

# Lessons from the CCSA COVID-19 Relief Fund: **Planning for the Future**



## KEY FINDINGS

- Child care programs adapted during the COVID-19 pandemic to meet the changing needs of children and families. Child care programs supported online learning and provided emotional and financial support to children and families during the pandemic.
- As restrictions lift and parents return to in-person work, demand for child care has returned to pre-pandemic levels. However, staffing shortages force child care programs to limit the number of children they can enroll. Low wages for child care employees are the primary barrier to recruiting quality staff.
- The increased use of cleaners and disinfectants damaged toys and other classroom supplies. Child care programs expect that replacing toys and supplies will be financially difficult.
- Child care programs permanently adopted best practices during the COVID-19 pandemic to better communicate with families electronically and to keep children and staff healthy and safe.

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## INTRODUCTION

**C**hild Care Services Association (CCSA) partnered with Smart Start in March 2020 to create the CCSA COVID-19 Relief Fund to support child care programs during the COVID-19 pandemic. The CCSA COVID-19 Relief Fund was supported by the Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation, PNC Foundation, Truist Charitable Fund, ChildTrust Foundation, and other private donors.

The CCSA COVID-19 Relief Fund distributed more than \$260,000 in grants to 750 child care programs across North Carolina in two phases. This report focuses on Phase II of grant distribution. In Phase II, 41 child care programs were awarded one-time grants that averaged approximately \$3,400, distributed in fall 2020. Grants were awarded in summer 2020 based on child care programs' scores on a rubric developed by CCSA. Child care providers were scored on the justification of need detailed in their grant applications, percent of subsidy families served, and the appropriateness of their proposed grant budget as detailed in their application. Non-profit programs and independently-owned programs were reviewed separately.



In June 2021, CCSA reached out to all child care programs that were awarded Phase II CCSA COVID-19 Relief Fund grants and interviewed administrators at 17 of the 41 programs (41 percent). We received a higher response rate than expected. We anticipated speaking to eight programs (20 percent) because child care program administrators are

very busy, and a year had passed since child care programs applied for the grant. The high response rate may indicate child care programs are eager to share their stories. Throughout the interviews, grantees remarked on the stress and challenges of the past year and expressed the gratitude they felt that CCSA acknowledged their contributions to communities and families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This report discusses key themes that emerged from the interviews, with a focus on the impact of CCSA COVID-19 Relief Fund Phase II grants on child care programs, how grantees are faring one year after applying for funds, and grantees' plans moving forward.

**The cost of operating a child care program increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many child care programs struggled to stay open, and two of the 41 child care programs awarded CCSA COVID-19 Relief Fund Phase II grants were no longer operating as of June 2021.**

Enrollment declined and operating costs increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. Enrollment declined because parents kept children out of

care because of financial constraints and fear for children's health. Simultaneously, child care programs' operating costs increased because programs were required to (1) buy additional cleaning supplies, PPE, and other supplies, such as cot dividers to reduce the spread of COVID-19, (2) pay for additional staffing to manage new drop-off and pick-up procedures, and (3) comply with additional health and safety regulations. The Center for American Progress found that operating costs for child care programs increased by an average of 47 percent nationally from 2019 to 2020. Family child care programs were particularly hard hit (See Figure 1).<sup>1</sup> The cost of operating a child care center in North Carolina increased by approximately 12 percent during the COVID-19 pandemic, four times less than the national average. Operating costs increased less in North Carolina than some other states in part because child care programs in North Carolina were never mandated to close and were never required to restrict group size in centers to less than licensing standards. In contrast, child care centers in states that restricted group size, including Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, and Louisiana, saw

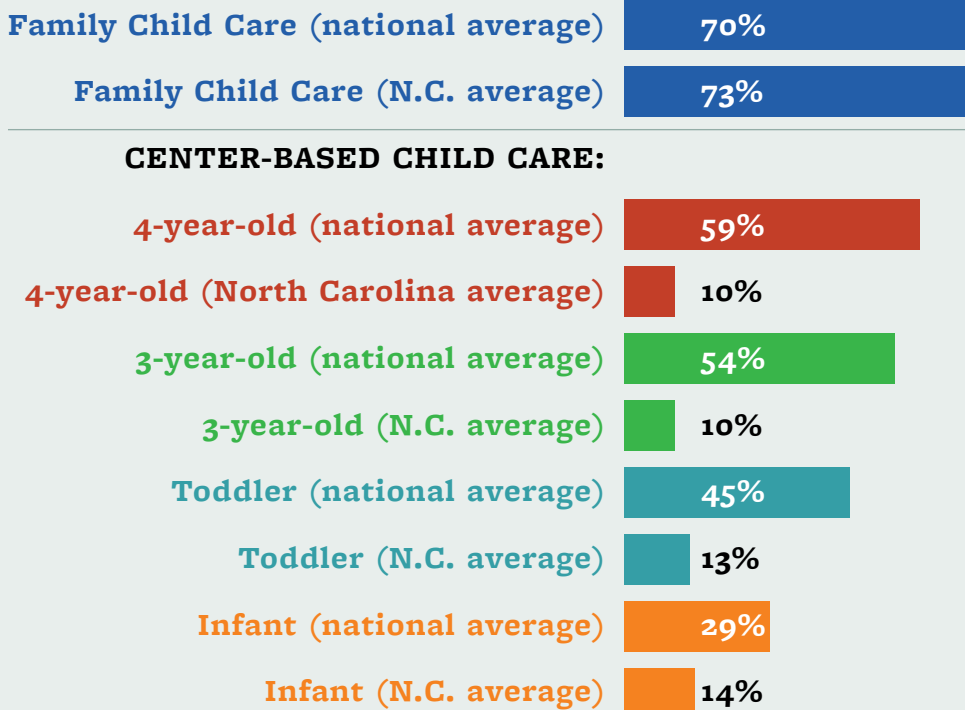
operating costs more than double.<sup>2</sup>

Many administrators of the child care programs interviewed discussed the financial challenges of the past year and were grateful to be open, indicating how close many child care programs came to permanently closing. The child care programs interviewed described surviving using a patchwork system of grants that included the CCSA COVID-19 Relief Fund, Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans, state operating grants, and other private grants. Johnson of Leap of Faith Christian Preschool in Cumberland County described how close her center came to closing permanently, saying, "...We were about to close our doors... but because of the [CCSA COVID-19 Relief Fund] grant, it allowed us more time to revamp some things and to do what we needed to do. The grant was an awesome resource for us."

Sadly, two of the child care programs awarded CCSA COVID-19 Relief Fund Phase II grants—Kid's Learning Center in Durham County and Bambino's Playschool in Durham County—permanently closed during the COVID-19 pandemic. CCSA was unable to follow-up with Kid's Learning Center to learn why the program is no longer operating. Bambino's Playschool Durham and Bambino's

**FIG 1 Operating Costs for Child Care Programs**

**Operating costs for child care programs increased by an average of 47 percent nationally during the COVID-19 pandemic. Child care centers in North Carolina fared better than average, with costs increasing by an average of 12 percent during the pandemic.**



Data from Workman, S., & Jessen-Howard, S. (2020). The True Cost of Providing Safe Child Care During the Coronavirus Pandemic. Center for American Progress. Retrieved July 2, 2021, from <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2020/09/03/489900/true-cost-providing-safe-child-care-coronavirus-pandemic/> Data from estimates generated by Simon Workman using an interactive calculator. See, "Methodology for 'The True Cost of Child Care During the Pandemic,'" September 3, 2020, available at [https://cdn.americanprogress.org/content/uploads/2020/09/03111756/COVIDchildcare-methodology-update.pdf?\\_ga=2.172671459.1145398032.1625582716-1163482100.1625231686](https://cdn.americanprogress.org/content/uploads/2020/09/03111756/COVIDchildcare-methodology-update.pdf?_ga=2.172671459.1145398032.1625582716-1163482100.1625231686)

Playschool Cary merged in response to COVID-19 related financial pressures and increased health and safety regulations. All children at the former location in Durham were relocated to the location in Cary. The two programs were about eight miles and 13 minutes apart by car. Bambino's Playschool did not lay off any staff members in the consolidation of the two programs. Bambino's Playschool plans to reopen a second branch in late 2021 or early 2022.

**"I have to say thank you to every sponsor that contributed to the grant because it was greatly needed at that time for child care, because as you know, we're not really recognized in the field as we should be because we are the foundation. I just want to say thank you to every sponsor because we would not have had this opportunity to stay afloat had it not been for every sponsor [of the CCSA COVID-19 Relief Fund]."**

**—Polly Johnson,  
Leap of Faith Christian Preschool, Cumberland County**

**During the COVID-19 pandemic, child care programs provided emotional and financial support for children and families.**

Child care programs pivoted to meet families' changing needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Children and families experienced unemployment, food insecurity, housing insecurity, and anxiety and depression because of the economic impacts and social isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>3</sup> In response, some of the child care programs interviewed supported families financially and emotionally.



For example, Cassandra Brooks of Little Believers Academy II in Wake County said, "As far as the children and the families, we've provided food boxes throughout this year. I've had families with COVID-19 cases. I had a family raising their grandchildren and they all had COVID. We've done Instacart [grocery delivery service] for some families [in quarantine]. [We are] trying to support single moms looking for employment. [We are]

supporting families with mental illness during this time. We've helped support mothers experiencing domestic violence by partnering with a church group. We've stepped up and helped children and families."

Similarly, three of the 41 child care programs that received CCSA COVID-19 Relief Fund Phase II grants used those funds to offer scholarship assistance to families who were no longer able to afford the cost of child care.

Many child care programs interviewed said that staying open was the most impactful way they supported children and families during the COVID-19 pandemic. In a year of uncertainty, grantees supported the children in their care by continuing to provide a consistent, safe, and enriching environment.



**During the COVID-19 pandemic, some child care programs provided a safe space for school-aged children to engage in online learning. Programs continue to use the materials as children return to in-person schooling.**

Child care programs filled a need for families in their communities when schools closed and school-aged children transitioned to online learning. The children of essential workers needed a safe place to go during the day and children with disabilities and English language learners sometimes needed additional support to effectively learn online. Nearly one-third (30 percent) of child care programs awarded a Phase II grant used some or all of the grant money to pay for electronic devices for children, including tablets and laptops, additional staff to support online learning, internet, and other classroom supplies. These programs quickly pivoted to support online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, Yates Baptist Child Development Center in Durham County used money from the CCSA COVID-19 Relief Fund to pay for three teachers to take the Basic School Age Care (BSAC) online training to gain expertise in working with school-age children. Additionally, at least five child care programs repurposed spaces, including a lobby and teachers' lounge, into classrooms for school-age children.

Lee Anna Flowers of Little Lambs Child Care 2 in Catawba County described her program's positive experience with online learning, saying, "For virtual [learning], we used [the classroom] all year long. We had four school-agers, one was a part-time school-ager, and...we had three with special needs. Two had ADHD and one was autistic. They weren't able to provide their own laptops, so with the [CCSA COVID-19 Relief Fund] grant, I was able to purchase [laptops]...Because a lot of the devices, if you didn't sign up first, the schools ran out. We were also able to purchase white boards...and headphones. I was actually shocked at how everyone was able to all be in class, and you wouldn't know they were all in class because everyone was focused."

In contrast, some child care programs faced barriers that prevented



them from being able to support online learning for school-aged children to the extent they had hoped.

- First, some child care programs did not have the infrastructure needed to facilitate online learning. Interviewees reported problems with internet bandwidth and not having enough electrical outlets for children to charge their devices. Children arriving to the child care center with uncharged devices was a problem mentioned in multiple interviews.
- Second, some child care programs had difficulty managing children's online schooling schedules. Children were required to attend virtual meetings at different times and often did not know their schedules. Additionally, child care programs reported that children's schedules sometimes changed and that communication with families about schedules was difficult because families were often unaware themselves of children's schedules. Child care programs that served children across multiple school districts reported increased difficulty managing online schooling as compared to child care programs that served children in one school district.
- Third, child care teachers sometimes struggled to feel professionally fulfilled when managing online schooling. Child care programs managed online learning provided by school districts, resulting in some early childhood teachers feeling that their skills were not being fully utilized.



June Shillito, director of Yates Baptist Child Development Center, described her center's experience, saying, "The teacher complained that she wasn't teaching because each child was talking to their school teacher online, so the teacher became a facilitator and a mediator, making sure they were on the right class...[She would] take kids out to the playground in the afternoon and try to plan fun things for them to do, but she didn't feel like she was teaching."

Most child care programs that used grant funds to purchase materials for online learning expect to continue to use the materials even as children return to in-person schooling.

Child care programs anticipate using materials purchased to support online learning—including tablets, laptops, headphones, and other educational materials—to enhance educational opportunities for children in care, for after-school and summer programs, to academically prepare children entering pre-K and Kindergarten, and to minimize learning loss over summer and holiday breaks.

**“When the [CCSA COVID-19 Relief Fund Phase II] grant came available...it forced me to sit down and think ‘what are some things that we really need to help us through the process?’ I wanted to use [the grant] for something that the use of it will be able to outlast this pandemic and will really enhance our center. And we all sat around and brainstormed about it, and we said the tablets.”**

**—Jamie Lipps,  
Kiddie Kollege Early Learning Center, Iredell County**

#### **COVID-19 regulations resulted in some child care programs permanently changing communication methods with families, cleaning and health procedures, and drop-off and pick-up procedures.**

One-third (34 percent) of child care programs used grant funds to change their center's physical space and procedures in response to COVID-19 health and safety regulations and recommendations. Electronic communication with families, improved cleaning and health procedures, and changes to drop-off and pick-up procedures emerged as key themes from the interviews and are detailed below.

#### **Child care programs improved their ability to communicate with families electronically.**

Many of the child care programs CCSA interviewed reported they increased electronic communications with families in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Child care programs said these changes will likely be made permanent because they were welcomed by families. For example, Hattie Daniels Day Care Center in Wilson County formerly required parents and caregivers to come to the center if a child had a minor incident, such as running and falling on the playground. The center now allows families to speak with the child on the phone and has the staff text pictures of the bruise or scratch to the families before determining if they need to come to the center.<sup>4</sup> This change was made to reduce the number of visitors in the center and has since been made permanent because working families preferred the new procedure.

Some child care programs used CCSA COVID-19 Relief Fund grant money to purchase laptops for staff that better enable them to communicate with families electronically. For example, Kiddie Kollege in Durham County used grant funds to purchase a laptop that staff can use to communicate with families. Prior to receiving the grant, staff used their phones to communicate with families. Karyn Wilkerson, the center's director, said the staff laptop both improves teachers' ability to communicate with parents and reduces the program's liability if anything were to happen to a teacher's phone while at work.

Electronic communication is also being used for prospective families. Allowing parents to tour and interview programs virtually reduces parents' travel time, travel cost, and increases accessibility. Kaila Billups, senior program director at Rocky Mount Family YMCA in Nash County, described the program's new procedures for prospective families, saying, "We used to have parents walk through and take a look, kind of like an open house, before summer camp and before after school, but now we've done that virtually. We record things and send them out so parents can watch them on their time, what time frame works with them. We've changed interviews [for prospective families] to Zoom and that seems to work very well, especially for an initial interview."

***Child care programs have permanently adopted many best-practices to keep children and staff healthy and reduce the spread of all viruses.***

Most of the child care programs CCSA interviewed intend to maintain enhanced cleaning procedures, health screenings, and temperature checks, as compared to their pre-COVID cleaning and health procedures. Karyn Wilkerson of Kiddie Kollege said, "We're still checking temperatures [and] doing the health screenings when they come in in the morning... One of the things that I did with the grant money was [purchase] vinyl



beanbags and pillows, which makes it a lot easier for sanitizing and cleaning. That kind of stuff is going to stay. The extra cleaning, because we always cleaned anyway, at mid-day while the children are at lunch... we're going to keep doing that, because this past winter, nobody had a runny nose." Three of the 17 child care programs interviewed remarked less children were sick during the past year as compared to previous years. These programs attributed the improved health of their children and staff to the extra cleaning and health screenings being done.

Additionally, some child care programs have permanently adopted systems to alert parents of cases of viruses being transmitted among children and staff. For example, the Regional Center for Advancement of Children in Haywood County has continued using CrisisManager, an application that alerts families of illnesses at the child care center. The center recently used the application to alert families of cases of croup, strep throat, and a stomach bug.

***Child care programs changed their drop-off and pick-up procedures. Some programs intend to make these changes permanent, while others plan to revert to old systems once it is safe.***

Child care programs' opinions about permanently limiting direct contact with parents and families during drop-off and pick-up varied. Some programs intend to revert to their pre-COVID-19 procedures as soon as it is safe to do so. Their reasons for wanting to revert to the old systems included needing additional staff to manage drop-off and pick-up when parents are not allowed in the building, problems with having items such as coats stay with the correct child, and missing casually engaging with families. However, as of July 2021, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services recommends child care programs continue to limit direct contact with parents and families to reduce the spread of COVID-19, and most child care programs CCSA interviewed continue to follow this recommendation. Many child care programs intend to limit direct contact with families until young children can receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Some programs plan to permanently limit the number of families allowed in the building during drop-off and pick-up. These programs cited keeping children safe from

**St. Gerard House | Hendersonville, N.C.**

**S**t. Gerard House in Hendersonville, North Carolina, provides full-day educational and therapeutic services to children ages 2 to 12 with autism spectrum disorder and other development disabilities. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, St. Gerard House hosted a weekly family group night that was open to any family of a child with special needs, regardless of their enrollment status. St. Gerard House transitioned the family group night to a virtual platform in response to COVID-19. Transitioning to a virtual platform allowed the center to serve families across the country and bring in national speakers.

Julia Buchanan, the center's development coordinator, said, "We moved [family group night] to a virtual platform, and that was kind of a bummer at first because we enjoy seeing people, but at the same time it has allowed people nationally to participate. And we have been able to have national speakers. So that program was elevated because of its virtual programming. I had someone message on Facebook last week that said, 'Hey, I'm in this part of North Carolina, can I still participate?' and it was really great to say, 'Absolutely! It's a virtual program. Here's the log on [information]'...It's really isolating to be a parent of a child with special needs. It's very hard for your friends and family to understand what you're going through, so to have a group of peers to talk to about issues that are affecting you is life changing."

unauthorized visitors as a key reason for continuing to limit the number of people in the building.

Some child care programs have adopted new technology to facilitate outside drop-off and pick-up. For example, Rocky Mount Family YMCA in Nash County now uses Ring video doorbells for drop-off and pick-up. Kaila Billups, the center's senior program director, said, "We've actually put in five permanent parking spaces that have a sign similar to a handicapped sign that they are [specifically] for child care pick-up and drop-off. [We] have added a Ring doorbell, so if they're not there during our typical drop-off and pick-up time, they can ring that doorbell." Other programs have adopted the use of applications including ProCare Parent Engagement and Brightwheel for contactless check-ins. These applications allow families to check children in and out by scanning a unique QR code on their phones at the child care program.

Additionally, some child care programs used grant money to improve drop-off and pick-up by purchasing umbrellas for staff transporting children, installing additional lighting to improve safety during early-morning or evening drop-off and pick-up, and purchasing a label maker to help keep track of items dropped off with children.

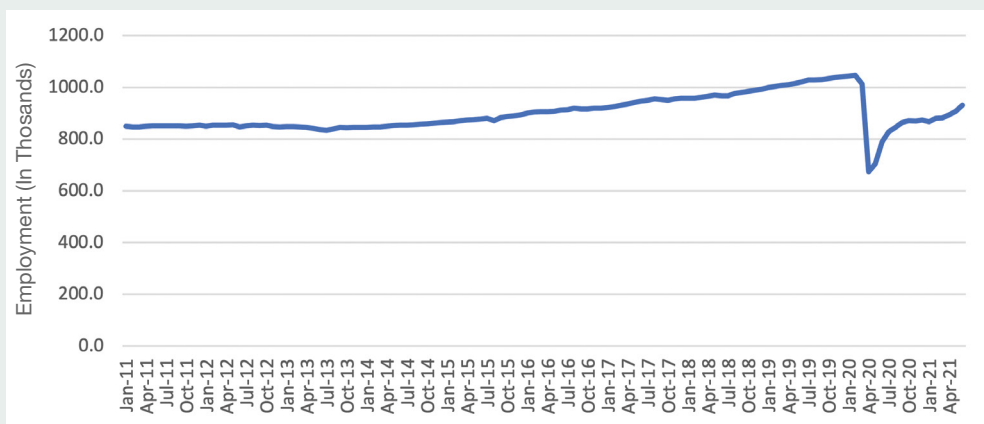
**Today, demand for child care has returned to pre-pandemic levels, but staffing shortages limit the number of children child care programs can enroll.**

Many child care programs identified challenges hiring staff as the primary barrier to returning to pre-COVID-19 enrollment levels. Mandy Mills of the Regional Center for Advancement of Children in Haywood County described her center's difficulty in meeting families' demand for child care, saying, "Pre-COVID, we were at our full capacity of around 130 [children]. And we're still over 100 [children] and the only reason we're down a little bit...is just because of staffing...We have probably over 200 kids on a waitlist and the reason we've lowered our capacity is

because we don't have the staff to maintain our full enrollment."

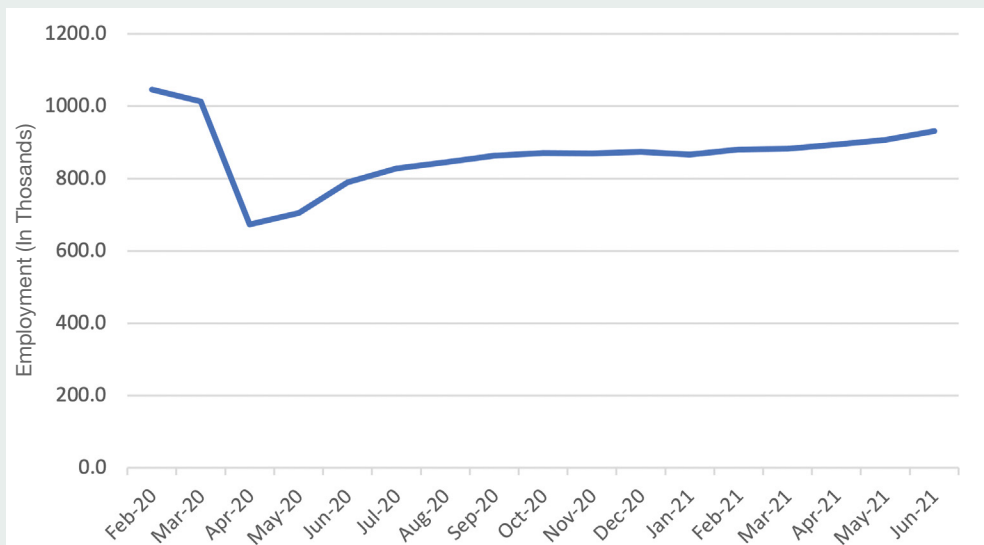
Child care is one of the hardest hit industries by the COVID-19 pandemic, second only to leisure and hospitality in total unemployment (See Figures 2 and 3, below).<sup>8</sup> Coupled with the long-standing problem of low wages for child care teachers and assistant teachers resulting in high turnover rates and difficulty retaining a high-quality workforce prior to the pandemic, child care programs are now faced with trying

**FIG 2 Child care programs have not returned to pre-pandemic employment levels and face staffing shortages**



*Data:* Seasonally adjusted data is from Bureau of Labor Statistics, Table B-1 "Employees on nonfarm payrolls by industry sector and selected industry detail." <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cesbtab1.htm>

**FIG 3 11 percent fewer employees worked in child care in June 2021 than in February 2020**



*Data:* Seasonally adjusted data is from Bureau of Labor Statistics, Table B-1 "Employees on nonfarm payrolls by industry sector and selected industry detail." <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cesbtab1.htm>



to attract workers back to the child care industry. Staffing is now a major issue for child care programs because employees often have higher-paying alternatives in other industries.<sup>6</sup> For example, Target, which multiple child care programs mentioned competing against for employees, raised its starting wage from \$11 to \$15 per hour in July 2020.<sup>7</sup> Comparatively, early childhood lead teachers earn a median wage of \$12.04 per hour in North Carolina and assistant teachers earn a median wage of \$11 per hour.<sup>8</sup> Our interviews with child care programs suggest the pre-existing challenge of low compensation for child care workers has worsened as wages in other industries rise.

Patsy Reavis of Wilkes Developmental Day School in Wilkes County discussed her center's difficulty with staff retention and hiring, saying, "I lost seven staff members from the start of COVID until two months ago. Of those, only two decided to go back into teaching or child care. The rest of them changed careers completely. And we have increased their salary. That was something we were able to do with the [CCSA COVID-19 Relief Fund] grant money. We are paying them more per hour than we were [from \$9 per hour to \$11 per hour], but they are leaving



the field and I am really unable to find the staff I need...It's going to decrease the quality, I'm afraid, if we keep struggling to find qualified staff. I don't know what to do. We offer a sign-on bonus. I have also offered my current staff an incentive if they can recruit someone that will come in and stay for six months."

At least four child care programs CCSA interviewed have raised wages and are offering sign-on bonuses, referral bonuses, and advertising on job listing websites to attract new staff. These programs described their efforts as largely unsuccessful. Michelle Miller Cox of First Presbyterian Day School Durham in Durham County described her difficulty hiring child care teachers, saying, "I've had to turn families away because I can't find teachers...We're in a holding pattern with enrollment...I ran an ad on [job listing website] Indeed for three weeks and I interviewed two people...We start our teachers at \$13.50 [per hour] because we are part of the Durham Living Wage Project...and we...offer health insurance and dental insurance at no cost to the employee...With that being said,

I've had to hire before, and I always got hits and at least one person hired, but this time it was literally a joke."

Some family-owned child care programs reported that they were further disadvantaged in competing for workers because, unlike some child care programs owned by large chains, they cannot afford to offer sign-on and referral bonuses, higher wages, or benefits.

Programs attributed the difficulty of hiring and retaining staff to:

- rising wages in other industries;
- the additional \$300 per week in unemployment insurance benefits provided by Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act;<sup>9</sup>
- child care needs, particularly among workers with school-aged children; and
- increased risk and difficulty of working in child care because of COVID-19.

Child care programs have dealt with staffing shortages by keeping enrollment low and sometimes hiring from outside the field. For example, one child care program interviewed described hiring an assistant teacher with an associate degree in social work whereas the program would normally hire assistant teachers with degrees in early childhood.

One bright spot is some child care programs reported the CCSA COVID-19 Relief Fund grant helped them retain staff, potentially reducing the impact of the current staffing shortage. Eleven of the 41 child care programs that received Phase II CCSA COVID-19 Relief Fund grants used grant money to give staff bonuses. Bonuses ranged from \$50 to \$617 per employee, with an average bonus of \$240. Child care programs also reimbursed employees for extraordinary child care expenses and home internet services, hosted staff appreciation meals, and provided staff with paid sick leave to boost staff morale and retention. Julia Buchanan, development coordinator at St. Gerard House in Henderson County, described the ability to reimburse staff for extraordinary child care expenses as crucial to maintaining a qualified staff during the COVID-19 pandemic. St. Gerard House also reimbursed two administrative employees for the cost of internet at home, allowing the two employees to work remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic and maintain their employment.

**The increased use of cleaners and disinfectants damaged toys and other classroom supplies. Child care programs expect that replacing toys and materials will be financially difficult.**

Nearly two-thirds (62 percent) of child care programs interviewed said that the cleaning procedures implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in having to replace toys and other materials more frequently. Child care programs described plastic toys and magnets that are bleached out, rugs with bleach stains, and deteriorating table and chair legs.

For example, Julia Buchanan of St. Gerard House described the toll harsh cleaners have taken on the program's materials, saying, "[We will have to] replace all of our gross motor equipment because it is falling apart because of all the chemicals...We have duct tape on some of our equipment at this point." Similarly, Lee Anna Flowers of Little Lambs Child Care 2 in Catawba County said, "We're going to

have to throw out a lot because the Clorox, after a while, even though you do the half [Clorox] and half [water], it still pulls the color [out of the toys].”

Many of the child care programs CCSA interviewed said the cost of replacements has placed or will place a financial strain on their programs. Anisa Hodges of Mini Academy in Lincoln County said, “When [the COVID-19 pandemic] started I bought...a fogger and

**For example, one program estimated that they have already spent 20 percent more on replacing toys this year as compared to an average year.**

we fogged every night. All my chairs are going to have to be replaced. Anything metal is going to have to be replaced because of all the bleach that we used with my fogging system. Our musical instruments, chairs, and tables are metal...It will be a huge financial strain.” Child care programs with NC Pre-K classrooms, North Carolina’s pre-Kindergarten pro-

gram, received additional funding in spring 2021 to offset the financial burden of replacing classroom toys, furniture, and other supplies. However, child care programs who do not serve NC Pre-K and programs with additional classrooms that are not designated as NC Pre-K may need similar assistance. Most child care programs CCSA spoke to are waiting until state COVID-19 cleaning regulations are further relaxed before replacing toys and other supplies.

## CONCLUSION

Among the 17 programs CCSA interviewed, five key themes emerged relating to the impact of CCSA COVID-19 Relief Fund Phase II grants on child care programs, how grantees are faring one year after applying for funds, and grantees’ plans moving forward:

1. Child care programs are recovering from the economic impact of COVID-19, but difficulty hiring qualified staff is preventing child care programs from reaching pre-pandemic enrollment levels.
2. The impact of low wages for child care employees has worsened as other industries have begun to raise wages. Child care programs compete with large employers in the retail and service sectors for workers, making it difficult for them to attract and retain qualified teachers and assistant teachers.



3. To recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, child care programs must purchase new toys and classroom supplies to replace items damaged by the enhanced cleaning and disinfecting procedures.
4. Child care programs permanently adopted some health and cleaning best-practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. Child care programs report that children are healthier and fewer viruses are being transmitted at the programs.
5. Child care programs increased their use of technology. Programs adopted applications to allow parents to electronically check children in and out of care, video doorbells to facilitate drop off and pick up, staff laptops and applications for communications with parents, and tablets and laptops to allow children to access the internet while in care.

Child care programs have demonstrated remarkable innovation and resilience in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. To support child care programs’ recovery, future research and policies should focus on supports to raise compensation for child care teachers and assistant teachers and supports for child care programs to replace toys and classroom supplies damaged by cleaning procedures during the COVID-19 pandemic. 📖



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- Lee Anna Flowers, Little Lambs Child Care #2
- Anisa Hodges, Mini Academy Denver
- Norma Honeycutt, Partners in Learning Child Development Center
- Sharal Huit, First Assembly of God Ministries
- Polly Johnson, Leap of Faith Christian Preschool
- Jamie Lipps, Kiddie Kollege Early Learning Center
- Michelle Miller-Cox, First Presbyterian Day School Durham
- Mandy Mills, Regional Center for Advancement of Child Development
- Wanda Mitchell, Hattie Daniels Day Care Center
- Patsy Reavis, Wilkes Development Day School
- June Shillito, Yates Baptist Child Development Center
- Karyn Wilkerson, Kiddie Kollege #1
- Cindy Wingate, KinderCare Charlotte



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- 7 Target Corporate. (2020). *Target Increases Starting Wage to \$15; Thanks Frontline Team Members with Recognition Bonus*. Retrieved July 2, 2021, from <http://corporate.target.com/press/releases/2020/06/target-increases-starting-wage-to-15-thanks-frontline>
- 8 Child Care Services Association. (2020). *Working in Early Care and Education in North Carolina*. Retrieved July 2, 2021, from [https://www.childcareservices.org/wp-content/uploads/CCSA\\_2020\\_Statewide\\_WorkStudyRpt-FINAL-web.pdf](https://www.childcareservices.org/wp-content/uploads/CCSA_2020_Statewide_WorkStudyRpt-FINAL-web.pdf)
- 9 The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act provided unemployed workers with an extra \$600 per week in federal unemployment insurance benefits from April 5, 2020, to July 31, 2020. The supplemental benefit was reduced to \$300 per week from December 27, 2020, to September 4, 2021. Unemployment insurance benefits were more profitable than wages for many child care workers, whose pay in North Carolina averages \$12.04 per hour for teachers and \$11 per hour for assistant teachers (Child Care Services Association, 2020).

On behalf of CCSA and all the child care programs across the state, we offer our most sincere gratitude to the donors, Smart Start and everyone who played a part in this effort to support child care in North Carolina during these challenging times.



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