



# RAISING NEW YORK

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## **Child care for infants and toddlers at severe risk as pandemic threatens providers across New York State**

*Statewide coalition calls for immediate investment of available federal CARES Act funding into rebuilding and strengthening New York State's child care system*

NEW YORK – At a moment when access to child care is essential to the state's economic reopening and recovery, the Raising NY coalition of parent, early childhood, education, civil rights, business, and health organizations today released a [policy brief](#) with new data revealing that child care provider closures and massive under-enrollment in those providers that remain open threaten the viability of the child care system for infants, toddlers, and other young children without additional financial support.

New York State has more than \$134 million currently available federal CARES Act funding that the state should strategically invest to rebuild, sustain, and strengthen the state's child care system for infants, toddlers, and other young children. In April, the state announced that it would make available \$30 million in CARES Act funding for child care scholarships for essential workers and for crucial supplies for child care providers.

The importance of drawing on some of the remaining federal CARES Act funding immediately is reinforced by the new data showing major risks to the child care system, and especially access to high-quality care for infants and toddlers:

- **The pandemic has led to vast closures across New York State's child care system.** More than 1 in 4 (27%) family child care providers that can serve infants and toddlers in New York City have stopped operating as of May 21 based on data that was self-reported to the NYS Office of Children and Family Services (this analysis does not include child care centers in New York City, which were generally subject to a closure order from the city). Outside of New York City, 28% of child care providers that can serve infants and toddlers have closed, including 22% of family child care providers and 50% of child care centers that can serve infants and toddlers.

- **Family child care providers in lower-income communities are the bulwark of the child care system during the pandemic.** Despite the extraordinary difficulties and risks caused by the pandemic, family child care providers in lower-income communities are remaining open at greater rates than other providers. In New York City and in the rest of the state alike, family child care and group family child care providers located in the lowest-income quintile of zip codes have the lowest closure rates.
- **Providers that can serve infants and toddlers and that remain open have extraordinarily low and unsustainable enrollment rates.** The majority of child care providers that can serve infants and toddlers and that remain open report no enrollment, according to the self-reported data that was collected between May 6 and May 21. In New York City, open family child care providers have an average utilization rate of 6%. Outside of New York City, open family child care providers have an average utilization rate of 28% and open child care centers that can serve infants and toddlers have an average utilization rate of 15%.

From a public health perspective, under-enrollment in child care programs that serve infants and toddlers is a necessity and should be expected to last for the foreseeable future. Child care providers must be prepared to operate with reduced capacity in order to maintain safety, and the demand for child care will be limited due to high unemployment and fears among many parents to send their children back to child care too soon. Yet the only way to maintain low capacity is to ensure that there are enough providers operating safely and at high levels of quality that can financially survive with reduced enrollment.

Raising NY's policy brief [\*Supporting Families and Powering New York's Economic Recovery\*](#) includes three recommendations for the use of federal CARES Act funding that respond to this urgent need:

- **Addressing the fiscal crisis facing child care providers** through increased operating funding that recognizes that child care providers will need to change their operating models and sustain lower enrollment.
- **Helping providers reopen with safe, high-quality programming** by providing direct financial support to address basic operating expenses, equipment and materials to enhance child development, funding for staff training, supplies, and to provide financial relief to families.
- **Supporting family demand for high-quality child care** by making child care subsidy eligibility levels and co-pays more fair, consistent, and equitable across the state, and ensuring that parents who are unemployed and seeking work, retraining, or pursuing higher education can receive child care subsidy.

"Families with infants and toddlers have suffered considerably during the coronavirus pandemic, with the crisis exacerbating pre-existing inequities for communities of color and communities that are low income," **said Hope Lesane, associate director for early childhood for The Education Trust–New York, which staffs the Raising NY coalition.** "That is why it is crucial state leaders include in New York's reopening strategy plans to support parents of infants and toddlers and child care providers as they reopen during this period, and also find opportunities to invest in the child care system and enhance quality so that it is stronger and more equitable than before the pandemic."

“There is a unique opportunity to leverage federal CARES Act funding to support New York’s child care system which will be critical in re-opening business in the state,” **said Heather C. Briccetti, Esq., president and chief executive officer of The Business Council of New York State, Inc., and co-chair of Raising NY.** “As we work with our member businesses across the state on re-opening plans, it will be important for parents to know that their children have a safe place to be cared for when they return to work outside the home.”

“As New York re-opens, we agree with Governor Cuomo that now is the time to strengthen infrastructure and build back better,” **said Kate Breslin, president and chief executive officer of the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy and co-chair of Raising NY.** “Child care that is of high quality, affordable, and accessible in all regions of the state is crucial for a vibrant economy. Raising NY’s plan for reopening child care provides New York with a practical, informed roadmap for providing the equitable, affordable care New York families with infants and toddlers will need to get back on their feet as New York recovers from the pandemic, and for supporting our essential child care providers, all in a manner that will strengthen the foundations of New York’s child care system.”

“I am proud of the leadership, solidarity, and compassion I have witnessed and experienced during this unprecedented crisis,” **said Melodie Baker, director of education at United Way of Buffalo & Erie County, co-chair of Raising NY, and chair of the Erie-Niagara Birth to 8 Coalition.** “As we begin to rebuild, we must address the needs of our most vulnerable citizens’ babies, infants, and toddlers and restore the backbone of our workforce: child care. The CARES Act funding and unspent subsidies present a rare opportunity to implement much-needed child care reform and coordinated support for New York families.”

“Child care is essential to reopening the economy,” **said Jennifer Marino Rojas, executive director of the Child Care Council of Suffolk, Inc.** “It is imperative that the system be adequately supported to ensure children and staff are safe and that child care businesses can survive.”

“As the pandemic hit, Governor Cuomo rightly designated child care an ‘essential’ business,” **said Larry Marx, chief executive officer of The Children’s Agenda.** “That fact becomes exponentially more true as we re-open our economy. As Raising NY’s recommendations show, we can’t return to work without safe, affordable, and quality infant and toddler care any more than we could without safe, affordable, and quality food, transportation, or phones. New York is the ‘Excelsior’ state, and with smart state action, we can improve rather than just return to our pre-pandemic system of child care.”

“It is essential that New York State structures a re-opening plan that includes the voices and reflects the roles of all sectors that are essential to supporting a timely, safe, and effective reopening of the economy,” **said Ramon Peguero, Esq., president and chief executive officer of the Committee for Hispanic Children & Families.** “It is imperative that New York consider the child care needs of its workforce and intentionally act to sustain and support the child care sector through this crisis, recovery, and beyond. The Committee for Hispanic Children & Families (CHCF) joins its Raising NY partners in calling on the state to reflect the needs of the child care sector in its plans to re-open the state, using the CARES Act funding and state subsidy funds not used due to COVID-related drops in enrollment to not only address the immediate emergency needs of the sector, but to address the recovery needs and establish long-term reforms for a system so vital to our collective economic well-being.”

“Families will be the backbone of New York's recovery, and families with young children need priority in support for high-quality child care to enable them to safely return to work,” **said Dr. Liz Izakson, executive director of Docs for Tots.** “Child care providers need critical supports in terms of supplies, training, and assistance to provide that quality. Meeting these needs is a small down payment towards a thriving recovery.”

“As we re-open businesses, supporting and investing in child care is critically important,” **said Meredith Menzies Chimento, executive director of the Early Care & Learning Council.** “Child care is an essential industry and now is the time to ensure the system’s stability. Families cannot afford child care and child care providers must be adequately compensated for educating and nurturing children. Forward-thinking concepts, such as a Re-Opening NY Child Care Investment Fund, must be implemented.”

“It is absolutely critical that we stabilize our child care system and support struggling parents of babies, infants, and toddlers,” **said Rachel P. Bonsignore, director of Liftoff Western New York.** “Child care affordability and accessibility must be given priority as we look to rebuild as a state and a region. Without adequate investment, we’ll see more child care closures, potentially permanent ones. These impacts would be devastating and threaten the well-being of our children and families and our economic recovery.”

“Child care is one of those concrete supports that we call protective factors,” **said Tim Hathaway, executive director of Prevent Child Abuse NY.** “Accessible, affordable, reliable care decreases families’ stress because it allows parents of infants and toddlers to work knowing that their children are safe and sound. Child care providers have been on the frontline since the beginning of the pandemic, providing care for the children of essential workers while putting their own health at stake. As New York makes plans to reopen, this workforce must have the resources and funding necessary to ensure that they, and the children they care for, remain safe. No re-opening plan will be complete without an emphasis on child care and a re-imagining of how the system delivers these essential services to working families across the State.”

“At United Way of New York City, we know that more than ever, it is time to activate to ensure families with young children have access to the quality child care they deserve,” **said Sheena Wright, president & chief executive officer of the United Way of New York City.** “The data indicate that as we begin planning for reopening, this is critical for employers and families alike, and we are proud to stand with our partners to ask our leaders to ensure New Yorkers have access to affordable quality child care, and to support the child care workforce that is critical for us to move forward.”

Read the policy brief and learn more about how families with infants and toddlers are being impacted by the pandemic at [RaisingNY.org/coronavirus](https://RaisingNY.org/coronavirus).

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**[About Raising NY](#)**

Raising NY is a diverse statewide coalition of parent, early childhood, education, civil rights, business, and health organizations dedicated to increasing the number of children who are on track for school readiness. Learn more at [RaisingNY.org](https://RaisingNY.org).