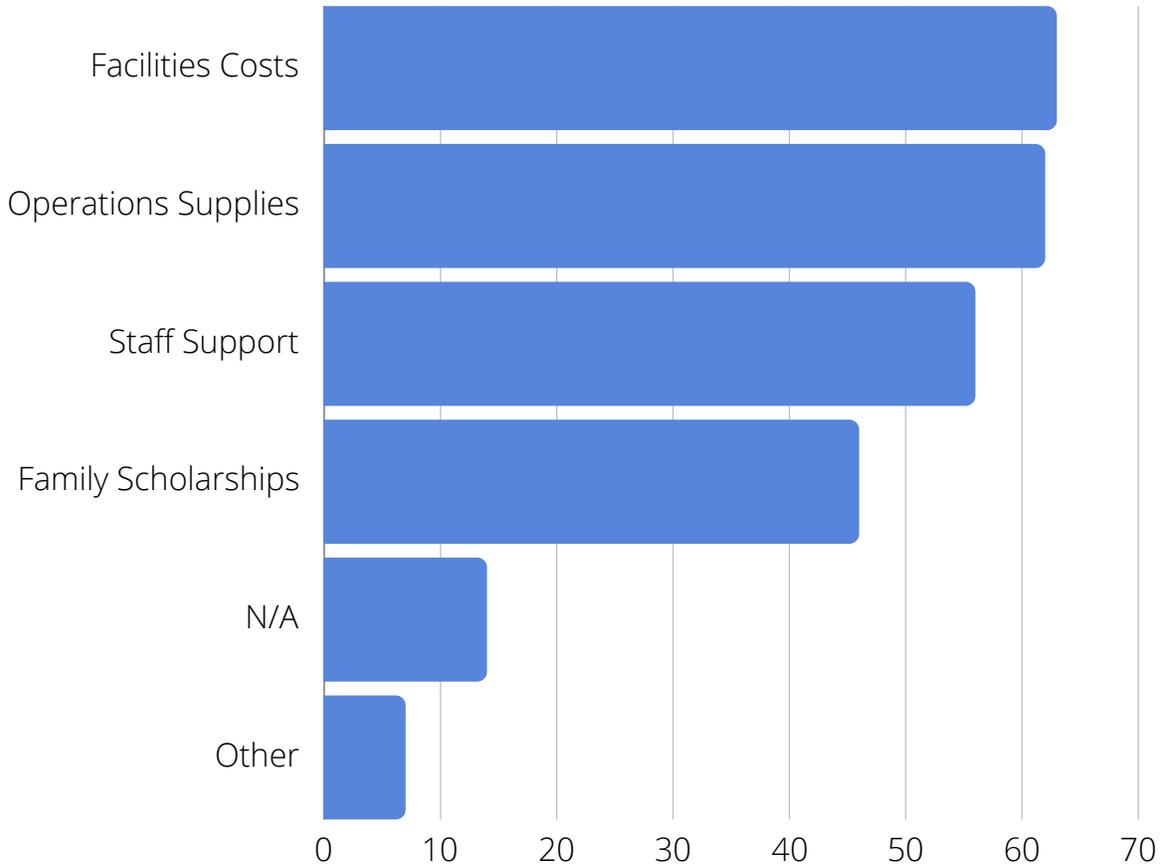


71% of providers help connect parents with social services, such as housing or food assistance, access to medical care, or help getting assistance from government or private programs.

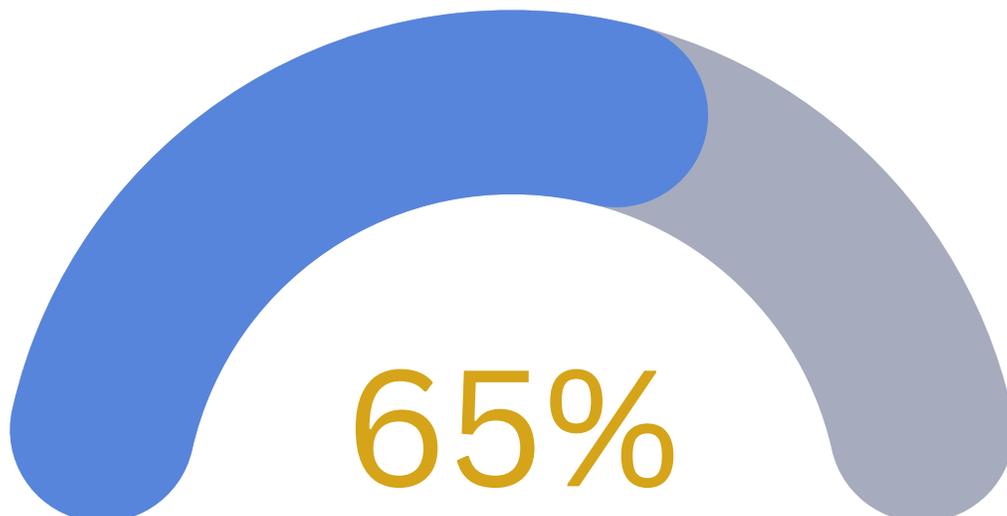


Provider Voices: Business Operations

In 2021, federal child care stabilization grants provided great financial relief during the pandemic. This funding played a critical role in helping to keep programs open for working families. Funds have been used in a variety of ways to cover a range of expenses.



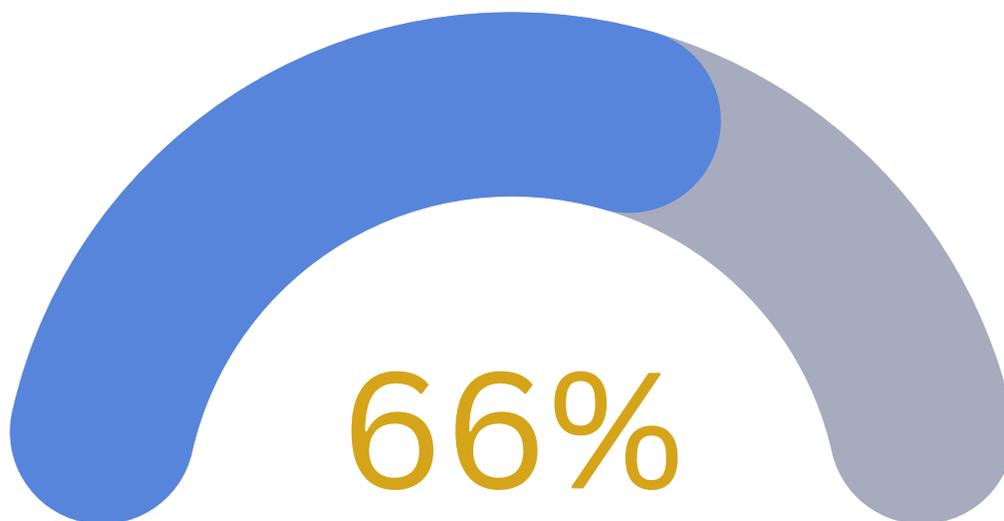
As stabilization dollars come to an end in June 2024, 65% of providers say they will have to increase tuition and parents fees.



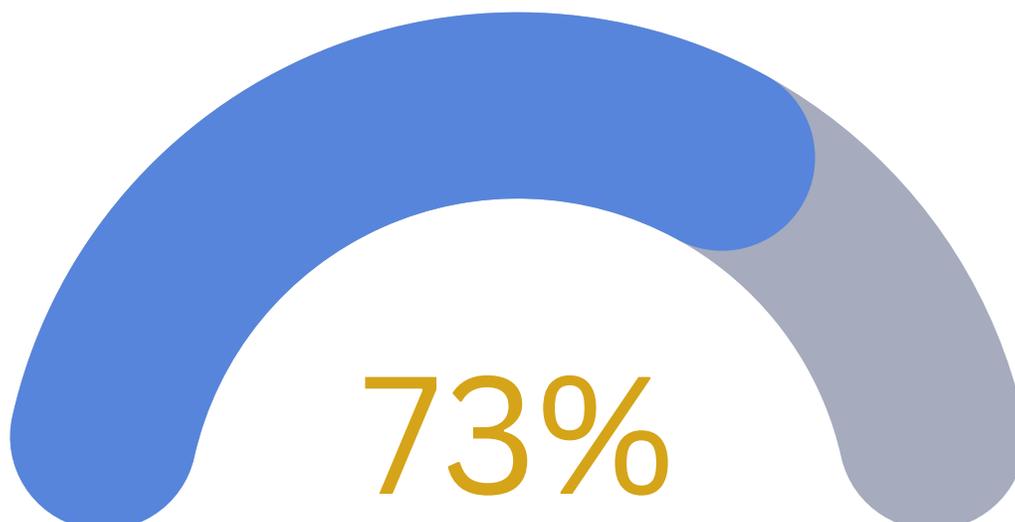
Provider Voices: Business Operations

Child care programs reported that **42% of decreases in enrollment were due to families experiencing financial challenges**. Half of the providers share that they regularly deal with **unpaid balances** from families ranging from a few hundred dollars to as much as \$6,000. The CAPS program, administered by the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, assists low-income families with the cost of child care so parents can attend work, school, or training programs. However, only **15% of income-eligible families** have access to this program. Providers may decide to apply for the USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) to help with the costly expenses of food. With more government funding, programs like CAPS and CACFP could help many families and impact providers' profit margins.

66% of providers participate in the CACFP



73% of providers report that CACFP covers more than half of food and labor costs.



Provider Voices: Program Observations



“There are many providers that can no longer keep their doors open, unlicensed care has skyrocketed and it’s hard to compete with their rates. Food is expensive, utilities and property taxes going up but our pay doesn’t increase with inflation and we have no funds for self care so therefore burn out is high.”



“I really appreciate the stabilization grants - they helped us tremendously. We were able to update some of our classrooms, order needed toys, supplies, able to do maintenance, and help parents that were sick with covid by offering a discount on tuition for sickness due to COVID.”

“Child care struggle is real for owners and parents. You want to make it affordable. The economy is making it very hard. The overhead cost are outrageous and with that it’s hard to keep staff because we aren’t able to pay them a lot. We can’t even keep up with corporate fast food pay.”



“I have some parents struggling and they get denied CAPS. I have a pregnant mom with a two year old employed as a house keeper. She got denied CAPS, so I took a cut in pay to help her out, I help buy diapers, hats for the winter. Good daycare providers will sacrifice their fair pay to help struggling parents.”





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