



NEIGHBORHOOD VILLAGES

Who We Are

Neighborhood Villages is a systems-change non-profit working to realize a future in which all families have access to affordable, high-quality early education and care.

We advocate for early education and care policy reform and implement innovative, scalable solutions that address the biggest challenges facing early education and care providers and the families who rely on them.

Our Programs

Programs Specific to Greater Boston

- The Neighborhood
- Curriculum Development

Statewide Programs Run in Partnership with the Department of Early Education and Care

- Professional Pathways for Early Educators
- Business Management Training for Administrators
- COVID-19 Testing for Early Education and Care Programs

A Snapshot: Current landscape of early education and care center-based programs 2022

A collection of almost 50 centers were surveyed across MA to get a snapshot of the current state of early education and care through the perspective of their directors.

Sixty eight percent of respondent directors work in programs primarily relying on parent-paid tuition; 12 percent rely solely on subsidies, and 20 percent rely on a mix of both.

The programs' locations span from Western MA to Boston to the Cape. Though the data is a snapshot from a small group of providers, their stories and sentiments ring true of those heard from providers across the state, and even across the country at this time.

[NPR article: Parents and caregivers of young children say they've hit pandemic rock bottom](#)

#1 Greatest Challenge - Workforce

- Most directors reported workforce as continuing to be their current #1 challenge
 - Open positions and difficulty/inability to hire new staff
 - Lack of coverage with current staff due to COVID, illness, vacation

Direct Impact of the Workforce Challenge

- No availability of new spaces for families
- Forced to reduce hours
- Forced to unenroll children

Unable to meet the needs of families



“While I have enough teachers, none of them are willing to work before 8:30am or after 3:30pm...closing the door for many working families.”

“Next year we will be closing one room and may need to decrease another because of staffing. We are currently looking at decreasing our hours for this year as we never had to before-again because of staffing issues and mitigating covid”

“Been looking for 2 teachers since summer of 2021 and now lost 2 more teachers. May need to disenroll families because no candidates are coming in.”

“We have had to reduce hours in January because of significant staff shortages due to openings and covid outages.”

Direct Impact of the Workforce Challenge

- Teachers leaving due to lack of pay and increased hours/stress
- Little to no new candidates applying for open positions
- Administrators forced to cover constantly - majority of directors report covering in classrooms at least 10-20 hours a week

No end in sight to recruit or retain staff



"I am at a loss, 35 years+ in this field and I have never felt quite so hopeless for staff"

"The amount of pay we can offer does not compare to other small business. Staff leaving the field because of pay and COVID stress."

"Our survival is at risk if we do not hire new teachers soon. We do not have the funds to advertise as our enrollment is low due to not having teachers and we are operating with a hefty monthly deficit. I am concerned for the future of our school and not sure what to do about it."

"The field is broken. There needs to be a way to align early childhood teacher with public teachers, in regards to pay and status, but if the cost solely falls on centers and parent tuition then it will not happen."

Direct Impact of the Workforce Challenge

- New teachers thrown into roles with high responsibility with no time for on the job training or coaching
- Veteran teachers leaving the field with decades of knowledge
- Increase in behavioral challenges without proper training or experience in supporting children
- Missed opportunities for early intervention, mental health support, etc

Impact on children and the quality of education



“The trauma and impact of COVID will be felt by these children for many years to come. We need trained and experienced professionals to support and care for children right now, not any warm body we can find!”

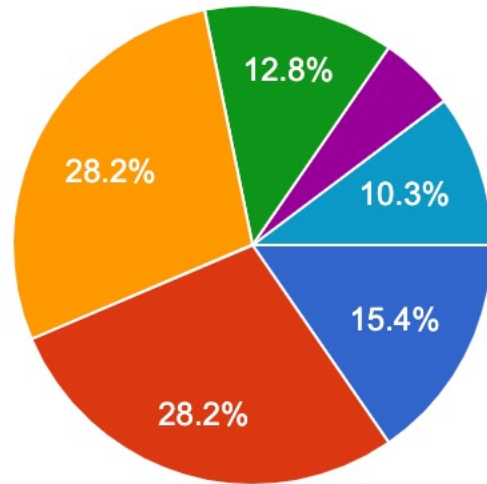
“It’s been so hard to staff in proper ratios, and provide the trainings and PD teachers really need right now. And so many kids are having delays and emotional issues that we just aren’t able to support in the way we wish we could.”

“The mid-career positions feel impossible to fill, seasoned teachers are desperate for leadership roles outside of the classroom, brand new teachers lack the experience needed to run/lead a classroom, especially as many of them are also juggling a full course load, or a second job. And we are stretched to the budgetary limit.”

#2 Greatest Challenge – COVID Guidance, volume of cases

- Roughly half of participants reported **lack of understanding and consistency in public guidance** as an ongoing challenge
- About 35% participants reported challenges with dealing with two aspects of COVID cases:
 - Dealing with the sheer number of cases – tracking, reporting, etc
 - Action required due to a positive case – closing classroom, notifying families, quarantine periods, tuition, etc

Percentage of classrooms closed due to COVID since January 1st



- 0
- 10% (a tenth of your classrooms)
- 25% (a quarter of your classrooms)
- 50% (half of your classrooms)
- 75% (three quarters of your classrooms)
- 100% (full program shut down, or all classrooms since Jan 1)

“The sheer number of kids and teachers getting COVID leaves us in flux and coverage for teachers that are out has been hard.”

“Each positive case takes about 12 hours of staff time to manage as we jump in to notify close contacts, check vaccination records, test, deliver care packages, call sick families with empathy, and help quarantined families with child care challenges. In addition, we are doing this at a time when members of our admin team are out with covid or exposures as well. This has resulted in very long hours, some days are from 5am-11pm, just on covid issues.”

“The biggest challenge right now is keeping up with the ever-changing regulations and protocols with the ever-changing protocols and regulations and trying to keep parents confident in our ability to keep the children safe.”

Current Administrator Morale

More than 50% of administrators report low and very low morale, with very high burnout. More than 90% reporting circumstances this year being worse than last year.

“I know for myself I feel sometimes so overwhelmed working such long hours with no relief in sight.”

Current Staff Morale

Most administrators report current staff morale as a 3 on a scale of 1-5, acknowledging that many educators and staff have already left their program or the field for other jobs.

“Everyone is exhausted - we have all hit rock bottom.”

If ARPA funds were extended through 2023, how would you prioritize funds?

More than 80% reported any additional ARPA funds would be spent on staff salary, bonuses or benefits (with the remainder spent on facilities, or unknown)

“Directors REALLY want to invest in salaries but are afraid of funding running out and being stuck.”

“The state and federal funding has been critical to retaining teachers, deliver our curriculum and keep us out of debt!”

“All the testing and other modifications do not matter if we do not invest in teachers. It is heartbreaking to see ARPA funds being used for floors, tests, families...it will not be impactful unless we address staffing.”

Salary freeze
Increase hours
Reduce benefits
Lower Staffing

Raise tuition
Decrease hours
Fundraise
Lower Enrollment

Educators

Parents

Shifting mindset

This is not a workforce crisis.
This is a wage crisis.

Infrastructure Support

- Operations and Central Administrative Supports for Providers.
- Instructional Support for Early Educator Instructional Coaching, Professional Development and Pathways.
- Family Navigation Increase Provider and Family Access to Centralized Supports Promoting Child and Family Prosperity.