

California Child Care Resource & Referral



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Despite Pandemic Majority of Surveyed Parents Work Outside of the Home, Need Childcare

First-of-its-kind survey provides window into how parents are (and aren't!) coping with child care during COVID-19, and how our leaders can help

San Francisco, CA – Six months into the COVID-19 pandemic, a new survey of more than 12,000 parents sheds light on how California families' child care arrangements and options have been impacted, sometimes drastically. The first-of-its-kind survey, by the California Child Care Resource & Referral Network (Network), also details policy recommendations to address the mounting child care challenges faced by families across the state, particularly in low-income communities.

More than 12,000 parents representing 55 of the state's 58 counties answered an online survey in English or Spanish. The survey shows that with many child care facilities forced to close or restrict their capacities and continued closure of in-person public schools, families are reeling. There is widespread concern about sanitation and cleanliness; worry about having to care for children while working, find the money for care even while working less, and/or cut back hours because of child care concerns; and fear of exposure to the virus in group care settings.

"I might have to quit my job because I won't have day care for kids since schools are not opening up in my area," said one survey respondent. "No afterschool programs. Neighbors have kids who will also be doing remote learning and it's hard to add 2 additional children for them to help and watch. This is an extremely difficult situation and my anxiety is off the charts."

Said another respondent, "I have enough funds to survive until January, but will have to juggle children and homeschooling and somehow work. I currently have no idea how to keep my head above water with no childcare coverage for the next year when hopefully they will be able to go to kindergarten. As the sole provider and only parent for my children, for the first time I am truly scared without having some form of childcare assistance."

Among the survey's findings:

- Cleanliness and sanitation is the most important factor in choosing child care right now, followed by group size and cost.
- There is no one child care setting that meets the needs of all families in California, just as there is no standard family. Some parents express fear of the virus as the main concern and prefer a family member or friend; some are more concerned about socialization and prefer a group setting; some prefer centers because they see them as more regulated. In thinking of ways to support families during this time, the system must include diverse options, so that certain groups aren't being prioritized over others.
- Families with lower incomes were much more likely to be working outside the home right now, and to prefer family, friend, and neighbor care.
- Parents who completed the survey in Spanish were much more likely to have lost their jobs and to prefer home-based care.

"Families are hurting," said Gemma DiMatteo, Research Director at the Network. "The good news is, there is much our policy makers and elected officials can do to help families during this time, including increased supports to child care providers to help in distance learning for school-aged children and maintaining safety protocols, targeted support for low-income families and those with subsidies, and encouraging workplace flexibility and child care assistance."

"Any conversation about economic recovery must include the voices of parents who need child care," said Linda Asato, Executive Director at the Network. "This unprecedented moment gives us a rare opportunity to rebuild California's child care system from the family up. Parents are the experts on their own families and are asking for support. We need to listen carefully to the challenges they are facing and meet them with policies and flexibility that meet their needs as they define them. We hope this report is a starting point for that conversation."

Find the full report here. The survey's results will be presented at a webinar on Tuesday, October 6 10AM-11AM PST. RSVP here. For more information or to speak with a parent regarding their own child care concerns, contact Gemma DiMatteo at gdimatteo@rrnetwork.org or (415) -494-4649.

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The California Child Care Resource & Referral Network (Network) is a non-profit membership organization of 58 local child care [resource and referral agencies](#) (R&R). For almost four decades, we have been a leader in understanding the demographics of the state, developing innovative partnerships with business and government, and helping our members respond to changing economic, social, and family needs.