

2022 CT OEC Parent Survey

January 31, 2023

Parent perspectives of their family's experiences are vital to truly understanding how young children are doing.

In Aug-Sept, 2022, the OEC and UConn SSW asked parents and guardians across Connecticut to describe their experiences with child care, employment, and concerns about their young children's social and emotional well-being as affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Here are key findings from the 5,474 parents¹ who responded.

Access to Child Care

Center-based child care was the preferred choice for parents with infants and toddlers (55%) and those with preschool-aged children (64%). Three-quarters (75%) of all respondents sometimes, usually, or always had **consistent and reliable child care**. However, more respondents with infants/toddlers younger than 3 years, or school-aged children ages 6 to 12 years reported they rarely or never had consistent and reliable child care as compared to parents with preschool-aged children.

Sixteen percent (16%) of respondents said that their child has a learning, medical, or other need/disability that impacted their child care choices. Of those parents, **40% said that it was difficult or very difficult to find care for their children with special needs** and noted that it was hard to find openings in affordable and convenient child care programs with individuals trained to support their children.

24% of respondents with infants/toddlers and 14% of respondents with preschool-aged children reported **not being able to access their preferred type of child care** due to cost, no openings available, no evening or weekend hours,

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Many parents (50%) said an adult in their household **reduced their work hours or stopped working** to care for their children during the pandemic. 39% of them had not fully returned to work at the time of the survey. Parents reported feeling a **moderate or great deal of stress** from economic and other factors, including inflation, gas prices, food insecurity, formula shortages, housing instability, and long COVID. Most parents (92%) reported being **able to pay their bills on-time** sometimes, usually, or always. Most parents did not report concerns about their youngest child's development specific to the pandemic, however 38% were concerned about social skills and 34% were concerned about emotional and mental health issues.

Parents say they need child care to be...

- **Affordable:** 17% of families with young children reported spending more than 30% of their income on child care. Almost one-third (31%) of families earning less than \$25,000 reporting paying for child care entirely from their own income.
- **Flexible and Accessible:** Most respondents (84%) said their need for child care moderately, very much, or completely affects their job choices, such as type of job or hours. Families need care that is available when they are working (including nights and weekends), convenient, with available back-up care. Programs that do meet these needs often do not have any openings.
- **High Quality:** Families want child care that is licensed or accredited and can meet their child's needs, particularly for children with identified special needs.

"Daycare for my children costs more than my monthly salary."



28% of respondents who earn less than \$25,000/year reported out-of-pocket child care expenses of \$500-1000 per month.

^[1] Respondents were primarily female (89%), between the ages of 35-54 (54%), who spoke English at home (77%); 75% had at least one infant/toddler or preschool-aged child. Although most responding parents were white (58%), 20% of the respondents identified as Hispanic and 8% as Black/African American. Just over half (58%) of the respondents who provided their income (N=4,817), had salaries or wages that were below the State Median Income. Respondents represent 3% of all Connecticut families with children ages 0-12 per U.S. Census.

^[2] The survey was offered in six languages, including English and Spanish.