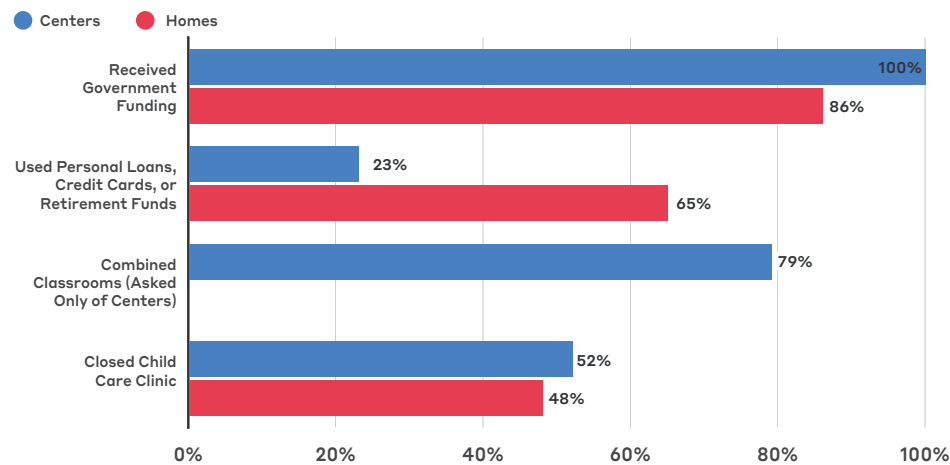


Child Care Programs in Wyoming

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 Wyoming are highlighted below.

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



Top 3 Reasons Centers Closed

- Covid Exposure/Illness (45%)
- Loss of Enrollment (25%)
- Loss of Teachers, Unable to Hire Replacements (10%)
- Government Requirement (10%)

Top 3 Reasons Homes Closed

- Government Requirement (54%)
- Covid Exposure/Illness (31%)
- Loss of Teachers, Unable to Hire Replacements (8%)

Top 3 Reasons Centers Combined Classrooms

- Loss of Enrollment (71%)
- Loss of Teachers, Unable to Hire Replacements (23%)
- Other (7%)

About half (52%) of child care centers and 48% of family child care homes (FCC) in Wyoming closed at some point during the pandemic with homes and centers closing for a similar number of days on average (33 and 32 days respectively). They both cited COVID illness/exposure (45% and 31% respectively), government requirement, (10%) and loss of teachers and unable to replace them (10% of centers and 8% of homes) as the top three reasons for closing—25% of centers also mentioned loss of enrollment.

Additionally, 79% of centers reported combining classes due to loss of enrollment (71%), loss of support staff and being unable to replace them (23%), and loss of teachers and being unable to replace them (7%) as their main reasons for doing so. About 23% of centers and 65% of homes reported the use of personal loans, credit cards, or retirement funds to stay afloat.

All responding centers and most homes (86%) reported receiving government relief. On average, centers received \$88,005 (median \$61,288) and homes received \$17,371

Uses of Government Relief Funding for Centers and Homes in Wyoming

	Child Care Centers	Family Child Care Homes
Pay Teachers and Other Classroom Staff	51%	N/A
Pay Other Essential Support Staff (Centers)/ Assistants (Homes)	1%	14%
Pay Rent/Mortgage	29%	22%
Pay for Facility Maintenance or Modifications	7%	31%
Pay for Personal Protective Equipment	4%	6%
Create Socially Distanced Space for Children and Staff	3%	5%
Start/Resume Mental Health Services to Children and Staff	5%	1%
Pay for Activities	3%	20%

(median \$14,706) to help them to continue operating. Centers reported spending the money to pay teachers, pay the rent/mortgage, or to pay for facility maintenance or modification, while homes mainly spent the money to pay rent/mortgage, to pay for facility maintenance, or modification and to pay for other activities.

THE PANDEMIC'S IMPACT

Enrollment: In Wyoming, between March 2020 and May 2022, enrollment in centers declined by 6.44%, but increased slightly by 0.99% in homes. Enrollment declined across all age groups among centers and among most age-groups, except infants/toddlers, in homes.

Enrollment in Centers and Homes in Wyoming

Centers				
	Mar - 20	May - 22	Change	% Change
Infants/Toddler (Birth-2)	14.93	14.66	-0.27	-1.81%
3 to 5 Years Old	21.24	20.90	-0.34	-1.60%
Before and After School (School-Age)	6.00	3.89	-2.11	-35.10
Total Capacity	42.18	39.46	-2.72	-6.44%

Homes				
	Mar - 20	May - 22	Change	% Change
Infants/Toddler (Birth-2)	3.28	3.83	0.6	16.95%
3 to 5 Years Old	5.28	5.22	-0.1	-1.05%
Before and After School (School-Age)	2.56	2.17	-0.4	-15.22%
Total Capacity	11.11	11.22	0.1	0.99%

Staffing: In Wyoming, between March 2020 and May 2022, there was a decline in the number of lead teachers, but the number of assistant teachers increased.

Average Number of Staff

	Mar - 20	May - 22	Change	% Change
Lead Teacher	5.68	5.33	-0.35	-6.23%
Assistant Teacher	3.07	3.80	0.72	23.58%
Center Director or Assistant Director	2.23	2.23	0.00	0.00%
Other staff	0.83	0.81	-0.02	-2.28%

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 +/- 29% for centers and +/-18% for homes in Wyoming. For more information on the methodology, see the full report.

In May 2022, the average number of openings in centers was 1.96 for lead teachers and 2.08 for assistant teachers. The table below provides more details.

Average Number of Openings in Centers in Wyoming

Lead Teachers	
Total	1.96
Infant/Toddler	0.78
3- to 5- Year Olds	0.95
Before and After School	0.23

Assistant Teachers	
Total	2.08
Infant/Toddler	0.90
3- to 5- Year Olds	0.95
Before and After School	0.23

Total Openings	
Infant/Toddler	1.68
3- to 5- Year Olds	1.91
Before and After School	0.45

Strategies used by centers to hire new staff and retain current staff included offering higher wages, child tuition discount or waiver for staff and part-time or flexible schedules. Their biggest competitor for staff was retail stores like Walmart, Amazon, grocery stores, etc.

One-third (33%) of home-based providers have staff – all of them said hiring staff was “very difficult” and 60% 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 need to ensure every parent has access to safe, affordable, quality child care.