

# WHO IS PROVIDING FOR CHILD CARE PROVIDERS?

U.S. families have long faced challenges finding safe, reliable, and affordable child care. But the weight of this challenge has increased dramatically for families since the beginning of the pandemic.

Relying on data from our RAPID-EC family and child care provider surveys, this fact sheet documents the importance of ensuring adequate child care access for households with young children.

Data from our survey show that American families rely heavily

on child care providers, but that providers have been struggling with paying for basic needs pandemic during the pandemic, and that these difficulties are associated with increases in emotional distress. Extensive evidence from prior scientific research documents

Access to child care is critical for American families' well-being, but child care providers (who have always been a low wage-earning workforce) have been experiencing increased financial hardship during the pandemic. This is taking a toll on their emotional well-being, which has the potential to adversely impact the care they are providing to children.



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that it is difficult for adults (including teachers) to provide nurturing and responsive care in the context of distress caused by economic hardship.

Increased financial support to those who care for young children is necessary in order to insure child and family well-being.

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## FAMILIES RELY ON CHILD CARE

Child care enhances family stability and well-being, promotes children's early learning and socio-emotional development, and plays an important role in children's nutrition. Parents/families across the country rely on diverse child care arrangements to ensure they can work and go to school or job training including relatives, home-, center- and school-based programs. Voices from parents\* attest to the wide range of ways that child care is important in their lives.

"Child care is a place for my child to interact with other children and help with curriculum and play for child development."

"They are invaluable people that I wouldn't be able to work without.

In addition, they are close members of my family, and I not only trust them, but I know it is important for them to bond with my kids."

"They play a huge part in socialization for my child. She has had a lot of difficult behaviors through this pandemic and is easily bored. She is challenged and engaged in a positive way there."

"My child care provider makes my son happy and makes it possible for my husband and me to work."

"They provide care, education, healthy food to my child while we work."

"My daughter gets the attention she needs."

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These quotes were responses to the question, "When thinking about the people/center that provides your child care right now, what role and significant contribution do they serve for you and your family?"

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## CHILD CARE IS ESSENTIAL FOR WORKING PARENTS

Ensuring access to child care is critical for maternal and child well-being among families with young children in the U.S. workforce. **More than one in three women caregivers in our survey were forced to leave the**

**workforce or reduce their work hours during the COVID-19 pandemic, even though most could not afford to do so.** Being forced to stop or reduce work negatively affected women's emotional well-being.

- In particular, 11% of women were forced to stop working, and 82% of them said they could not afford it; 24% of women were forced to reduce work hours or responsibilities, and 68% of them could not afford it.
- Women who were forced to stop or reduce work, especially those who could not afford to, reported significantly more emotional distress (a composite of anxiety, depression, stress, and loneliness symptoms) than women who maintained their employment status during the pandemic.

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**“My job has laid me off, and I can’t find another one. I need to work, but it’s just not feasible while doing remote learning and lack of affordable child care”**

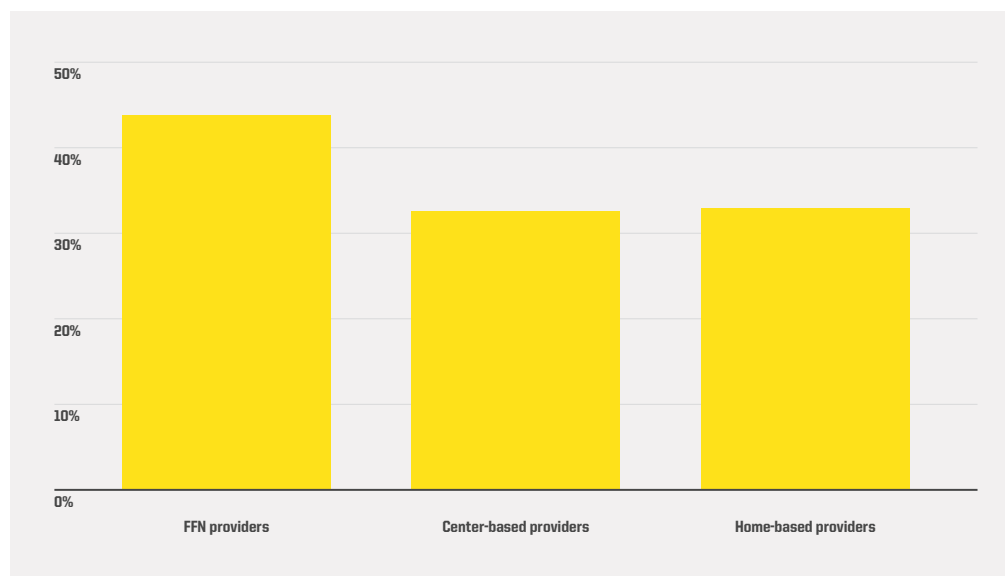
Mother in Colorado

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## DESPITE THE IMPORTANCE OF CHILD CARE, PROVIDERS ARE EXPERIENCING PRONOUNCED DIFFICULTIES PAYING FOR BASIC NEEDS

- One in four child care providers reported having at least one other job, and over 40% of them reported that providing child care accounted for less than half of their income.
- One in three child care providers has experienced at least one material hardship (e.g., food, housing, utilities) during the pandemic.
- Family/friend/neighbor (FFN) providers reported significantly more material hardship (43.8%) than providers in center-based (32.6%) or home-based (32.9%) child care settings.

Percentage of child care providers with one or more material hardship, by provider type

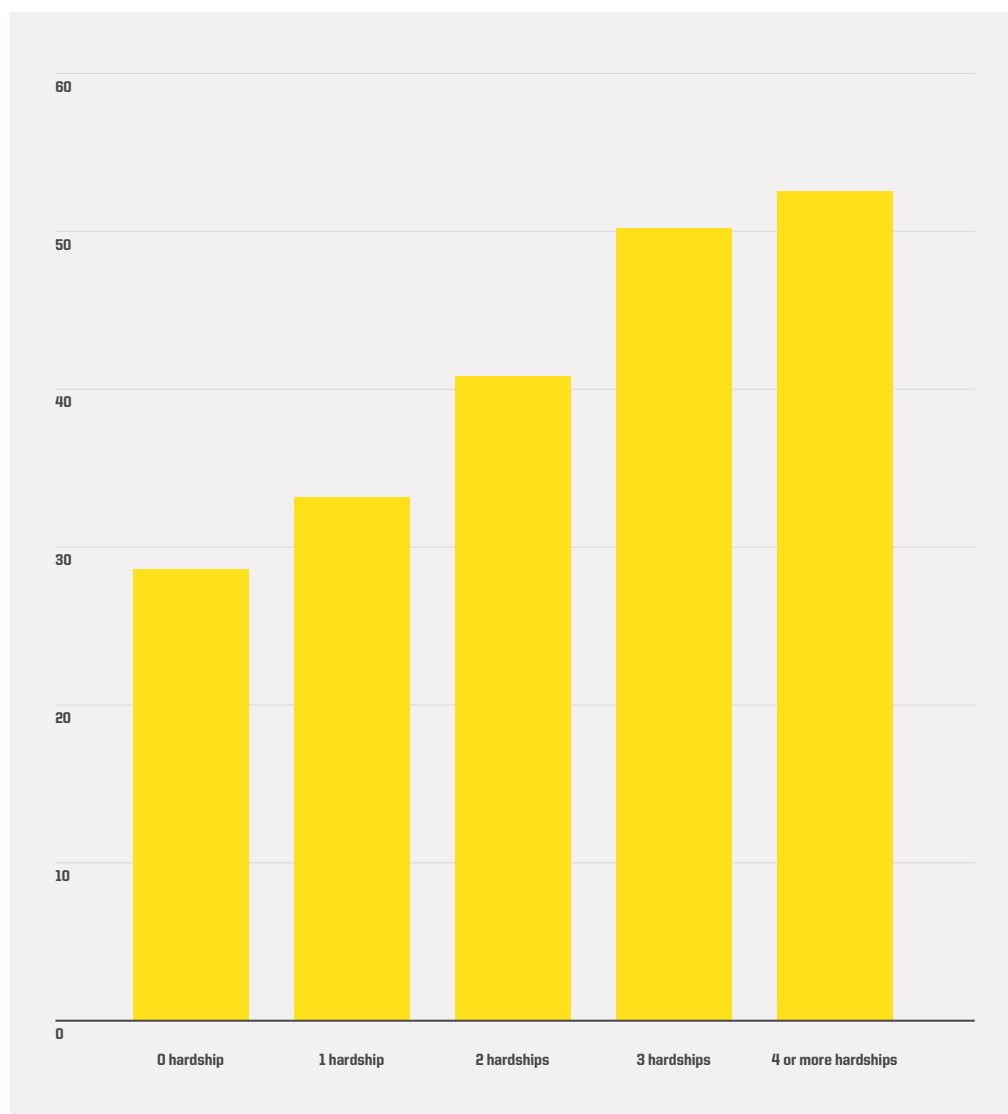


## CHILD CARE PROVIDERS ARE AT THEIR BEST WHEN THEY CAN FORM ATTACHED RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUNG CHILDREN AND SUPPORT THEIR EMOTIONAL REGULATION

When providers experience distress, they struggle to do this. We found that experiencing material hardship negatively affected child care

providers' emotional well-being. As the number of areas in which providers' material hardship increases, so does emotional distress.

Association between child care providers' material hardship and emotional distress



Note: emotional distress is measured on a 1-100 scale as a composite of self-reported anxiety, depression, stress, and loneliness.

# FAMILIES SPEAK VOICES ON CHILD CARE DURING COVID-19

OREGON



**Many families see child care as absolutely necessary for their ability to work and earn income:**

"Child care allows us to remain employed." **Parent in South Portland**

"[My child care] allows me and my husband to continue working at our jobs, and therefore able to afford our rent and basic needs. It also gives my son socialization with friends." **Parent in Beaverton**

"They allow me to work and serve my community (I'm an essential worker in child welfare)." **Parent in Salem**

"They are the only way I am able to keep working. But I cannot afford my current child care without family help." **Parent in North Portland**

**Not having child care has been a source of ongoing stress for many families:**

"[Our biggest concerns are] finding child care, paying as needed, just having child care so both my husband and I can go to work." **Parent in Sheridan**

"[Our biggest concerns are] paying rent and getting child care for while we are working." **Parent in Eugene**

**Many parents feel their child care providers play an essential role in their children's' lives:**

"They play a huge part in socialization for my child. She has had a lot of difficult behaviors through this pandemic and is easily bored. She is challenged and engaged in a positive way there." **Parent in Veneta**

"They play a huge role as caregivers, comforters, and educators in my children's lives." **Parent in Coquille**

"Getting back into [child care] means that my husband and I can focus on work instead on balancing work and child care. It also limits my child's screen time, as that was a big way that we kept him busy while we worked remotely." **Parent in Southeast Portland**

# ABOUT THE RAPID-EC PROJECT

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

The RAPID-EC project is an early childhood family well-being survey designed to gather essential information in a continuous manner regarding the needs, health promoting behaviors, and well-being of children and their families during the COVID-19 outbreak and recovery in the United States. The survey focuses on better understanding child development (and parents' concerns about development over time), caregiver mental health and well-being, and caregiver needs and utilization of resources.

RAPID-EC collects data from 1,000 caregivers in all 50 states twice per month. The survey collects snapshots of data across time with the ability to assess trends longitudinally.

Twice per month, the team posts analyses of survey findings, including policy recommendations and resources for additional reading.

1,000+

surveyed  
bi-weekly

67

surveys

10,000

unique  
households

50

US states

