

A Child Care Workforce Exodus

Crisis prompts providers to leave the field for better pay, less stress

Early childhood professionals in Wisconsin are leaving the early care and education field for better paying jobs with less stress as child care programs grapple with unprecedented understaffing and hiring woes.

A recent survey of 300 Wisconsin early care and education providers, conducted by Wisconsin Early Childhood Association found the impact of these challenges is a loss of care for more than 9,900 children and their families that could have been served within surveyed programs if they were fully staffed. Strikingly, the survey data represents only 10 percent of the larger child care landscape in Wisconsin, underscoring the severity of the state's child care workforce challenges. This crisis hinders parents' ability to return to the workforce or increase their hours, which creates a ripple effect on businesses and the economy.

WECA's survey data comes on the backdrop of national child care employment rates dropping by more than 8 percent since February 2020, or a total of 88,400 early childhood jobs.



"I have been open 32 years, and this is the most difficult it has been to retain and get new staff."

-Group center leader



65% said wages are the largest contributor to not attracting/retaining staff

"We cannot compete with employers that are paying way more than we can afford, as we can only charge our parents so much for child care services."

-Child care provider



60% are looking to hire full-time staff



50% have unfilled slots due to staff shortages



33% closed classrooms due to staffing challenges

Data from survey of 309 child care providers from across Wisconsin conducted by Wisconsin Early Childhood Association in August 2022. National statistics from the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE).