



Child Care and COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated existing disparities in our nation's child care system. Years of underinvestment in child care met with the challenges of the pandemic underscore the difficulty in accessing high-quality child care.

There have been decreases in the supply of child care. This is especially problematic in neighborhoods with already marginalized populations who are being most impacted by this pandemic. There has also been a decline in the number of high-quality providers as a result of COVID-19.

The \$10 billion allocated for child care in the federal aid package signed into law at the end of 2020 will provide much-needed assistance to providers, but a recent analysis estimates that at least \$9.6 billion is needed *each month* to stabilize our child care system and ensure it survives the pandemic. ([Source](#))

The child care industry will need to be rebuilt from the ground up and/or reimagined in the wake of COVID-19 .

We need to consider access, affordability, and health when we re-envision a child care system that can work for families, providers, and communities.

Transforming Child Care

Our child care system is broken and does not provide optimal outcomes for parents, employers or children. Even before the outbreak of COVID-19 and the associated impacts on and closures of child care programs, the supply of quality child care in the United States was decreasing.

The federal government should provide financial support to ensure all families have access to child care. This system should not be only for low-income families; it must be a system in which the majority of Americans have a personal stake, similar to Social Security or Medicare.

This is not to say that all child care look alike, or that the provision of a particular type of child care is mandatory – rather, that families need the opportunity to select child care that meets their needs and is affordable, accessible and of high quality.

Congress must make changes to the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) subsidies to make child care more affordable for more families, as well as expand child care tax credits for families.

Federal policy should aim to ensure that no family under 150% of state median income pays more than 7% of their income on child care and families under 75% of the state median income should not have to pay anything at all.

In addition to the immediate public health needs in this country, COVID-19 has only increased the mental and emotional health care needs of children in child care. Policymakers must ensure that Child health care consultants and early childhood mental health consultation are available to child care providers, with the funding and resources needed to serve all providers and children.