



Dedication Through Difficulty

2024 Central Ohio Child Care Provider Survey Executive Summary

The 2024 Central Ohio Child Care Provider Survey findings are a testament to the unwavering dedication of child care professionals, while also laying bare the continuing difficulties that threaten this sector. State and local governments, as well as other community stakeholders must strongly recommit to supporting this crucial industry.

The survey time frame includes continuing public support for child care programs and the families that rely on them, including Stabilization Grants, the launch of Child Care Choice Vouchers, and Franklin County RISE. With these, child care providers in central Ohio have stayed the course, generally maintaining enrollment ratios and staffing levels. However, funding for many pandemic recovery and stabilization programs has ended, and child care providers remain stuck at barely two-thirds of total capacity. Inflation and persistent low wages in the child care sector keep providers locked in a precarious situation that jeopardizes continuing economic growth and development, and the well-being of children, families, and caregivers.

Key Takeaways:

- **Provider confidence has been gradually improving** over the last four years. Still, 11% of providers are unsure if they will be open in three months, and 48% are unsure if they will be open in 12 months.
- The proportion of **providers reporting monthly losses has been creeping up** and is currently at 55%. These shortfalls persist despite the finding that 64% of providers have increased tuition within the last year, and 52% of those expect to raise tuition again in the next six months.
- **Staffing remains a challenge.** Sixty-four percent of surveyed child care centers want to hire and more than half of these want to hire multiple staff. Sixty-eight percent find it difficult to hire staff. Forty-six percent of family child care programs would like to hire. Median hourly **pay for child care professionals has lagged far behind inflation** and needs to increase by at least \$1.50-\$5.00 to remain competitive with other industries.

The 2024 report includes:

- Summary data by county and by setting (child care center and family child care home)
- New insights into specific provider groups:
 - Programs with Publicly Funded Child Care (PFCC) arrangements
 - Newly established programs (less than 3 years old)
 - Participants in Step Up To Quality (SUTQ)

It is time for action for our communities.

Child care is essential infrastructure, without which our economy cannot grow or thrive. Action for Children urges government, corporate, and philanthropic leaders to dig into addressing the care crisis, focusing on the needs of the child care professionals and families closest to the challenges.