



# YALE STUDY ON COVID-19 TRANSMISSION IN U.S. CHILD CARE PROGRAMS: **CHILD CARE AWARE® OF AMERICA POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Researchers at Yale University recently released the findings of a survey of 57,335 child care providers in the United States (all 50 U.S. states, District of Columbia and Puerto Rico). The findings of the survey help illustrate that the child care sector is working hard to support families, but child care providers need significant help if they are going to survive this pandemic. Below are Child Care Aware® of America's policy recommendations to help the child care sector support families and the economy.

## **Ensuring that the Child Care Sector Can Survive**

- Congress must provide additional federal funding for child care to support both considerable mitigation efforts and stabilization funding to weather ongoing or variable closures in response to public health decisions.
- Support is needed for continuing policies that allow child care programs to weather the crisis, such as payments for providers based on enrollment rather than attendance.
- State and local governments must create collaboration, in the form of taskforces and joint plans, between school systems and child care stakeholders. Community pandemic response and planning must address the needs of school-aged children as well as those of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

## **Ensuring a Safe and Healthy Child Care Environment**

- Infection mitigation efforts matter. Child care providers and educators must have easy access to personal protective equipment (PPE) and sanitation supplies. Federal and state policymakers should ensure that child care providers, through state lead agencies and child care resource and referral agencies (CCR&Rs), have access to the supplies they need to safely operate their businesses.
- Policymakers must help communities invest in child care infrastructure, the workforce, and facilities to meet public health recommendations around space, smaller group sizes, barriers, and ventilation.
- COVID-19 has only increased the mental and emotional health care needs of children in child care. Child health care consultants (CCHCs) play an important role in helping child care educators implement practices that promote healthy and safe environments for young children. Policymakers should ensure that CCHCs are available to child care providers, with the funding and resources needed to serve all providers and children.

# Protecting the Health, Safety and Wellbeing of the Child Care Workforce

Child care educators, providers, and staff will be risking exposure to COVID-19 while providing care, and they need support to approach their work with risk management in mind. CCAoA urges policymakers to strengthen the following key policies to ensure child care workforce health and wellbeing:

- Prioritization of child care workers for regular, free COVID-19 testing.
- Prioritization of child care workers for access to a future COVID-19 vaccine.
- Hazard pay for providers when child care facilities are open.
- Health care benefits, including through state Medicaid expansion. Given that 85% of child care providers lack health care, this is an especially critical policy need.
- Access to paid leave and unemployment insurance by:
  - Maintaining the paid leave provisions of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act and passing the paid leave provisions of the HEROES Act, which would provide all workers and independent contractors with 10 paid sick days per year until 2022 and eliminate loopholes in the existing law.
  - Extending pandemic unemployment insurance benefits. Future benefits should cover providers, educators, and staff who work at child care businesses that are closed due to public health guidance and local/state orders, and cover child care workers who are not able to return to work due to health or caregiving obligations.
- Prioritization of and funding for mental health care for child care providers and staff.

## Help for Families and Children

- Policymakers should take all possible steps to keep family co-pays from increasing by providing additional funding to child care programs to support additional costs, especially as additional school age children may need access to child care.
- Policymakers should prioritize ensuring all children in need of food or nutrition support continue to have access, through providers of child care or other venues deemed appropriate by local officials. This includes:
  - Approval and continuation of necessary waivers.
  - Providing additional funding for providers where meal costs rise.
  - Ensuring P-EBT eligibility includes low-income families who rely on meals provided through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).