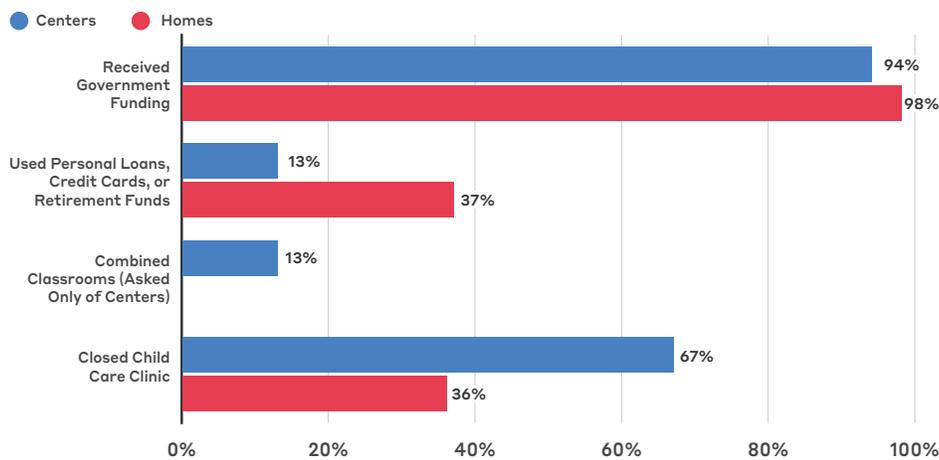


SURVIVING THE PANDEMIC

Child Care Programs in Vermont

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 Vermont are highlighted below.

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



Top 3 Reasons Centers Closed

- Government Requirement (100%)

Top 3 Reasons Homes Closed

- Government Requirement (81%)
- COVID Exposure/Illness (13%)
- Other (6%)

Top 3 Reasons Centers Combined Classrooms

- Loss of Teachers, Unable to Hire Replacements (65%)
- Other (35%)

About two-thirds (67%) of child care centers and 36% of family child care homes (FCC) in Vermont closed at some point during the pandemic with homes closing for fewer days on average (61 days), compared to centers that closed (103 days). All responding centers cited government regulations as the reason for closing and 81% of homes gave the same reason—another 13% of homes cited COVID illness/exposure as the reason for closing.

Additionally, 13% of centers reported combining classes due to loss of teachers and being unable to replace them (65%) as their main reasons for doing so. About 13% of

centers and 37% of homes reported the use of personal loans, credit cards, or retirement funds to stay afloat.

Most centers (94%) and homes (98%) reported receiving government relief funding during the pandemic. On average, centers received \$52,980 (median \$22,490) and homes received \$9,173 (median \$6,000) 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.

Uses of Government Relief Funding for Centers and Homes in Vermont

	Child Care Centers	Family Child Care Homes
Pay Teachers and Other Classroom Staff	41%	N/A
Pay Other Essential Support Staff (Centers)/ Assistants (Homes)	0%	10%
Pay Rent/Mortgage	28%	34%
Pay for Facility Maintenance or Modifications	13%	14%
Pay for Personal Protective Equipment	5%	13%
Create Socially Distanced Space for Children and Staff	8%	3%
Start/Resume Mental Health Services to Children and Staff	4%	2%
Pay for Activities	0%	23%

THE PANDEMIC'S IMPACT

Enrollment: In Vermont, between March 2020 and May 2022, enrollment in centers declined by 16.02% and decreased by 8.16% in homes. Enrollment declined across all age groups among centers and among most age-groups in homes.

Enrollment in Centers and Homes in Vermont

Centers				
	Mar - 20	May - 22	Change	% Change
Infants/Toddler (Birth-2)	7.86	6.51	-1.36	-17.27%
3 to 5 Years Old	22.92	20.15	-2.78	-12.11%
Before and After School (School-Age)	53.01	43.72	-9.29	-17.52%
Total Capacity	83.80	70.38	-13.42	-16.02%

Homes				
	Mar - 20	May - 22	Change	% Change
Infants/Toddler (Birth-2)	2.17	1.79	-0.4	-17.31%
3 to 5 Years Old	3.71	3.83	0.1	3.37%
Before and After School (School-Age)	2.71	2.25	-0.5	-16.92%
Total Capacity	8.58	7.88	-0.7	-8.16%

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

Average Number of Staff

	Mar - 20	May - 22	Change	% Change
Lead Teacher	5.67	5.39	-0.28	-4.95%
Assistant Teacher	3.73	2.76	-0.97	-26.00%
Center Director or Assistant Director	0.85	0.85	0.00	0.00%
Other staff	1.39	1.37	-0.02	-1.58%

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 +/- 27% for centers and +/-14% for homes in Vermont. For more information on the methodology, see the full report.

In May 2022, the average number of openings in centers was 0.69 for lead teachers and 0.99 for assistant teachers. The table below provides more details.

Average Number of Openings in Centers in Vermont

Lead Teachers	
Total	0.69
Infant/Toddler	0.28
3- to 5- Year Olds	0.41
Before and After School	0.00

Assistant Teachers	
Total	0.99
Infant/Toddler	0.41
3- to 5- Year Olds	0.43
Before and After School	0.15

Total Openings	
Infant/Toddler	0.69
3- to 5- Year Olds	0.84
Before and After School	0.15

Strategies used by centers to hire new staff included offering part-time or flexible schedules, higher wages, signing bonuses, and child tuition discount or waiver for staff. To retain staff, centers are offering higher wages, retention bonuses and part-time or flexible schedules. Their biggest competitor for staff was public schools.

Very few home-based providers (17%) have staff – 60% of them said hiring staff was “very difficult” and 57% gave that response for retaining staff.

CONCLUSION

The pandemic exposed fundamental flaws in the child care market. 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.