

SCRAMBLING, UNSATISFIED, AND UNSUPPORTED: Parents in the South Bronx face numerous challenges to accessing high-quality child care

Across New York City, access to high-quality, affordable child care is a persistent challenge for families. It is a particular challenge in the South Bronx, a vibrant, diverse area home to many families of color and immigrant families. The South Bronx is also a child care desert—an area where child care programs are scarce and residents face considerable barriers to meeting their families' needs due to decades of structural racism and economic inequities.

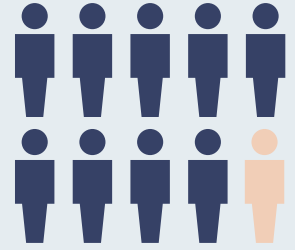
As New York City continues to struggle with the COVID-19 pandemic, a poll conducted this summer by The Education Trust–New York found that New Yorkers overwhelmingly want the next mayor to provide economic relief to working parents and help support our youngest New Yorkers to stay developmentally on track. The poll findings made clear that families are under a tremendous amount of stress while experiencing incredible economic instability.

Following the poll, Raising NY sought to more deeply understand the experiences of families in the South Bronx. Their stories help to color in a picture that has become all too common and equally tragic.

In a series of focus groups, South Bronx parents from diverse backgrounds described a number of critical challenges they face to ensuring their children are cared for, from high costs to difficult schedules to a lack of developmental supports for their children. The stories shared by South Bronx families are a small glimpse into child care challenges faced all over New York City.

The time to support families, caregivers, and New York's youngest is now.

9 out of 10 residents in the Bronx said that child care is a burden for families in NYC. Of those who indicated child care is a burden, 9 out of 10 said it is hard to find affordable, high-quality child care that families are completely satisfied with.



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When I was in the office, the school my daughter was in almost made it impossible. They would dismiss her at 1:30 p.m. on a Wednesday, now I have to go pick her up. That expectation is bizarre. I understand how valuable that was to the teachers for lesson planning, but it just doesn't coincide with the expectations that I have as a parent. My daughter gets dismissed at 4:00 p.m., I get out at 5:30pm, it takes me an hour to get to her school, I have to rely on my mother to pick her up.

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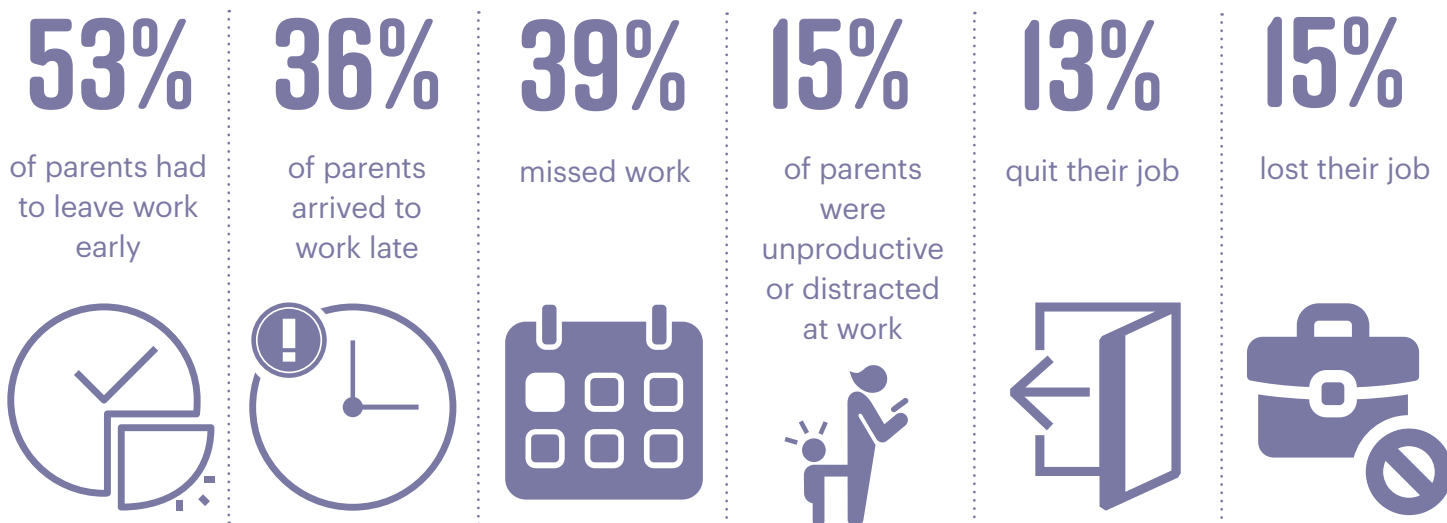
My wife wants to get back to the workforce, but if she goes back then she's just working to pay for child care. It doesn't make sense. Yes, the government assistance from COVID helps but it's just temporary and it's not going to help long-term. We need more supports for parents so we can be productive and contribute to the economy.

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They don't make it easy. And when you do [find a program] they want outrageous numbers so you can't pay out of pocket. I'd rather just stay with my child and try my best to provide myself.

Lack of access to child care has created a number of financial difficulties for parents, including job loss and difficulty paying for basic expenses.

Parents in the Bronx reported that child care issues had work related consequences.



More than 1 out of 4 parents in the Bronx reported quitting or losing their job due to child care issues.



It's a degrading process to go to get it. And now you can't earn an extra dollar because then you won't qualify for food stamps anymore.

Child care has also created a number of economic difficulties for parents, including work-related consequences and difficulty paying for basic expenses.

67% →

of parents in the Bronx have had trouble paying for basic expenses such as food, housing, and/or health care in the last year



50%

of those parents have lost housing or were evicted.



35%

of parents who lost housing in the last year are still homeless or living in a shelter



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Housing in the Bronx is expensive, New York is very expensive, and the government does not help you. If you don't live mediocrely, you can't work more than 40 hours, or you don't qualify for the help to pay for daycare or get food stamps. So even if you make \$500 a week you don't qualify. In order to qualify you need to live mediocrely.

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I'm scrambling. My mom has another job, but there are some days when she's available, so I used her some days. Another friend of mine is available some days. But when they're both not available I need to leave work early. I need to pay two different people, and in emergencies I may need to pay someone else. Sometimes it feels like it's not worth working, because I'm just paying for someone to take care of my child.

Parents are largely satisfied with their family-based or center-based child care centers, although Black and Latinx parents and parents from low-income households are much less likely to rank their experience as positive. Residents broadly support further investments in these programs.

1 in 3 parents indicated their child had been turned away from a center- or home-based program because the provider could not offer enough support for a child with a learning or physical disability.



My daughter was recently diagnosed with a learning disorder. I always knew something was a little off, but the pandemic really put a light on it. DLD, development language disorder, that falls in the same spectrum as autism. Part of education is also having professionals that know how to deal with kids with a learning disorder, rather than separating them from the rest of the children. I chose not to put my child in special ed for social reasons. I needed to find resources outside of school to help her.



My oldest receives speech therapy, and he was diagnosed with ADHD, but they were recommending him to go to another school, and they're trying to exclude kids rather than accommodating them.



I don't know if this is one, but I think we need to address mental health. I think there's a big disconnection between the African American household and mental health... We see so much pollution and garbage outside... We're giving birth to kids who are fine, but their environment will shape them into something else.