

Staffing Shortages Due to Low Wages Are Driving the Child Care Crisis in New York

Staffing shortages due to low wages are contributing to a growing number of child care providers operating at reduced capacity – even while many carry waitlists of families desperate for child care.

For many families newly able to access child care assistance due to New York's historic expansion in eligibility, the assistance is meaningless because they cannot find a provider with an open a spot.

A \$1B investment in the child care workforce in this year's budget will help New York's families find the care they need.

From March 15 – March 20 2023, the **Empire State Campaign for Child Care** surveyed more than 1,660 child care programs* from across New York State on the impact staffing shortages, defined as one or more staff roles that are currently unfilled, have had on their programs' ability to serve families in their area.

Our first 1,660 responses reported:

28,462

children cannot receive care in their programs due to the workforce shortage

25,022

children are known to be on their waiting lists**

3,857

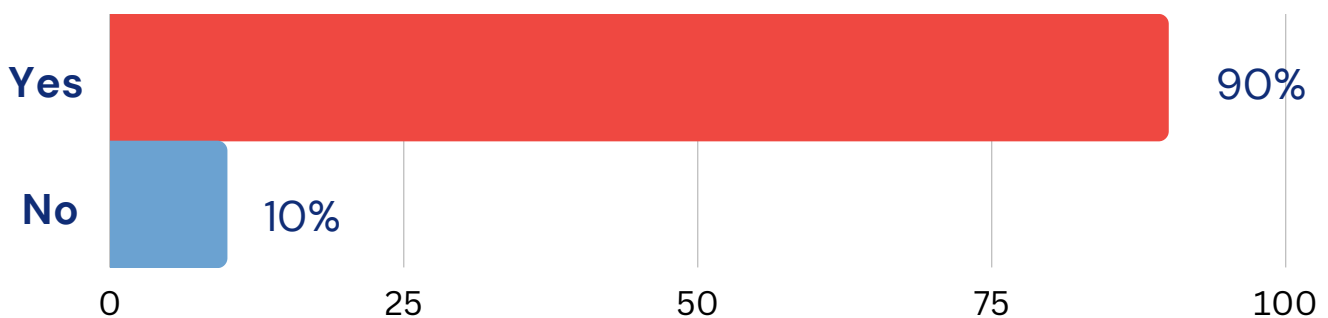
staff positions are unfilled in respondents' child care programs

766

classrooms are completely closed in respondents' center and afterschool programs due to understaffing

90% of child care centers are currently understaffed

"Are you currently experiencing a staffing shortage? (meaning one or more staff roles in your program are currently unfilled)"



n = 523 respondents who own, operate, or administer one or more child care centers

Licensed capacity is not the whole story

OCFS reports New York's current licensed child care capacity (788,744) is approaching pre-pandemic capacity. While this marks an important milestone in New York's recovery, it is not the whole story.

Our survey respondents report being **unable to compete** with school districts, warehouses, retail, and food service, all of which can offer higher salaries and better benefits than our broken child care market. Roles go unfilled for months with no applicants and turnover rates have dramatically increased, destabilizing the relationships children need to thrive.

Staffing shortages have left many programs operating far below capacity. Our survey shows over 750 classrooms are dark because they are completely unstaffed. Group family child care providers are halving their capacity and moving down to family child care designation because they cannot find qualified assistants.

A \$1B investment in child care workforce compensation will help programs compete on the job market and help passionate educators continue to do the work they love, caring for our youngest children.

Respondents experiencing a staffing shortage reported that:

70%

of home-based child care programs experiencing a staffing shortage could provide much-needed care for **infants and toddlers** if they were fully staffed.

67%

reduce capacity, close classrooms, or close their programs completely **on short notice due to staff absences**, leaving families to scramble for last minute care or miss work.

35%

close their programs earlier than they used to due to staffing shortages. Earlier closing times disproportionately strain the careers and earning potential of working mothers.

*Respondents were asked to include all programs they own, operate, or oversee in one survey response. Each result represents a range of one to 150 programs. Analysis of ongoing survey based on first 1,660 responses as of 3/20/23.

**Waiting lists are fully voluntary. Many programs do not keep a waiting list. Others cap their waiting lists at a number of their choice.



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