



Staffing Challenges at Virginia Child Care Centers in Fall 2022: Differences by Centers' Subsidy Participation Status

Key Findings

- Child care centers in Virginia are struggling to hire teachers. Most centers have vacant positions, and many reported that these staffing challenges are leading them to turn families away and ask staff to take on additional duties and hours.
- Staffing challenges are particularly pronounced at centers that accept child care subsidies. These centers use public dollars to serve families who otherwise could not afford the high costs of child care and stand to benefit the most from stable, reliable care.
- Centers in the subsidy program reported average hourly wages that were \$2 lower for lead teachers than the wages reported by centers not in the subsidy program.
- At centers accepting subsidies, 68% said hiring was very challenging, and 63% reported serving fewer children and having to turn families away—rates far higher than centers not in the subsidy program.

Between September and November 2022, all child care centers in Virginia serving children 0-5 years of age were invited to participate in the Fall 2022 **Virginia Child Care Provider Survey**. Forty-five percent of child care centers in Virginia (N=1,334) completed the survey, including 630 centers participating in the state's Child Care Subsidy Program (CCSP) and 704 centers not participating in the state's subsidy program. This brief describes the ongoing staffing challenges that child care centers in Virginia are continuing to face (see the Fall 2021 staffing challenges brief: bit.ly/see_partnerships_staffing_va_CCSP). Findings are presented separately for centers that do and do not participate in CCSP.

The CCSP is a voluntary voucher program that serves families who otherwise could not afford the high costs of child care or are facing other challenges.¹ Subsidy reimbursement rates are often lower than what centers charge families paying tuition and often fail to fully cover the cost of providing care. As a result, centers participating in CCSP may struggle more with sustaining their sites' operations, including paying, recruiting, and retaining teachers. This is problematic as these centers tend to serve more children living in poverty who stand to benefit from stable, reliable care. While Virginia did increase reimbursement rates in October 2022 in an effort to bridge this gap, this survey was administered before centers accepting subsidies may have experienced any impact from the reimbursement rate increase. Virginia has also been steadily increasing the minimum wage, and in January 2022, the minimum wage was increased for the second time over an 8-month period, to \$11.00 per hour.

¹In Virginia, families eligible for the subsidy program must have incomes below locally set thresholds, the maximum of which is 85% of the State Median Income.

Child care centers, especially those in the subsidy program, are struggling with staffing.

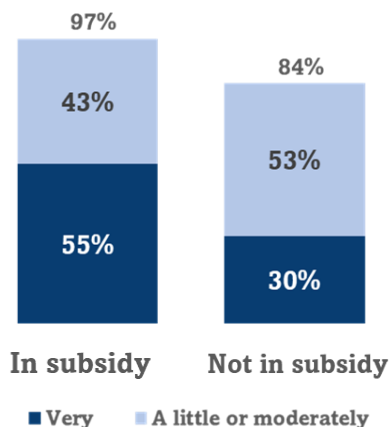
82%

of centers in the subsidy program had at least one teacher vacancy, compared to 46% of centers not in the subsidy program

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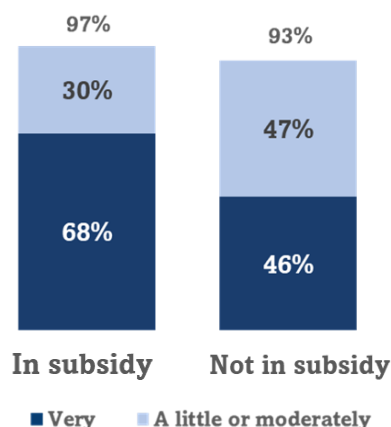
average number of teacher vacancies at centers in the subsidy program, compared to an average of 1 vacancy at centers not in the subsidy program

Percentage of VA child care centers that reported staffing (e.g., teachers leaving, vacancies) was challenging:



Note: Based on responses from 1,318 child care centers in Virginia. In the overall sample, 90% said staffing was at least a little challenging, and 42% said staffing was very challenging.

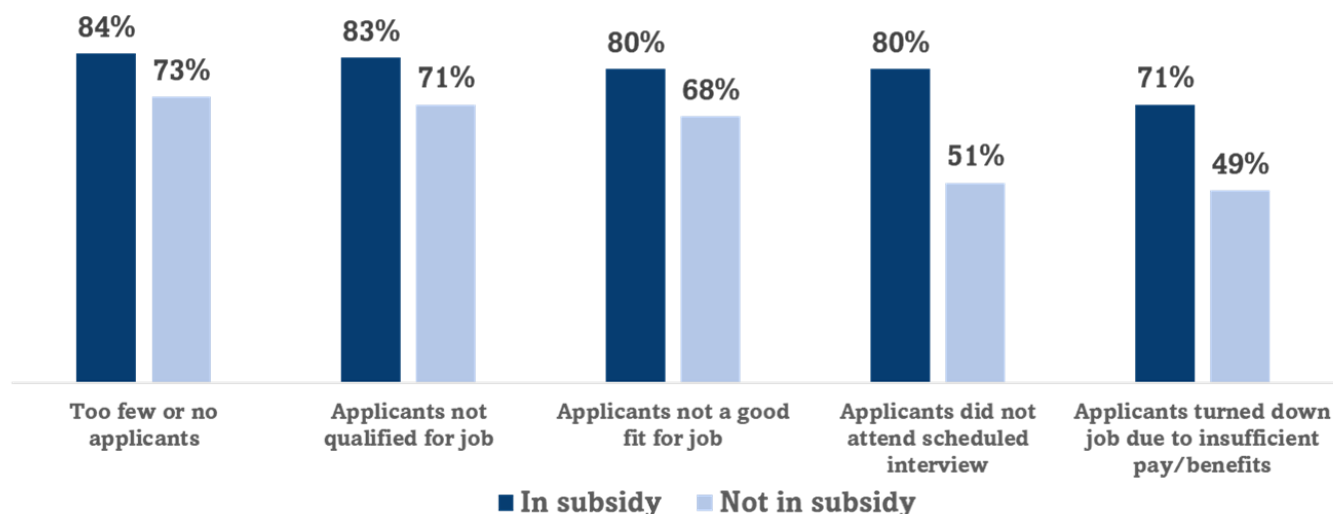
Among VA child care centers that tried to fill vacancies since July, percentage that found hiring challenging:



Note: Based on responses from 1,155 child care centers in Virginia who reported trying to hire new teachers/staff since March 2022. In the overall sample, 95% said hiring was at least a little challenging, and 56% said hiring was very challenging.

Child care centers, especially those in the subsidy program, are facing many challenges trying to fill vacant positions.

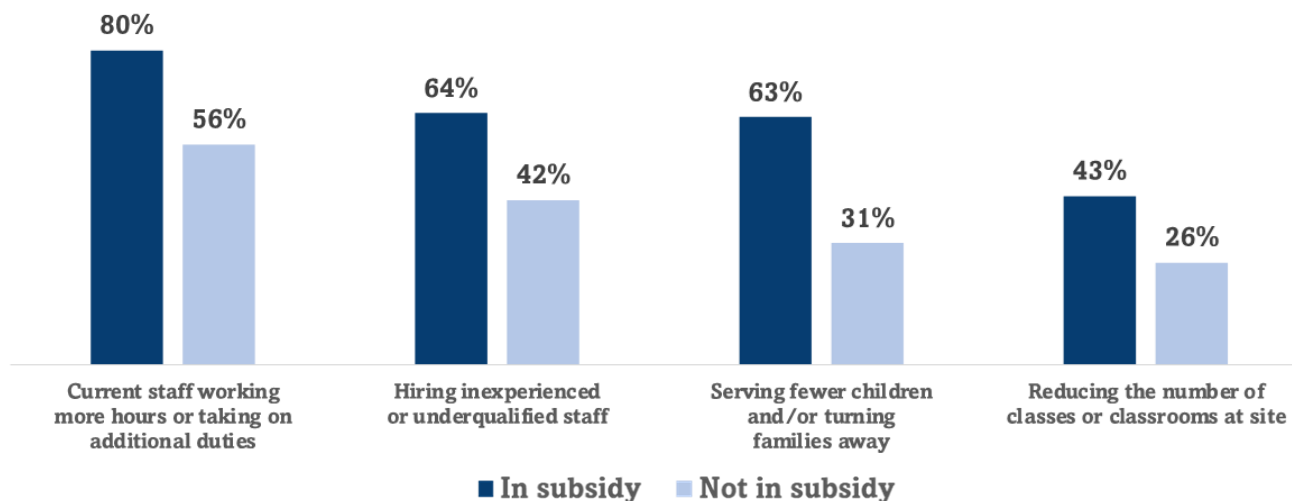
VA child care centers that tried to fill vacancies reported the following challenges:



Note: Based on responses from 1,155 child care centers in Virginia who reported trying to hire new teachers/staff since March 2022. Percentages in the overall sample (from left to right) are: 78%, 76%, 74%, 65%, and 60%.

Child care centers, especially those in the subsidy program, reported the negative impacts of staffing challenges.

VA child care centers that tried to fill vacancies reported the following impacts due to staffing shortages:



Note: Based on responses from 1,155 child care centers in Virginia who reported trying to hire new teachers/staff since March 2022. Percentages in the overall sample (from left to right) are: 68%, 46%, 52%, and 34%.

Before the increased reimbursement rates took full effect, child care centers in the subsidy program reported lower wages for teachers; this may be one reason these centers are struggling more with staffing.

\$2.10

mean difference between lead teachers' hourly wages at centers in the subsidy program (\$15.13) and centers not in the subsidy program (\$17.23)

\$1.08

mean difference between assistant teachers' hourly wages at centers in the subsidy program (\$12.94) and centers not in the subsidy program (\$14.02)

Providers elaborated on the challenges of staffing shortages, hiring difficulties, and offering competitive pay:

"It's difficult to afford competitive pay. We provide pay equal to, or just slightly above what most centers in our area pay, but we cannot afford to pay the sort of salary that would draw in teachers."

"Applicants apply, some show up for interviews, and others do not. Child care doesn't pay a lot, especially with no experience. This makes it hard to recruit new staff that want more than minimum wage."

Note: Sample quotes from 481 write-in comments that centers in the subsidy program shared in response to the question, "What barriers, if any, make it challenging for your site to serve more children?"

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