

Impacts of COVID-19 on Early Childhood Administrators, Family Child Care Providers, and Teachers in Delaware



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Introduction

The Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC) distributed a statewide survey to child care center administrators and family child care programs, and to a sample of teachers. The aim of the survey was to understand how COVID-19 has affected these three groups, specifically with regard to staffing, finances, and families. There were three versions of the survey with some overlapping questions and some questions unique to each group. All surveys were administered between June 15- July 23, 2021. Results in this report are provided for questions that were common across all three survey versions.

Sample

The administrator survey was emailed to all administrators of licensed programs in Delaware. The family child care survey was sent to all licensed family and large family child care professionals. And the teacher survey was sent to a sample of early childhood teachers in licensed programs who had attended a professional development within the previous 6-month period (and therefore were accessible through the DIEEC PD registry). This brief presents results from only those respondents who answered at least one survey question, which includes 120 administrators (30% response rate), 132 family and large family child care professionals (24% response rate), and 191 teachers (17% response rate).

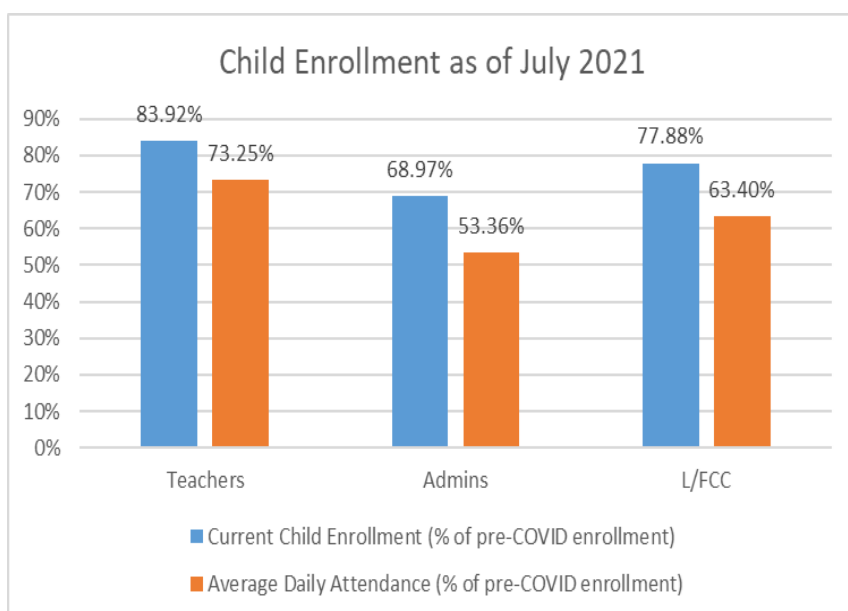
Characteristics of Respondents

A number of demographic characteristics were collected from respondents. The administrators, teachers, and Large/Family Child Care (L/FCC) providers were mostly White or Black, and almost all respondents spoke English as their primary language.

Education and specialized training in early childhood varied across groups. A greater percentage of administrators had a BA or a graduate degree or specialized training in early childhood, compared to teachers and L/FCC professionals.

Enrollment & Attendance

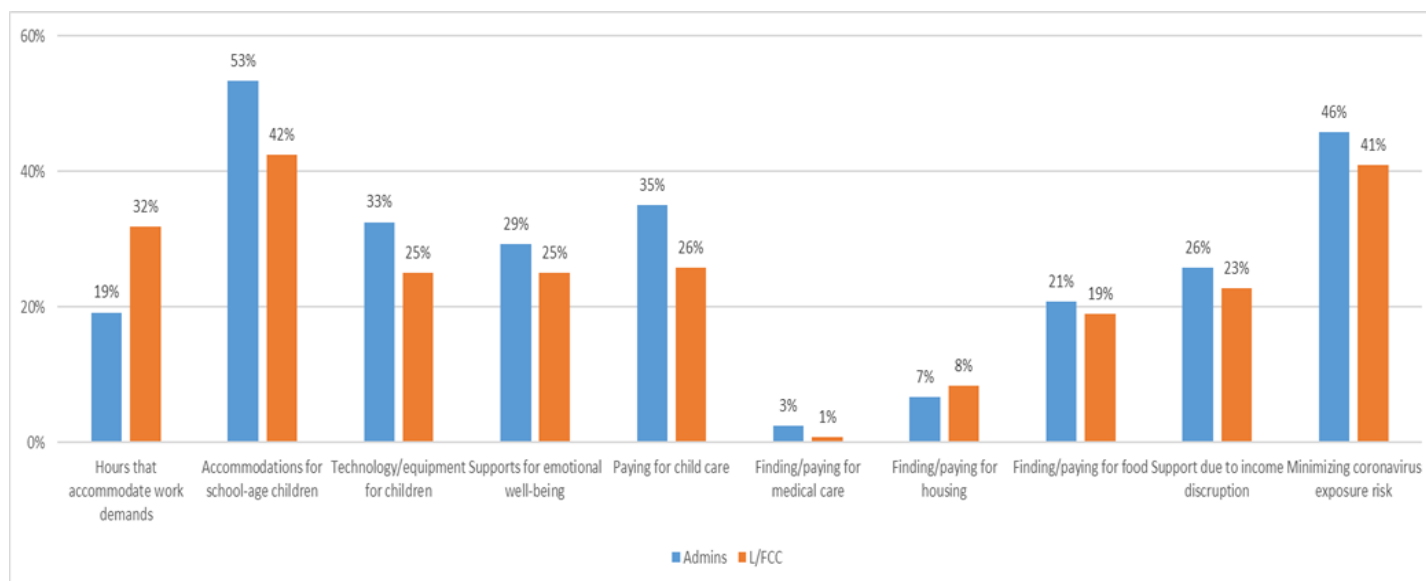
All groups of respondents reported that their enrollment and attendance was affected by the pandemic. The smallest changes were among family child care programs, with average enrollment decreasing by just one child. In contrast, administrators reported average enrollment decreased by over 30%, and daily attendance averages at 80% of current enrollment. Teachers also reported enrollment decreases, shifting from an average of approximately 13 to 11 students.



Support for Families

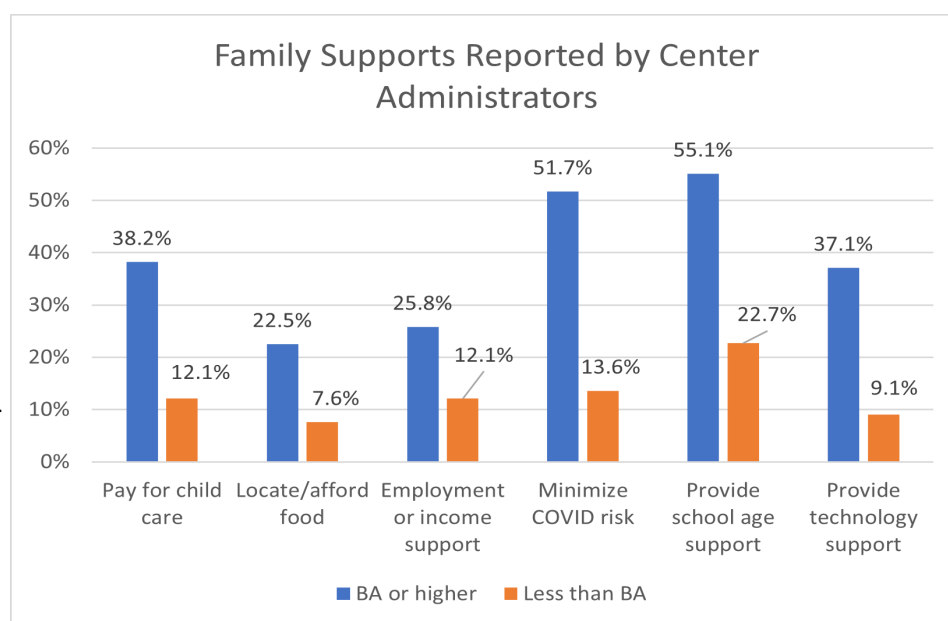
The survey asked about supports that programs provided to families during the pandemic. Supports provided included items specifically related to child care arrangements as well as a variety of other types of support. Some programs offered multiple types of supports to families, and centers generally provided more support than L/FCC programs.

Supports Provided to Families



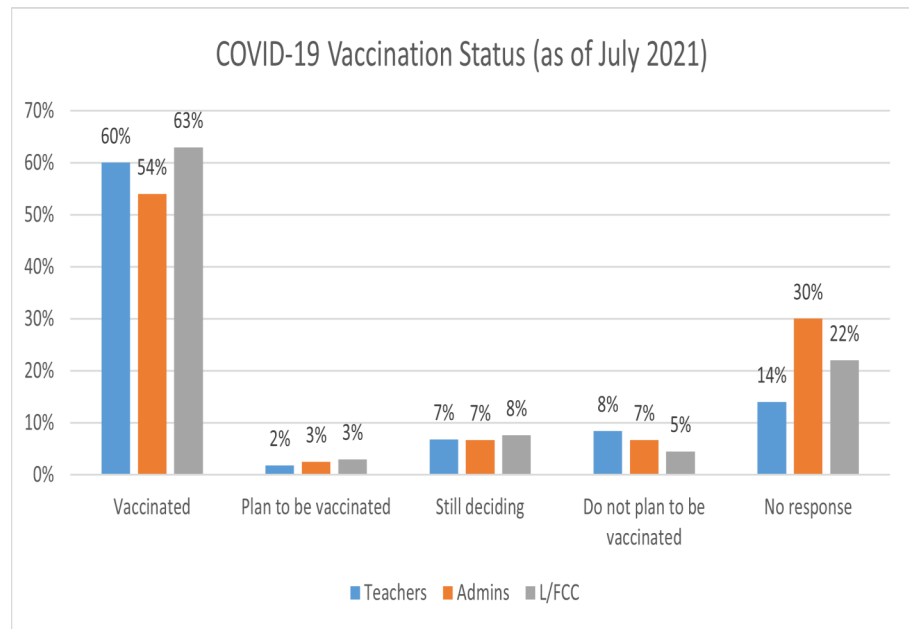
To learn more about how the types of support offered to families may differ depending on the education level of the respondent, we conducted a comparative analysis of those with and without a bachelor's degree or higher for center administrators, L/FCC providers, and teachers.

Results indicated that there were few significant differences in the types of family support offered across L/FCC providers who have a BA or higher and those that do not. Further, there were no significant differences between teachers with and without a BA, in terms of the supports for families offered. Center administrators with a BA, on the other hand, offered family supports at higher rates than those without a BA, including helping families pay for child care; locate/afford food; locate employment/income support; and minimize COVID risk. In addition, center administrators with a BA or higher reported providing school-age services and support and technology support at higher rates than center administrators without a BA. The graphic to the right displays results for center administrators only, given that is where notable differences were found for education level.



Vaccination Rates

The majority of respondents from all three groups of survey participants report being vaccinated. Vaccination rates are highest amongst family child care professionals, followed by teachers and then administrators. It is also important to note that there were approximately one quarter of respondents who did not provide a response to this question.



Conclusions & Implications

The brief provides a glimpse into a particular period during summer 2021, highlighting a number of important issues. All three groups of survey participants were affected significantly by the pandemic, though there are important differences between groups. These differences are not surprising given the uniqueness of each group as it relates to their services for children and families.

Early childhood professionals in each group reported different responses to the pandemic. Though over half of respondents in each group reported being vaccinated, vaccination rates were highest for L/FCC providers, followed by teachers and then center administrators.

Additionally, the pandemic appears to have differentially impacted enrollment among groups of early childhood professionals. Child care centers appeared to be struggling with decreased enrollment, while enrollment remained relatively consistent for family child care programs. One potential reason for this is staff shortages, thus reducing the capacity for enrollment in centers.

Further the different groups reported supporting families in different ways. When asked about the supports requested by families, all groups of respondents reported comparatively high requests for assistance with minimizing coronavirus exposure risk. Family child care professionals had higher proportions of families asking for supports for emotional well-being. Child care centers, on the other hand, received more requests for added school-age care and technology/equipment for children. In addition, child care centers, and center administrators specifically, received more requests for financial support for income/employment disruption, paying for care, and finding housing.

Finally, center administrators with a BA offered supports at higher rates than those without a BA. This finding coincides with other research that provides evidence of the importance of a child care center leader having a degree (Mims et al., 2008; Mocan et al., 1995).

Together, these findings have implications for providing individualized support to different groups of early childhood professionals given the distinctive ways they serve children and families.

About the Authors:

Jessica Francis: Jessica has served as the Research and Evaluation Manager for the Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood since 2018. Prior to coming to the Institute she served in various roles at the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) at Rutgers University and also worked for the Chicago Public Schools. Her research is focused on classroom quality and internal organizational effectiveness. Jessica holds a Ph.D. in Child Development from Loyola University Chicago and Erikson Institute.

Gerilyn Slicker: Gerilyn recently completed her Ph.D. in the Department of Human Development and Family Sciences at the University of Delaware. While at the University, Gerilyn worked as a Research Assistant at the Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood. Gerilyn's research interests are in early childhood policy, with a specific focus on investigating and evaluating the influence of federal, state, and local policies on children's experiences with early care and education. Previously, Gerilyn taught preschool and served as a Head Start director and education leader.



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