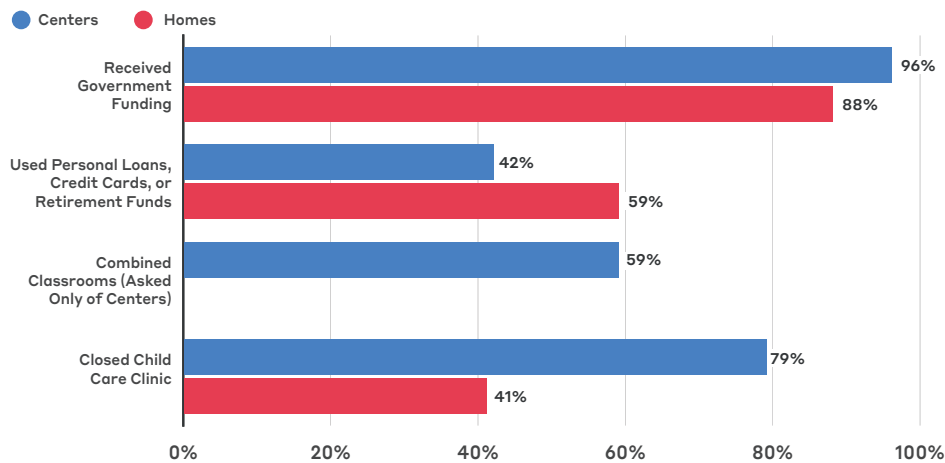


SURVIVING THE PANDEMIC

Child Care Programs in Pennsylvania

A study conducted by the Bipartisan Policy Center finds that the COVID-19 relief packages passed by Congress were a lifeline for struggling U.S. child care programs. Nearly all child care providers in the 11-state survey reported using the funds to keep their businesses open during the pandemic. Key findings for Pennsylvania are highlighted below.

Strategies Used by Child Care Centers/Homes in Pennsylvania During the Pandemic



Top 3 Reasons Centers Closed

- Government Requirement (80%)
- Covid Exposure/Illness (6%)
- Other (4%)

Top 3 Reasons Homes Closed

- Government Requirement (43%)
- Loss of Enrollment (25%)
- Covid Exposure/Illness (18%)

Top 3 Reasons Centers Combined Classrooms

- Loss of Enrollment (47%)
- Loss of Teachers, Unable to Hire Replacements (36%)
- Loss of Support Staff, Unable to Hire Replacements (8%)

About eight in ten (79%) child care centers and 41% of family child care homes (FCC) in Pennsylvania closed at some point during the pandemic with homes closing for longer, on average (86 days), compared to centers that closed (73 days). Both centers and homes cited government requirements (80% and 43% respectively), COVID illness/exposure (6% of centers and 18% of homes), and centers gave other reasons (4%) while homes gave COVID illness/exposure (18%) as the top three reasons for closing.

Additionally, 59% of centers reported combining classes due to loss of enrollment (47%), loss of teachers and

being unable to replace them (36%), and loss of other support staff and being unable to replace them (8%), as their main reasons for doing so. About 42% of centers and 59% of homes reported the use of personal loans, credit cards, or retirement funds to stay afloat.

Most centers (96%) and homes (88%) reported receiving government relief funding during the pandemic. On average, centers received \$126,869 (median \$70,000) and homes received \$16,234 (median \$15,000) to help them to continue operating. Centers reported spending the money to pay teachers, pay the rent/mortgage, or to pay for personal protective equipment, while family

Uses of Government Relief Funding for Centers and Homes in Pennsylvania

	Child Care Centers	Family Child Care Homes
Pay Teachers and Other Classroom Staff	60%	N/A
Pay Other Essential Support Staff (Centers)/ Assistants (Homes)	4%	14%
Pay Rent/Mortgage	17%	38%
Pay for Facility Maintenance or Modifications	7%	19%
Pay for Personal Protective Equipment	8%	13%
Create Socially Distanced Space for Children and Staff	2%	6%
Start/Resume Mental Health Services to Children and Staff	1%	1%
Pay for Activities	1%	11%

child care homes mainly spent the money to pay rent/ mortgage, for facility maintenance or modification, and to pay for assistants.

THE PANDEMIC'S IMPACT

Enrollment: In Pennsylvania, between March 2020 and May 2022, enrollment declined by 20.64% in centers and 14.24% in homes. The decline among enrollment in centers and homes was most pronounced among before-and-after care for school children (-26.95%) and (-25.25%).

Enrollment in Centers and Homes in Pennsylvania

Centers				
	Mar - 20	May - 22	Change	% Change
Infants/Toddler (Birth-2)	23.08	18.08	-5.00	-21.65%
3 to 5 Years Old	36.03	29.99	-6.04	-16.76%
Before and After School (School-Age)	18.53	13.53	-4.99	-26.95%
Total Capacity	77.63	61.61	-16.03	-20.64%

Homes				
	Mar - 20	May - 22	Change	% Change
Infants/Toddler (Birth-2)	2.42	2.27	-0.1	-6.18%
3 to 5 Years Old	4.28	3.79	-0.5	-11.57%
Before and After School (School-Age)	2.85	2.13	-0.7	-25.25%
Total Capacity	9.55	8.19	-1.4	-14.24%

Staffing: In Pennsylvania, between March 2020 and May 2022, there was a decline in the number of teaching and other staff. These declines were most pronounced among other staff and among lead teachers.

Average Number of Staff

	Mar - 20	May - 22	Change	% Change
Lead Teacher	6.47	5.01	-1.46	-22.52%
Assistant Teacher	8.25	6.53	-1.72	-20.86%
Center Director or Assistant Director	1.74	1.55	-0.19	-10.65%
Other staff	1.27	0.96	-0.31	-24.69%

Methodology of 11-State Survey:

The Bipartisan Policy Center worked with Well World Solutions to conduct a survey of child care centers and family child care homes in 11 states to better understand how child care programs weathered the COVID-19 pandemic and how they used the federal government's pandemic-related stimulus funding. The survey was fielded from June 14-30, 2022. The MOE was +/- 6% for centers and +/- 6% for homes in Pennsylvania. For more information on the methodology, see the full report.

In May 2022, the average number of openings in centers was 2.72 for lead teachers and 3.39 for assistant teachers. The table below provides more details.

Average Number of Openings in Centers in Pennsylvania

Lead Teachers	
Total	2.72
Infant/Toddler	1.13
3- to 5- Year Olds	0.96
Before and After School	0.63

Assistant Teachers	
Total	3.39
Infant/Toddler	1.28
3- to 5- Year Olds	1.24
Before and After School	0.86

Total Openings	
Infant/Toddler	2.41
3- to 5- Year Olds	2.20
Before and After School	1.49

Strategies used by centers hiring new staff and retaining current staff included, offering higher wages, part-time or flexible schedules and child tuition discounts or waivers for staff. Their biggest competitor for staff was retail stores like Amazon, Walmart, grocery stores, etc.

Almost three in ten home-based providers (38%) have staff – 70% of them said hiring staff was “very difficult” and 37% gave that response for retaining staff.

CONCLUSION

The pandemic exposed fundamental flaws in the child care. COVID-19 relief funding kept the child care market afloat, but as we emerge from the pandemic, we must address the flaws in the business model so that child care can survive and our economy can fully recover. We need to examine the true costs of child care and determine how to ensure the country has a stable, high-quantity system that meets the needs of all concerned—parents, children, businesses, and our education system. Child care provides a public good. Congress and our nation needs to ensure every parent has access to safe, affordable, quality child care.