COVID-19 Impact on Child Care

The impact of COVID-19 has led to widespread child care program closures. Programs that are open are experiencing low child enrollment (compared to pre-COVID) and increased operating costs (related to social distancing for public health purposes and the increased cleaning and sanitization requirements also related to addressing public health needs).

Economic Recovery and Working Parents

Working parents or those seeking to return to the workforce face unprecedented child care challenges this fall in the face of a collapsing child care landscape.

- 75% of parents with school-age children say they can’t pay for child care as districts move to fully remote or partial onsite school.¹
- 66% of parents with children under age 5 say sending their children back to child care is important to returning to work (76% of parents in urban areas, 63% of parents in suburban areas, and 60% of parents in rural areas).²

Estimates of Maine Children Potentially Needing Child Care

- 47,499 children under age 6 with all parents in the workforce
- 65,850 school-age children age 6-12
- 113,349 total (B-5 and school-age)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey, 1 Year Estimates

Note: Pre-COVID, many parents of school-age children depended on the hours children were physically onsite in school in order for parents to work. Remote learning and hybrid options for public school instruction have resulted in unprecedented child care challenges for parents of elementary school children – many of whom depend upon an adult to guide them with the remote instruction from their public school teachers.

Source: Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child and Family Services

COVID-19: Maine Economic Impact
Households Experiencing a Decline In Income Since March 13, 2020


Maine’s Economic Recovery Depends on Child Care
October 4, 2020

In Brief: Economic recovery depends on working parents. And, working parents depend on child care. Additional support is needed to stabilize the child care market and to support working parents (and parents who need to return to the workforce). Maine’s economic recovery depends on it.
Supply and Affordability

Pre-COVID, there was a gap in many communities between the supply of child care and the need. With COVID, the gap between the supply and need (for parents who are working and those who want to return to the workforce) has been exacerbated. But, it’s not the only problem.

Child care is also hard for families to afford. A Maine Children’s Alliance study found that the cost of child care takes between 11% to 22% of a typical family’s income to pay for full-time child care.\(^3\)

The cost of school-age child care used to represent what is referred to as “Before and After” care – before school hours and after school hours. However, with so many school districts operating through remote learning or some type of hybrid, parents of school-age children who never paid for the hours of the day in which their children were in school, now are facing tough choices. Do they stay home to support the remote learning of their children? Or, can they find a child care program that they can afford where an adult can support their children to follow their public school teacher’s remote instruction? Full-day child care for school-age children is an unprecedented expense for families and one that many families – both low and middle income families cannot afford.

Economic recovery for Maine depends on investing in child care – stabilizing the market and supporting families.

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\(^1\) Bipartisan Policy Center, *Child Care in COVID-19: Another Look at What Parents Want* (August 26, 2020)

\(^2\) Ibid.