Virtual Roundtable: Parent Experiences with Child Care

April 1, 2021
For too many families, an “ideal” child care system is not reality

- Unaffordable
- Inaccessible
- Work hours and location
- Values
- Preferences
Parent preferences must be central in our pursuit of making the child care system work better for all who rely on it

- Efforts to improve the child care system, whether at the federal, state, or local level, must be centered around parents’ priorities for child care.
- We must better understand what those needs, preferences, and circumstances actually are.
- A deeper understanding of how the child care system impacts families’ lives is necessary to ensure family experiences can truly drive child care policy.
Child Care is Unaffordable

Prior to the pandemic (November 2019):

- More than half (54%) of parents said finding child care within their budget was difficult, including almost one in five parents (18%) who said it was “very difficult”
  - Parents with lower incomes are more likely to say it was difficult: 61% of those making under $50,000 responded as such compared to 45% of those making above $100,000

- To afford child care, a majority of parents reduced spending on non-essential (75%) and every-day purchases (59%), delayed or decreased money saved for emergencies (57%), and relied on family members or friends to help with child care (56%)

In our December 2020 survey, the maximum annual amount most parents said they can afford for child care is $10,400—well below the cost of quality child care for one child in many states, especially for infant care.
BPC’s child care gap analysis quantified the supply of, potential need for, and gaps in child care in 25 states, as of 2019

- The interactive mapping tool quantifies supply and gaps by: state; county; congressional district; state senate district; metropolitan area; and opportunity zone
- Breakdowns by: minority population; poverty line; 85% state median income

BPC’s analysis identified a potential gap of almost **32%, or over 2.5 million families** who potentially lack access to child care
The unavailability of affordable, high-quality child care that meets a family’s needs impacts a parents’ ability to work and provide for their family. This spillover impacts businesses and the broader economy.
Many parents need 30+ hours of child care per week. In 2019, 63% of parents said they paid for 30 or more hours of child care each week.

Parents prefer child care closer to home. In 2019, 60% of parents said they preferred child care closer to home, while just 27% preferred child care closer to their workplace or school.

Many parents—but not all—are able to use their preferred arrangement. In January 2020, two-thirds (66%) of parents reported they were using a child care arrangement that aligned with their ideal child care type (if both price and accessibility were not factors).
- **Faith-affiliated** centers are an important component of the system.
- Many working families would prefer to care for their children **themselves**.
- Parents overwhelmingly prefer to rely on **relatives** for child care rather than non-relative friends or neighbors.
Parents prioritize their child's safety, trust in a child care provider, the cost of care, and quality caregivers and teachers when selecting their arrangement.

One-third of parents reported they did not make any compromises when selecting their arrangement, but nearly a quarter compromised on cost of care or flexibility of hours.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compromise</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I did not have to make any compromises</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost of care</td>
<td>23%</td>
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<td>Flexible hours (early morning, night, and weekend care)</td>
<td>22%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Location of child care provider</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<td>Qualifications of caregivers and teachers</td>
<td>17%</td>
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The American Rescue Plan Act, signed into law on March 11, 2021, includes several provisions that will help parents, children, and families.

- Several of these funding opportunities and programs are only available during 2021.
- Congress must work to facilitate long-term, sustainable investments for working families.
- We cannot let short term fixes distract us from the longer-term needs of working parents and their children – and from understanding what parents truly want in a support system.

- Child care subsidies and tax supports
- Paid family leave
- Nutrition support
- Home visiting services
- Prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect
- Support for homeless children, children with disabilities, and tribal youth and families
the challenge:
redesigning the child care system to work better for families, providers, businesses, and the broader economy

Parent Roundtable Discussion:

• What are parents’ experiences accessing and affording child care?

• Does the child care system work for parents and meet their needs and values?

• What does an ideal system of holistic family support look like in a post-COVID environment?
Parent Survey Resource Center:
https://bipartisanpolicy.org/blog/parent-survey-resource-center/

Video Explainer: Rethinking America’s Child Care System:
https://bipartisanpolicy.org/blog/rethinking-americas-child-care-system/

What’s in the American Rescue Plan for Parents: