



## Executive Summary

A team of researchers from Yale just published the results of the first large-scale study of the child care workforce during COVID-19. The Yale team compared COVID-19 rates in child care providers who continued providing child care during the first three months of the pandemic to those who did not. Their findings: providers and staff in programs that stayed open last spring were no more likely to contract COVID-19 than providers whose programs were closed. The Yale study will be published in the January 2021 issue of *Pediatrics*, a peer-reviewed journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics, and was posted on the AAP website on October 14.

The Yale research team surveyed more than 57,000 child care workers nationwide in May and June 2020, and asked them to self-report whether they had become infected with COVID-19 or been hospitalized. There was no difference in infection rates for workers whose programs stayed open and those whose programs closed.

The research revealed that child care programs that stayed open were particularly conscientious in following recommended infection control measures. Over 90% of child care providers in open programs reported frequent handwashing and disinfection of surfaces. They also had high rates of other infection control measures - like daily symptom checks, physical distancing and keeping children in “cohorts” – small groups that didn’t mix with other children. Researchers stress that infection control practices remain critical, especially in light of “vigilance fatigue,” a tendency to become less careful and consistent in efforts to protect against a threat as time goes on.

Walter Gilliam, head of Yale’s Edward Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy, is the study’s lead author and the president of CCAoA’s Board of Directors. “This study tells us that as long as there are strong on-site measures to prevent infection, providing care for young children doesn’t seem to add to the provider’s risk of getting sick,” said Gilliam. “Our study does offer solid evidence that, under certain conditions, it’s possible to open child care programs without putting staff in harm’s way.”

Chief among these conditions: low rates of community spread of COVID-19 – with local positive test rates under 5% — and high rates of protective practices at the child care setting, including physical distancing, frequent handwashing and cohorting.

That doesn’t mean that child care workers avoided the novel coronavirus entirely. The study found that

Black, Latino and Native American child care providers were more likely to test positive for COVID-19 and be hospitalized for it. And, in counties with higher rates of coronavirus deaths – the study’s marker of community spread – child care workers were more likely to contract the virus.

The Yale research team cautions that their findings do not necessarily apply to adults who work in schools or other settings with older children. Programs for infants, toddlers and preschoolers tend to be small, and kids stay together. In schools and colleges, there are usually more people in a building, and students and teachers move more - switching classes and moving around the building.

The study did not investigate the effects of COVID-19 on children in child care. It focused solely on adults working in child care settings.