



Top Barriers to Quality Child Care in Our Communities

Parent Listening Team Report



September 2022

Convened by Child Care Aware® of America

WHO WE ARE

On the cover: Word Cloud showing common answers to “Why we do we what we do?”

In the spring of 2022, Child Care Aware® of America invited approximately 100 parents with young children, from 29 states, to apply for our parent listening team. We asked the usual questions: how many children they had, and what makes their family unique. The most important, yet challenging question we received was, **What are the greatest barriers to quality childcare for those denied access to it?** The answers differed across the country, but common threads of inability to afford care, lack of access to nutritional foods, and waitlists and limited teaching staff echoed across state lines. From this group, we as 15 parents were chosen as leaders from across the country to deeply dive into answering that question.

We formed a Parent Listening Team. The Parent Listening Team would meet weekly and focus on groups they knew face barriers to child care opportunities systemically, specifically people who have had significant barriers because of racial identity, community ZIP code, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age or other reasons. We shared our own personal stories and reflected on the impacts our communities are facing. The Parent Listening Team engaged our personal connections, relationships and resources in our state and region to start building a network of other parents who could provide feedback and support to answering really tough questions about child care.

From there, we surveyed almost 400 respondents across the country, in Spanish and English. We then interviewed and gathered quotes from almost 100 parents and guardians. We brought our own experiences and personal knowledge of being a parent with young children in child care. Together, families across the country came together to piece out the greatest barriers to quality child care for those denied access to it.

So, why did we do this? Honestly, it's simple. A group of people who are well connected in their communities and have faced obstacles are direct connections to finding solutions and support. Each interview brought about a better understanding of just how critical access to child care is needed. Seeing the patterns in survey data revealed more barriers and challenges that we may not think about on a regular basis. Seeing all this data and hearing all these stories nurtured a community among parents of small

children and brought a sense of a unified struggle, a struggle that officially comes with recommendations.

The last charge of the Parent Listening Team was to gather, organize and present these findings to Child Care Aware of America. This experience is an official call to action for supportive systems to make a difference in the lives of many around the country and to bridge a gap that families from state to state suffer. This data alone offers accountability toward a better understanding of families from diverse communities and statewide barriers to access all families deserve.

Pamela Flores Aguilar



Who I am: I am Pamela, I am 33 years old, I am a woman who six years ago fell in love in the middle of the jungle-Amazon with a Polish-American man. Three years ago I moved to a country I had never visited. Here began a new world full of all kinds of positive and negative experiences, but always with the conviction that everything was going to get better. Now I can say that I am a person who tries to live each experience with attitude, empathy and determination. But the most important part is that I am a mom of two little girls, Lili and Izabella. They transform my life at every moment.

Where I live: I live in Wilmington, NC, but I'm originally from Peru.

Barriers to quality child care my community and I have faced: The main barrier I have is finding resources in my community for my two girls. In the middle of the search, I found that this barrier was not only mine, but also that of many immigrant mothers who are unaware of the management of the educational system, child care, etc. I want to work to make these resources language-friendly and easily accessible to families who need them.

Maritza Bermudez



Who I am: I am a mother and community leader who has lived through so many challenges in my community. I work every day to empower my community to advocate and speak up about their challenges and needs and to be able to live a life with dignity.

Where I live: I live in the city of Anaheim in Southern California.

Barriers to quality childcare my community and I have faced: As a mother of five, I have personally experienced my share of child care challenges, especially when it came to affordability and access. The cost to put my three younger children (now 5, 6 and 8) in a quality child care center when they were younger just would not be accessible. This meant putting my career on hold. As I started to get more involved in my community, I realized that this was an issue that was also affecting many members of my community. Especially the ones with children with special needs and/or disabilities who did not feel supported in finding access to resources that could help them and their child, as was my case having a son with Autism. Some parents did not even consider reaching out to child care centers because they automatically assumed it would be out of their budget and instead relied on family members and neighbors for care. These setbacks and challenges are very much real and affect so many families.

Asia Crowfield



Who I am: I am a Los Angeles native, a mother and a wife who tries to juggle life graciously. As a mother and an inspiring entrepreneur, my goal is to grow my family and businesses successfully.

Where I live: Las Vegas, NV

Barriers to quality child care my community and I

have faced: The biggest barrier to child care has been quality and affordability. Being a mother, we all want our children to start off their education in the best way possible. I would love to be able to afford quality education in a structured learning environment. As a

mother of four, I would like to see the child care system expand and cover the needs of most families. Every child deserves a safe environment where they are genuinely cared for.

Akua Danqu



Who I am: I am a mother of three strong-willed children, ages 2, 12 and 13, who enjoys advocating for people when it comes to receiving the benefits they deserve. I'm a parent who is very intentional about making sure my children receive the BEST care and education. I do whatever it takes and make whatever sacrifices I need to ensure my children have these things, so I do not make "willy-nilly" decisions when it comes to my children but rather long-term, life-changing decisions for their current and future well-being.

Where I live: Washington, DC

Barriers to quality child care my community and I have

faced: I'm a mother who struggled to navigate the child care system for my two oldest children, and 10 years later still find

myself struggling with very same barriers to accessing affordable, equitable child care. This makes me realize the child care system is still flawed. And when it comes to equity, I am here to tell you that the quality of child care programs and the availability of vouchers in Georgetown are different from those in the Southwest quadrant of Washington, DC, where there are significantly more families struggling economically and socially.

Ashley Dines



Who I am: A Nevada native that has experienced the highs and lows of what my state has had to offer, a mother that has gone from navigating being a parent to leadership to trying to pioneer a space for other families to regain the power they possess in their communities.

Where I live: Las Vegas, NV

Barriers to quality child care my community and I have faced: Affordability was at the top of my hardships while having two children under 4 and wanting so desperately to not only build a career for myself, but to give them the best quality education I could afford, which wasn't realistic. Over the course of the most recent years, I have found that many of my community members are facing the same issues and we should not forget about the inability of

families that have children with disabilities to access proper care at all for their children. I experienced not only my situation, but also am finally able to understand what steps have to be taken in order to change the trajectory of these issues.

Nikki Graf



Who I am: I am a mom of four children, all of which chose me as a parent in different ways. My wife gave birth to our first, I carried our second, our third came to us through a kinship adoption, and our fourth is in foster care. I also work in the Child Care Aware system, so I professionally understand the great impact child care has for families, but struggle to access that as a parent.

Where I live: Minneapolis, MN

Barriers to quality child care my community and I have faced: Although I have navigated becoming a mother four different ways, the biggest challenge we faced as parents was finding child care that was affordable and culturally responsive to a two-mom family with children from varying racial backgrounds. We had to move several child care programs due to racism our children experienced. At one school our daughter

was bullied for her family and the color of her skin. At the second school, our son was on the brink of expulsion due to administrative staff and their personal racial biases. Moving from place to place has been disruptive to our children, ridiculously expensive, and not accessible at all. We have finally landed at a school in which we have full trust and expectations that they can support our children, but at an expense that exceeds our mortgage. We have made many financial sacrifices and frequently find extra work to balance the cost of child care for four children. I work in the child care system, and it is incredibly hard to see how great quality child care can be for parents and know that we would never be able to access it easily.

Brittany Lewis



Who I am: I am a Black mother to a beautiful 2-year-old Black girl.

Where I live: West Philadelphia, PA

Barriers to quality child care my community and I have faced: Affordability, quality and curriculum. Before my daughter was born, her father and I already decided that we couldn't put her in child care because we could not afford it. We also recognized we wanted to affirm her ethnicity and her culture and most child care centers did not teach the type of curriculum we were looking for. Accessibility to child care is not an issue for my community or me. There are so many day cares on every corner in Philly, but they aren't all quality. Because there

is a plethora of them, many parents need to place their kids in child care to work, but sometimes they give up quality for necessity.

Katie Metz



Who I am: I am a mother of two children, a 4- and a 6-year-old. I have been a military spouse for 12 years. I am a passionate leader trying to help my community navigate the child care system, and also bring awareness to the resources available around the United States.

Where I live: Currently reside in Ewa Beach, HI. Originally from Stevensville, MI.

Barriers to quality child care my community and I have faced: The biggest barrier to child care is access to resources as well as finances. Being a military spouse usually means having to choose between family and career. I stayed home for six years while my husband was deployed a majority of each year. I became a stay-at-home mom because going back to work and putting two toddlers in care was more than I would be making in a month. I had no idea where to go for resources to help with cost. When my son started kindergarten, I was looking to go back to work. I found that the amount I had to pay for child care was still almost my entire paycheck, and that was only for one child. On top of the cost, finding a spot in a child care center is extremely difficult. My daughter was on the waitlist for military child care for over a year before finally being offered a spot. We moved and had to find another center for her; the problem was they were all more than my paycheck would be. I learned about state and national resources that were available and decided on a center to put her in. Even with the subsidy that I qualified for, around half of my paycheck is spent to put her in care. I struggle now with trying to find a full-time position with child care benefits because making a little more would mean that I would lose my subsidy due to the income cap. This helped me see the need for quality, affordable and reliable child care in my community. Now I am working to help parents find resources and access to child care in the community.

Fay Pierce



Who I am: My name is Fay Pierce. I'm 30 years young and a White, low-income disabled mother.

Where I live: I live in northern New Hampshire

Barriers to quality child care my community and I have faced: My journey with early education started when my daughter was two and a half years old. She was diagnosed with ADHD, ODD, a sensory delay and generalized anxiety. I wanted to test her speech, feeling that she may be behind with that and her social-emotional development. From there we found out that she would need an IEP. Trying to navigate through this was absolutely impossible. There was language that I just couldn't understand. Although I navigated through, it

created a passion for helping other families through it. I work outreach full time at my local family resource center, seeing families in the same situation every single day and helping them navigate through it. I love my community, and I love helping children receive the support needed to thrive.

Christina Romero



Who I am: I am a Hispanic mother to four children and a grandmother of two who raised my sister's three children. I have a lived experience with the child welfare system, some positive and supportive, and others that caused lifelong harm to my family and myself. From that experience, I committed to a journey of service to other families who experience this type of current system. My goal is to help families navigate the system's complexities and extend my unconditional love and support.

Where I live: I am a Fort Lauderdale resident in Broward County, FL.

Barriers to quality child care my community and I have faced: As a low-income community member, some barriers we face are affordability, reliability and trustworthy child care providers. In my neighborhood, there is no such thing as quality child care. You need to travel outside your area and make many sacrifices to have your child receive quality care. There is nowhere to access resources within a family's reach, so many people are unaware of programs if help is needed. I believe every voice matters,

and I have dedicated mine to making a difference in the community. I would like to influence the change needed to adjust the income scale so families can get the quality child care their children deserve that is affordable. I find joy when families are strengthened and supported.

Titilayo Samuel



Who I am: My name is Titilayo Samuel. I am blessed with two handsome boys and am married to my wonderful husband. I have a nonprofit organization in the U.S., Nigeria and the United Kingdom where I take care of children, the needy and widows. I love helping people, especially less privileged children. There's nothing I can't do to satisfy my community.

Where I live: I live in Maryland, and I am from Nigeria 🇳🇮

Barriers to quality child care my community and I have faced: According to the interview that I had with parents, 31% of respondents cited cost as the primary reason they had difficulty finding child care. 28% of families that I interviewed said availability of child care slots was the most common barrier to securing care. 22% of families said it was difficult to find quality child care.

Farryn Slaton-Barkley

Who I am: A mom trying to find the best support for neurodivergent children in my area.

Where I live: Macon, GA

Barriers to quality child care my community and I have faced: Access to quality care has been the biggest barrier for me. Parents of children with special needs have had some of the hardest times finding care that is affordable and accessible. I desire to take my research efforts to support parents in advocating for their needs and supporting educators and institutions interested in improving the education in their cities.

Tony Swartz



Who I am: I'm from Montana, born in Missoula and raised in Seeley Lake. I survived TBI at the early age of 15. The cards were stacked against me when I became a father. My children brought me out of my shell and gave my life a force of LOVE. I couldn't afford child care, and the mental health issues that started when my kids were bullied was overwhelming. Sakura Warrior Arts, a local self-defense academy replaced

those overwhelming feelings with confidence. I am a Parent Leadership Training Institute graduate, and my program was based around bully prevention.

Where I live: Frenchtown, MT

Barriers to quality child care my community and I have faced: The solution for child care barriers is to at least double the revenue in child care. Child care workers need a living wage and benefits, comparable to K-12 teachers. Improve child care quality via workforce training, onsite coaching, small grants to programs. However, quality is undermined daily by inability to attract and retain skilled staff. Parents need more resources and more educational information for their children's daily concerns.

Heather Wesolowski



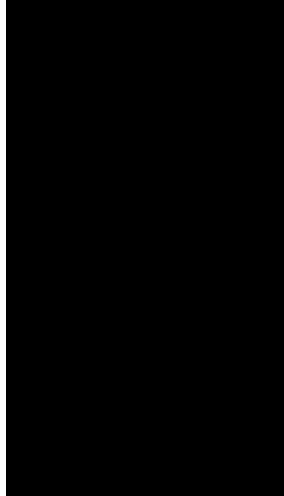
Who I am: I am a single mom of two beautiful girls, ages 3 and 4. I'm at the beginning stages of getting the single mom life together and being happy and in the moment.

Where I live: I reside in Las Vegas, NV

Barriers to quality child care my community and I have faced: As a single mom, with no family and friends locally, I struggled for two years trying to figure out how to do this by myself. My biggest hardship: I eventually became evicted and homeless with my daughters, with no income. It took me over a year of reaching out to numerous nonprofit agencies, bringing my young daughters to and from all these places to find affordable child care options for my daughters to allow me to get back to work and support us all. Every place provided very little help with my child care issues. I just recently got both of my daughters approved to be in a program, but the hours are very short. I am still seeking help to obtain enough hours to gain employment that will support all three of us. I am now in the midst of getting our lives together. I want to

share every single bit of child care information to the next single struggling mother, so they won't have to go through the years of desperately seeking help.

Hannah Wingo



Who I am: I'm a mom of two sweet boys, ages 8 and 6. My oldest son has developmental disabilities caused by congenital cytomegalovirus, or CMV. Along with my husband, we are navigating our way through a world impacted by disability and medical complexities. I'm willing to work hard to advocate for inclusion and improvement, knowing it's not always easy, but it's always worth it.

Where I live: Springfield, MO

Barriers to quality child care my community and I have faced:

There was a stark difference in our experiences of seeking and finding child care for each of our children. We faced major obstacles finding care for our oldest because a huge majority of providers or facilities are simply not equipped to care for children with disabilities. For families like ours, safety and trust quickly rise to the top of the list of priorities, and unfortunately those needs are met with too few or non-existent resources.

WHAT WE DID

Core question asked:

“What are the greatest barriers to quality child care for those denied access to it?”

Data and information gathered:

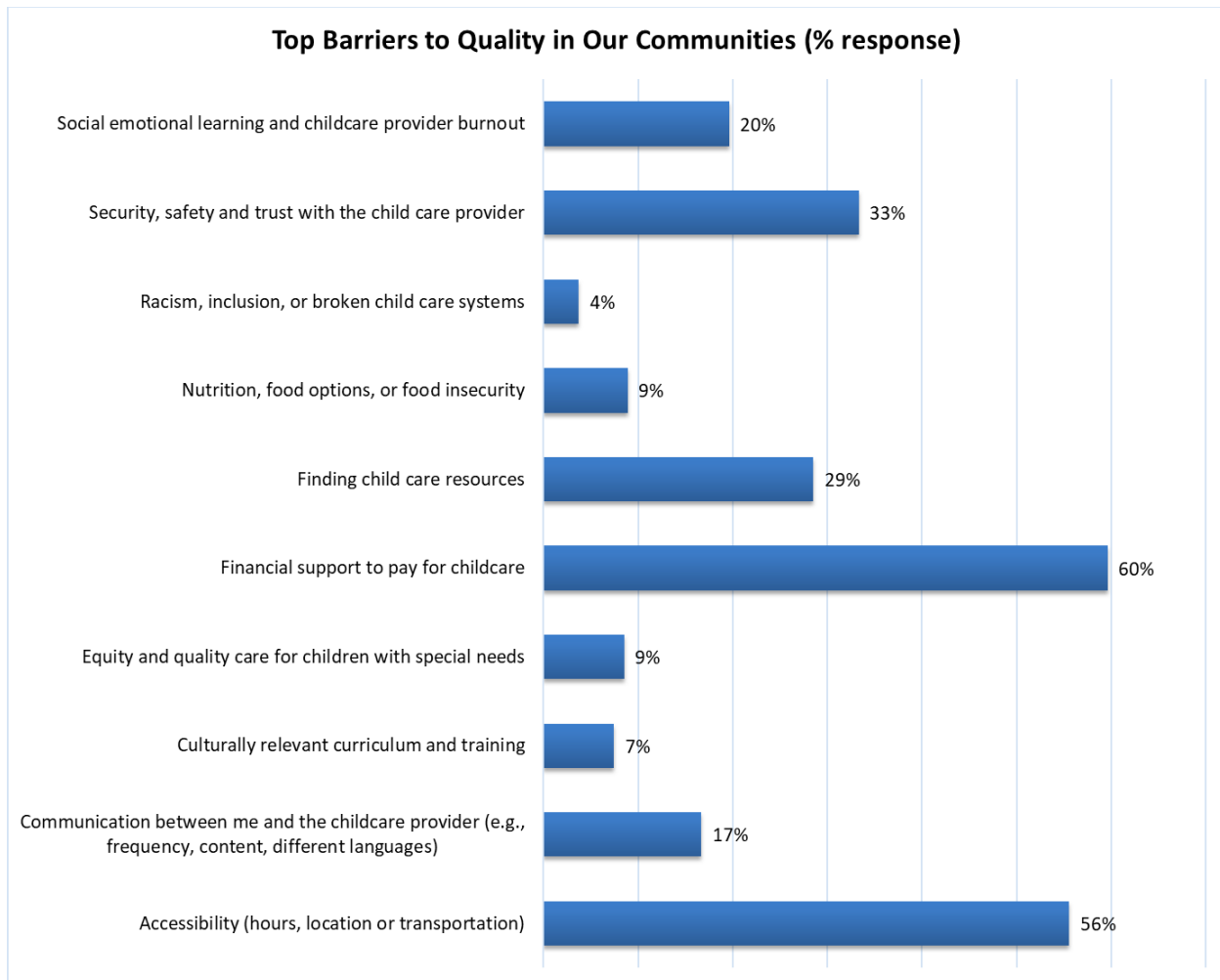
- Surveyed almost 400 respondents across the country in Spanish and English
- Interviewed and gathered quotes from almost 100 parents and guardians
- Used and documented our own experiences and knowledge
- 100 parent leader applications for the Listening Project on common barriers to quality child care around the country
- Information and guidance provided by CCAoA about quality child care and potential barrier areas of focus.

Additional details on this report:

- We focused on groups we know face barriers to opportunities systemically: a specific focus on communities who have had significant barriers due to racial identity, community ZIP code, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age, etc.
- Following interviews, the survey was used as follow-up for parents to dive deeper into issues they felt were the biggest challenges.
- We recognize that CCAoA has limited funding, despite their leadership. Our recommendations are vast and require systemic changes that also come with the caveat that they may require resources beyond CCAoA's current means.

FINDINGS FROM OUR COMMUNITIES

Our team explored ten (10) main barriers to quality child care our families and communities had most experienced. The Parent Listening Team based surveys, interviews and focus groups on these 10 barriers. As shown in the graph below, **financial support/affordability, accessibility (hours, location and transportation), security, safety and trust, and finding resources** were the top barriers selected by most parent respondents.



The following section in the report describes in more detail the findings within these top four barriers in our communities.

1. **Financial Affordability**

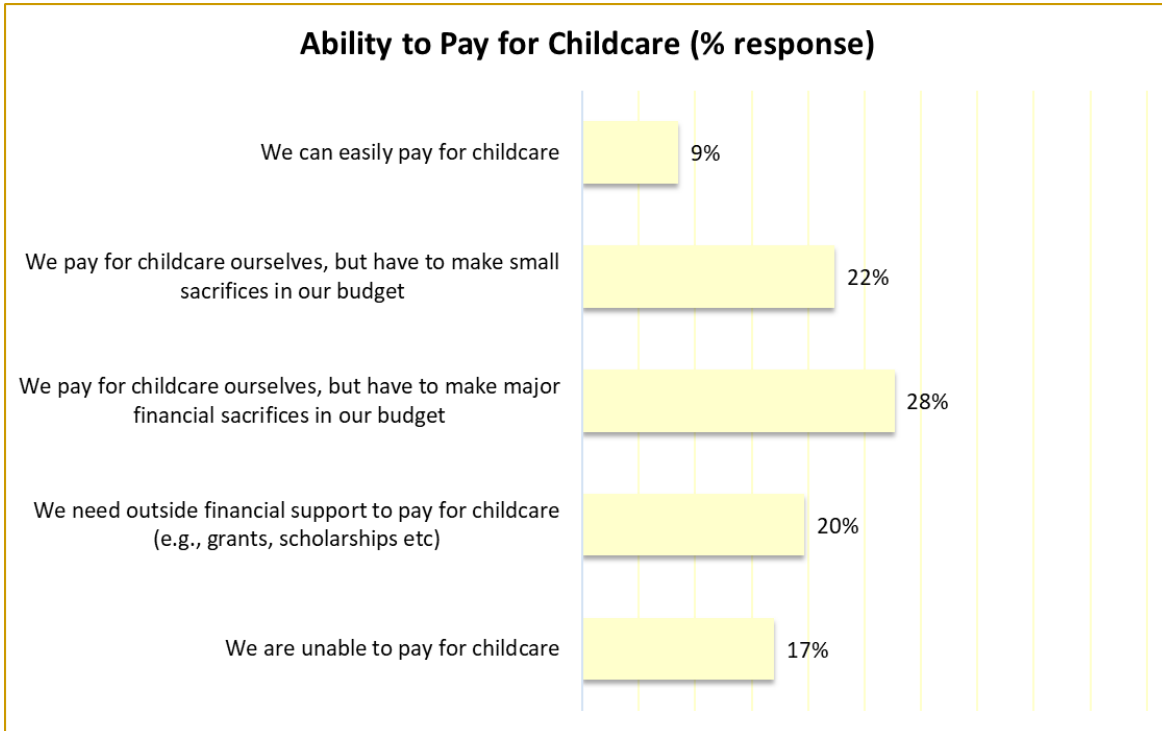
Per the Parent Listening Team's analysis, the cost of child care is not feasible for ANYONE despite their income levels. Findings show that across the country, most families are struggling to pay for child care and the solution does not lie in the families' income. Parents expressed their frustration and burden when their income does not exclude them from the heavy cost of child care.

Only 9% of parents said they easily pay for child care. And for families with incomes under \$100,000, only 1 in 100 can easily pay for child care.

24% of people of color said they were unable to pay for child care

40% of lower-income parents/guardians (compared to 15% of higher-income respondents) had to become stay-at-home parents due to lack of affordable options

Data shows that when comparing families' income levels, the financial sacrifices families have to make exist regardless of whether their income is below or above \$100,000 (see graph below). This point raises the importance of child care subsidies and the need for financial assistance regardless of income level



Families are not only deeply affected when they are unable to afford child care. But the risk of losing their job or of child protective services involvement because children are home unsupervised while parents work are equally or more burdensome if child care isn't financially accessible. Ultimately, there are too many sacrifices and risks parents have to take to pay for child care. One caveat when comparing income levels is the consideration of cost of living in different parts of the country and its impact on people's ability to afford child care.

See the stories below from parents and guardians we engaged for more details.

"I have to work extra to be able to pay for it. I have to leave my children with other people and lose his childhood; I have WIC only for food, not to pay the bills. I would like a good quality child care but with reasonable costs, with facilities with more green areas and focus on development, not just giving them food and sleep."

(Mother of two, immigrant from Brazil)

“Offering it to lower-income families is great, but if you just miss the cutoff by just a little bit. Making it available to the middle class because it takes almost the entire paycheck in order to make the payment” (Military mother of two in Texas)

“Parents need lower monthly rates, so you are not only working to cover the cost of child care” (Hispanic, stay-at-home mother of four in Florida)

*“Even with state assistance, I’m still hardly covering the expenses.”
(Mother from Maine)*

*“Funding is needed, more centers need to be opened. Local news is shining a light on the child care crisis. There’s a labor shortage across the board, but for people to be able to go back to work, they need child care. People without kids need to know about this too. I think it boils down to money and funding.”
(Pre-K teacher and mother of two in Springfield, MO)*

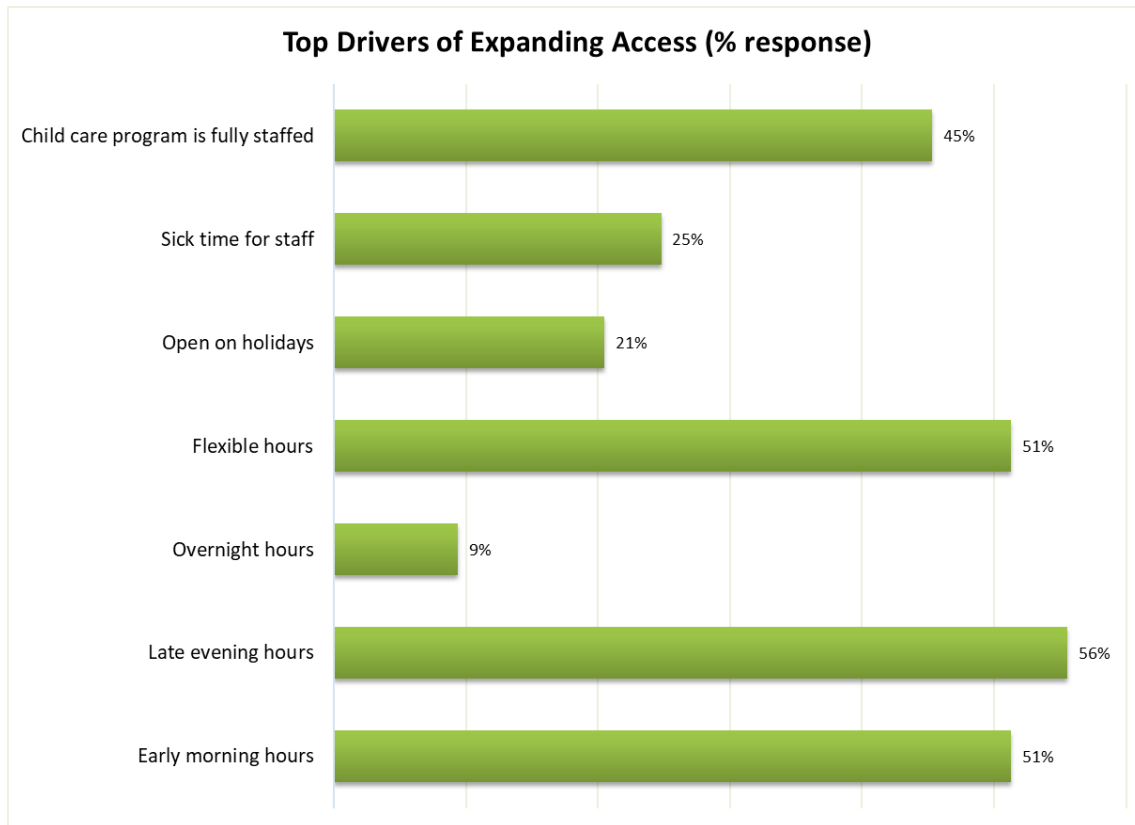
“Families are struggling more and more and are not able to receive that (child care assistance) help. You lose benefits as you get better paying jobs” (Mother of two girls)

2. **Accessibility: Hours, Quality Location and Staffing / Training Gaps**

The Parent Listening Team found accessibility and a quality location for their child as the second barrier that stood out for parents across the country. Parents expressed that for quality child care they either need to pay more (which results from working more to earn more money), travel outside of their neighborhood or community, or they need to find access to transportation personally or publicly. All these issues left parents in a tangle of piecing together minimal resources in order to send their children to child care. Parents are choosing between staying home or working, leaving their child in a program for extended hours, moving on from a program because the application fee is an extra expense, or traveling for hours to a location.

Only 1 in 10 parent / guardian respondents always have access to child care.

Parents surveyed also expressed that center hours are really important - early morning hours (51%), late hours (56%) and flexible hours (51%) needed - and over 63% of single parents report needing more flexible hours (see *graph below*).



When hours are flexible, parents then need close, quality locations - as only 19% of parents are able to put their kids in quality child care in their community. In fact, *31% of parents of color do not have a quality child care provider in their community vs. 7% of White people*. Quality locations, proximity and flexible schedules are components of child care that parents often have to sacrifice when looking for care for their children.

“We had a 24-hour center, but after COVID they went to traditional hours. If you are on 2nd or 3rd shift, it’s either private care or in someone’s home. In my online mom’s group, you see postings like “I need someone to watch my 8-week-old”. They are going to leave their baby with someone they don’t even know.”
(Single mother of two from Las Vegas)

Another area of accessibility where parents experienced barriers is finding a program that has consistent, trained and qualified educators. Parents mentioned that child care staff turnover was a major area of challenge for children and accessibility. Parents felt

their children's care and development suffered when teachers were consistently leaving, burned out or under-trained. Parents also expressed that when finding a program, staff shortages resulted in longer waiting lists or programs with open classrooms, but no staff to manage them.

Only 33% of parents/guardians believe their provider has all the training they need; many parents say the provider has only some of the training they need or they are unsure whether the provider has training.

Parents/guardians surveyed (especially parents of color and parents with income less than \$100,000) want training especially in these top three areas: 1) child development, 2) CPR/first aid and 3) conflict resolution.

Location, quality, trained staff, flexible hours and transportation are variables that most parents in our country should not have to navigate when it comes to the care and development of their child. See the stories below from parents and guardians we engaged for more details.

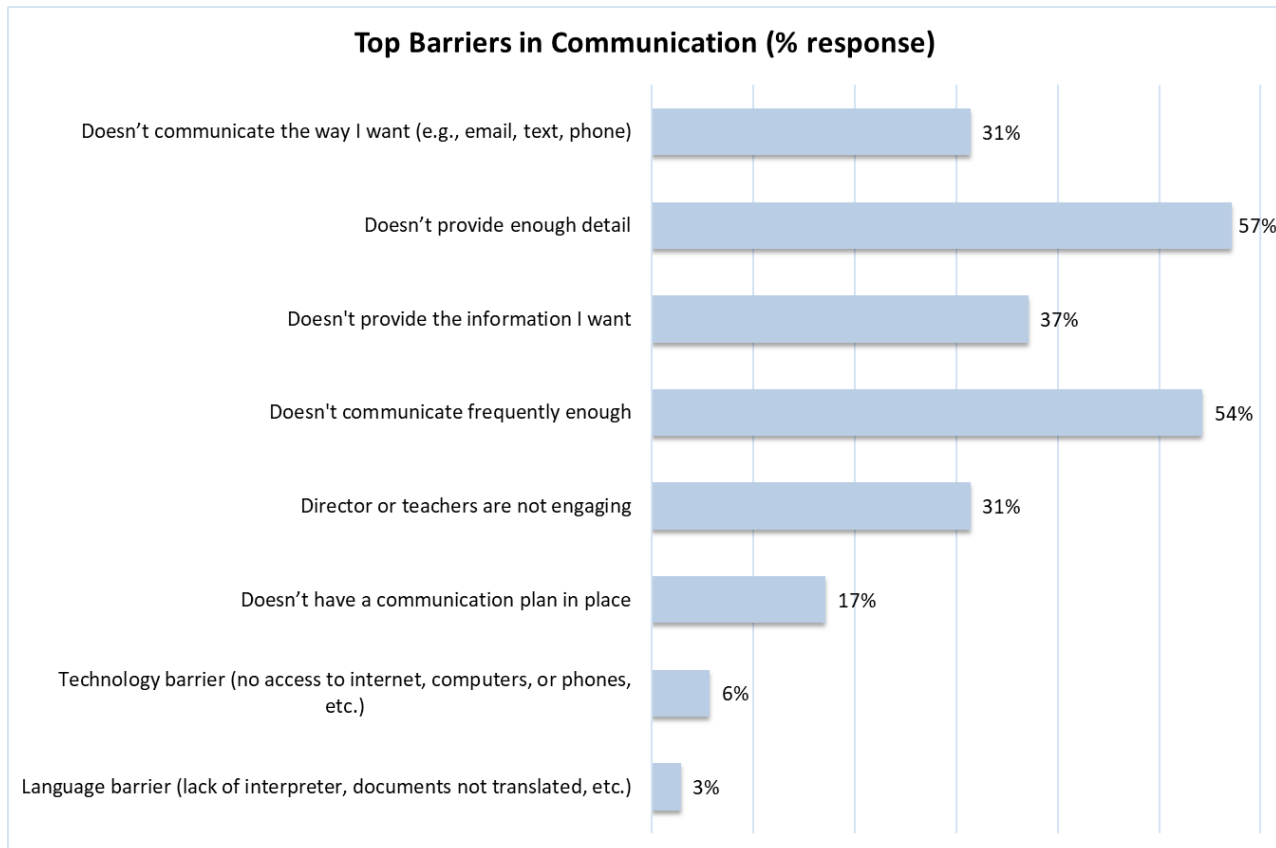
"Not all providers are trained to handle children with ADHD or trauma. There is always judgment from the staff due to the parents' looks, like tattoos and different color hair" (Mother from Tamarac, FL)

"We need educators who are trying to understand family dynamics rather than judging parents and children" (Mother of five in Las Vegas, NV)

"As one of few families of color living in our community I'll never forget going around to different daycares and preschools. The looks on the teachers' faces when I asked what they have for training was astonishing. But that became my question because I walked in being judged." (41-year-old mom of two in Shelburne, NH)

3. Security, Safety and Trust

As analyzed in the first two barriers, parents shared the sacrifices they make in their child care program because of accessibility and affordability. These sacrifices, as reported by parents, have challenged the trust between parents and their child care provider. In fact, **only 33% of parents completely trust their childcare provider; the majority only somewhat trust them.** The collected data has captured a level of desperation parents have in limited child care options, that they are forced to overlook certain issues related to the safety and security of their children. According to one parent during an interview, *“Parents are more concerned about finding any available child care center where emergency protocols aren’t at the top of their priority list so it gets [overlooked]; [they] just want to find an available child care center.”* Regardless of quality, parents want more consistency in the trust they have in child care and secure communication from their providers on how their children will be safe in their care (see below).



As shown in the graph above, parents and guardians want more detailed and more consistent communication to build trust. In addition, respondents indicated there were low levels of consistent safety protocols across the board as summarized below.

40% of parents surveyed don't know if safety protocols are in place in their child care program or know there are no safety protocols in place.

Only 45% responded that their child care centers conduct background screening, and less than half have door-locking devices.

Only 36% of providers always contact parents when there is an incident with their child.

Improvements can be made across providers to put in more standard safety and communication protocols that can increase trust with parents and guardians at relatively small cost. See the stories below from parents and guardians we engaged for more details.

"Open communication and daily updates; my child feels comfortable with the teacher." (Rachel, low-income mother of a one year old from Ft. Lauderdale, FL)

"To build trust, we need teachers who create an open environment to know it's ok to be scared. If a child doesn't know much about another student, they may be reminded that that child is still learning to share, or if they miss mom and dad, it's ok. It's super important to create that environment at such a young age"

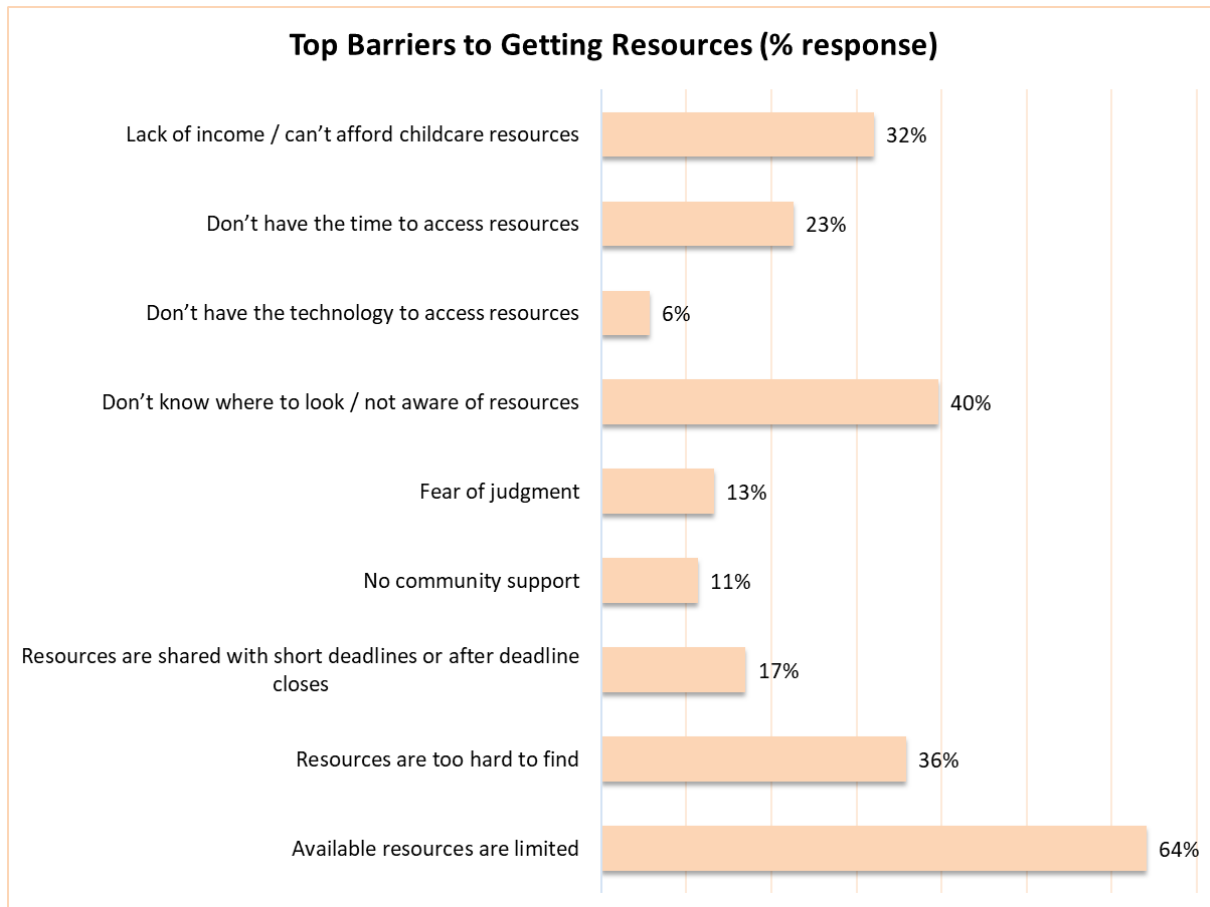
(Pre-K teacher and mom of two in Springfield, MO)

4. Finding resources

When looking for quality child care, parents expressed the barrier to finding resources. A parent described finding care as “a scavenger hunt and it should be easier.” Parents are often left to their own devices when looking for a program and express frustration of having to go to multiple or non-helpful resources for their search.

40% of parents engaged don’t know where to look / can’t find the resources.

The number-one barrier to resources is there are not enough of them. However, for 36% of respondents, resources are too hard to find (see graph below).



In addition, at least 30% of parents said they wanted the ability to find resources more

often in locations they regularly access, including: federal offices, state offices, community outreach programs, local nonprofits, social media, public schools, resource distribution centers, grocery stores and libraries.

"I got the information from a friend. I couldn't find information on the internet or how to apply. The information was confusing. Now I can provide the information to other families who are in my previous situation (41-year-old mother of a 2-year-old boy)"

Ultimately, parents feel in the dark on what they have access to and see a great opportunity for information on child care that is reliable, centrally located, understandable and available through multiple media (e.g., website, human support, documents, multi-lingual) to remove burdens of looking for care.

"Facebook is great but it's not reliable/accurate. Need that reliable/accurate list that's verified." (Mother of two from Hawaii)

TOP RECOMMENDATIONS

<u>Focus Area</u>	<u>Top Recommendations</u>	<u>To Consider</u>
<p>Affordability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Engage and influence more employers to offer child care support stipends as an employment benefit ● Engage and influence more employers to offer onsite child care or partner with a child care provider close to the office ● Support states/localities in revising the eligibility criteria for sliding scale fees - to base child care payments not just strictly on income, but to include living expenses ● Real System Change: Advocate and lobby for increased government assistance and scholarships to subsidize child care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Distribute affordability data to employers to demonstrate the importance of child care and how not being able to afford child care impacts employment rates (i.e., recruitment and retention) ● Advocate for employers to be flexible in hours (e.g., understanding when things happen with children) ● Support child care providers in practicing more creative ways to make care affordable (e.g., any cost-saving strategies from centers to share with others)
<p>Accessibility: Quality Location or Staffing and Training Gaps</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide training incentives for educators to further their professional development, especially in child development, conflict resolution and safety trainings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provider appreciation practices ● Provide support in improving provider workplace culture and retention ● Provide bus passes and

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Promote tuition reimbursement for teachers to further their education and credentialing ● Advocate and lobby for more retention bonuses and incentives for long-term educators (e.g., DC early educator pay equity fund) ● Advocate for providers to offer greater flexibility in hours offered for working parents ● Advocate for the elimination of application fees or implementation of a pro-rating process for more financial accessibility for families ● Publish a list of highly-rated training from parents to providers and a process to find and complete those trainings. Trainings that are highly rated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Safety ○ Conflict resolution ○ Child development 	<p>other means of financial support for transportation to child care centers</p>
<p>Safety and Trust</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide support to child care programs to create a consistent, transparent and constant communication plan with families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Post training videos and resources on emergency protocols for parents and providers ● Advocate by spreading

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Communicate consistent licensing or state standards for required safety training and emergency protocols ● Communicate parent standards for safety training and emergency protocols ● Provide guidance and sample protocols on background checks for providers 	<p>statistics on common safety protocols and procedures for stronger security and their results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Share successful examples of staff trainings and handbooks on safety and emergency protocols, required safety certifications, etc.
<p>Finding resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Update CCAoA website for easier navigation to get to provider resources in each state and be a central place for information for parents and many different organizations. ● Support CCR&Rs to have consistent information to share on their state’s child care availability, resources and support for families ● Ensure there are verified and easily accessible resource lists for CCR&Rs on CCAoA website ● Support the broadening of access to information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Work with partners to distribute resource lists/hubs to more diverse places 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Especially with partners who are already working with parents: TANF/SNAP/Medicaid, SSI, SSDI, Recreation Centers, Acelero and Head Start providers, breastfeeding centers, Diaper banks○ Especially specific communities that lack relationships like LGBTQ+ parents	
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CONCLUSION: Measures of Success & Accountability

Our Measures of Success in 5 years

The Parent Listening Group was asked what success would look like five years from now. Although this is dependent on significant systemic change, parents from the group still saw hope in answering this question. Success from our perspective looks like this:

- **Family voices are heard in early childhood:** Parents can trust, afford and easily access quality child care that fits their specific child's learning and growing needs
- **The early childhood profession is recognized:** Educators are getting paid what they deserve, trained to support any child within their care, and supported and seen as true professionals
- **Early childhood is culturally responsive and immersive:** All children and families have the ability to show up as their whole selves in any child care setting and feel a sense of belonging, individuality and respect.
- **Child Care Aware of America is a household name:** Every family and parent of a young child is aware of the supports available to them and can easily access those supports. CCAoA is positioned perfectly as the leader in all things child care, and they successfully share that leadership.
- **Every family has access to early intervention:** Creating a system that recognizes a whole child and all their needs mentally, physically, emotionally, nutritionally and developmentally could set up our entire society to just do and be better.
- **Early childhood is fully funded and has an accessible financial model that other industries can follow:** Every family, child, teacher and program can function successfully without the burden of finances.
- **Quality is central:** Although quality is challenging to define, we start to see quality in different ways that promote the nurturing and growth of children. We start to see a deeper and richer quality - that children are seen, safe, they belong, they have positive relationships, they are cared for. If quality is low, then we find a unified way to raise quality while ensuring families still have access to affordable, trustworthy and accessible child care.

Success, to parents, in five years would be CCAoA committing to redirecting the early childhood system toward a path that ensures families can easily find and send their child to an affordable program that is high quality and in a location that is near their home while offering clear communication and qualified educators.

Recommendations on Accountability

Collectively, the Parent Listening Group recognizes the importance of setting up community spaces for people experiencing barriers to share their stories. As a group, we were able to uplift each other as we heard concerns and proposed recommendations. Thank you for creating a space like this with our listening team. Going forward we ask from you to continue to create communities like this and uplift the voices of those who face challenges. Accountability is key to remaining an ally to those you serve directly, and together we created some marks that we expect action and ongoing support.

Ideas on accountability

- 1) **Raise CCAoA visibility:** As a success for the future, CCAoA needs to be on the frontlines educating and sharing your work with more parents so they can know what to hold you accountable for (*for example: spreading those with big networks like Head Start and ACELERO, and those engaging with parents right now like TNAF providers, hospitals, breastfeeding centers, diaper banks*).
- 2) **See it to believe it:** Communities need to see the results of the work CCAoA is doing. Be public, be loud and be proud of how you support children and families. Share it, so more people can be involved and want to move this work forward.
- 3) **Share your partners:** This work will take a village. Share who is with you in this work. We want to support all that are supporting us.
- 4) **Provide the tools to enable parent leadership and power:** Teach parents how to advocate for themselves. Offer resources, education, guidance and information for parents to make informed decisions on their own.
- 5) **Say what you are going to do, and if you can't do it, say what you will do instead:** We recognize that limitations exist, but so does creativity. If there is an ask that can't be done, help us ask it in a different way so it CAN be done.