



**COVID-19 and the New Jersey Child Care System
Surveying its Impact on those Most Affected
April 17, 2020**

In late March, Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ) surveyed the state’s child care community in order to better understand how the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-1) was affecting their ability to care for and educate young children in their communities. The ACNJ early learning team was hearing anecdotally that many providers were closing their programs for fear of disease spread. At that time, New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy had not taken any steps to close child care centers, even though the threat of the pandemic was growing by the day.

ACNJ developed a short child care survey and on March 20th sent it to center-based and family child care providers throughout the state. Most of the 300+ survey responses were received in the first five days after the initial distribution. Survey responses came from all of New Jersey’s 21 counties, with 85 percent representing center-based providers and six percent representing family child care. Approximately 79 percent of the respondents accepted child care subsidies.

On March 25, 2020, Governor Murphy signed Executive Order 110, which directed the closure of all child care centers except for those on federal property or military bases, family-based centers caring for five or fewer children, and any centers that registered to provide emergency child care services solely to essential personnel. More than 600 center-based child care programs were certified to provide emergency child care for essential employees.

While the survey results reflect the state of child care prior to the Governor’s Executive Order, the findings demonstrate the continued economic fragility of center-based and family child care throughout New Jersey. Even with recent increases in child care subsidy rates based on additional federal dollars, years of chronic underfunding has left child care programs with little reserve to withstand emergencies, let alone a pandemic. The survey’s main data takeaway was that without funding support, the future of most programs would be in peril. Approximately 59 percent of the responses stated that they would not survive beyond a month of closure with monetary assistance and 32 percent responded that they were unsure that they could survive any closure.

Total Responses	307
Program Type	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 85% from centers• 6% family child care providers• The remainder of respondents were CCR&R staff and quality improvement specialists



Accept Subsidies	79% of programs accept subsidies
Would the program be able to reopen if they close?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 59% said they would not survive beyond a month of closure • 32% said they were unsure if they would survive any closure • Remainder of responses were from Abbott programs/public funded preschool, others said they could survive but it would be hard

Besides the data, the survey included an open-ended question, “Tell us more about the challenges you are experiencing.” The question evoked heartbreaking responses that reflected confusion in such areas as how to apply for unemployment insurance and the availability of small business loans. The responses also reflected the real fear of how providers would meet their payroll obligations, rent and utilities, the likelihood that many families would not immediately need child care once the economy began again because so many parents had lost their jobs and the difficulty many were experiencing in obtaining cleaning supplies to minimize the spread of the virus.

These statistics and the comments written by those on the frontline have been the framework for ACNJ’s advocacy in supporting existing centers now and in the future. As a result of the surveys, in late March, ACNJ developed a fact sheet, [Child Care Providers and COVID-19: Paying the Bills and Helping Staff Pay Theirs](#), which provided child care owners and their employees information on federal/state supports, unemployment insurance, recovery rebates, and small business loans and grants, in an attempt to help alleviate the initial confusion.

From the questions and concerns found in the survey, as well as subsequent conversations/information with our partners, ACNJ, along with those partners, have been holding *Child Care and COVID-19 State and Federal Supports Q&As* on Facebook Live events where child care providers heard from the experts and had their mounting concerns and questions addressed. The three sessions held were:

Session 1 – [Paying the Bills and Helping Staff Pay Theirs](#)

Session 2 – [Federal Supports and Resources \(PPP and EIDL\)](#)

Session 3 – [Understanding Unemployment Benefits](#)

The survey comments were so compelling, that ACNJ felt that the New Jersey Congressional delegation needed to hear the issues their child care communities were experiencing in order emphasize the importance of additional federal funding for child care. ACNJ organized the comments so that each Congressman/woman received those from his/her Congressional district, demonstrating the specific needs in the communities with whom they serve. We then asked them if they would consider holding a



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child care virtual town hall to hear first-hand from these and other child care stakeholders. So far, ACNJ conducted one of these listening sessions with aides from the Offices of Congressman Albio Sires' (NJ-8th Congressional District) and Senator Robert Menendez's. Six child care providers from the 8th Congressional district were able to provide first-hand information to the aides on their concerns, including problems with applying for small business loans (PPP and EIDL), inadequate money to pay for staff, rent and utilities and the uncertainty of their futures once our economy begins to move towards normalcy.

Although the survey responses allowed ACNJ to identify immediate child care challenges, it also allowed the Early Childhood team to develop stronger connections with the provider community. Building these relationships is critical in any future successful advocacy to address developing issues during this crisis.