

**Michigan P3 Policy Agenda-Setting**  
**Executive Summary: Child Care Access and Subsidy Action Team Responses**

<b>Number of Conversations Held (as of 11.1.19)</b>	23
<b>Number of Action Team participants</b>	310
<b>Number of Survey Responses (as of 11.1.19)</b>	43

*In Michigan there are currently 167,000 infants and toddlers in families who live at or below 200% of the federal poverty level ~ 21,000 of their families currently receive child care assistance (2017 CDC and LARA, State of Michigan)*

**Overall Themes:**

- Most of the parents that participated in an Action Team conversation use family members or friends to care for their children and many of them struggled to find infant/toddler child care.
- The top factors that influence their choices for care (which are also barriers) include location, flexibility for when care is provided, cost and the desire for highly qualified, professional staff.
- Parents feel that high quality care is accessible to parents working 8-4 and have higher incomes.
- Parents also said that having more options, a streamlined way to find available care and flexibility in payment plans would be supportive.
- Most of the parents who participated have experienced infant child care wait lists – many never heard back after being placed on one, which is very stressful.
- Parents feel that the income qualification is too low to help the families that need the subsidy support, and that there are simply not enough child care locations that accept subsidy.
- Parents that have used subsidy indicated that they learned about it from DHS, but most of the parents that participated in the Action Team meetings did not know about it.
- Barriers mentioned about child care subsidy are: mis-information about qualifications, inconsistent levels of support throughout the state and the process takes too long.
- Providers expressed that the process of applying for and accepting subsidy is too cumbersome and time consuming, and they do not want to “police” what parents are doing.
- They also feel that payment rates are too low for the effort needed, which also makes it very challenging to pay/keep staff.
- Providers that do not accept subsidy have heard negative stories about the process and that there is no support for them to navigate the system.
- Providers reported that support from Resource Centers, TEACH scholarship and grants for supplies (during Race to the Top) are things that have gone well.
- Challenges include low pay for staff, knowledge that parents can’t afford to pay more, low provider/child ratios, and a lack of support and/or uncertainty about which state level entity they could get help from.
- Providers also said that grants to support higher pay and less restrictions would help to decrease the workforce issues, burnout and stress that they are experiencing.

**Recommended Policy Solutions:**

1. Simplify the application process for parents.
2. Increase earnings for child care providers, with a focus on the infant/toddler workforce.
3. Increase the income eligibility threshold for child care subsidies.
4. Expand the number of high-quality child care slots by providing incentives to providers offering infant-toddler care.
5. Simplify the application and administrative requirements for providers to ensure more infants and toddlers have access to high quality care.
6. Examine geographic and racial/ethnic disparities.

## Child Care Access Action Team Responses – Full Text\*

### Parent Responses

- 1. If you're working full or part time or are in school, who cares for your children while you're away?**
  - 4 licensed care provider
  - 4 family member
  - 2 friend or neighbor
  - State or Family
  - Grandparents (of the children), other family members, or friends who parents reach out to for help to care for their children while parents are at work. Some parents also have their children in a childcare center.
  - Parents sometimes take off work or adjust their work schedule to care for children when those people are not able to watch their children.
  
- 2. How do you pay for care?**
  - State pay
  - Cash
  - Check
  - Payment is out of parents' pocket because parents do not qualify for childcare subsidy or assistance
  
- 3. Have you ever been placed on a waiting list for a child care program or Early Head Start? What was your experience?**
  - 4 yes and 3 no
  - My eldest daughter was at an excellent childcare provider, however, they did not have an opening for my youngest daughter when she was born. We changed providers, but I am on a wait list to get both of them back into the previous provider. At the current rate, we will probably be on a wait list for another year.
  - I have had some call backs and others have not given me a call back.
  - 3 years and still waiting
  - Yes, no communication
  - Stressful- lack of availability
  - Makes the decision for the family as to where they will go whether or not they can afford it
  - Choice of care is not based on quality
  - Long waiting lists
  - Need to get on waitlist well in advance of baby being born
  
- 4. Have you tried to find infant-toddler child care? If so, what was your experience?**
  - Ridiculous
  - Lots of waiting and frustration
  - Yes, too expensive, no spots available
  - Finding Childcare: One parent did a google search for childcare options and contacted childcare centers. Some parents used the Great Start to Quality search engine as a starting

point to find childcare. Parents also found childcare by word of mouth from friends or from program flyers posted in the community.

- Experience: Searches to find childcare were helpful. When families contacted the childcare centers, some were placed on waitlist, some families were told there was no space at that time, and others were enrolled with no problems. Some families decided not to enroll their children in childcare because of the cost and made alternative arrangements for childcare while they worked. The cost of childcare and also enrollment forms were barriers to using childcare.
- Stress, sadness- very limited opportunities. Lack of quality. Cost is crippling and really makes the choice.
- Daycare subsidies don't support those in school so parents worked together to support one another- stressful and had to make it work without consistency for a while.
- Google searches connected people to GSQ and then cold calling people- this led to Early Head Start.
- Member with education background from family support and knew about office for young children- they would facilitate licensed childcare locations- that narrowed the list of acceptable places- this just led to wait lists and then the family hired a nanny which failed and found care at a local center and then back to home care—very very stressful!!!! Experience at the center was stressful and inappropriate and a parent had to educate the teachers- very questionable.
- Most stressful part during pregnancy and having a new baby—finding out you are pregnant is too late for a wait list which creates more stress. Searching is awful and google searches are never ending. Visiting places with openings is awful and the places that have openings are not really options.
- Search for one was limited as there are only three places available at all. They are full always. They knew someone who knew someone who supported getting them in. They then were saving spots over the years and they must know someone to get in anywhere
- Traumatic for parents and every child involved in the process. They must go whether it's a fit or not and it is often like a punishment for the child as there are not other options. No payment plans and money is due NOW! In home is hard to find but often the best and most supportive- warm, welcoming.
- Stability of care is limited as providers may not be able to maintain.
- Relied on friends to get through this early childhood stage.
- Lack of alternative hours
- Long waitlists

**5. When choosing child care, what are the top factors that influence your choice?**

**Cost, convenience in location to work place, materials available to children/overall environment, etc.**

- 6 – location
- 3 - quality rating
- 4 - cost
- 5 - flexible hours
- 1 - provider understands my cultural beliefs and practices

- It is a safe location and I feel comfortable when visiting the location. There have been a few homes I have been to that I will not leave my children at because of things that happened during the visit.
- Cleanliness, well rounded meals
- Location and distance, affordability, safety and ratings
- Location of childcare facility (including onsite childcare at major businesses or places of employment that offer it)
- Transportation to childcare (accessibility to location, location near or on the bus line)
- Professionalism of all staff including the lead teacher/caregiver, teacher's aid
- staff qualifications
- personality and interactions with the children (*are you good with children*)
- Communication with parents: verbal/written reports that are daily or weekly, describe what children do throughout the day (*how my child is doing*, describe what children are learning (*curriculum/what are you teaching children*))
- Word of mouth (*knowing someone else who has their children there*)
- Cost (*willingness to work with families to make payments*)
- Cost/assistance
- location
- hours
- availability
- Quality (even though there are so few choices, you often feel like you have to take it due to limited options).
- Licensed care
- Center based or home based, if home based concern for only have one staff member with no back up. On the flip side, preference of child being in a home setting. Question: for home setting is it required for additional adult to be there in case of emergency? Answer: no a second adult is not required for 6 kids or less.
- Equity based – looking at everything through an equity lens. In our region, the biggest factor for equity is income. “You get what you pay for”, based on resources, staffing, etc.
- Happy nurturing adults
- Clean
- Healthy
- Quality
- Staff turnover
- Relationships
- Cost
- Warm, safe
- Care about children
- Personality
- Teacher qualification
- Location
- Hours
- Low teacher/child ratio

- Diversity

**6. What barriers, if any, made it difficult for you to find child care for your infant or toddler?**

- During the school year, I only need care before school. The ONLY child care in my area that opened up early enough for me to be at work on time (4:30 am) refused to take my children for the hours before school. She claimed it would take away from full time positions.
- 6 – no available I/T care in my area
- 4 – the hours I need care, care centers are not open
- 4 – I am not comfortable with the child care options near me
- 1 – cost
- The high cost of childcare.
- Hard to find childcare if you work different shifts.
- Open slots for children.
- There needs to be more programs licensed.
- Center staff need to meet the qualifications.
- Transportation, money issues, having multiple children and/or caregivers.
- Not knowing how to search for childcare or even where to start to look for it (one parent said she simply did a google search)
- Lack of education as a single parent
- Application forms for childcare are sometimes confusing
- Lack of funds
- Lack of transportation; location
- Hours; availability
- Not enough places with non-traditional hours
- Lack of quality
- Lack of licensed care options
- Non licensed have lack of oversight
- Parent voice: location important based on parent work schedules in case of emergencies and getting children where they need to be
- Lack of alternative care
- Lack of needed hours
- Lack of onsite care linked to workplace
- Inconsistent work schedules
- Price
- Location
- Availability of space due to age
- Breast feeding and dumping breast milk- people do not understand and need to be educated around the makeup of milk

**7. If you have used child care services, did you feel that the service providers who worked with you were knowledgeable and respectful of your family culture?**

- 5 – yes
- 1 – not sure

- More education about breast milk and breast-feeding routines and needs
- Lack of understanding of the developmental continuum of young children
- Often a small amount of knowledge can be misinterpreted and used in the wrong manner
- Lack of understanding in infant toddler routines and needs
- Teachers were diverse, toys and books were ethically and culturally diverse
- Providers understood work/school schedules
- Overworked
- Not nurturing

**8. What would help you find child care more easily?**

- Having more options for childcare.
- An easy list of daycares and if they have openings or not
- An updated website would help
- More State pay Daycares
- Resources, location, word of mouth, family, support system, DHS
- Childcare was affordable
- Childcare places were willing to work with families when it comes to paying for childcare
- There was a more structured list/outline of eligibility requirements for childcare.
- Providers should be upfront with costs
- Financial assistance was easily available to help with cost
- Need paid maternity leave
- Mothers need to go back to work 1-2 weeks after giving birth, child care centers won't take babies until they are 6 weeks old

**9. From your perspective, what's working well in your community regarding child care?**

- I am not sure if there is a cohesive movement, project, etc. that is working well for our community in regards to child care. We have limited providers and even more limited space for children under the age of 3.
- I found a great in-home daycare
- The only thing working well is if a parent has a job working 8 to 4. I have to be to work at 5 am, and only need care before school. There are no choices or options for me.
- Nothing. We literally have no childcare options.
- Limited Resources, Head Start Program Availability

**Provider Responses**

**1. What's working well for you when it comes to providing high-quality child care?**

- Star rating system
- My child care set up.
- I used the TEACH grant to get my Associates degree from KCC and without that I probably wouldn't have done it. I learned a lot about myself and my career from those classes.
- Having quality equipment supplied by the grants. Having the support of great start to quality and having parents that are in tune with the development of their children.

- Getting reimbursed from the food program. Allows me to put more money into quality care. Also, grants from the state
- Great families and good education opportunities
- Strength of character and life for young children
- Having a basic routine/schedule
- The support from Great Start to Quality is great. The grant I received two summers ago was phenomenal and really helped me purchase quality items
- Relationships with families and children, daily operations
- Participating in Great Start to Quality
- The race to the top block grants helped me tremendously with purchasing items for my daycare to better serve my children.
- Frequent coaching
- Low teacher/child ratios
- Supporting staff in classrooms and across the building
- Professional learning communities, Professional Development Opportunities, Coaching
- Support organizations for teachers
- Child Care workers are passionate about what they do
- Families that are appreciative of what we do and understand what we do and what high quality looks like
- Home visits
- Grant funded slots/programs
- Full day options
- EC programs part of the elementary buildings
- Push in special education services
- Highly regulated
- High quality curriculum

## **2. What are your challenges with providing high-quality child care?**

- Low pay/burnout increase staff turnover and could lead to decreased consistency
- Paying teachers enough to keep them, staff turnover
- Inability to charge parents enough to pay staff enough
- Costs – parents can't pay more, but not enough revenue
- Lack of qualified work force, Lack of needed degreed staff, Not a lot of quality teachers
- Lack of trainings, Not enough information of resources for trainings in the area, Improperly trained teachers and assistants
- The ratios, we should be able to have more infants and toddlers instead of only being able to have 4.
- Not having enough time to satisfy all the wants I want to do with them and the preschoolers.
- The varied ages in a family childcare. Babies to 5yrs. It's a large span that can be daily exhausting, with no breaks throughout the typical day.
- The numbers/ratios we can have. Only 6 and only 4 under 30 months which is the bulk of those looking. At 3, most in the area go to Headstart of a paid preschool.

- High equipment and operational costs and low pay. The rules that make more sense for centers but don't necessarily apply for a home based daycare.
- Long work hours, low pay
- Ratio is too low.
- Lack of knowledge where curriculum comes into play
- Inconsistent parents regarding arrival & departure schedules, varying parenting styles that children have hard time adjusting to day are expectations, etc.
- It is difficult only being able to have 2 under 18 months. I really enjoy all of the babies and wish that they would change the age or amounts you can have. I feel so bad for parents who can't find a quality child care for their infant
- Cumbersome, multi-agency system
- Capacity
- High cost, can't afford, can't get good employees
- One of the barriers is that programs find it difficult to find teachers to staff, graduates of early childhood, are prepared to be preschool teachers, not prepared to be infant and toddler teachers.
- The pay for the teachers. Infant/Toddler teachers specifically.
- They make it so that it's more appealing to be licensing exempt than to be licensed.
- Sometimes childcare providers don't know what they need to do to become licensed.
- Some conversation about lack of resources. Final analysis. Why is there a lack of resources? Why can't childcare providers enter the system? Why are they paid less? Why are there no legislative rules for childcare slots? Because it isn't a priority. We all know, but it hasn't penetrated the community at large.
- The lack of resources isn't well known because the early childhood community holds it together every day. The strength of the workforce. It's a strength and a weakness at the same time. The workforce that is there is doing a lot of work and holding it together, because they love the kids, but there needs to be awareness raised of the poor conditions.
- Comments about the regulations. There are three dept that are oversee childcare, is it lara, is it DHHS and one more? Providers need to know who to go to for what. It's a complicated system. + Great Start to Quality, Plus ECIC. There are a lot of entities to report to.
- Early Childhood workforce depth of knowledge about what high quality looks like
- Funding- grant funds and requirements
- Gap between DHS and how centers bill and there is still a gap for families
- Low staff pay and lack of benefits
- Unsupportive childcare directors
- Finding qualified staff
- High Staff turnover
- Inconsistent DHS practices across counties and caseworkers
- Providers lack of knowledge about the process of where the parents are in with their paperwork
- DHS caseworkers overloaded and unresponsive
- Not a diverse group of classroom staff
- Lack of support from school social workers or mental health professionals
- Difference of beliefs, mindset, knowledge, training amongst classroom staff/teaching teams



- Leadership (central office, boards, decision makers) not on the same page
- Lack of parent's knowledge about high quality programming what it looks like and why it is important or the great start to quality
- Lack of substitute teachers
- Subsidized funding for programs that only operate 9 months-12 months
- Staff hours
- Social-Emotional needs of young children (extreme behaviors)
- Transportation for families and children
- Amount of paperwork

### 3. What would be helpful to you in your efforts to provide higher quality care?

- Subsidy for quality enhancements and staff compensation (Not CDC)
- Free Trainings
- Grants to increase quality of material/ purchase curriculum, screening and assessments
- Higher salaries
- More grants to be able to purchase equipment and materials that infants and toddlers can use.
- I can't imagine.
- A partner to come once in awhile to support care alongside me with extra hands and new ideas and more quality equipment that works in the childcare setting
- Less restrictions, more freedom on ratio
- I'm not sure.
- Grants, larger DHS pay
- Ways to teach & teamwork with parents for benefit of child's development
- Bigger capacity
- Money 😊 Honestly, just ideas of different things to do and maybe an online library of books/articles that we could easily research and find answers to questions
- A streamlined one-agency system.
- Ratio would be bigger, grants to help purchase materials
- Premade curriculum!
- Money – is there even a way to offset costs of childcare for infant/toddler? Employer support?
- Subsidy
- Transportation with appropriate seating/restraints
- Professional development for staff – infant/toddler specific
- Degree seeking classes lack infant/toddler focus
- Health insurance made specific for early childhood educators. Wonder: Is there insurance support through MiAEYC? Can there be some sort of umbrella for early childhood educators for insurance?
- Advocacy at a state level

**4. Has your community or care program developed solutions, such as doing things to work around the system, funding to help families who need high-quality child care? What are those?**

- Don't know
- 1 yes and 10 no
- I charge DHS families no more out of pocket than what their Fc is per CDC. I chose to keep cost low so it is affordable for low income, single, etc. families

**5. What are your program's facility needs?**

- Staff training, licensing
- Funding for building up keep or betterment.
- More quality equipment
- Higher wages for 60 hour weeks, better resources to quality materials
- I wish it would be easier to get a substitute that could come and give care if I have an appointment. As it is now I have to close and I lose income and my families have to find alternative care.
- To be able to care for more than 12 children at once. Allow us to license our homes for more than a group license or offer an extended license for those of us that are a 4 star or higher. affordable curriculum, affordable insurance,
- More donations of supplies & toys
- I need new flooring, paint, mini cribs
- I would love to be able to take more children, there is such a shortage of providers that many people are just leaving their children with just anyone because they have to work. Other states have higher ratios, we need to update ours! Not the infants, but older children, we can safely watch more.

**6. Are you experiencing any challenges related to being in the child care workforce?**

- Yes- Salary, benefits, hours
- Health care insurance
- Pay not covering bills and child care for my own child
- More incentives: Better pay, better benefits
- Wages are poverty level
- Stress Management (Self)
- Dealing with families that have differing opinions, family situations, etc.
- Need more supports for working with mental health issues, family challenges, behavior challenges
- Low salary, can't earn a living wage to support a family
- The family/work balance is non-existent. It's really difficult to get to appointments or go to my own children's activities. We should be able to have a sub that does not need to have all the qualifications of an assistant if they're not helping daily (some training should be required, not all though) so that we can do those things during a work day.
- Staffing. It is hard to be able to afford good help. Finding people who love the job as much as I do and who can work for minimum wage.

- Just energy to keep up with the kids needs on a daily basis
- My child doesn't get counted toward food program but counts towards my ratio until she is 7. I should get reimbursed for daycare hours. Most of the parents looking for care under for kiddos under 30 months and I can only have 4 and of those only 2 under 18 months. It's very restricting
- Long hours and low pay. Keeping up with the new rules are regulations.
- Their inability to accommodate all the children that need quality daycare that end up in an unlicensed home.
- Not being treated as a professional but as a sitter
- Honestly, the loneliness you feel being secluded from adults all day
- Burn out. Long days, low pay, challenging 1st time parents
- Anytime I take a state paid child, it takes FOREVER for them to get approved for payment. The case worker should be able to speak with providers and tell us if all paperwork is in and email us if they are approved. It is such a slow process. Also if a parent brings their child to daycare and then does not go to work (we have no idea of what parents do when they drop off child.) But if the state finds out that parent wasn't working, WE have to pay the money back! Not the parent! Even years later. That is just not fair. And it makes providers not want to take state pay families. The parent is the one lying, the state should go after them, not providers.
- A childcare provider said - We accept childcare subsidies. But if families start making even a little bit more money, then they can't afford it again. It's designed to help, but it makes it much more unaffordable at times. We take the loss because we know that families need the help. People end up choosing the in-home providers, because of the cost. Especially when you live in a rural area. Where there is nothing there. Family, friends, neighbors.
- The whole structure can easily topple. If families have to stay home with their kids, the workforce is jeopardized. Which brings us back to the lack of public knowledge about these issues.
- We have a certain amount of data but we need more. We need it shared and we need alignment around the data if we're going to change anyone's mind about it. Needs to be good data. How does it impact the business world? XX amount of people would be in the workforce if this were solved. Also, what the difference high quality childcare would mean to a child's life. Measuring the success of early childhood care. Showing the difference between that and the kids that are raised by family, friends, and neighbors.
- Diversity. A lot of the funding toward childcare, the current structure doesn't help build diversity in the young classrooms. For example, the classrooms for GRSP. There is no integration because of the focus on highest needs. It often ends up being, "here is the white classroom and here is the classroom of color," due to these funding streams.
- When we go to the state with this. There is no chance that we're going to bring childcare subsidies.
- There are a lot of people who aren't taking the CDC subsidies. What's up with that? It's so complicated that families aren't using it.
- The childcare providers don't need to because they have a waiting list. Many licensed homes don't have infant rooms. The cost is so high to run an infant program. Programs rely

on the bigger preschool program to offset the infant program, because they don't even break even.

- There is so much benefit in the shared service for us to be able to help with the background work in payroll and services.
- Daycare providers are the most passionate people. But there are not a lot of new people coming into this work. We're already down 10,000 providers since 2006.
- Handling children with challenges with lack of support; staff are not qualified to support children with certain needs
- Burnout when dealing needs of children and staff
- Providers feeling like they are in a silo
- Not always an avenue to obtain furthering your education or a means to pay it off on your current wage
- Lack of support structure for families that have children with needs/behaviors and how that impacts the program staff
- Lack of mental health professionals in the field
- Special education staff in local school districts unfamiliar with child development
- Job related stress
- Mental exhaustion to support all of the families and their needs
- Working a second job in addition to childcare
- Putting your own money into the classroom/program
- Too many regulations (licensing, great start to quality, gsrp, head start, miregistry) that has too much paperwork
- Self liability- who protects the workers?
- Ec workforce is not at the program level decision making table
- Parent involvement
- DHS and family understanding of quality care
- Staff turnover
- Low wages, lack of benefits
- Providers bring up that families don't know how to apply for the subsidy.
- A couple of providers brought up that although families had WIC, they didn't know they could get subsidy.
- A lot of people out in the field state it is hard or they don't know how to apply for subsidy.
- Now that the online is streamlined one navigator feels like the application process is much easier now.
- The 72,200-gap number, is it that they don't qualify or don't know how to apply for it?
- Even if the families do qualify, there is a communication lag or misunderstanding that parents think that all the childcare is paid for and that is not always the case.
- Providers often don't want to accept subsidy because they often get families that rack up a bill and then leave.
- Families often apply and provider takes kids but then a month later no pay and no subsidy.
- Providers and families are often in a bind because they take the child before approval.
- Families are often taking children to illegal childcare because they need someone to fill the gap.

- A recent provider stated that they got a letter that the child was dropped in July and it is now October.
- Sometimes if parents are over the pay level now can't qualify and are more in the whole.
- Gap underestimates the base problem since the rate to qualify for subsidy is so low.
- The severity of the shortage is even higher when you take into account the 167,000 that are below 200% of poverty.
- Many providers don't get the copay, so they are only receiving what the state actually pays.
- Programs don't make money off their IT programs and so make money up by doing a higher number in preschools.
- Lack of IT care.
- Now private centers are struggling because older kids go the school district for programming such as GSRP, so this affects their ratios and income.
- Zoning issue stops a lot of home providers from becoming group homes.
- High cost to rezone. Thousands for fee to rezone, apply to board, must have an architect come, etc.
- Some cities such as Detroit are working to support home providers with the cost of rezoning and the application process.

#### 7. Do you think child care teachers are paid fairly?

- No
- 10 no and 2 yes
- It is costly to run the business and run it well. Parents also have budgeting priorities and don't always feel that child care providers are worth spending more money on.
- I think CDC rates should increase significantly
- You charge what you feel you are worth
- I set my rate so if I didn't feel like I was making a fair wage then it would be up to me to change
- As a home Licensee I have control over my income, but if I had an assistant I would have to pay them low wages in order to continue to commit to families.
- I am a licensed 5 STAR family program. I have 2 kids of my own, 2 and 4, years old. I can only charge for 4 spots a day. I make \$12 an hour before all my work expenses. After expenses I make \$5/hour. That is what I made back in 2006 when my child development degree wasn't complete.
- Gender wage gap \_ a profession of all women is paid less
- Huge gap btw EC and K-12 staff with same licensing requirements
- No!
- High staff turnover
- Fast food workers are paid more 😞 😞 😞
- Many providers just take what the family can afford.
- Subsidy payments are so low it is hard to pay staff and take subsidy which you sometimes don't get paid for.
- Does having provider become a navigator help? We know of one, but she is still trying to figure it out. One school district has done it and they are considering having computers

to fill out the applications. UWSEM navigator has worked with local school for young adults to help with high schoolers applying for childcare if they are old enough and qualify.

**8. Do you feel child care providers change jobs frequently? If so, what do you think would help child care providers stay at the same job for a longer time?**

- Yes (13)
- I am an in home and I think if we were allowed to have a sub for occasional appointments or activities that more providers would stay open. Also if the state changed the ratios to allow us to enroll more children, I think more providers would be earning a more livable income and would not want to close.
- More income and more training.
- Better pay and benefits
- No or very limited benefits
- Benefit packages
- Pay is #1 barrier to remaining in child care field. Compensation is not high enough, not a living wage
- Higher compensation
- Pay increase
- Better pay and better hours. More support
- Higher wages
- Higher pay, benefits would help.
- Better benefits, more teacher planning time, breaks
- Field is not respected as highly as elementary/middle/high school (K-12) teachers
- Feeling valued: Their times & expertise, Celebrated and treated well, Recognition and acknowledgement of abilities and dedication
- I think regulations and not having clear cut rulebooks makes it stressful for those who enjoy this career. The long hours and days causes burnout, and the lack of adult support. Honestly my favorite days are when someone from Great Start, Food program, or the State stops by. Hours are not good for families (early and late shifts)
- Nothing
- Higher wages, streamlined systems
- Better pay and benefits
- More pay and more communication from DHS case workers. More respect from parents
- Wellness programs
- Work/Life balance
- Higher salary, better benefits
- Pay
- Training
- Support for children with challenging behavior
- Health benefits
- Vacation
- Retirement

- Working outside of work hours
- No pay spread across the year (9 months)
- Difficult to pick up a summer job
- Coaching support across the board for requirements/quality
- Staff will leave for a quarter across the street.
- Highly qualified staff often take a private job and then go to a school district when a “good” job opens.
- Rarely the staff will stay for long periods of time but that is usually those tied closely to the center and the community.
- High burn out rate.
- Providers are second parents to the child.
- Home providers have a hard time with staff. Even one example of staff stealing from provider.
- Often can’t use leadership skills, get bored, not challenged, stuck in IT rooms often and no one checks on them.
- IT teachers feel as if on an island. You get promoted out of there. Stigma in the center and also the lowest paid.
- Cold hard cash.
- Ability for providers to provide benefits like time off, health care, living wages.
- A lot of providers have a show up for work or workers don’t get paid. Paid time off could help.
- Sometimes some providers put it in policies to take a week off but often can’t afford to pay staff of that time. If staff were paid, they may stay.

### Reactions to Policy Solutions

#### **Solution One: Expand the number of high-quality child care slots by providing incentives to providers offering infant-toddler care.**

- I don't want someone watching my infant just for the money, I hope they like infants.
- I'm not quite understanding this question. Most providers get calls for infant and toddler care so they do not need incentives to offer care, it's already being offered. In fact, there aren't enough spots.
- It takes all hands to care for infants. An extra person would help, but I can't afford another helper.
- I am hesitant to agree as I assume these incentives would be tied to participation in addition requirements
- Expand the number of toddlers we can have period. I already take my 2 infants and the other 4 are toddlers.
- #1 is great – but if we did that, we would have to move the other kids out of the space, so the incentive would have to be make me more room, build me another building.

#### **Solution Two: Increase the number of high-quality licensed and license-exempt child care options by providing additional supports and resources to providers to increase quality.**

- I have concerns about license exempt. I think that it is slightly unfair for them to receive the same support that those of us who are licensed receive
- We are already working towards this, however, we know that the increased support comes with increased requirements, causing some providers to leave the field.
- License exempt should not be allowed. If the rest of us have to jump through so many hoops then everyone should. The state should be going after all the unlicensed programs.
- Anything helps 😊
- #2. We need a better way to define high quality. GSQ sucks. Assessment needs to be based on all different curriculum. Montessori – doesn't do well because they do a different curriculum. National accreditations could help. NAC accreditation.

**Solution Three: Collect and report self-identified child care enrollment by age, location and race/ethnicity to support data-informed decisions about investments in child care.**

- We already know very well that we need additional spots. Don't spend any more funds collecting data!
- Not sure how this will help?

**Solution Four: Increase earnings for the infant-toddler early childhood workforce.**

- Most popular idea
- For those parents who pay cash, is this going to further the inability to afford child care
- Fund service providers directly
- We don't make enough.

**Solution Five: Examine geographic and racial/ethnic disparities and cultural concerns that may deter or prevent families from enrolling in high-quality child care.**

- I think that quite often we are taking race and ethnic disparity to the wrong level. We are all human and should be treated as such. When you start singling out certain groups you truly aren't treating people equally.

**Solution Six: Tell us your ideas! What policy solutions would you suggest?**

- Paid maternity/paternity leave
- Space provided to nurse/pump and education providers on breast milk storage
- More centers that can provide more space for care
- I would have to say to increase the number of infant and toddlers that one provider can have at a time. There aren't enough infant toddler spots available to meet the demand. The 30 month and up spots are sometimes difficult to fill because of all of the free or non free preschool options available.
- Make it more affordable for families. Maybe employers could help employees pay daycare expenses
- We just need childcare. Parents can't be concerned with quality of childcare when there is no childcare options at all. We can't keep jobs because we have no childcare.
- Again, I would really like you to look at age groups and amount of kids you can be licensed for.
- Increase ratio, stop providing so many free programs for 4 year olds. All you're doing is closing down more programs who can't survive on the low ratios of infants and toddlers. The 4 year



olds go to free preschool and we can't fill out spaces even though we are quality programs. Stop discriminating between early childhood education. Preschool, childcare it's all early childhood education. Educate parents that early childhood education is important. We are one not 2 separate entities.

- Instead of a home provider only able to have 6 children in care, expand it to more children, like 8 without having to have an assistant. No more than 2 infants still, but more toddler/ preschool age
- Fountain Street Church. What if under these rules there would be a way to include/open up all the resources. We have so many churches – why don't we open up the spaces that we do have in the community. As a church, we're not equipped to run a child care program – but we have money and a building.
- Resources is a big issue – collaborations with churches and faith-based organizations is a wonderful idea. It could perhaps increase the number of spots. The idea of leveraging resources that we already have is the way that we need to start thinking.
- We also need to think about who is the most motivated at this time? Employers. Workers. This is an issue that is keeping people out of the workforce. We need to leverage that resource as well. Muskegon's Livability project is doing that well right now.
- Talent 2025. When we talked to some of the family providers, they wanted to expand, but maybe they didn't have the resources or start up needed to expand. So that is a possibly solution as well to provide start up resources.
- One solution that the childcare provider is looking into after looking at all of these barriers, is to partner with different organizations in specific neighborhoods. Looking at 50% subsidized. 50% private pay. Those who are at 200% have 0 copay. ELNC – is a great service for families that aren't working 8 hour shifts
- Solution must include startup costs. Must be incentivized for new people and existing people.
- All of the solutions are number one.
- Apprenticeship Models could be a solution
- Instead of ranking by importance, maybe we rank by what needs to happen first? There is a lot of respect among Early Childhood Workers. But we need to raise the respect of those who take care of the tiny babies. We have been raising these jobs – but we need to do it more. There is not enough people coming into this workforce. There aren't a lot coming into teaching in general.
- Degree should be required for children and toddlers, and should be paid the same. It would be great to create an early childhood path. Maybe you do start in early childhood, but we show a clear path of how you can move through a career. Continuing funneling people through and even though it's not high pay, it's high demand. You could be an early childhood professor in the end. It may not solve the \$10/hr problem. It's easier to accept that if you see a path. Infant teacher needs to be respected and valued. Allegan has an amazing training that has low turnover and both men and women in the program.
- The group added "Massive educational campaign." We need a massive educational campaign around these issues. Compared to a Going Pro campaign, anti-smoking campaign, or Pure Michigan. It needs to explain the investment. Explains the return on investment. Has to be a sustained 10 year commitment. Another example was "Michigan works when childcare works." Pennsylvania did a campaign just for employers. One day conference for just CEOs. Here is why

we should invest in it in regards to the future of the workforce. Together we can float more boats if we do a giant campaign. Let's sit all the CEOs down. Give them hands on knowledge by getting them into a child care facility that takes care of children.

- Can there be substitute teacher substitute pool? Shared services will begin to look into that.
- Also needs to be licensing policy things to change. If there were a central hub that does the fingerprinting, provides basic training, centers can buy a membership to this central.
- Campfire has been recognizing people in the profession just on Facebook.
- Are some families getting assistance but are not working so they don't need childcare?
- This presupposes that the system we have works.
- Start over:  
Have public education system that begins at birth.  
Workers will be paid for the work that we do.
- Stop disrespecting the work that educators do.
- Value the field even though it is predominantly female which is the problem with wage as far as gender discrimination.
- Model the system after some states that have it right such as Virginia, universal preschool in Georgia.
- Is there a breakdown in MiBridges or with the case worker to apply for childcare? No, you can select everything at one time, but some people don't know. For instance, one young lady only applied for certain assistance.
- Make the system for benefits opt out. So that once they apply, we tell them what they qualify for and then they opt out if they don't need it.
- If they have a change in status, they need to know that they could qualify.
- We need to recognize the gap between who qualifies and who doesn't take it. We know that's about 30-40% in our region from those who qualify for Medicaid.
- One friend doesn't use it because she is afraid of choosing the wrong place for her infant and the parent would like to have the infant home with her.
- Parents are fearful of taking their child to childcare so leave the child home with older sibling or relative.
- Parents have to do due diligence in childcare and drop in, check for quality, etc. to know their parent is safe.
- Parents often have a rough time navigating from applying, turning in documentation, and then finding childcare. They are feeling bad about receiving childcare subsidy or assistance and don't want to tell someone that.
- Generational poverty and situational poverty play into this scenario. Generational they may leave the child home with relatives because that's what they have always done. Situational may be embarrassed to apply or tell someone they are receiving that.
- Being respectful to the parent and provider experience is very important and something our region will be working toward.
- Arming parent with quality items so that they are empowered.
- Reducing the stigma for parents.
- Everything should go to hospitals or OB/GYN because that's where people are at.

- One parent didn't know the child could qualify for early on because baby was a preemie because no one told them.
- Even though GSQ is connected to MiBridges, parents don't know how to navigate all of that.
- How are we as a region connecting parents to resources and what are the challenges we need to strategize on around that

## RANKING SOLUTIONS

- Policy Solution [NOTE: the group sorted and ranked their top three potential policy solutions]
  1. Increase earnings for infant/toddler workforce
  2. Increase the number of high quality licensed and license-exempt childcare options by providing additional supports and resources to providers to increase quality.
  3. Expand the number of high quality childcare slots by providing incentives to providers offering infant-toddler care.  
(2 and 3 were almost a tie)
- 1. Increase earnings for infant/toddler teachers
- 2. Increase the number of high quality licensed and licensed exempt child care options by providing additional supports to provers to increase quality-Discussion was had that the group was not in favor of increasing the number of license exempt providers
- 3. Examine geographic and racial/ethnic disparities and cultural concerns that may deter or prevent families from enrolling in high quality childcare
- 4. Expand the number of high quality child care slots by providing incentives to providers offering infant-toddler care
- 5. Collect and report self identified child care enrollment by age, location, and race/ethnicity to support data informed decisions about investments in child care (no one ranked this indicator as a priority)

## Question: What is something that you think Michigan is doing well when it comes to early childhood?

- conversations are being highlighted more. We're in a crisis and luckily there is a lot of conversations
- A lot resources
- Advocate – First Steps. The millage is something that we're doing well. He was in a statewide Advocacy Group. Advocating for the preschool slots, that's something that's going well, but unfortunately, the group has been disbanded. Began to do work on childcare and all the work for providers. Some success, still a lot to do.
- In Muskegon county, they're doing a good job convening parenting groups.
- a lot of resources and are coordinating it better
- Michigan is making Infant and Toddler Childcare more of a priority
- Finally have champions in the house and the senate to move some things.
- The conversation is starting and mobilizing in a way we haven't seen before.

- a lot of resources and groups. General public is more knowledgeable about the importance of early childcare work.
- multiple levels of data available.

10/17/19

My son has a December birthday, is 2 years old right now. He is too old for early head start, yet too young for Head start. Also, our income is above the Headstart qualification guidelines for Head start, yet we are still considered low income. We cannot afford daycare programs in order for me to be able to work. I have 2 other children, one in elementary school, and a 4 year old who luckily got into the GSRP program this year. We receive WIC assistance, yet I cannot find/qualify for quality childcare for my 2 year old son. Living as a family of 5 on one income has proven to be difficult. I've tried to look into different local resources for childcare for my 2 year old so that I can at least work a part-time job to help support our family. Daycares cost more than 75% of what I would be bringing home, some daycares even cost more than I would make at a job. Having childcare provided for my 2 year old would help my family immensely, not just financially, but would also provide him with socialization and early childhood skills he might not get

exposed to at home. I'm sure we are not the only family who falls through the cracks, and I hope writing this will help ~~other~~ to prevent ~~at~~ this from happening to others in the future.