RESEARCH REPORT

Supporting Georgia's Early Care and Learning System with CRRSA and ARP Funding

Perspectives from Stakeholders and Families

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ABOUT THE URBAN INSTITUTE

The nonprofit Urban Institute is a leading research organization dedicated to developing evidence-based insights that improve people's lives and strengthen communities. For 50 years, Urban has been the trusted source for rigorous analysis of complex social and economic issues; strategic advice to policymakers, philanthropists, and practitioners; and new, promising ideas that expand opportunities for all. Our work inspires effective decisions that advance fairness and enhance the well-being of people and places.

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Executive Summary

The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia's children and families. DECAL administers Georgia's Pre-K Program; licenses child care centers and home-based child care; administers Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program that helps families pay for child care; manages federal nutrition programs; and manages Quality Rated, Georgia's child care quality rating and improvement system. The department also houses the Head Start Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance child care quality and availability, and works to ensure families know about their child care options in Georgia. In response to COVID-19, DECAL began using the federally provided Coronavirus Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA) and American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds to administer special pandemic-relief programs and service modifications to help children, parents, and early care and learning providers meet these new challenges.

The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning contracted with the Urban Institute in September 2021 to lead a study to learn more about DECAL's stakeholders' perspectives on what Georgia's early care and learning system needs to strengthen its supports for children from birth through age 13 years. In addition to the information solicited from stakeholders across the state, DECAL wanted to bring the voices and perspectives of a wider range of voices into their consideration as they determined how to allocate their remaining CRRSA and ARP funds. Urban sought three types of voices to broaden the perspectives DECAL was hearing: people working in and operating early care and learning programs, families whose children need early care and learning services, and DECAL staff members delivering the services.

To reach a diverse and wide range of stakeholder perspectives on Georgia's early care and learning system, Urban collected data through three channels: a survey of the early care and learning workforce, a survey of DECAL staff members, and focus groups of parents and early care and learning providers. Data collection occurred between October and November 2021. In total, 6,597 people who work in or operate Georgia's early care and learning programs responded to the online workforce survey, 416 DECAL employees responded to the online DECAL staff member survey, and 83 Georgia parents or legal guardians of children from birth through age 13 in early care and learning participated in 21 focus groups.

Nine Recommendations to Support Children and Families and Strengthen Early Care and Learning in Georgia

The nine recommendations summarized below reflect what the stakeholders said. In some cases, they answered a direct question: "How should DECAL spend the extra federal dollars they received to support child care and early learning needs in Georgia?" In other cases, they responded to questions about resources they would or would not find helpful, or they told us about concerns in their experiences that we shaped into recommendations. In other words, we used our expertise to ask questions, reflect back the responses, and gather information from a wide range of people from all parts of the state, including rural communities, metropolitan Atlanta counties, and other urban counties.

Each experience and concern shared is important for DECAL to consider as it allocates resources from CRRSA, ARP, and any other child care system dollars. The pandemic, the child care crisis it exacerbated, and the additional federal funds provided to address the issues create an important opportunity to reflect on how short-term funds can address immediate needs and build a foundation for longer-term solutions. The nine recommendations summarized below reflect what the stakeholders said and are followed by specific strategies and approaches identified by stakeholders to address the needs.

1. Provide Support to Encourage More People to Become and Remain Early Childhood Educators

Parents discussed the importance of building relationships with early childhood educators[1] so they can meet their children's needs together. They noted it is hard for them and their children to adjust to repeated changes in caregivers. Parents also talked about the importance of having people who are gentle with and responsive to their children's needs. Both parents and child care providers had suggestions for how to attract and keep early childhood educators and support them in becoming better teachers:

- Support strategies that will **improve early childhood educator pay**, such as providing supplemental pay (e.g., bonuses) and offsetting work-related expenses and time (e.g., commuting costs, lesson planning).

- Help create **more career pipelines** that will assist child care programs with finding qualified staff members, such as high school dual enrollment, child care apprenticeships that offer on-

the-job training, coursework, and mentorship; and compensating early learning educators for time devoted to mentoring and overseeing volunteers participating in on-the-job learning.

- Help programs ensure **staff members are properly trained** to improve child safety by providing funding to support workers pursuing education or training; making training and professional development opportunities more accessible; paying early childhood educators for their time in professional development; and helping them earn more when they increase their knowledge or skills.

2. Focus Attention on and Provide Information about Basic Health and Safety

Parents want to know more about child care programs' health and safety practices, want more observation of child care programs, and want to know where to report concerns. They suggested the following:

- Provide more information that is easier to find about child care inspections and violations.

- Provide funds for cameras that allow parents and supervisors to see what is going on, as well as more *unannounced* DECAL visits to observe routine, rather than prepared, program practices.

- Provide a place that parents can call when their children are injured or disciplined inappropriately in a child care program.

3. Reconsider Group Sizes and Child-to-Staff Ratios

Parents, child care operators, and early childhood educators tended to offer different perspectives on group sizes and child-to-staff ratios depending on whether they were in center-based care, home-based care, or Georgia's Pre-K program. Parents tended to talk about the amount of attention their children received, and those in center-based programs tended to express the most concern about lack of attention. Suggestions for center-based programs tended to focus on reducing the number of children per educator (child-to-teacher ratios), and suggestions for Georgia's Pre-K program tended to focus on smaller class sizes. Family learning home providers, however, were more likely to suggest they could take care of more children.

4. Provide More Accessible Information to Families about Available Early Care and Learning Services

Families suggested that more of the pandemic relief funds could be used to ensure more families know about the services they qualify for (e.g., support paying for child care and services for children with disabilities) and the resources available to help them find the care they need. Parents suggested the following:

- Make information more accessible by providing information in places parents regularly visit, such as churches, public schools, farmer's markets, and grocery stores; and reach out to expectant and new parents through OB-GYN doctor offices and hospital maternity wards.

- Improve DECAL's messaging by using person-first, nonstigmatizing language, providing clear eligibility requirements, including fathers as a target audience, and improving information on existing websites.

5. Consider How to Support More Providers in Offering Care, Providing Longer Hours, and Participating in CAPS

Parents discussed waiting lists for care in their communities. Of the care available, they talked about how limitations in the hours offered were impacting their ability to work, and some noted providers were closing earlier since the pandemic started. Families who were receiving support paying for child care (CAPS) noted that their options are limited by which providers participate. They suggested the following:

- Incentivize providers to stay open longer; offer care on evenings, weekends, and holidays; and offer payments to transport children.

- Support providers to increase participation in CAPS.

6. Support Providers in Taking Care of Children's Social-Emotional and Behavioral Needs

Many child care operators and educators shared concerns about how the pandemic was negatively impacting children. In focus groups, parents shared several concerns about their children's social-emotional and behavioral needs, including many who felt that some educators do not have an understanding of developmentally appropriate child behavior and others who noticed regressions in

terms of potty training and acting out because educators did not sufficiently attend to diapering and toileting. Providers shared that they want to help families and children, they need more support to do so, and access to supports to help early childhood educators remain in or return to the workforce. When asked what resources would help them, the majority of center-based providers and Georgia's Pre-K providers said additional classroom support with managing challenging behaviors and supporting children's social-emotional development.

7. Consider New Benchmarks for Affordable Care in Georgia and CAPS Parent Contributions

Both parents who do and do not receive child care subsidy support from the CAPS program said it is hard to pay for child care. Everyone noted that costs in their lives were going up and affording child care was getting harder even if child care prices did not go up. Parents receiving CAPS said the program changes during the pandemic have been a "lifeline." Families tended not to have specific suggestions, but their comments and concerns indicated the following:

- Parents with multiple children in care were struggling to pay their assessed parent contributions (before the pandemic program waived these).

- Some families not receiving CAPS were making trade-offs, including giving up work opportunities because they could not pay for child care (one family noted that the mother had been a police officer, but the cost of child care would exceed her pay so she decided to stay home).

8. Support CAPS Program Operations to Increase Responsiveness to Parents

Parents and DECAL staff members noted that the responsiveness of communications for DECAL's subsidy program for parents with low incomes (CAPS) could be improved. Both staff members and parents understood that recent pandemic changes to serve more parents and provide higher levels of financial support to parents were straining staff members' ability to communicate with parents as quickly as anyone would like. Parent remarks indicate that their experiences varied across the state and that prepandemic experiences were also mixed. Suggested strategies to decrease the numbers of times parents are reaching out include the following:

- Provide clearer information on the website about CAPS eligibility and the CAPS application process, including how soon to expect responses.

- Provide more information about why an application is denied.

- Mail notices sooner (some said mailings arrived after they were supposed to take a certain action).

- Improve training for application reviewers about how to interpret eligibility requirements for complex family situations.

- Understand that some parents cannot take work breaks during standard business hours to discuss their applications.

9. Offer More Grants and Supports for Financial Sustainability and Business Planning

Programs report that additional financial supports are among their greatest needs currently; they are also concerned about their sustainability and financial viability once pandemic-response funding winds down. Early care and education workers suggested that the following would be most helpful as they recuperate during the pandemic:

- Provide additional grants for programmatic opportunities.

- Help with sustainability planning.

- Help child care providers obtain nutritious food.

- Consider offering facility grants, loans, or bulk purchasing.

As DECAL considers these recommendations, they must also think about equity in distributing funds. This includes equity of distribution across the types of groups and needs and geographic equity between rural and urban areas and among metropolitan Atlanta and other urban areas. The various perspectives showed that what is best for one group is not necessarily best for all groups. In the full report, we present findings by types of child care providers, types of workforce positions, information about parents who do and do not receive subsidies, and parents who do and do not have children with disabilities. DECAL will need to consider the information provided in this study in conjunction with the data they have to determine an equitable distribution of the funds. Finally, recommendations are not the same as specific strategies. So DECAL will have to seek out their staff members' expertise and draw on existing research to determine the most effective strategies to enhance the services they already offer in supporting the needs of children, families, and early care and learning in Georgia.

Supporting Georgia's Early Care and Learning System with CRRSA and ARP Funding

The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) contracted with the Urban Institute to lead a study to learn more about DECAL's stakeholders' perspectives on what Georgia's early care and learning system needs to support children from birth through age 13. DECAL wanted to bring the voices and perspectives of a wider range of voices into their consideration as they determined how to allocate their remaining federally provided Coronavirus Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA) and American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds. Urban sought three types of voices to broaden the perspectives DECAL was hearing: people working in and operating early care and learning programs, families whose children need early care and learning services, and DECAL staff members delivering the services. See box 1 and appendix A for more details about when, how, and with whom the study was conducted.

When Was the Study Conducted, Who Participated, and How Did They Participate?

When was this study conducted?

- We collected participant responses from October to November 2021.

Who participated and how did they participate?

- In total, 6,597 people who work in or operate Georgia's early care and learning programs responded to an online survey;[a] some also participated in focus groups. People were invited to participate in the survey through email messages from the Urban Institute. Survey respondents represent urban and rural areas, various position types (e.g., directors, early childhood educators, owner-operators, and others), all types of licensed and exempt programs, homes and centers, and providers who do and do not participate in Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) and Georgia's Pre-K. Family child care and any child care providers who participate in Quality Rated were invited to participate in focus groups by DECAL staff members and intermediary organizations; 23 people participated in five focus groups. *Throughout the report, we generally refer to the people who run the early care and learning programs as providers or operators. We typically refer to the people who interact directly with the children as early childhood educators or child care program staff. In some cases, we use other specific job titles. When we refer to all people who are teaching in child care programs of all kinds (including family child care providers who are also teachers), we call them early childhood educators.*

- In total, 416 people who work at Georgia's Department of Early Care and Learning responded to an online survey;[b] some also provided insights through key informant interviews or as members of a leadership advisory group for designing the study. Staff members from all divisions and levels participated. Staff members were invited through email messages from the Urban Institute. *Throughout the report, we refer to these people as DECAL staff. In some places, we note their division affiliation.*

- In total, 83 Georgia residents who are guardians of children from birth through age 13 whose children need early care and learning programs participated in 21 focus groups. *Throughout the report, we refer to these people as parents or families.*

  » Parents and grandparents participating in CAPS, Georgia's subsidy program, Family Peer Ambassadors,[c] and parents who use family child care were invited to participate.[d] People from urban, rural, and suburban areas throughout the state participated. They have infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children. Some identified as families who had experienced homelessness or domestic violence. Most were employed, but some shared they could not work because of their own disabilities or child care limitations. Their children were attending child care programs of all types.

See appendix A for more information about how the study was conducted, who was invited, how they were invited, and who participated.

Source: Georgia Early Care and Learning Stakeholder Engagement Study 2021.

[a] The analysis included 6,004 complete responses and an additional 593 responses that had completed at least half of the survey. Survey weights accounted for the partial responses. See appendix A for additional details.

[b] The analysis included 377 complete responses and an additional 39 responses that had completed at least 24 percent of the survey. Survey weights accounted for the partial responses. See appendix A for additional details.

[c] DECAL Family Ambassadors are guardians of young children in child care or early intervention. They serve as leaders in their communities, engaging families in activities to support children's school readiness, and provide input on the structure of DECAL's tools. For more information, visit "Child and Family Development," DECAL, accessed December 13, 2021, https://www.decal.ga.gov/InstructionalSupports/ChildandFamilyDevelopment.aspx.

[d] Individual parents could have overlapping group affiliations. These groups represent how we recruited the parents to assure a diverse representation of experiences and needs.

When DECAL contracted with Urban, Georgia had been experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic for 19 months. When the Urban Institute began data collection, DECAL had various programs in place to support child care providers and families. The DECAL staff members were working hard to deliver modified routine services and special pandemic-relief services.

When DECAL asked the Urban Institute to gather stakeholder feedback, they also asked Urban to make recommendations based on that feedback. Thus, this report is organized around nine recommendations for spending DECAL's pandemic-relief funds and for other systems-level

improvements that may require changes to policies or routine practices. All recommendations are grounded in the perspectives stakeholders shared with Urban. In some cases, stakeholders made direct recommendations about how they thought DECAL should spend the funds. In other cases, Urban has made recommendations based on our knowledge about what is possible to address the challenges that were shared. We also shaped our recommendations based on the DECAL services already offered. Throughout the report, we provide illustrative quotes from study participants.

First, we begin with an overview of DECAL services, both those routinely offered and how services were modified based on the pandemic. Then, we present information by recommendation. For each recommendation, we provide the following information:

- which groups made the recommendation or expressed concerns that led to the recommendation

- the concerns and solutions expressed by the people participating in the study

Finally, we include additional considerations for DECAL to review as they contemplate all the challenges and recommendations of stakeholders. In this section, we discuss insights from DECAL staff, cross-cutting implications, process improvement opportunities, and issues of equity.

Understand the people want to work, but without having affordable child care, you must settle or must make sacrifices.
—Georgia parent

Georgia's Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)

The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia's children and families. Routinely, DECAL administers Georgia's Pre-K program; licenses child care centers and home-based child care; administers Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program that helps families who meet specific eligibility requirements pay for child care; manages federal nutrition programs; and manages Quality Rated, Georgia's child care quality rating and improvement system. The department also houses the Head Start Collaboration Office,

distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works to ensure families know about their child care options in Georgia. DECAL provides many services directly but also contracts with other organizations to provide services. See DECAL's website for more information about the services they provide: http://www.decal.ga.gov/ (accessed December 13, 2021).

Approximately 3,100 child care learning centers, 1,500 family child care learning homes, and 6,500 exempt programs are in Georgia.[2] A family child care home may care for three to six unrelated children younger than age 13.[3] A Georgia's Pre-K classroom must be limited to 22 children and have one lead teacher and one assistant teacher, providing a ratio of 11:1.[4] Child care center and family child care learning home child-to-staff ratios are presented in table 1 below.[5] About 337, 000 children from birth to age 13 were attending these and other licensed child care programs under DECAL's purview. About 30,690 families were receiving child care subsidies from DECAL to help pay child care tuition for 56,664 children.

TABLE 1
Child Care Staff-to-Child Ratios

Children's ages	Child:staff ratio	Maximum group size
Child care learning center ratios		
Infants younger than 1 or children younger than 18 months who are not walking	6:1	12
1-year-olds who are walking	8:1	16
2-year-olds	10:1	20
3-year-olds	15:1	30
4-year-olds	18:1	36
5-year-olds	20:1	40
6-year-olds	25:1	50
Family child care learning home ratios		
Younger than age 2.5	2:1	-
2.5- to 4-year-olds	5:1	-
Ages 4 and older	6–8:1	-

Source: "Rules and Regulations: Child Care Learning Centers," DECAL, October 1, 2020, http://www.decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/CCLCRulesandRegulations.pdf.

Before and during the study, DECAL had developed and was administering special pandemic-relief programs or service modifications to help children, parents, and early care and learning providers meet their pandemic-related child care challenges. Those services include the following.

- **STABLE 4ward:** The STABLE program was created to stabilize the cost of operating a child care program; the first awards were made from the program in November 2021. STABLE 4ward will distribute more than $800 million to licensed child care providers in Georgia through September 2023. Funds need to be spent by June 30, 2024.

- **CAPS ACCESS:** The Awarding Child Care Education Scholarship Supplements (ACCESS) initiative launched on May 17, 2021, to temporarily support families receiving CAPS assistance. Under this program, CAPS will pay providers their full rate, including the family fee, through October 2, 2022. No family participating in CAPS should pay any tuition-related fees or copayments during this period.

- **CAPS Expansion:** DECAL is working to increase the number of children served by CAPS by 10,000, in part by expanding CAPS eligibility limits. They also increased tiered bonus payments to Quality Rated providers by 15 percentage points per star level. This expansion began November 1, 2021.

- **POWER:** In an effort to support the early care and education workforce and retain educators, Georgia implemented the Providing Our Workforce Essential Recognition (POWER) program. Eligible recipients began receiving a $1,000 bonus in June 2021.The state has set aside additional funds to provide two more POWER payments in January–March 2022 and June–August 2022.

- **School-Age Help and Relief Effort (SHARE):** This grant program for providers serving school-age children provided funding to support virtual learning and enrichment programs during the school year and summer. Child care learning centers, family child care learning homes, and license-exempt providers were eligible to receive school-age professional development and grant funding.

Recommendation 1: Provide Support to Encourage More People to Become and Remain Early Childhood Educators

Parents, child care operators, and early childhood educators expressed concern about a staffing shortage and current educators leaving the early care and learning workforce.

- **Parents said they noticed that educators were leaving frequently.** They talked about the importance of relationships between the children and their educators for potty-training success and improved behaviors, understanding the learning progress their children were making, and consistently communicating with parents.

It hurts the children when children love the providers and then the providers leave. It's about relationships. It's hard when my child is upset that an educator is getting ready to leave.
—Georgia parent

- **Regardless of where they worked or position type, low pay was the most frequently cited concern of child care program staff members:** 65 percent of center-based staff members, 63 percent of school-based staff members, and 52 percent of home-based staff members chose this as a top current challenge. Although other program types point to Georgia's Pre-K as paying more, 60 percent of Pre-K staff members still cite low pay as a top concern (figure 1).

- **Similarly, most workforce survey respondents (nearly 80 percent) reported some difficulties paying bills or purchasing food during the pandemic.** Assistant teachers were more likely to report challenges than lead teachers, and lead teachers were more likely to report challenges than directors.

- **Child care providers noted it is hard to pay teachers a competitive wage.** They said that people can make more money working for Amazon or Walmart, where they are also eligible for health insurance and retirement benefits. Providers also said they cannot offer similar wages and benefits when they are relying primarily on parents to pay the costs. Many providers reported that parents who do not receive subsidized care cannot pay more than they are already paying. Several providers stated that child care costs are higher than mortgages for many families. Providers also said they are losing educators to K–12 schools and the public school system Pre-K where they are paid more.

- **Slightly more than half of programs (51 percent) cited hiring and training new staff members as a top current need, and the majority (54 percent) indicated it would be a major challenge in the coming year.** Center-based programs were even more likely to report this concern (57 percent and 62 percent, respectively, for each period).

FIGURE 1

Child Care Operators and Workers Cited Low Pay as a Top-Three Challenge of Working in Early Care and Learning before the Pandemic and Currently

Share of ECE Workforce Survey respondents identifying the issue as a top challenge, by time frame
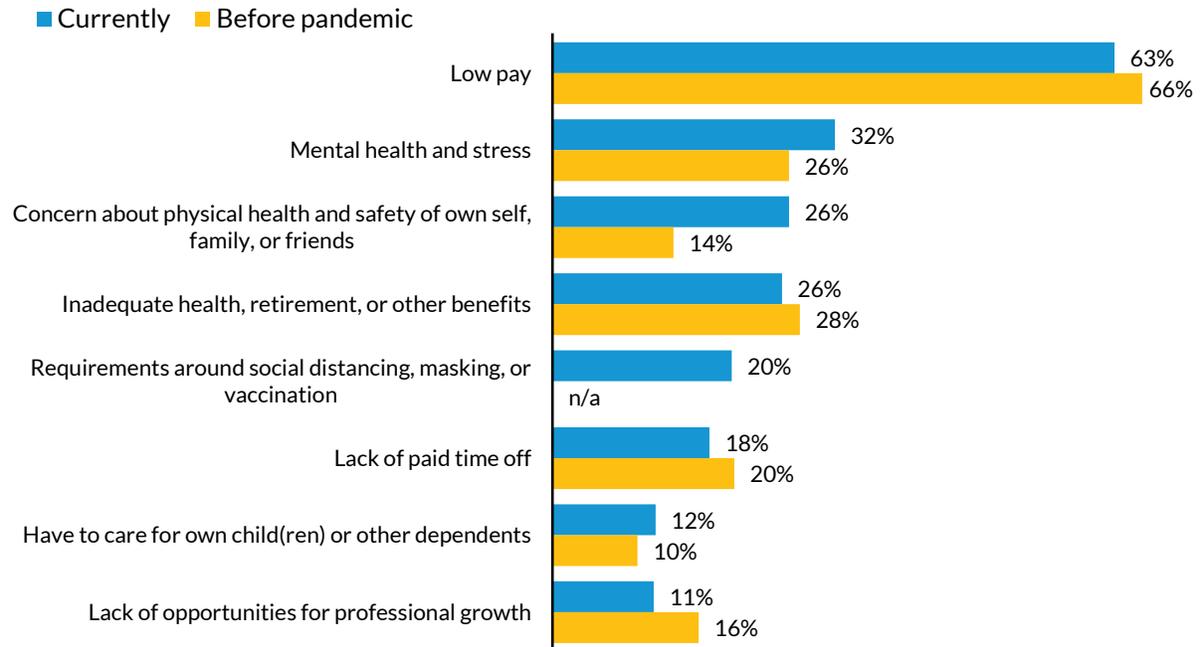
■ Currently ■ Before pandemic

Challenge	Currently	Before pandemic
Low pay	63%	66%
Mental health and stress	32%	26%
Concern about physical health and safety of own self, family, or friends	26%	14%
Inadequate health, retirement, or other benefits	26%	28%
Requirements around social distancing, masking, or vaccination	20%	n/a
Lack of paid time off	18%	20%
Have to care for own child(ren) or other dependents	12%	10%
Lack of opportunities for professional growth	11%	16%

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Source: Urban Institute survey of the Georgia early care and learning workforce (ECE Workforce Survey).
Notes: Respondents could select up to three issues from a list of options as "top challenges" for each period. Other options that could be selected but are not shown because of fewer respondents choosing them were difficulty of type of work, issues with work schedule, changing or delayed information or updates, work commute or travel, and "other," for which respondents were asked to specify an issue. See appendix A for more information on survey participants.

When we examine what early care and learning workforce participants across program settings said by position type (figure 2), we see similarities across positions. The differences, however, are important and may provide key insights into how to best support each position type. The people earliest in their careers who are trying to choose a career pathway are far more likely to note low pay than the directors running the programs. The people further into their careers—directors or operators and lead educators—are more likely than the other position types to note inadequate health, retirement, or benefits. Early career teaching staff members may not yet be thinking of or needing these benefits, but inadequate benefits likely will become a barrier to them staying in the field in the future.

FIGURE 2

Child Care Operators and Staff Members across All Types of Roles Cited Low Pay as a Top-Three Challenge of Working in Early Care and Learning

Share of ECE Workforce Survey respondents identifying the issue as a top challenge, by position type

■ Director or Operator   ■ Lead Teacher   ■ Assistant Teacher   ■ Other   ■ Total

Low pay
- 49%
- 65%
- 71%
- 57%
- 63%

Mental health and stress
- 33%
- 34%
- 28%
- 29%
- 32%

Concern about physical health and safety of own self, family, or friends
- 29%
- 26%
- 25%
- 28%
- 26%

Inadequate health, retirement, or other benefits
- 30%
- 29%
- 20%
- 19%
- 26%

Requirements around social distancing, masking, or vaccination
- 24%
- 19%
- 18%
- 22%
- 20%

Lack of paid time off
- 14%
- 20%
- 18%
- 14%
- 18%

Have to care for own child(ren) or other dependents
- 9%
- 12%
- 13%
- 12%
- 12%

Lack of opportunities for professional growth
- 8%
- 12%
- 12%
- 14%
- 11%

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Source: Urban Institute survey of the Georgia early care and learning workforce (ECE Workforce Survey).
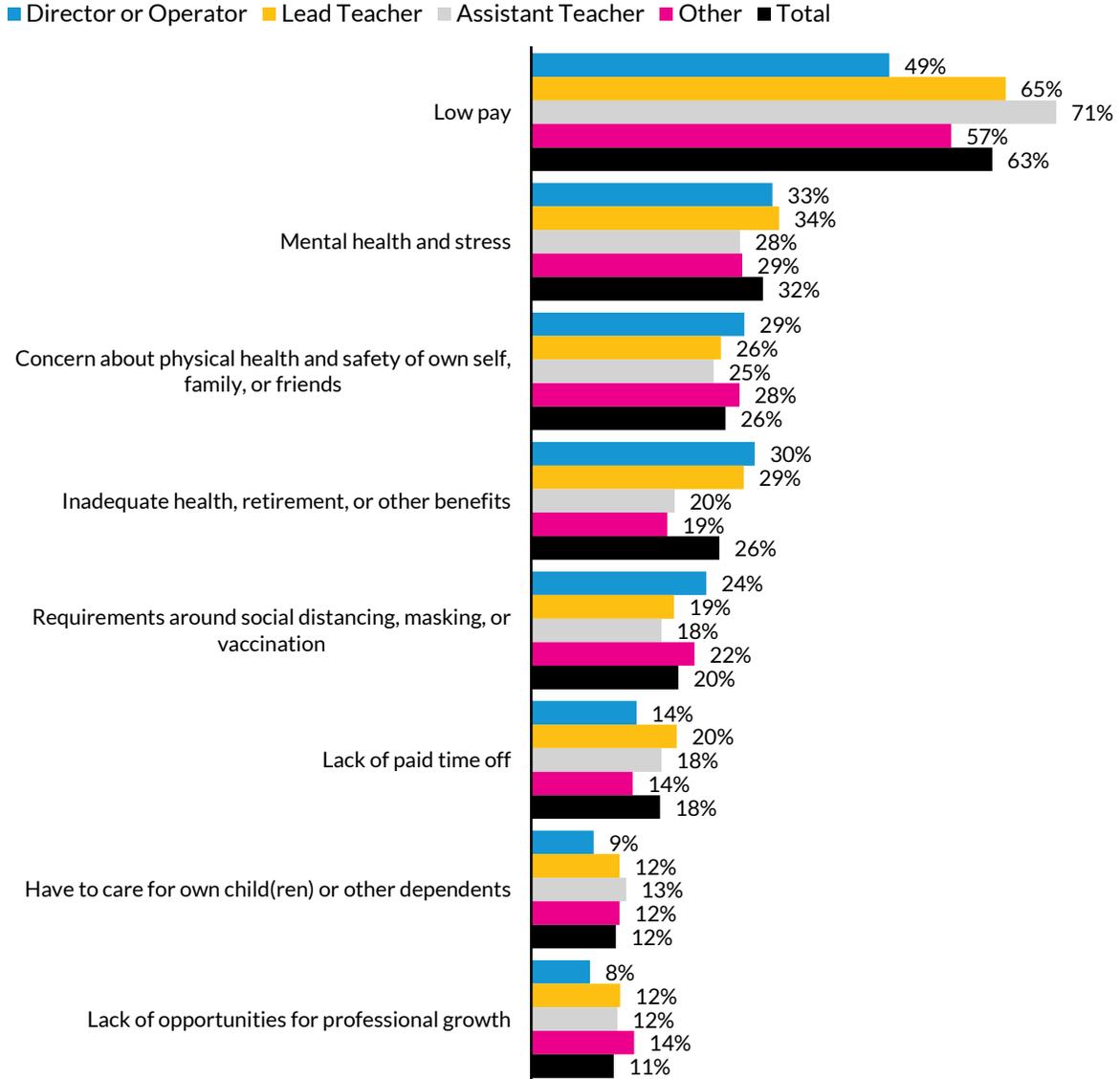**Notes:** Respondents could select up to three issues from a list of options as "top challenges" for each period. Other options that could be selected but are not shown because of fewer respondents choosing them were difficulty of type of work, issues with work schedule, changing or delayed information or updates, work commute or travel, and "other," for which respondents were asked to specify an issue.

Solutions for Motivating Qualified People to Become or Remain a Center-Based Child Care Educator

When asked how DECAL should spend pandemic-relief funds, many people (parents and child care providers) made suggestions about how to grow the child care workforce and retain current workers.

IMPROVE TEACHER PAY

Parents said to pay teachers more. Parents recognized the important role that early childhood educators play in their children's lives, discussed the challenges teachers faced in caring for large numbers of children, and expressed concerns about teachers' exposure to children who were not vaccinated. They thought DECAL should find a way for the teachers to be paid more. Parents expressed awareness that their child care learning centers were receiving funds from DECAL, but they were concerned that teachers still needed more support. Many of them reported high teacher turnover in their programs which they interpreted to be as a result of low pay and challenging working conditions.[6] Child care operators had a few suggestions for how to increase early childhood educator compensation and off-set expenses as indicated below.

Even though someone may have a passion for something, they may need to go somewhere else if the pay isn't high enough.
—Georgia parent empathizing with providers

Child care operators suggested DECAL should provide supplemental pay similar to that provided to lead teachers working in Pre-K. People suggesting this option also said

- bonuses are helpful in the short term, but they do not necessarily retain early childhood educators in the long run;

- consider pay supplements for infant and toddler educators that may help them remain in early care and learning settings;

- consider pay supplements for people who work with children with special needs that could help expand the quality of options available to families of children with special needs; and

- consider ways to increase total compensation including health insurance and other benefits as well as paid time off.

Others suggested offsetting work-related expenses or time, including

- encouraging providers to pay early childhood educators for their preparation time and lesson planning;

- providing funding or reimbursement for classroom and curriculum supplies; and

- providing reimbursement for the cost of transportation to and from work for staff members who may face barriers getting to work in both rural and urban parts of the state; or providing metro cards to people in urban areas.

ASSIST CHILD CARE PROGRAMS WITH RECRUITING STAFF MEMBERS

Parents and child care providers also had specific strategy suggestions for increasing the workforce in the long term and ensuring the workforce is properly trained to assure child safety and development. These include supporting long-term career development options and short-term volunteers (both young people and older adults).

- **Provide more workforce development options that include becoming early learning educators.**[7] Career pathways such as high school dual-enrollment programs and child care apprenticeship programs were suggested in addition to encouraging young people and older adults to volunteer.

  » Some participants noted that dual-enrollment exists in their communities already, while others said that students can train to become K–12 educators but not early childhood educators.

  » Some suggested providing service-learning credits to young people for volunteering in early care and learning programs.

- **Support child care apprenticeships that offer on-the-job training, coursework, and mentorship.** Numerous parents recommended offering apprenticeships so more adults are available to care for children. Apprenticeship programs support creating pathways that allow staff members to advance in teaching positions as they demonstrate higher skills. For example, they may begin as aides or assistants, become teachers, and then eventually lead classrooms as "lead teachers."

- **Compensate early learning educators for time devoted to mentoring early career staff members and overseeing volunteers.** Early childhood providers reported that apprenticeships could be useful but recommended that DECAL pay directors or owners for mentoring and supporting apprentices.

  » They noted that those learning positions require extra time to mentor and guide them, and they have experienced trying to support that extra work without extra compensation—it is hard to do well or to want to do given other demands.

  » They expressed similar feelings about young volunteers, indicating that people younger than 18 cannot be alone with the children, and it can be a challenge to manage the volunteers.

  » Some reported that hiring high school students can be useful in the short term, but often the students work for a short period of time.

- Upon hearing that young people under 18 could not be alone in the classroom, one focus group participant said the state should consider whether 17-year-olds could be cleared to work alone with children just like they can be considered for military service with a special review.

HELP PROGRAMS ENSURE STAFF MEMBERS ARE PROPERLY TRAINED AND SUPPORTED AS THEY ATTEND TRAINING

Parents noted that children can get hurt if staff members do not have the right training. Child care operators and staff members noted a number of challenges in supporting staff training needs. ECE Workforce Survey participants and focus group participants suggested the following strategies for making it easier for staff members to get the training they needed. The strategies focus on providing flexible options, providing supports so people could take time off from work if needed, and helping pay for training.

- **Provide scholarships, grants, or other funding to support workers pursuing education or training.** These steps can help with the direct tuition costs or training fees, but also could support transportation costs, internet fees and broadband access costs, and the need to pay for their own children's child care.

- **Make training and professional development opportunities more accessible.**

  » Support access to substitute teachers who can make it possible for child care operators and educators to attend professional development and training classes during the child care day.

> » Make trainings and professional development accessible in various formats that allow workers flexibility. Most child care operators and staff members wanted to receive future professional development and trainings as on-demand recorded sessions. About a third of respondents also selected other virtual options such as live video visits or calls with a trainer and live webinars. In-person trainings and printed materials were selected by nearly half and about a third, respectively, of child care operators and staff members.
>
> » Make community college courses easier to access.

- **Pay early childhood educators for their time participating in professional development and help them earn more when they increase their knowledge, skills, or credentials.** Early childhood educators reported they are required to meet increasingly rigorous educational standards but are not paid for the time they spend attaining credentials and degrees. Moreover, they reported that their compensation does not increase as they gain credentials and degrees. With their already low pay and challenges attaining the education, this discourages people who might otherwise want to stay in the field.

Recommendation 2: Focus Attention on and Provide Information about Basic Health and Safety

Parents talked about this area of concern, and parents typically named health and safety among their top priorities when selecting care. Child care providers were not asked direct questions about this topic on the workforce survey.

- **Parents expressed concerns about health and safety in child care programs** and noted that they did not know where to report child injuries or concerns.

- **Some parents reported looking at licensing violation information to inform child care selection, but others are not aware of how to find the information**. Some parents also said they had looked for information on DECAL-provided websites when they were searching for child care options to learn about whether providers had been cited for any violations and what corrective actions had been taken to fix problems. They noted having a hard time finding this information and that it seemed to be available for some providers but not others.

- **Some parents expressed concern that during the pandemic they could not come into the child care programs to see what was going on.** They felt that fewer people were able to observe the

quality and condition of the programs and their children could not necessarily provide a complete picture of what was going on.

- **Parents and some providers reported announced and virtual visits are not as robust as on-site monitoring.** Some parents who were able to go into their child care programs noticed when program staff members were preparing for observations from DECAL, either for a quality rating visit or a health and safety visit. Parents were concerned that without unannounced visits or in-person visits, DECAL staff members could not see the real conditions in the child care programs.

I feel like the state should do more random popups since we can't go in. I'm stressed every day. I never know what staff will be there.
—Georgia parent

Parent Recommendations for Improving Health and Safety and Increasing Their Knowledge of Health and Safety Conditions

Parent recommendations include the following (note that during the pandemic parent access to observing their children in their child care programs was more limited; sometimes they could not go into their programs at all, and in other cases they could not drop in the way they would have previously):

- **Provide funds so all programs can have cameras that allow parents and supervisors to see what is going on.**

  » Some parents were using or had been using child care programs that provided live video feeds of their children they could look at any time during the day.
  » One parent noted that her program caught an educator "beating children" because they had cameras.
  » Other parents reported that cameras can help them feel more connected to their child's program and support their child's learning and development.

- **Provide a place[8] that parents can call when their children are injured or disciplined inappropriately in a child care program.**

» Some parents reported their children had experienced burns, broken arms, or inappropriate discipline in child care programs, but they did not know where to report the injuries. One parent of a child with special needs reported that her child was not fed during the day and lost weight during her attendance in one Quality Rated program, so she took her child out and left her job to properly care for her child.

- **Provide more information that is easier to find about child care inspections and violations.**

  » Some parents wished this information were available online. Others said they had seen it on DECAL's Quality Rated website but wished information were consistently available and easier to find for all programs.

- **Do more unannounced visits to catch programs not following the rules.**

  » Parents had observed child care programs getting ready for visits by cleaning or reorganizing classrooms. They worried that programs were not providing as healthy or high-quality environments for their children because they knew no one was going to drop in during the pandemic.

Recommendation 3: Reconsider Group Sizes and Child-to-Staff Ratios

Parents, child care operators, and early childhood educators identified the number of children educators are responsible for and workload as key challenges in providing high-quality care. Although some parents referred directly to class sizes or child-to-teacher ratios, they were more likely to talk about challenges they experienced related to the amount of attention they felt early childhood educators could give to their children.

- Several parents reported that their young children were potty trained at home but would come home with a dirty diaper or pull-up that appeared not to have been changed all day.

  » Parents were concerned about their children being soiled all day. But they were also concerned because educators did not have the time to work with parents collaboratively on a toileting plan. Parents needed their children to make progress in child care to make progress at home too.

- Some parents said they were concerned that educators could not tell them about their child's day or how they were progressing on key milestones.

Considering Varying Needs of Different Types of Programs

In the ECE Workforce Survey, respondents were given the opportunity to identify changes that would help staff members stay in child care; hiring more staff members (54 percent) and smaller class sizes (46 percent) were the operational changes most often cited. Different types of programs, however, offered varying perspectives. Center-based staff members (64 percent) were most likely to identify more staff members as helpful, while Georgia's Pre-K staff members (69 percent) were most likely to cite smaller class sizes as helpful. Family home providers were far less likely to identify either more caregiving staff members (34 percent) or smaller class sizes (17 percent) that would help them remain in or return to child care.

In fact, family learning home providers were more likely to express an opposite perspective, with 37 percent of home-based survey respondents indicating they would like to see higher attendance or program enrollment. Similarly, some family learning home providers shared in the focus groups that increasing the number of children they could care for would help them earn more money and make it easier for families with multiple children who wanted all their children in one caregiving setting. For example, one family child care provider noted that she had the capacity to care for an additional older sibling who needed after-school care, in addition to the infants she was already caring for. In her words, "it's not the same as taking on another infant." In other words, some family child care learning providers wanted DECAL to consider the number of children that could be cared for in a home based on those children's ages.

Some parents using family child care homes affirmed that they were happy with the amount of attention their children were receiving there. One mom illustrated in her remarks what an attentive relationship, that she was satisfied with, looked like. Stories like this affirm that ratios or group sizes in family learning homes may help children and parents get more individualized attention, but they do not reinforce the provider's perspective that they could handle more children or that parents would be happy with that change.

One mom talked about the provider sending her pictures of her child engaging in activities during the day. She said the provider noticed when her child's mood changed and alerted the mom. The mom and provider were able to talk about strategies to use at the child's home and in the early learning home to help the child adjust to their new sibling.

These differing perspectives of center-based, home-based, and Georgia's Pre-K programs on group sizes and child-to-teacher ratios are not surprising given the different requirements they currently have (see current requirements listed in table 1 of the report).

Center-Based Child Care Operators and Workers Indicated More Staff Members and Smaller Classes Would Help Them Stay in Early Care and Learning; Home-Based Providers Were More Likely to Emphasize a Need for Higher Enrollment

Share of ECE Workforce Survey respondents identifying change as an operational change or support that would help them remain in or return to the workforce

■ Total ■ Center-based ■ Home-based ■ Pre-K

More teaching/caregiving staff
- 55%
- 64%
- 34%
- 30%

Smaller class sizes
- 46%
- 42%
- 17%
- 69%

Availability of substitute teachers
- 40%
- 41%
- 29%
- 39%

More support from program leadership or administrators
- 30%
- 31%
- 27%
- 26%

Less paperwork, reporting, and administrative work
- 23%
- 18%
- 31%
- 36%

Higher attendance or enrollment in program
- 17%
- 20%
- 37%
- 6%

More timely or useful updates and information from government organizations
- 14%
- 13%
- 25%
- 10%

URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Urban Institute survey of the Georgia early care and learning workforce (ECE Workforce Survey).
Notes: Respondents could select up to three responses from a list of options. Other options that could be selected but which are not shown because of fewer respondents choosing them were fewer meal preparation or cleaning duties and "other," for which respondents were asked to specify a change or support. Program type was based on respondents' self-reports.[9]

Recommendation 4: Provide More Accessible Information to Families about Available Early Care and Education Services

Families suggested that more of the pandemic relief funds could be used to ensure more families know about the services they qualify for and the resources available to help them find the care they need. They talked about the need for more parents to know about the existence of and eligibility requirements for the child care subsidy program (CAPS). Some parents of children with disabilities reported challenges accessing early screening and assessments for their children as well as early intervention services to which their children with disabilities were entitled. Some parents were aware of the DECAL-provided supports to help them find care, but others were not. Parents said they used both DECAL-provided resources and less formal methods to help them find the care they needed.

- QualityRated.org was used by some, but not all, parents as one information source.
  - » Some parents reported the website often includes out-of-date information, especially regarding provider hours.
- Very few parents reported using the 1-877-ALL-GA-KIDS number to find care.
  - » Most parents participating in the focus group were not aware of the resource.
- Parents reported learning about care from friends, by driving or walking by, from their children's school, from caseworkers, and online searches other than official DECAL sites.

Parents Recommended Making Information More Accessible

Parents recommended advertising the parent services DECAL offers in more locations to help families become aware of how children can qualify to receive care earlier in their lives. Parents said to consider a wide array of family needs; for example, some parents might be better reached through television commercials and others might respond better to hanging flyers on their doorknobs at home. Parents suggested providing brochures or flyers that could be posted or distributed in places that parents regularly visit:

- maternity wards and OB-GYN doctors' offices—so people expecting babies learn about their options before or as soon as their babies are born

» Several parents of children with disabilities reported that they obtained information in the hospital about early intervention services. These parents and others who participated in the focus groups reported the benefit of obtaining information from health professionals and caseworkers.

- churches, public schools, grocery stores, and farmers' markets

  » Family Peer Ambassadors [10] reported providing information to parents at the locations parents attend so they do not need to go out of their way to find information.

- social media platforms such as Facebook

  » Numerous parents reported that they used Facebook to learn about early care and education options, and several Family Peer Ambassadors reported using Facebook to share information about care options and services available.

Parents also said that DECAL's messaging could be improved:

- **Use person-first, nonstigmatizing language.** They said many messages refer to "low-income" families and that some families who would qualify for or need the services do not think of themselves that way or do not want the stigma of using something for people with low incomes.

- **Provide clear information about conditions that are priorities for eligibility.** Parents in priority groups for help paying for child care, such as victims of domestic violence, also noted that they may have considered alternative options for themselves (e.g., leaving abusers earlier) if they knew they could have gotten help.

- **Create messages for fathers.** Some also said that messages did not seem to be directed toward dads or families with nontraditional structures, which means DECAL may not be reaching those populations as well as they could.

- **Parents suggested that existing websites could have more and easier-to-read information about eligibility** so people do not feel like they have to apply to find out if they are eligible.

Recommendation 5: Consider How to Support More Providers in Offering Care, Providing Longer Hours, and Participating in CAPS

Parents discussed waiting lists for care in their communities. Of the available care, they talked about how limitations in the hours offered were impacting their ability to work. And, for families who were participating in or wanted to participate in CAPS, they noted their options were further limited by providers who would accept CAPS or met the Quality Rated criteria for CAPS participation.

- Some parents said that providers have been closing earlier since the pandemic, which has made it harder for them to pick up their children on time.

- Others noted that little evening, weekend, or holiday care is offered, which means parents have to turn down some job opportunities, work fewer hours than they would like to, and find alternate care arrangements when they have to work and their regular provider is closed.

BOX 3

Parents Provided Numerous Examples about How Limited Provider Hours Affect Them

- "The provider closes at the same time that I get off work. I have to drive so fast to get there. They charge $5 per minute late fees." (Numerous parents provided this same example.)

- "When I was in a homeless shelter, I could have gotten a job at a grocery store if I could have worked until 9:00 p.m. or on the weekends. But, I couldn't do that."

- "Some people who are not doctors and nurses also work 12-hour shifts, but there are not places open those hours."

- "My son has been on the waitlist since he was born; he is one."

Sources: Parents participating in focus groups.

The waiting lists are unreal. As soon as I had my son, I put him on a waiting list. I live in a rural area and there's not a lot of options around me so you must get on a waiting list as soon as possible.

—Georgia parent

Parents Suggested Incentivizing Providers to Stay Open Longer and Offering Payments to Transport Children

Parents said their work options are limited by the hours providers are open. In some cases, transportation from one provider to another or between home and the provider could help parents maintain employment or work more.

- Parents thought providers might offer longer days or evening, weekend, or holiday care if offered incentives to do so:
  - » One parent suggested the state should "have a pot of money so they can pay people who are willing to work on minor holidays" because her program closes but she must work.
  - » One parent recommended DECAL should "create a grant program to help entrepreneurs open child care programs in places where all the programs have waiting lists for kids."

- Parents tended to mention transportation between providers if their children were in Pre-K or elementary school, referencing the challenge of needing after-school care for their children and options not being available at the school (if the school offered care on site, it was already full).
  - » Some parents thought it would be helpful if providers could offer transportation. Although others thought they may be able to pay for the transportation themselves (they were already paying people), some thought they would probably need help paying for transportation.

If there was a way they could work out transportation in my area, then I can work longer to be able to provide for my child. We have to make a lot of hard choices. I need to be home when they get off from school because I don't have a choice.
—Georgia parent

Parent Comments and Provider Workforce Responses Suggest Finding Available Spaces in CAPS-Participating Programs Is More Challenging

Parents participating in the CAPS program noted additional challenges. Some parents participating in CAPS said their options had become more limited since DECAL required providers participating in CAPS to become Quality Rated.[11] Overall, nearly half (49 percent) of providers that were licensed or in the licensing system in September 2021 served children participating in CAPS, and more than half (53 percent) were participating in Quality Rated.[12]

Child Care Operators Participating in CAPS Reported Attendance Had Fallen More Than Those in Other Types of Programs

Share of program operators responding to the ECE Workforce Survey reporting current attendance level compared with typical fall attendance before the pandemic

Source: Urban Institute survey of the Georgia early care and learning workforce (ECE Workforce Survey).
Notes: CAPS participation and eligibility were based on program operators' self-reports. Those who identified as child care directors, managers, owners, or site directors were asked whether their programs participate in CAPS. They could select "Yes," "No," "N/A - Not eligible to participate," or "I don't know." Those who selected "I don't know" are not shown in the figure above. Non-CAPS are child care programs that indicated they are eligible for CAPS but do not participate. (Licensed child care programs and two categories of license-exempt programs, government-owned and operated child care programs and day camps, are eligible to participate in CAPS. All other license-exempt programs are not CAPS eligible.)

Even with efforts to support CAPS-eligible families' access to care financially and stabilization payments to providers to stay open, child care providers reported their enrollment levels had fallen during the pandemic. Child care operators participating in CAPS reported program attendance had fallen more than those in other types of programs. Only a third reported attendance was above 75 percent of typical fall levels before the pandemic compared with about half in other types of programs.

The disconnect between the experiences of families and child care providers who were open and participated in CAPS may reflect provider workforce challenges, increased requirements, and difficulties of caregiving during the pandemic, and that other providers had closed either temporarily or permanently, lowering the overall supply of care available.

Of program operators that participated in CAPS, only 57 percent reported being aware of their programs participating in CAPS ACCESS[13] or another pandemic-related CAPS program (Note: DECAL reports that all CAPS programs received benefits from CAPS ACCESS.)

FIGURE 5

Slightly More Than Half of Child Care Operators Participating in CAPS Indicated They Accessed Relief Programs Their Facilities Were Eligible for
Share of program operators responding to the ECE Workforce Survey reporting whether they accessed CAPS ACCESS or another CAPS program during the pandemic

■ Accessed CAPS ACCESS or other CAPS program
■ Did not access CAPS ACCESS or other CAPS program
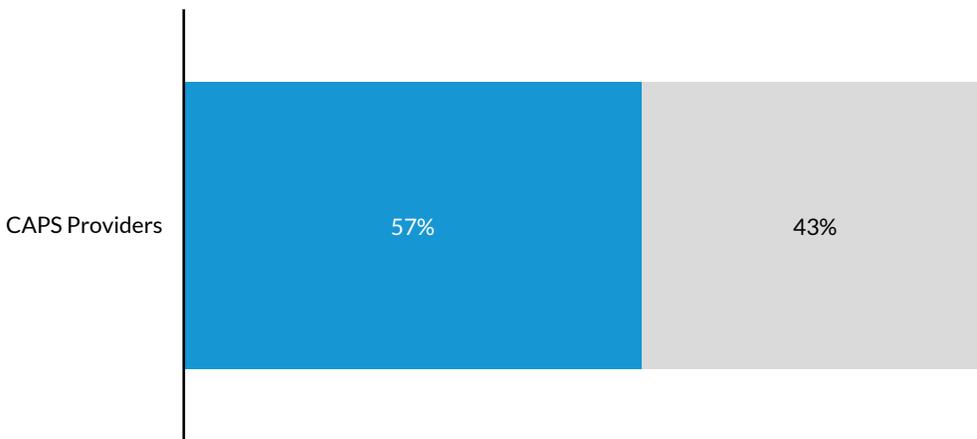
URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Urban Institute survey of the Georgia early care and learning workforce (ECE Workforce Survey).
Notes: CAPS participation and eligibility were based on program operators' self-reports. Those who identified as child care directors, managers, owners, or site directors were asked whether their programs participate in CAPS. They could select "Yes," "No," "N/A - Not eligible to participate," or "I don't know." (Licensed child care programs and two categories of license-exempt programs, government-owned and operated child care programs and day camps, are eligible to participate in CAPS. All other license-exempt programs are not CAPS eligible.)

Consider CAPS Providers' Particular Needs When Making Resource Decisions

Given current parent concerns about the limited availability of providers participating in CAPS, it will be important for DECAL to consider how the needs of CAPS-participating providers and nonparticipating providers differ.

- Child care operators participating in CAPS were more likely than non–CAPS participating providers to cite certain changes that would help keep them in or bring them back to the workforce. These include higher pay (80 percent for participants) and improved benefits (43 percent), more teaching and caregiving staff members (71 and 54 percent, respectively), and higher attendance or program enrollment (41 percent).

FIGURE 6

Child Care Operators in CAPS-Participating Programs Indicated That Increasing Teaching and Caregiving Staff Members Is an Operational Change That Would Help Them Stay in Early Care and Learning

Share of ECE Workforce Survey respondents identifying change as an operational change or support that would help them remain in or return to and stay in the child care industry

■ CAPS program ■ Non-CAPS ■ Not CAPS Eligible

	CAPS program	Non-CAPS	Not CAPS Eligible
More teaching/caregiving staff	71%	54%	54%
Availability of substitute teachers	47%	45%	43%
Higher attendance or enrollment in program	41%	32%	44%
Less paperwork, reporting, and administrative work	28%	32%	25%
Smaller class sizes	26%	21%	27%

URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Urban Institute survey of the Georgia early care and learning workforce (ECE Workforce Survey).
Notes: Respondents could select up to three responses from a list of options. Other options that could be selected but which are not shown because of fewer respondents choosing them were fewer meal preparation or cleaning duties and "other," for which

respondents were asked to specify a change or support. CAPS participation and eligibility were based on program operators' self-reports. Those who identified as child care directors, managers, owners, or site directors were asked whether their programs participate in CAPS. They could select "Yes," "No," "N/A - Not eligible to participate," or "I don't know." Those who selected "I don't know" are not shown in the figure above. Non-CAPS are child care programs that indicated they are eligible for CAPS but do not participate. (Licensed child care programs and two categories of license-exempt programs, government-owned and operated child care programs and day camps, are eligible to participate in CAPS. All other license-exempt programs are not CAPS eligible.)
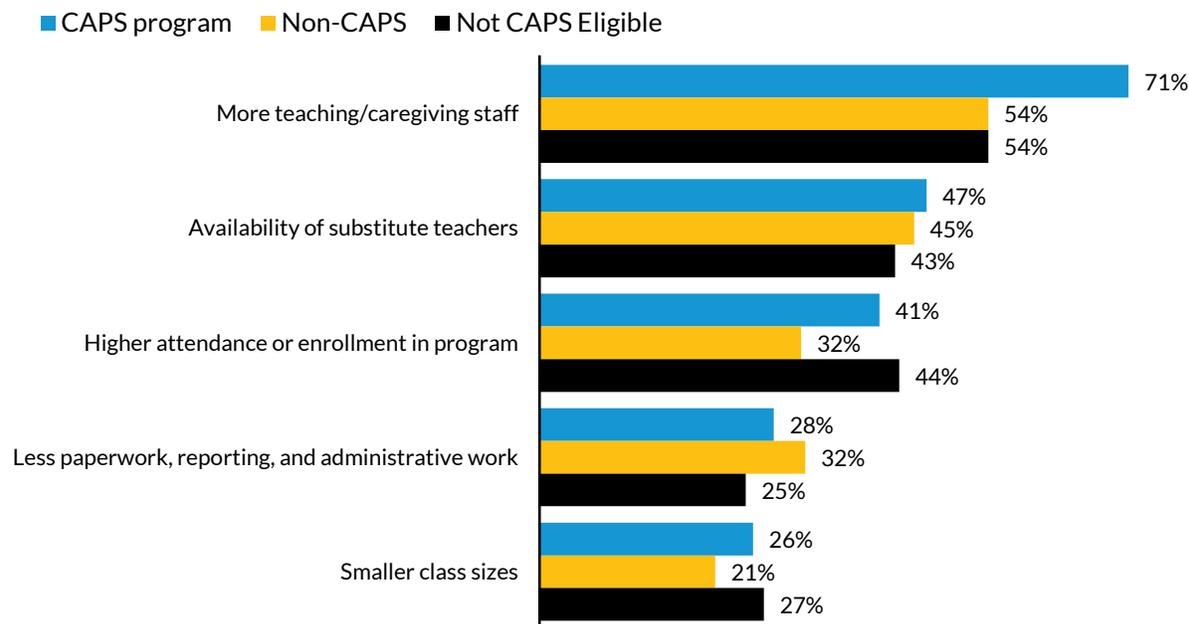
PARENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Parents recommended that DECAL make it easier for more providers to participate in CAPS so a wider pool of care options is available. Parents noted that they wanted quality care for their children, but they were not sure that requiring CAPS providers to be Quality Rated was the way to do that.

- Parents noted that they wanted to send their children to programs where their children would be safe, learn something, and experience warm, loving relationships.

- Some parents also expressed concerns that some of the Quality Rated providers did not appear to have what they would consider a quality program.

- Some parents noted that they drive 30 minutes or more out their way, passing other child care programs, to participate in a program where they feel comfortable their child will get the care they need and want.

Recommendation 6: Support Providers in Taking Care of Children's Social-Emotional and Behavioral Needs

Most child care operators and staff members (61 percent) indicated that support with managing challenging behaviors and children's social-emotional development are instructional and classroom resources that would help them keep working in child care. A substantial share (42 percent) also cited classroom materials to support learning as helpful. Home-based providers most often cited classroom materials and curriculum and lesson planning resources as helpful.

These supports help providers foster enriching and stable classroom and program environments that help facilitate children's development and support families during the pandemic. Many child care operators shared concerns about how the pandemic was negatively impacting children. Nearly two-thirds of child care operators reported they were "very concerned" about children experiencing learning loss; stress, trauma, or emotional issues; or missed opportunities for social connections during the pandemic. Around half also expressed concerns around children missing medical or other routine check-ups, lacking a safe and structured environment, or experiencing food insecurity. Child care

operators were particularly concerned about access to high-quality care for children with disabilities (68 percent reported being "very concerned"), those in families with lower incomes (64 percent), and those in foster care or protective services (58 percent).

The provider survey responses demonstrate provider concern for the families and children in their care, a recognition that providers could do better in meeting the needs of families and children, and an acknowledgement that the providers need help to do it better. When providers do not have the supports they need, children, families, and the providers become stressed. Parents and children may leave the program, but early childhood educators may also leave. Situations where providers are not equipped to handle these behavioral needs may also result in child expulsions or inappropriate discipline. None of these outcomes are what parents, providers, or DECAL wants.

FIGURE 7

Child Care Operators and Workers Cited Managing Challenging Behaviors as a Classroom Support That Would Help Them Stay in Early Care and Learning

Share of ECE Workforce Survey respondents identifying support as a classroom support or resource that would help them remain in or return to and stay in the child care industry
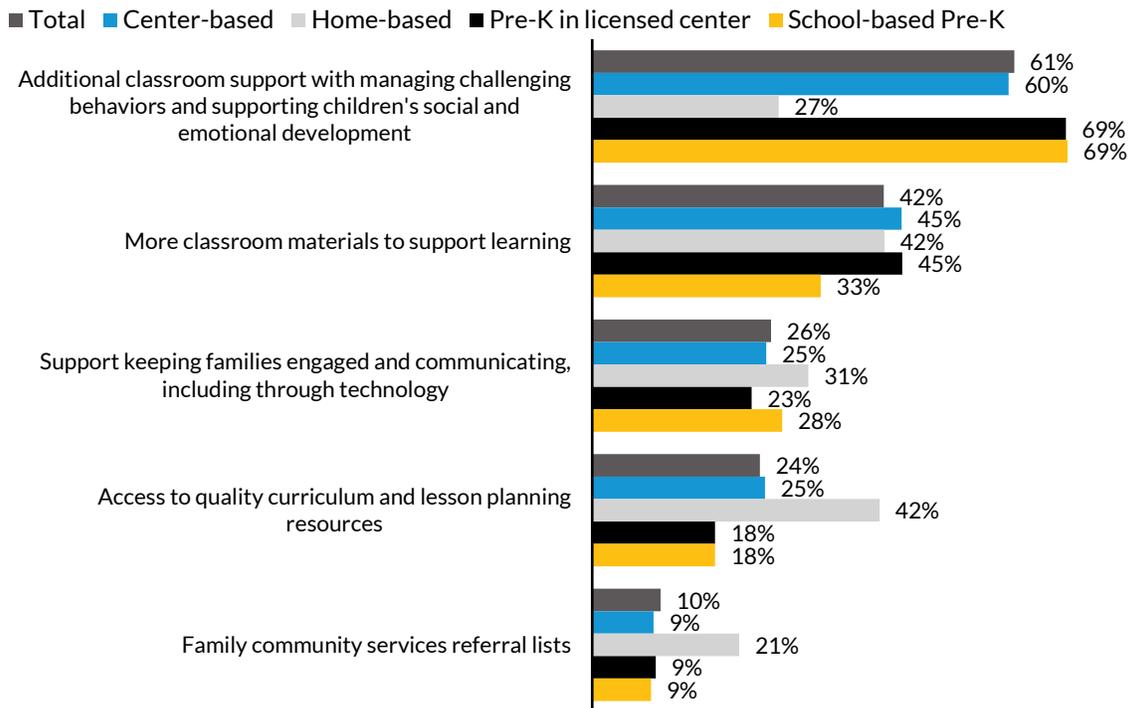
Legend: ■ Total ■ Center-based ■ Home-based ■ Pre-K in licensed center ■ School-based Pre-K

Additional classroom support with managing challenging behaviors and supporting children's social and emotional development
- 61%
- 60%
- 27%
- 69%
- 69%

More classroom materials to support learning
- 42%
- 45%
- 42%
- 45%
- 33%

Support keeping families engaged and communicating, including through technology
- 26%
- 25%
- 31%
- 23%
- 28%

Access to quality curriculum and lesson planning resources
- 24%
- 25%
- 42%
- 18%
- 18%

Family community services referral lists
- 10%
- 9%
- 21%
- 9%
- 9%

URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Urban Institute survey of the Georgia early care and learning workforce (ECE Workforce Survey).
Notes: Respondents could select up to two responses from a list of options. Another option that could be selected but is not shown because of fewer respondents choosing it was "other," for which respondents were asked to specify a change or support. Program type was based on respondents' self-reports.[14]

Recommendation 7: Consider New Benchmarks for Affordable Care in Georgia, including Limits for CAPS Participation and Parent Contributions When Receiving CAPS

Both parents who do and do not receive child care subsidy support from the CAPS program said it is hard to pay for child care. Everyone noted that other costs in their lives were going up, so affording child care was getting harder even if child care prices did not go up. They were not sure how to address the problem other than to support more parents in getting help and to express thanks for the support they had already received.

Use the big pot of money to subsidize all daycare so anyone can afford it even if they don't get CAPS.
—Georgia parent recommending what to do with the pandemic relief funds

Parents who receive CAPS noted how helpful the pandemic relief program that waives their parent tuition amount has been (CAPS ACCESS); some called it a "lifeline." Parents with multiple children noted that even prepandemic it was hard for them to pay their assessed parent contribution. They were also worried that they are seeing child care providers increase tuition. Parents are worried that when they have to start paying the parent portion, it will be even harder than before because of other increased costs in their lives and higher tuition that will make their parent portion even more than it was prepandemic.

The gas and the grocery store bills are going up. People need homes. People have bills. Everything is going up.
—Georgia parent worried about how to pay child care tuition among increasing costs for everything else

Parents who are not receiving CAPS talked about the trade-offs they were making between work and child care. In two-parent families, one parent was staying home because the second income would be less than the cost of child care. In some cases, two-parent families talked about working split shifts that allowed one parent to be home with the kids at all times.

If it weren't for a $500 per week daycare bill, maybe my wife could go back to her law enforcement job. But we would go in the hole for her to work.
—Georgia parent whose family does not receive help paying for child care and who does not think they qualify

Recommendation 8: Consider How to Sufficiently Support CAPS to Increase Responsiveness to Parents

Parents and DECAL staff members noted that the responsiveness of communications for DECAL's subsidy program for parents with low incomes (CAPS) could be improved. Both staff members and parents understood that recent pandemic changes to serve more parents and provide higher levels of financial support to parents were straining staff members' ability to communicate with parents as quickly as anyone would like. Parent remarks indicate that their experiences varied across the state and that prepandemic experiences were also mixed.

Parents expressed considerable stress in trying to reach caseworkers to find out the status of their applications. Parents were more likely to say their renewal application was easier than their initial application, but that was not the case for everyone. Parents also said that transferring from one provider to another was a challenge. Some parents said their caseworker's voicemail was full so they could not leave a message; others said they were leaving repeated voice messages. Some said they were emailing questions. Some parents noted if they were able to connect with a supervisor that they could get answers about why their caseworker was not responding. Most parents were not familiar with the texting service.

Parents generally thought the Gateway system, where they submit their application and supporting paperwork to demonstrate their eligibility, was easy to use. Some found it confusing and not as easy as emailing documents to their caseworkers.

Most parents participating in CAPS who shared perspectives in the study had communication challenges with the CAPS program.[15] Parents explained that they were so stressed about getting answers about their child care subsidy application because they were not sure when they would get an answer and for the following reasons:

- They had to start their job by a certain date but could not do so until they knew they had the subsidy to help them pay for child care.

- They had to start their job by a certain date, and they had to pay their provider the full amount out of pocket until they were approved for CAPS.

- They needed to change providers because they had moved to another part of the state but could not get the approval until after they enrolled in the new program. Meanwhile, they had to pay out of pocket until approved.

When parents need child care, they need it right away.
—Georgia parent receiving CAPS

Parent Recommendations for Improving CAPS Communications

Parents had the following recommendations for improving communications and responsiveness in the CAPS program:

- **Provide clearer information on the website about eligibility.**

  » People felt like they did not know whether they were eligible when applying.
  » People learned later that they were in priority groups. They would have applied earlier if they had known they were eligible.

- **Provide clearer information in the application submission process about when to expect to hear back.** People were more anxious the first time they applied, and they said they had no idea when they should have heard back.

- **Provide more information about why an application is denied.** People felt like they did not have enough information to know if the person processing their application had interpreted all

their information correctly or if there had been a mistake that they could correct. They were repeatedly trying to contact the agency to get more information.

- **Provide better training to people reviewing applications about how to interpret eligibility for families where the parents are separated but not divorced.** Parents indicated that they received different information from different people and had to speak to many people before they were finally determined eligible. Families fleeing domestic violence are one such group in this category who need help immediately and for whom the stress of receiving information about eligibility quickly is particularly dire.

- **If mailing letters to parents, send them sooner.** Parents who received letters in the mail about a need to renew their information received their letters after the deadline.

- Parents acknowledged that not all parents are equally capable of using electronic systems or would prefer the same way of communication. They suggested **using multiple methods and considering parents' work schedules and that they may have jobs where they cannot be on the phone or on email except during short breaks.**

Recommendation 9: Offer Child Care Providers Additional Grants and Supports for Financial Sustainability and Business Planning

Programs report that additional financial supports are among their greatest needs currently; they are also concerned about their sustainability and financial viability once pandemic-response funding winds down.

- The majority of child care operators were somewhat or very concerned about their programs' sustainability when pandemic-relief funding ends.

Different types of child care operators were more likely to cite different types of supports as more helpful, emphasizing the need to consider which supports will help improve outcomes for certain programs.

- Center-based programs were most likely to cite additional funding to pay staff members (68 percent) as one of their top current needs.

- On the other hand, two-thirds of home-based programs cited additional funding for operating costs such as rent, insurance, and utilities as a top need. These programs were less likely than others to indicate additional funding to pay for staff members (35 percent).

FIGURE 8

Child Care Operators' Current Needs Included Funding Issues

Share of child care operators citing different issues as top current program needs
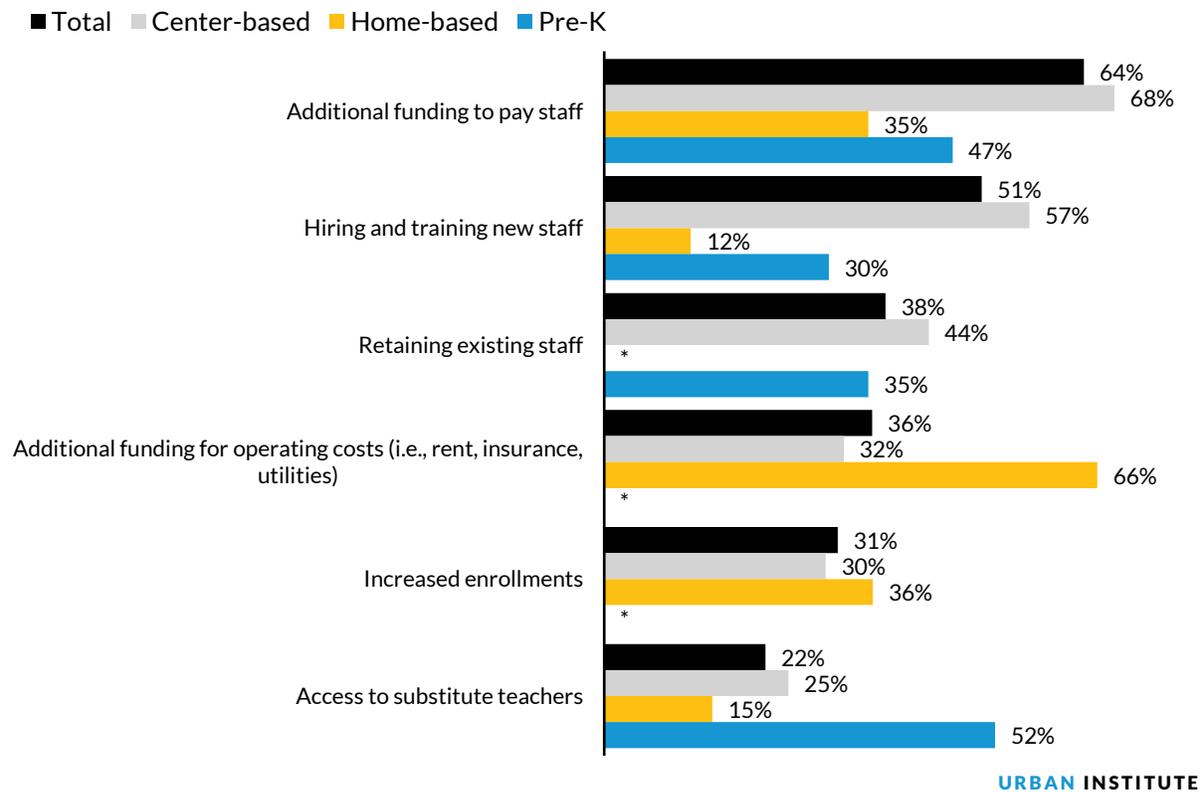
■ Total   ■ Center-based   ■ Home-based   ■ Pre-K

Additional funding to pay staff
- 64%
- 68%
- 35%
- 47%

Hiring and training new staff
- 51%
- 57%
- 12%
- 30%

Retaining existing staff
- 38%
- 44%
- *
- 35%

Additional funding for operating costs (i.e., rent, insurance, utilities)
- 36%
- 32%
- 66%
- *

Increased enrollments
- 31%
- 30%
- 36%
- *

Access to substitute teachers
- 22%
- 25%
- 15%
- 52%

URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Urban Institute survey of the Georgia early care and learning workforce (ECE Workforce Survey).

Notes: Respondents could select up to three responses from a list of options. Other options that could be selected but which are not shown because of fewer respondents choosing them were help paying for or acquiring personal protective equipment or cleaning supplies, legal advice, assistance with accessing public funding programs, information or communication on child care policy or regulations, community mental health resources, help getting landlord to reopen the building where program is operating, and "other," for which respondents were asked to specify a change or support. Program type was based on program operators' self-reports.[16]

* Suppressed because of small sample size.

SOLUTIONS RECOMMENDED BY PARTICIPANTS

Programs most often cited additional grants for programmatic opportunities (44 percent) and help with sustainability planning (37 percent) as the potential supports from DECAL that would be the most helpful.

- Nearly half of programs (45 percent) have or intend to develop a sustainability plan for when pandemic-response funding ends, while nearly as many (43 percent) are unsure if that is the case. Very few programs (11 percent) indicated they do not intend to develop a plan.

- Nearly 40 percent of programs (37 percent) would like assistance developing sustainability plans with the same amount unsure of if they would like assistance or not. School-based (59 percent) and home-based (44 percent) programs were more likely to indicate they'd like help developing a sustainability plan.

  » Slightly more than a quarter (27 percent) indicated they would not like help developing a plan. Pre-K programs were most likely to report they did not want help creating a plan, and those that indicated they do not want help may also include programs that already have a sustainability plan.

Child Care Operators Cited Additional Funding and Sustainability Planning as the Most Helpful Potential DECAL Supports

Share of child care operators citing potential DECAL support as most helpful
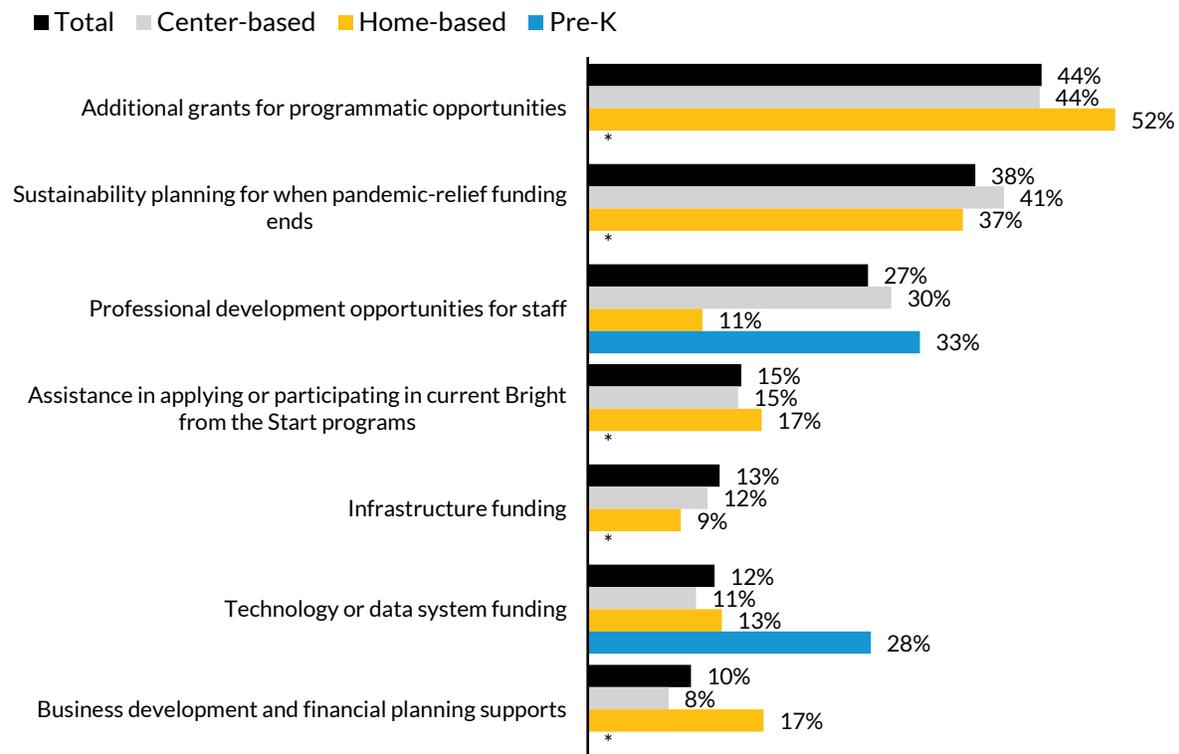
■ Total   ■ Center-based   ■ Home-based   ■ Pre-K

Additional grants for programmatic opportunities: 44%, 44%, 52%, *

Sustainability planning for when pandemic-relief funding ends: 38%, 41%, 37%, *

Professional development opportunities for staff: 27%, 30%, 11%, 33%

Assistance in applying or participating in current Bright from the Start programs: 15%, 15%, 17%, *

Infrastructure funding: 13%, 12%, 9%, *

Technology or data system funding: 12%, 11%, 13%, 28%

Business development and financial planning supports: 10%, 8%, 17%, *

URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Urban Institute survey of the Georgia early care and learning workforce (ECE Workforce Survey).
Notes: Respondents could select up to two responses from a list of options. Other options that could be selected but which are not shown because of fewer respondents choosing them were additional information on child care policy or regulations and "other," for which respondents were asked to specify a change or support. Program type was based on program operators' self-reports.[17]
* Suppressed because of small sample size.

Around two-thirds of child care operators in center-based and home-based settings (62 percent and 67 percent, respectively) reported their program had participated in STABLE. More than half of child care operators across settings also reported that they or their staff members had received bonus payments through POWER and 39 percent reported participating in CAPS ACCESS or other CAPS pandemic-response programs.

- Individuals leading center- and home-based programs were much more likely than those in other types of programs to report that they or their staff members had received POWER bonus payments. Center-based providers (66 percent) were most likely to report participation in the program, followed by home-based providers (49 percent). Although all Georgia Pre-K lead and assistant educators received POWER bonuses through their programs, only one-third of Pre-K program (32 percent) operators reported being aware that their staff were participating in POWER. The lack of awareness may reflect a lack of understanding of the source of the bonuses and the connection to POWER.

Providers in focus groups had also noted some pandemic-related challenges in getting the routine goods and services that they needed to offer nutritious meals and maintain safe environments for the children. Providers thought that DECAL may be able to help with these purchasing relationships by perhaps creating contracts for these goods and services that providers can access.

- **Help child care providers obtain nutritious food.** Several child care directors and family child care operators reported that since the pandemic, their milk and food distributors have dropped them because they are small clients. Some said they go to the grocery store at nights or on weekends to buy needed food and supplies. Several noted that this is a new responsibility on top of their roles overseeing all the books, the early childhood educators, the early learning environment, and parent engagement. Several said this added responsibility creates additional stress.

    » Some parents noted that having culturally responsive food is important. They had observed some peer families who had religious dietary restrictions, such as not eating pork, but no alternate food options offered.

- **Consider offering facility grants, loans, or bulk purchasing.** Numerous family child care operators and child care facility directors said they were experiencing difficulty hiring contractors to fix playgrounds and facilities. Several mentioned facility problems they needed to address to get their playgrounds, plumbing, and other issues up to code. They reported that

they are not able to hire contractors and could benefit from a state program to help with purchasing major capital or blanket purchases so contractors are more likely to show up to make needed facility repairs.

Summary of Parent and Provider Perspectives

Parents shared that they wanted learning environments where the staff members are caring, communicative, and collaborative with parents, and where their children are safe from harm and their needs are met.

- Parents see well-trained early childhood educators who stay over the long term as key to their children's success.

  » They know early childhood educators are struggling, and one of the top parent recommendations is to pay teachers more.

- Parents also see an important role for DECAL in making sure their children are safe, helping them access services, and letting them know how to report the problems they see.

- And they appreciate how the CAPS program, in particular, pivoted to help them meet greater needs during the pandemic. They are worried about how they will pay for child care postpandemic, and non–CAPS eligible families are already talking about trade-offs they are making.

Child care operators want to provide supportive environments for children and families. They want to create careers in early learning programs. They want to give children and parents what they need.

- But providers identified many challenges to sustaining the workforce, maintaining their programs, and providing the supports that families and children need without burning out and underpaying their staff.

- They said pandemic supports have been helpful but have not met all challenges. They see challenges continuing postpandemic and are worried about what that means for the future.

Throughout the report, we intentionally focused on the voices of parents, child care operators, and early childhood educators whose perspectives are critical for DECAL to hear firsthand. In this section of the report, we bring together those voices with the perspectives of DECAL staff members who serve families and child care providers.

DECAL Staff Member Perspectives

At the start of this report, we mentioned that we also conducted a survey of DECAL staff members. The purpose of the survey was to understand their perspectives on the needs of the children, families, and early childhood educators and operators they are serving and how well they are meeting these people's needs. Most people participating in the survey were nonsupervisory staff members who do not have decisionmaking authority but are charged with carrying out DECAL's work. As those charged with providing services, they have a unique and important set of insights.

DECAL staff members' concerns generally echoed and aligned with those of parents and the early care and learning workforce. They identified program staffing and financial sustainability as key challenges for programs and communications and affordability as issues for families. Recommendations in each of these areas were also similar to those suggested by parents and child care operators and early childhood educators: hiring, training, and increasing pay could help build and maintain a strong workforce, and expanding and broadening CAPS and stepping up communications and responsiveness could support families' access to care.

Specifically, DECAL staff members provided the following insights.

Providing High-Quality, Responsive Services to Child Care Providers and Families

- When asked to consider the quality and responsiveness of DECAL services to the child care workforce, child care providers, families, and staff members tended to feel positive about most dimensions of service quality.

- They were less positive about DECAL responsiveness to

  » early care and learning workers with complex situations (10 percent expressed concern);
  » child care providers who needed help navigating processes (10 percent expressed concern); and
  » families who needed help navigating processes (23 percent expressed concern).

- They tended to have more concerns about service quality for families than for other groups, with 20 percent expressing concern about timeliness of processing paperwork or providing approvals for programs and 11 percent expressing concern about whether families were learning about DECAL programs.

- We did not collect similar information from child care providers and the early learning workforce, but comments parents made in focus groups suggest that DECAL staff members have a good sense of where improvements could be made and would be appreciated by parents.

Strengthening Early Care and Learning Programs

- Most DECAL staff members identified staffing and hiring issues (73 percent) and having a strong workforce (61 percent) as major challenges facing child care providers.

- Similar to parents and child care workers, DECAL staff members recommended increasing pay for early childhood educators and assisting programs with recruiting and retaining quality early childhood educators as ways to strengthen child care and early education in the state.

- DECAL staff members echoed parents' suggestions to resume and increase the number of in-person visits and inspections to improve quality of care.

- Similar to parents and early childhood educators, DECAL staff members recommended lowering child-to-staff ratios and class sizes as ways to strengthen early care and learning in the state.

- Slightly more than a quarter of DECAL staff members (28 percent) identified the cost of operating programs as a major challenge facing child care providers.

Supporting Families and Children

- The majority of DECAL staff members (54 percent) identified consumer education as a major challenge for families in accessing high-quality care.

- The majority of DECAL staff members (61 percent) identified the cost of care for families not receiving subsidies as another top challenge for families accessing high-quality care, and a substantial share (39 percent) cited the quality of available care as well.

- DECAL staff members frequently identified children in families with lower incomes as a group they were particularly concerned about, with 43 percent indicating they were very concerned about access to high-quality care for children in families with lower incomes.

- DECAL staff members suggested expanding CAPS eligibility to middle-income families, especially those right above the current threshold. They also recommended reviewing and rethinking priority groups for the program to include families with needs who were not

currently being served. They shared that the need is greater than what is currently being met and that the program should reach more families overall.

- About one in five DECAL staff members were very concerned about access to high-quality care outside of school time (22 percent); during nontraditional hours, including evenings, early mornings, overnight, and weekends (22 percent); and in the summer for school-age children (21 percent).

This report provides DECAL with many stakeholder experiences, concerns, and recommendations. Each experience and concern is important for DECAL to consider as it allocates resources from CRRSA, ARP, and other child care system dollars. The pandemic, the child care crisis it exacerbated, and the additional federal funds provided to address the issues create an important opportunity to reflect on how short-term funds can address immediate needs (such as short-term bonuses for staff) and the foundation for longer-term solutions.

As DECAL considers these stakeholders' perspectives, they also must think about equity in distributing funds. We collected information from stakeholders in ways that assured we heard from people in rural areas from all corners of the state, metropolitan Atlanta urban counties, and other urban counties. We also presented findings (and data not shown here) by types of child care providers, types of workforce positions, information about parents who do and do not receive subsidies, and parents who do and do not have children with disabilities. We spoke to and sought feedback from people who serve or have children who need care of all ages from birth through age 13. Still, DECAL will need to consider the information provided here in conjunction with the data they have to determine an equitable distribution of the funds. The various perspectives showed that what is best for one group is not necessarily best for all groups. Finally, recommendations are not the same as specific strategies, so DECAL will have to seek out their staff members' expertise and draw on existing research to determine the most effective strategies.

Appendix A. Data Collection, Response Rates, and Weighting

Designing the Study

The Urban Institute team designed this study in collaboration with staff members working in Georgia's Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL). We worked closely with the research unit staff members and with advisement from the Deputy Commissioner for Quality Innovations and Partnerships, the Commissioner, and a project leadership team with representatives from across DECAL's service areas. The research team consulted regularly with these DECAL staff members to assure that the study would meet DECAL's needs, learn about and understand current DECAL programs and strategies, understand Georgia and DECAL-specific terminology and language used, secure the data needed to reach out to program participants, and reflect on data findings.

In this collaborative design, we agreed that three types of stakeholders would best meet DECAL's expressed interests and needs: early care and learning staff members (the early childhood workforce and child care operators), DECAL staff members (the people developing, administering, and delivering services), and parents and grandparents who rely on early care and learning services to support child and family needs. Many other early care and learning stakeholders in Georgia exist, but these three perspectives provide different dimensions for understanding the early care and learning system's strengths and challenges, and we determined that we could reasonably obtain their perspectives and provide insights during the period needed to provide actionable information to inform DECAL's decisions on how to spend the remaining federally provided Coronavirus Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA) and American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds.

We made sure to invite and receive diverse perspectives in each of the three groups, focusing on the following dimensions of diversity:

- counties designated as urban and rural, paying attention to whether the urban counties were Atlanta area or non-Atlanta area and the distribution of rural counties across DECAL's six service regions

- types of early care and learning programs delivering services and used by parents, including those (programs and parents) that did and did not participate in Georgia's child care subsidy program, CAPS

- position types of early care and learning and DECAL staff respondents, both supervisory and nonsupervisory

- DECAL staff member divisions and roles

- child age groups, either served by early care and learning programs or for whom parents were seeking or using care

- children with and without identified disabilities

- families with various needs and experiences who had children of all ages (infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children) and who needed care for either one or more children

Three Types of Data Collection

We collected information through three methods: a survey of the early care and learning workforce, a survey of the DECAL staff members, and focus groups of parents and early care and learning providers. We provide more information about each data collection strategy here.

BOX A.1

Topics Covered in Data Collection Instruments

Early Care and Learning Workforce Survey

- current or most recent early care and learning job

- effects of COVID-19 on employment, finances, and other areas

- challenges and additional supports needed for working in ECE

- program needs, challenges, and potential supports

- professional development

- demographics and background characteristics

DECAL Staff Survey

- job at DECAL

- views on work and DECAL services

- challenges and recommendations in working at DECAL and to improve DECAL services

- views on the child care system and challenges

- recommendations to support the child care system

- demographics and background characteristics

Focus Groups with Parents

- how families learn about early care and learning opportunities, providers, and services

- what parents are looking for in early care and learning programs (quality and safety)

- availability and affordability of care

- how families receiving CAPS experience program participation

- positive experiences and challenges faced by families in learning about, finding, affording, and using early care and learning programs

- how families recommend DECAL use the funds

Focus Groups with Early Care and Learning Programs

- current status of early care and learning and related services in Georgia

- effects of the pandemic on providers

- pandemic supports

Survey Administration, Populations, and Recruitment

We administered the surveys using Qualtrics, a secure, web-based platform. Participants completed the online surveys themselves. The ECE Workforce Survey was available to take in English or Spanish, and the DECAL Staff Survey was available in English only. For both surveys, the population of eligible people was invited to participate rather than a sample.

EARLY CARE AND LEARNING WORKFORCE POPULATION

The population for the early care and learning workforce survey (ECE Workforce Survey) was all staff members working in licensed or exempt Georgia early care and learning programs, including child care learning centers, family child care learning homes, programs that are part of Georgia's Pre-K, and Head Start and Early Head Start programs, as well as other license-exempt programs and facilities. The survey was sent to program and facility directors, managers, and owners, as well as teaching and nonteaching staff members.

Eligible participants were identified using Georgia's workforce registry (Georgia Professional Development System—GaPDS). To better understand and be inclusive of both current and former child

care workers and inactive users still working in the field, we included email addresses for recruitment from all users with ECE workforce positions who had been active in GaPDS in the past five years and contact information for staff members in DECAL's provider licensing, exemption, and Georgia's Pre-K records. The provider lists were drawn from fall 2021 records, except for the exemption records—exemptions for which the last action had occurred from January 2019 through fall 2021 were included. The survey was conducted as a census rather than a sample of these records and was successfully emailed to 102,945 unique contacts. Because DECAL was not certain that all early care and learning workforce members were captured through these lists, we also worked with DECAL to post to its social media accounts and share with the Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS), an advocacy group that partners with DECAL.

DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CARE AND LEARNING STAFF POPULATION

The population for the DECAL Staff Survey was all current DECAL staff members as of October 20, 2021, not including contractors and temporary employees. DECAL provided a comprehensive roster of current staff members including email addresses, which were used for survey recruitment. The survey was conducted as a census rather than a sample and was emailed to 659 staff members.

Survey Recruitment and Administration

We uploaded email address lists for both surveys to Qualtrics, the web-based platform we used for survey administration. Urban team members sent a recruitment email to each person on the lists, with a unique link to the survey that only they could access, requesting their participation. We launched the surveys on October 26, 2021, and closed them approximately two weeks later, on November 10, 2021.

To encourage completion, we sent seven email messages for each survey over the administration period, with information about the data collection and a link to the survey. These emails included the initial recruitment email, reminder emails, an extension email (that we were extending the deadline for both surveys), a "two days left to participate" email, and a "final day" reminder email. We distributed these emails through the Qualtrics distribution feature for the ECE Workforce Survey and through Qualtrics for the initial recruitment and first reminder emails for the DECAL Staff Survey. We switched to using Outlook mail merge to distribute the remaining five emails for the DECAL Staff Survey, because of issues with reaching staff email addresses with distribution through Qualtrics.

LOTTERY FOR THE ECE WORKFORCE SURVEY

At the end of the early care and learning workforce survey, participants had the option to enter a lottery for a chance to win a $50 Visa e-gift card. If they decided to enter, participants were redirected from the main survey to a secure website where they could enter their name and email address. We randomly selected 100 winners for the lottery, out of 4,541 entrants.

Response Rates

Tables A.1–6 below show the overall response rates for the surveys, as well as the response rates by characteristics that were available on the recruitment list.

ECE WORKFORCE SURVEY

We sent the ECE Workforce Survey invitation email to 107,710 email addresses (drawing from all workers in the workforce registry records and provider contact records, and a small number of people who reached out to take the survey that were not in either of the records); 4,765 of these emails did not go through, so 102,945 emails were received. Of these 102,945 people who received the survey, 9,337 started the survey and, of those, 6,004 completed it. The overall completion rate for the survey was about 5.8 percent. In our analysis of the survey data, we only included those who had completed at least 50 percent of the survey (6,597 surveys in total), which also amounted to about 6.4 percent of the invitations received.

TABLE A.1
ECE Workforce Survey Overall Response Statistics

	Overall	Share of emails received
Emails sent	107,710	-
Bounce backs^	4,765	-
Emails received	102,945	100%
Incomplete surveys	3,333	3%
Completed surveys	6,004	6%
Total surveys started	9,337	9%
Surveys used in analysis^^	6,597	6%
Opt outs^^^	1,872	2%

Source: Urban Institute survey of the Georgia early care and learning workforce (ECE Workforce Survey).
Notes: Bounce backs^ represent when people were sent emails but the emails did not go through. Surveys used in analysis^^ include all completed surveys (6,004 surveys) and incomplete surveys that were at least 50 percent complete (593 surveys). Opt outs^^^ represent people who received emails inviting them to participate in the survey but indicated that they did not want to receive any further outreach about the survey. These are people who declined to participate in the survey.

We also studied response rates by different characteristics that were included in the workforce registry records and provider contact records. The table below reports response rates by the region of the first employer listed in the workforce registry records and by the urban or rural geographies of that region. Across these regions, and urban and rural areas, the response rate of those who had finished the survey was relatively consistent and similar to the overall completion rate.

TABLE A.2
ECE Workforce Survey Response Statistics by Geography

	Total number of email recipients	Total number who started the survey	Response rate (started survey)	Total number who finished the survey	Response rate (finished survey)
Overall	102,945	9,337	9%	6,004	6%
Region of first employer listed	-	-	-	-	-
CE urban	11,552	1,038	9%	682	6%
CE rural	1,557	167	11%	109	7%
CW urban	14,008	1,132	8%	736	5%
CW rural	265	20	8%	14	5%
NE urban	13,318	1,240	9%	814	6%
NE rural	2,855	234	8%	159	6%
NW urban	14,090	1,371	10%	909	6%
NW rural	803	74	9%	56	7%
SE urban	6,733	536	8%	336	5%
SE rural	5,707	560	10%	362	6%
SW urban	8,787	712	8%	477	5%
SW rural	4,556	443	10%	293	6%
NULL^	14,217	1,000	7%	559	4%
Provider^^	4,497	810	18%	498	11%

Sources: Urban Institute survey of the Georgia early care and learning workforce (ECE Workforce Survey); Georgia's workforce registry (Georgia Professional Development System—GaPDS) records retrieved on October 15, 2021; and provider contacts drawn from licensing, exemption, and Georgia's Pre-K records retrieved October 7, 2021.
Notes: NULL^ indicates cases where there were missing data around a specific variable in the workforce registry records for a survey recipient. Provider^^The source for the values in this row was the provider contact records, which did not contain geographic characteristics. CE = Central East, CW = Central West, NE = North East, NW = North West, SE = South East, SW = South West.

We also calculated response rates by other characteristics in the workforce registry records, including the last year respondents were active in the workforce registry system, child care program type, position type, age, and race and ethnicity. The respondents from the provider contact records did not have these additional characteristics listed in the data, so we exclude them from the table below (as well as those respondents who reached out to us to take the survey and were not in either of the records). Across most

characteristics, the response rate for those who finished the survey was relatively similar to the overall completion rate (6 percent), though some had relatively higher completion rates, including workers active in the workforce registry in 2021 (9 percent), respondents in the local school system (11 percent), those who were directors (9 percent) or specialists (9 percent), and those 31 and older (10 to 12 percent). Those who were younger than 30 (4 percent), listed as substitutes or floaters (3 percent), and last active in the workforce registry in 2020 or earlier (2 to 4 percent) had relatively lower completion rates.

ECE Workforce Survey Detailed Response Statistics for Outreach to Workforce Registry (GaPDS) Users

	Total number of email recipients	Total number who started the survey	Response rate (started survey)	Total number who finished the survey	Response rate (finished survey)
Overall^	98,088	8,527	9%	5,506	6%
Last active year in system	-	-	-	-	-
2016	1,685	46	3%	29	2%
2017	8,939	285	3%	136	2%
2018	11,158	373	3%	198	2%
2019	14,296	556	4%	287	2%
2020	13,039	785	6%	474	4%
2021	49,327	6,482	13%	4,382	9%
Program type of first employer listed	-	-	-	-	-
Child care learning center	68,922	5,415	8%	3,607	5%
Exempt	1,130	162	14%	104	9%
Family child care learning home	2,136	278	13%	174	8%
Head Start	909	112	12%	73	8%
Local school system	6,375	1,080	17%	697	11%
Other^^^	625	62	10%	39	6%
NULL^^	18,347	1,418	8%	812	4%
Position type for first employer listed	-	-	-	-	-
Assistant educator	33,663	2,435	7%	1,559	5%
Director	8,653	1,122	13%	742	9%
Lead educator	28,515	2,974	10%	2,052	7%
Nonteaching staff	1,449	126	9%	77	5%
Specialist	2,698	361	13%	243	9%
Substitute/floater	6,079	323	5%	192	3%
NULL^^	17,387	1,186	7%	641	4%
Age	-	-	-	-	-
30 and younger	11,313	764	7%	465	4%
31–40	4,865	689	14%	497	10%
41–50	3,655	608	17%	423	12%
51–60	2,669	464	17%	323	12%
61 and older	1,190	188	16%	127	11%
NULL^^	74,752	5,814	8%	3,671	5%

	Total number of email recipients	Total number who started the survey	Response rate (started survey)	Total number who finished the survey	Response rate (finished survey)
Race	-	-	-	-	-
AINA	217	14	6%	*	*
Asian	1,343	169	13%	96	7%
Black	33,904	3,191	9%	2,073	6%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	135	*	*	*	*
White	24,861	2,371	10%	1,658	7%
Two or more	1,366	145	11%	91	7%
NULL^^	36,618	2,625	7%	1,573	4%
Hispanic	-	-	-	-	-
Yes	4,557	513	11%	315	7%
No	57,744	5,484	9%	3,682	6%
NULL^^	36,143	2,530	7%	1,509	4%

Sources: Urban Institute survey of the Georgia early care and learning workforce (ECE Workforce Survey); and Georgia's workforce registry (Georgia Professional Development System—GaPDS) records retrieved on October 15, 2021.
Notes: Overall^The overall response values in this row differ from those in table 1 because this table only includes characteristics for those listed in the workforce registry records and does not include people in the provider contact records or who reached out to us to ask to take the survey (and were not in the workforce registry records or provider contact records). NULL^^ indicates cases where there was missing data around a specific variable in the workforce registry records for a survey recipient. Other^^^ programs' type include programs with the labels DOD, GDCH, NLBD, OTH, TEC, and UNIV in the workforce registry records. *Suppressed because the sample size did not meet minimum threshold for reporting. Additionally, suppressed rates are sensitive to fluctuations because of the small sample sizes, so a small number of additional starts or completions could change the rate substantially. AINA = American Indian or Native Alaskan.

We studied the response rates by the source of the contact for eligible participants from the provider contact records as well. Contacts drawn from the provider records had a relatively higher response rate than the overall response rate for the survey (11 percent versus 6 percent). Providers from Georgia's Pre-K records had a relatively higher response rate for finished surveys (19 percent), and those from exemption records had a relatively lower response rate (5 percent), compared with the overall provider completion rate.

TABLE A.4
ECE Workforce Survey Detailed Response Statistics for Outreach to Provider or Program Contact Lists

	Total number of email Recipients	Total number who started the survey	Response rate (started survey)	Total number who finished the survey	Response rate (finished survey)
Overall^	4,494	807	18%	496	11%
Source of Contact	-	-	-	-	-
Georgia's Pre-K records	288	83	29%	56	19%

	Total number of email Recipients	Total number who started the survey	Response rate (started survey)	Total number who finished the survey	Response rate (finished survey)
Exemption records	904	81	9%	48	5%
Licensing records	3,302	643	19%	392	12%

Sources: Urban Institute survey of the Georgia early care and learning workforce (ECE Workforce Survey); and provider contacts drawn from licensing, exemption, and Georgia's Pre-K records retrieved October 7, 2021.
Notes: Overall^The overall response values in this row differ from those in table 1 because this table only includes characteristics for those listed in the provider contact records and does not include people in the provider contact records or who reached out to us to ask to take the survey (and were not in the workforce registry records or provider contact records).

We weighted the data for the ECE Workforce Survey analysis using raking to adjust for nonresponse by region, urban or rural status, program type, position type, race/ethnicity, age group, years of care experience, and source of record for provider contacts.

DECAL STAFF SURVEY

We sent the DECAL Staff Survey invitation email to 659 email addresses (drawing from all staff in the DECAL staff email list shared with us), all of which were received. Of these 659 staff, 446 people started the survey, and of them, 377 completed it. The overall completion rate for the survey was about 57 percent. In our analysis of the survey data, we only included those who had completed at least 24 percent of the survey (416 surveys total), which amounted to 63 percent of the invitations received.

TABLE A.5
DECAL Staff Survey Overall Response Statistics

	Overall	Share of emails received
Emails sent	659	-
Emails received	659	100%
Incomplete surveys	69	10%
Completed surveys	377	57%
Surveys used in the analysis^	416	63%
Total surveys started	446	68%

Source: DECAL Staff Survey, fielded from October 26 to November 10, 2021.
Notes: ^Surveys used in the analysis include all completed surveys (377 surveys) and incomplete surveys that were at least 24 percent complete (39 surveys).

We also calculated response rates by other characteristics in the DECAL staff email list, including job location, division or unit, the urban or rural county status listed in the staff record, the region of the county listed in the staff record, and supervisory status. Across most characteristics, the response rate

for those who finished the survey was relatively similar to the overall completion rate (57 percent). Some had relatively higher completion rates, including staff members who were mobile employees (travel to or work across multiple sites or regions) (63 percent); who worked in Quality Innovations and Partnerships (QIP) (77 percent), Pre-K (76 percent), instructional support (71 percent), or nutrition (71 percent) divisions; who had rural counties (69 percent) and counties in the South East (75 percent) listed; and who were supervisors (66 percent). Those who were home-based employees (50 percent), who worked in the Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) division (43 percent), and for whom the county listed in their staff record was in the North West region (49 percent) had relatively lower completion rates.

TABLE A.6
DECAL Staff Survey Detailed Response Statistics

	Total number of email recipients	Total number who started the survey	Response rate (started survey)	Total number who finished the survey	Response rate (finished survey)
Overall	659	446	68%	377	57%
Job location	-	-	-	-	-
Headquarters based	124	79	64%	68	55%
Home based	207	122	59%	104	50%
Mobile employee	328	245	75%	205	63%
Division or unit	-	-	-	-	-
Quality Innovations and Partnerships (QIP)	71	61	86%	55	77%
Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS)	201	108	54%	86	43%
Child Care Services (CCS)	144	90	63%	75	52%
Georgia's Pre-K	51	45	88%	39	76%
Instructional support	58	47	81%	41	71%
Nutrition	21	17	81%	15	71%
Administration and support	113	78	69%	66	58%
Urban or rural status of county	-	-	-	-	-
Rural	65	52	80%	45	69%
Urban	583	386	66%	326	56%
Out of state	11	*	*	*	*
Region of county	-	-	-	-	-

	Total number of email recipients	Total number who started the survey	Response rate (started survey)	Total number who finished the survey	Response rate (finished survey)
Central east	118	79	67%	65	55%
Central west	169	109	64%	91	54%
North east	100	73	73%	62	62%
North west	111	63	57%	54	49%
South east	59	51	86%	44	75%
South west	91	63	69%	55	60%
Out of state	11	*	*	*	*
Is a supervisor	-	-	-	-	-
Yes	127	100	79%	84	66%
No	532	346	65%	293	55%

Sources: DECAL Staff Survey, fielded from October 26 to November 10, 2021; and DECAL staff email list.
Notes: * Suppressed because the sample size did not meet the minimum threshold for reporting. Additionally, suppressed rates are sensitive to fluctuations because of the small sample sizes, so a small number of additional starts or completions could change the rate substantially.

We weighted the survey data using raking to adjust for nonresponse by division, job location, DECAL region, urban or rural status, and whether they were supervisors.

Focus Group Populations, Recruitment, and Participation

Parents and families were recruited to participate in focus groups (table A.7) in three ways:

1. **Urban Institute recruitment emails to families participating in CAPS:** DECAL shared the email addresses and select characteristics of families participating in CAPS in November 2021 with the Urban team. We split families into four categories based on their region of residence: North/Central (including the North West, North East, Central West, and Central East regions), South (including South West and South East regions), Atlanta (including all counties in which Atlanta falls), and other Urban areas (including the counties with the 10 largest cities in Georgia after Atlanta). We held two focus groups for each group: one for only families with children younger than age 5 and the other with families who had children from birth through age 13. After conducting the initial eight focus groups with families participating in CAPS, we scheduled two additional focus groups for these families; there was a high level of interest in participating, and we wanted to accommodate as many parents as possible. A total of 49 parents and grandparents participating in CAPS attended one of these ten focus groups.

2. **DECAL emails to Family Peer Ambassadors:** DECAL staff members shared a message with the family peer ambassadors on Urban's behalf. The message included a request that the ambassadors register to participate in a focus group and that they share the invitation with other parents and families in their networks. Parents and families were able to register for one of eight family peer ambassador focus groups scheduled for November via a Calendly scheduling link.

3. **DECAL emails to intermediary organizations:** Bridget Ratajczak of DECAL shared a message regarding this study with the Professional Family Child Care Alliance of Georgia (PFCCAG), asking for their support in recruiting families and providers participating in family child care. Parents and families received a Calendly link with three meeting options and were able to register for a focus group that fit in their schedules.

Early care and learning providers were recruited through DECAL staff members and intermediary organizations. PFCCAG recruited family child care providers and offered two meeting options. A total of 14 family child care providers participated in the focus groups with Urban Institute. Denise Jenson, director of Quality Rated at DECAL, requested her staff members send the email to child care programs they worked with in the past Quality Rated cohort. These providers were also offered two meeting options, and a total of seven people participated in a focus group. We held one additional focus group for kin care providers and had one grandparent participate in that call.

All focus groups were conducted between November 9 and November 30, 2021.

TABLE A.7
Parent and Provider Focus Group Recruitment

Groups	Attendance
Number of parent focus groups	21
Number of family members who attended	83
Families participating in CAPS	49
Family peer ambassadors	23
Families who participate in family child care	11
Number of child care provider focus groups	5
Number of child care providers who attended	23

Source: The Urban Institute's focus group participation data.
Notes: In total, 179 parents registered to participate in a focus group, but only 83 attended. The average family participating in the Urban Institute CAPS focus groups had two children. The age of children in our CAPS sample ranged from birth through age 13. Twenty-two percent of families participating in CAPS had infants, 53 percent had toddlers, 70 percent had preschool-age children, and 53 percent had school-age children. Thirteen percent of parents who participated in focus groups live in rural areas of Georgia.

Appendix B. Georgia Geographic Context

Tables B.1–2 below depict the distribution of counties across geographic areas in Georgia. Across DECAL regions, more counties are in the South East and South West (48 and 40, respectively) and fewer in the North West and Central West regions (11 in each). In total, 29 counties are in the greater Atlanta metropolitan area, with 10 rural and 19 urban, as defined by the Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH).[18] The rest of the state has 130 counties, with 110 rural and 20 urban.

Georgia Geography Summary Table

Area	Number of counties
Total	159
DECAL Region	-
Central east	23
Central west	11
North east	26
North west	11
South east	40
South west	48
Other Region	-
Atlanta—rural	10
Atlanta—urban	19
Other—rural	110
Other—urban	20

Sources: "Situation and Outlook Report: Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell, GA MSA (12060)," Proximity One, last updated May 6, 2019, http://proximityone.com/cbsa/1/cbsa12060.htm; DECAL regions map.

TABLE B.2
Georgia Geography Descriptive Table—All Counties

County	Department of Community Health (DCH) rural designation^	DECAL region	Greater Atlanta metropolitan area
Appling	Rural	South east	No
Atkinson	Rural	South east	No
Bacon	Rural	South east	No
Baker	Rural	South west	No
Baldwin	Rural	Central east	No
Banks	Rural	North east	No
Barrow	Urban	North east	Yes
Bartow	Urban	North west	Yes

County	Department of Community Health (DCH) rural designation^	DECAL region	Greater Atlanta metropolitan area
Ben Hill	Rural	South west	No
Berrien	Rural	South west	No
Bibb	Urban	South west	No
Bleckley	Rural	South east	No
Brantley	Rural	South east	No
Brooks	Rural	South west	No
Bryan	Rural	South east	No
Bulloch	Urban	South east	No
Burke	Rural	Central east	No
Butts	Rural	Central east	Yes
Calhoun	Rural	South west	No
Camden	Rural^^	South east	No
Candler	Rural	South east	No
Carroll	Urban	Central west	Yes
Catoosa	Urban	North east	No
Charlton	Rural	South east	No
Chatham	Urban	South east	No
Chattahoochee	Rural	South west	No
Chattooga	Rural	North west	No
Cherokee	Urban	North west	Yes
Clarke	Urban	North east	No
Clay	Rural	South west	No
Clayton	Urban	Central west	Yes
Clinch	Rural	South east	No
Cobb	Urban	Central west	Yes
Coffee	Rural	South east	No
Colquitt	Rural	South west	No
Columbia	Urban	Central east	No
Cook	Rural	South west	No
Coweta	Urban	Central west	Yes
Crawford	Rural	South west	No
Crisp	Rural	South west	No
Dade	Rural	North west	No
Dawson	Rural	North east	Yes
Decatur	Rural	South west	No
DeKalb	Urban	Central east	Yes
Dodge	Rural	South east	No
Dooly	Rural	South west	No
Dougherty	Urban	South west	No
Douglas	Urban	Central west	Yes

County	Department of Community Health (DCH) rural designation^	DECAL region	Greater Atlanta metropolitan area
Early	Rural	South west	No
Echols	Rural	South east	No
Effingham	Urban	South east	No
Elbert	Rural	North east	No
Emanuel	Rural	South east	No
Evans	Rural	South east	No
Fannin	Rural	North east	No
Fayette	Urban	Central west	Yes
Floyd	Urban	North west	No
Forsyth	Urban	North east	Yes
Franklin	Rural	North east	No
Fulton	Urban	North west	Yes
Gilmer	Rural	North east	No
Glascock	Rural	Central east	No
Glynn	Urban	South east	No
Gordon	Urban	North west	No
Grady	Rural	South west	No
Greene	Rural	Central east	No
Gwinnett	Urban	North east	Yes
Habersham	Rural	North east	No
Hall	Urban	North east	No
Hancock	Rural	Central east	No
Haralson	Rural	North west	Yes
Harris	Rural	Central west	No
Hart	Rural	North east	No
Heard	Rural	Central west	Yes
Henry	Urban	South west	Yes
Houston	Urban	South west	No
Irwin	Rural	South west	No
Jackson	Urban	North east	No
Jasper	Rural	Central east	Yes
Jeff Davis	Rural	South east	No
Jefferson	Rural	Central east	No
Jenkins	Rural	Central east	No
Johnson	Rural	Central east	No
Jones	Rural	South east	No
Lamar	Rural	South west	Yes
Lanier	Rural	South east	No
Laurens	Rural	South east	No
Lee	Rural	South west	No

County	Department of Community Health (DCH) rural designation^	DECAL region	Greater Atlanta metropolitan area
Liberty	Rural^^	South east	No
Lincoln	Rural	Central east	No
Long	Rural	South east	No
Lowndes	Urban	South east	No
Lumpkin	Rural	North east	No
Macon	Rural	South west	No
Madison	Rural	North east	No
Marion	Rural	South west	No
McDuffie	Rural	Central east	No
McIntosh	Rural	South east	No
Meriwether	Rural	Central west	Yes
Miller	Rural	South west	No
Mitchell	Rural	South west	No
Monroe	Rural	South east	No
Montgomery	Rural	South east	No
Morgan	Rural	Central east	Yes
Murray	Rural	North east	No
Muscogee	Urban	South west	No
Newton	Urban	Central east	Yes
Oconee	Rural	North east	No
Oglethorpe	Rural	North east	No
Paulding	Urban	Central west	Yes
Peach	Rural	South west	No
Pickens	Rural	North west	Yes
Pierce	Rural	South east	No
Pike	Rural	South west	Yes
Polk	Rural	North west	No
Pulaski	Rural	South west	No
Putnam	Rural	Central east	No
Quitman	Rural	South west	No
Rabun	Rural	North east	No
Randolph	Rural	South west	No
Richmond	Urban	Central east	No
Rockdale	Urban	Central east	Yes
Schley	Rural	South west	No
Screven	Rural	South east	No
Seminole	Rural	South west	No
Spalding	Urban	South west	Yes
Stephens	Rural	North east	No
Stewart	Rural	South west	No

County	Department of Community Health (DCH) rural designation^	DECAL region	Greater Atlanta metropolitan area
Sumter	Rural	South west	No
Talbot	Rural	South west	No
Taliaferro	Rural	Central east	No
Tattnall	Rural	South east	No
Taylor	Rural	South west	No
Telfair	Rural	South west	No
Terrell	Rural	South west	No
Thomas	Rural	South west	No
Tift	Rural	South west	No
Toombs	Rural	South east	No
Towns	Rural	North east	No
Treutlen	Rural	South east	No
Troup	Urban	Central west	No
Turner	Rural	South west	No
Twiggs	Rural	South east	No
Union	Rural	North east	No
Upson	Rural	South west	No
Walker	Urban	North west	No
Walton	Urban	Central east	Yes
Ware	Rural	South east	No
Warren	Rural	Central east	No
Washington	Rural	South east	No
Wayne	Rural	South east	No
Webster	Rural	South west	No
Wheeler	Rural	South east	No
White	Rural	North east	No
Whitfield	Urban	North east	No
Wilcox	Rural	South west	No
Wilkes	Rural	Central east	No
Wilkinson	Rural	South east	No
Worth	Rural	South west	No

Sources: "Situation and Outlook Report: Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell, GA MSA (12060)," Proximity One, last updated May 6, 2019, http://proximityone.com/cbsa/1/cbsa12060.htm; DECAL regions map.

Notes: ^DCH defines rural counties as those that contain a population of fewer than 50,000 people, in most cases. ^^Represents counties that are Georgia state legislatively defined rural counties; designation is not based on having a population of fewer than 50,000.

Notes

1   Parents typically used the words "teachers" or "caregivers" to talk about the people who were directly caring for and teaching their children.

2   "About Child Care Services," Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, accessed December 13, 2021, https://www.http://www.decal.ga.gov/CCS/About.aspx.

3   "Applicant's Guide to Licensing for Family Child Care Learning Homes," DECAL, revised July 2002, http://www.decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/FCCLHApplicantGuide.pdf.

4   "Georgia's Pre-K Program Family Handbook," DECAL, last updated July 15, 2013, http://www.decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/PreKFamilyHandbook.pdf.

5   "Rules and Regulations: Child Care Learning Centers," DECAL, October 1, 2020, http://www.decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/CCLCRulesandRegulations.pdf.

6   Parents may or may not be aware of how teacher pay is determined or who pays the teachers. Their recommendation is a reaction to what they are seeing and experiencing and the ways that they empathize with early childhood educators. As DECAL does not set wage rates, and increasing pay can also mean increasing the cost of care for families, determining how to pay teachers more is a complex issue.

7   Early childhood educator is a term the authors have used to describe all staff in child care programs (centers or homes) who work directly with children. Although people providing comments tended to focus on center-based educator turnover, this is likely because many were using or providing center-based care and educators are educator for providing that type of care. In other sections of the report, we also talk about concerns related to child care availability overall. Creating these types of career pipelines can eventually support more home- and center-based care options.

8   The authors note that DECAL does have a place where these incidents can be reported already. We present the information this way because this was a recommendation from parents. Thus, DECAL should review where and how they provide information about where parents can call. We address this more in the conclusions.

9   The center-based and home-based program categories include respondents from both licensed exempt and licensed settings (Child Care Learning Centers [CCLC] and Family Child Care Learning Homes [FCCLH]). Among center-based respondents with a valid response on the licensing question, 92 percent (3,161 out of 3,418) indicated that they were in a licensed setting or a setting with both licensed and licensed exempt programs. Among home-based respondents with a valid response on the licensing question, 92 percent (326 out of 354) indicated that they were in a licensed setting or a setting with both licensed and licensed exempt programs. Respondents from Pre-K in other settings, other private or public preschool or child care programs, before- or after-school programs, day camp or recreation programs, tutoring and extracurricular programs, "other" types of programs for which respondents were asked to write-in a response, and those who selected more than one type of program are not shown as separate series but are reflected in the total. The "Pre-K in other settings" category includes respondents working in Georgia's Pre-K programs based in license-exempt federal or state government-run programs, Head Start or Early Head Start, other license-exempt settings, and respondents who did not know their program license status or did not answer the licensing question.

10 The DECAL Early Education Family Ambassadors are guardians of young children in child care or early intervention. Family Ambassadors engage families from their communities to provide them with information about child development and strategies they can use to support their children's school readiness.

11 Quality Rated is Georgia's quality rating and improvement system. For more information, please visit "Quality Rated Child Care," DECAL, accessed December 13, 2021, https://qualityrated.decal.ga.gov/.

12 Based on DECAL administrative data provided by Rob O'Callaghan on October 4, 2021. Exempt providers participating in CAPS, Quality Rated, or Georgia's Pre-K program are included in the licensing system.

13 Reg Griffin, "DECAL and CAPS Announce ACCESS—Awarding Child Care Education Scholarship Supplements" (press release), DECAL, May 17, 2021, http://www.decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/release_CAPS%20ACCESS%20announcement%200511320 21%20Final.pdf.

14 See note 7.

15 We cannot tell if parents were more likely to participate in the study if they had challenges with CAPS. However, DECAL staff were also more likely to identify challenges in communicating with families as an area for DECAL improvements, suggesting that challenges are present for many more families than those with which we spoke.

16 The center-based and home-based program operator categories include respondents from both licensed exempt and licensed settings (Child Care Learning Centers [CCLC] and Family Child Care Learning Homes [FCCLH]). Among center-based operators with a valid response on the licensing question, 97 percent (1,108 out of 1,145) indicated that they were in a licensed setting or a setting with both licensed and licensed exempt programs. Among home-based operators with a valid response on the licensing question, 97 percent (223 out of 232) indicated that they were in a licensed setting or a setting with both licensed and licensed exempt programs. The "Pre-K" category includes respondents operating Georgia's Pre-K programs across all settings and licensure statuses. Respondents from other private or public preschool or child care programs, before- or after-school programs, day camp or recreation programs, tutoring and extracurricular programs, "other" types of programs for which respondents were asked to write-in a response, and those who selected more than one type of program are not shown as separate series but are reflected in the total.

17 See note 14.

18 "Situation and Outlook Report: Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell, GA MSA (12060)," Proximity One, last updated May 6, 2019, http://proximityone.com/cbsa/1/cbsa12060.htm.

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