

Results of the DHS Child Care Provider Survey

The Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) conducted a survey of child care providers from April 10-17, 2020 to learn more about the current status of providers and what assistance providers needed to remain open or to reopen their child care business. We are sharing the survey results with you and want to thank providers for taking time to complete the survey.

There were 1,983 surveys completed with at least one survey completed in all 99 Iowa counties. 42% of respondents work in center-based child care or preschools and 58% work in family child care homes. Of the respondents, 76% reported that the facility is open and 24% reported that the facility is temporarily closed.

Of the facilities that are open, 51% reported having openings to accept children. Many respondents indicated that the openings available were 'temporary' until their regular families returned to work and needed child care again or the openings are reserved for children of essential care workers. When asked if the business/organization had experienced a financial loss as a result of the public health emergency (COVID-19), 60% said 'Yes' and 20% said 'Not yet, but I expect to.' Of providers experiencing a financial loss, 61% reported the loss between \$0 – \$5,000 and 16% reported a loss between \$5,001 – \$10,000.

Comments from open facilities included the following areas:

- Increased stress to remain open because of health and safety risks to the provider/owner and staff
- Feeling underappreciated and not considered as essential workers
- Requests for financial help to remain open because significantly less children are attending/decrease in parents paying fees
- Supply needs (disinfectants and other sanitizing product, thermometers, gloves, masks, paper towels and toilet paper)
- Appreciated DHS paying Child Care Assistance (CCA) based on child enrollment rather than attendance
- Appreciated Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) consultants' and DHS staff's responsiveness in answering questions

Of the facilities that are temporarily closed, a combined 82% of respondents indicated one of the following reasons for the closure:

- K-12 school closure
- Families keeping children at home
- Other (health and safety of staff or family, location of the child care facility closed, child care center board decision, helping to prevent the spread of COVID-19)

When asked about the business/organization's financial loss as a result of COVID-19, 39% reported a loss between \$0 – \$5,000, 18% reported a loss between \$5,001 – \$10,000 and 13% reported a loss between \$10,001 – \$20,000.



Respondents were asked if the facility will reopen when the public health emergency ends, 87.5% indicated 'Yes' and 12% indicated that reopening is 'Unknown at this time.' Respondents selected up to three assistance/ supports needed to reopen from a list of items.

- 50% identified grants to cover operating expenses (rent, utilities, etc.) because of lost revenue due to closure
- 42% identified cleaning supplies
- 25% identified paper goods (i.e., toilet paper, paper towels, etc.)
- 25% identified other (discussion with school districts to keep child care open, health care supplies – thermometers and thermometer covers, guidelines for how to assess when to reopen, need for parents to return to work, reduced threat of COVID-19, assistance with loss of income and paying staff during the closure)
- 21% identified mini-grants for deep-cleaning and replacement of supplies
- 10% identified emergency planning technical assistance for a public health emergency or pandemic
- 9% identified information and training on trauma-informed care

Comments from closed facilities included the following areas:

- Decision to close the facility was very difficult
- The loss in enrollment revenue coupled with the increased costs to operate forced the facility to temporarily close in order to reopen in the future
- Feeling underappreciated and not considered as essential workers
- Supplies (cleaning supplies, disinfectants, paper goods) became inaccessible
- Did not feel there was sufficient guidance to address health and safety issues
- Appreciated CCR&R consultants' and DHS staff's responsiveness in answering questions

As part of our process to identify ways to support child care providers during this unprecedented public health emergency, DHS determined strategies using the data from this survey. More information about how DHS will use the child care funding received through the federal CARES Act will be released soon.

In addition, DHS shared survey data with CCR&R, local Early Childhood Iowa (ECI) area boards and the Iowa Women's Foundation (IWF) to help these organizations communicate the needs of the child care industry in local communities and across Iowa. These organizations will determine how best to support and advocate for Iowa's child care industry. [Note: Personal, identifiable information, with the exception of the county name, was removed before sharing the survey data with ECI and the IWF.]

Your child care business provides essential infrastructure support in your community and has a critical role to play both during this emergency and in our state's recovery. Without quality, reliable child care options, thousands of Iowa parents will not be able to return to work when the pandemic ends.

Again, thank you to the businesses/organizations that completed the survey. We will be doing another survey in the future. The information you provide is critical as we assess the needs of Iowa's child care industry and determine how best to support you as part of the state's recovery.

