



VOICES OF CHILD CARE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN GEORGIA'S EARLY EDUCATION LANDSCAPE

December 5, 2024



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Georgia Child Care Association (GCCA), representing more than 700 childcare providers and early education stakeholders, is steadfast in its mission to advocate for accessible, high-quality childcare across Georgia. Our members—dedicated child care business owners and leaders—bring invaluable insight into the industry’s opportunities and challenges. Together, we stand ready to support the State of Georgia in addressing the critical issues of child care access and affordability.

In November 2024, GCCA launched a comprehensive survey of our members, who lead child care centers throughout Georgia. These leaders include Child Care Owners, Directors, and Executive Leaders representing diverse businesses—from small operations with 1-3 licensed centers to larger organizations with over 10 licensed centers, as well as corporate and nonprofit entities.

This report presents timely, relevant insights into the current state of Georgia’s child care industry, as seen through the eyes of those at its forefront. GCCA is proud to use these findings to guide our education and advocacy efforts, amplifying the urgent call to better fund and support child care centers—the backbone of Georgia’s workforce and the foundation of our economic future.

Ideisha Bellamy
Chief Executive Officer

Courtney May
Board Chair

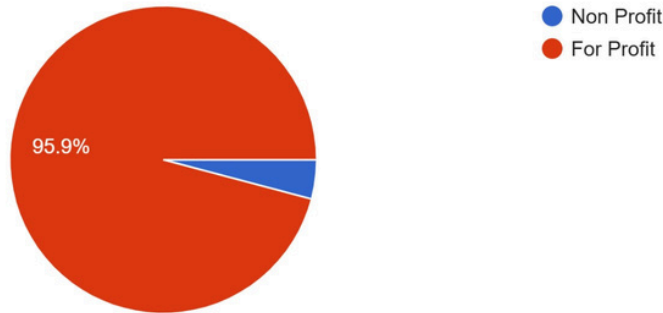
*GCCA members are licensed child care centers from across Georgia
and are licensed to care for over 40,000 children.*

WHO ARE OUR RESPONDENTS?

RESPONDENTS WERE OVER 95% FOR-PROFIT ENTITIES

Is your center for profit or non profit?

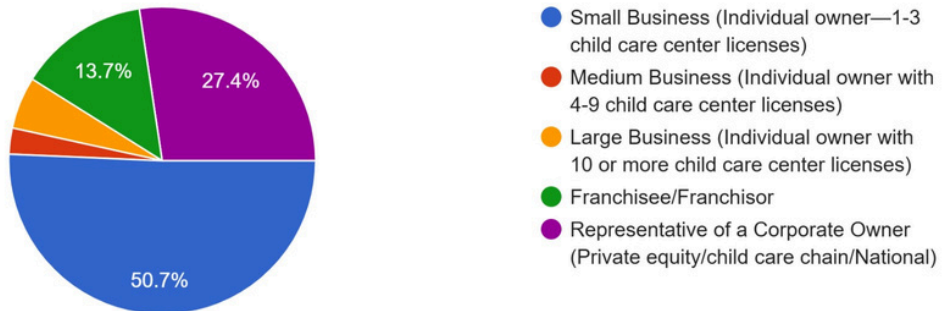
73 responses



RESPONDENTS WERE MORE THAN 50% SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS WITH ANOTHER 27% REPRESENTING CORPORATE OWNERSHIP STRUCTURES SUCH AS PRIVATE EQUITY OR A NATIONAL CHILD CARE CHAIN.

Please select a category that best describes your ownership structure:

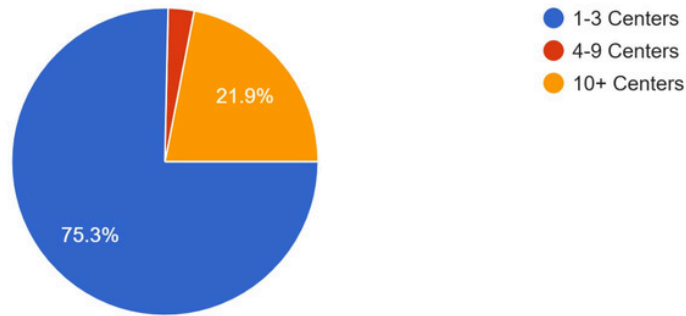
73 responses



WITH REPRESENTATION FROM ACROSS THE SPECTRUM OF OWNERSHIP STRUCTURES, THE MAJORITY OF RESPONDENTS OPERATED UP TO THREE LICENSED CENTERS.

How many licensed centers do you currently operate?

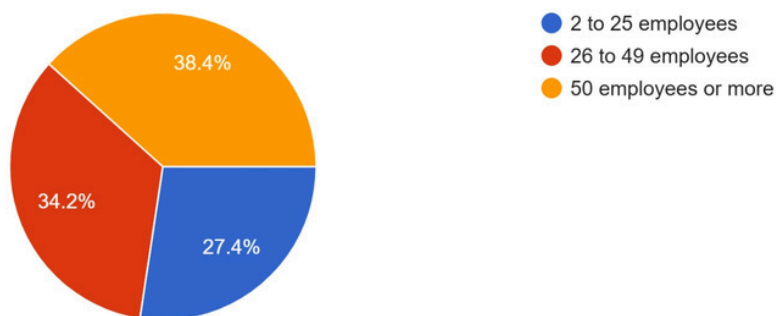
73 responses



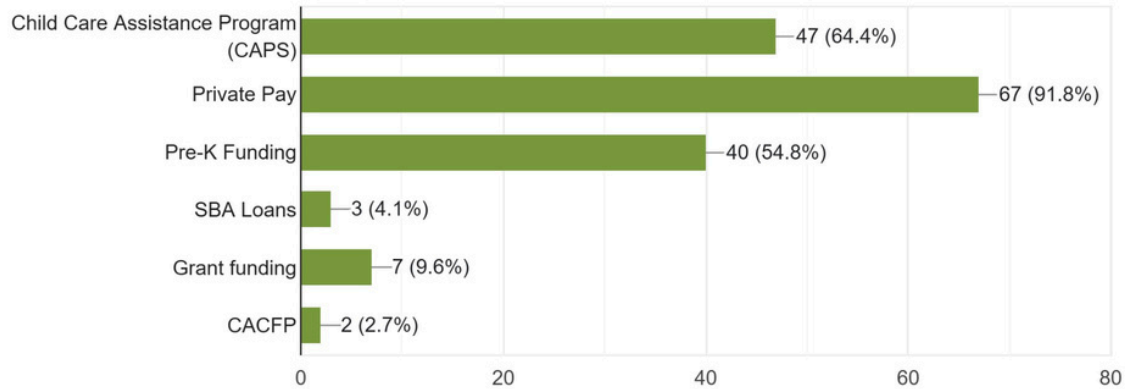
THE MAJORITY OF RESPONDENTS EMPLOYED MORE THAN 50 EMPLOYEES.

How many (total) staff do you currently employ?

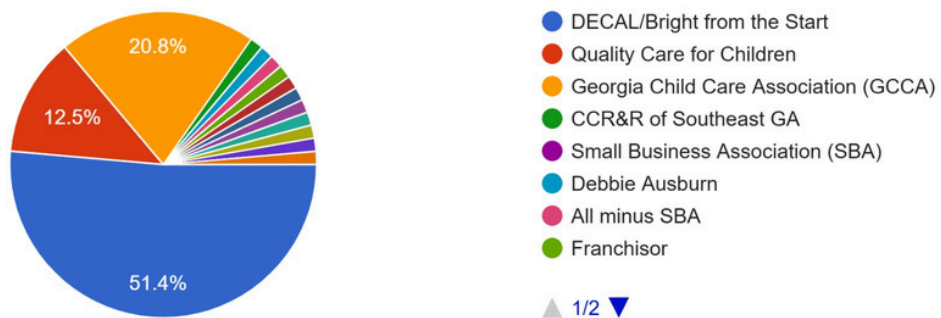
73 responses



WHAT ARE THE PRIMARY FUNDING SOURCES FOR CHILD CARE CENTERS REPRESENTED WITHIN THE SURVEY?



WHEN CHILD CARE CENTER RESPONDENTS NEED SUPPORT, WHERE DO THEY GO TO RECEIVE HELP?



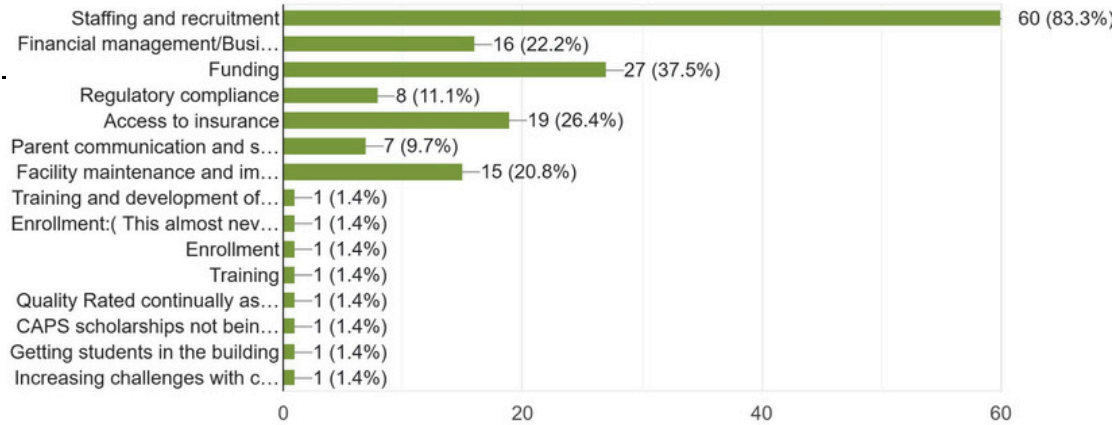
Other support services accessed through Heart Hand and Soul Project, Healthmpowers

TO GAIN THE BEST UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT CHILD CARE CENTERS NEED, RESPONDENTS WERE ASKED TO IDENTIFY KEY BUSINESS AND PERSONAL CHALLENGES THAT THEY ARE FACING.

Business Challenges

What are the biggest challenges that you see facing your child care business?

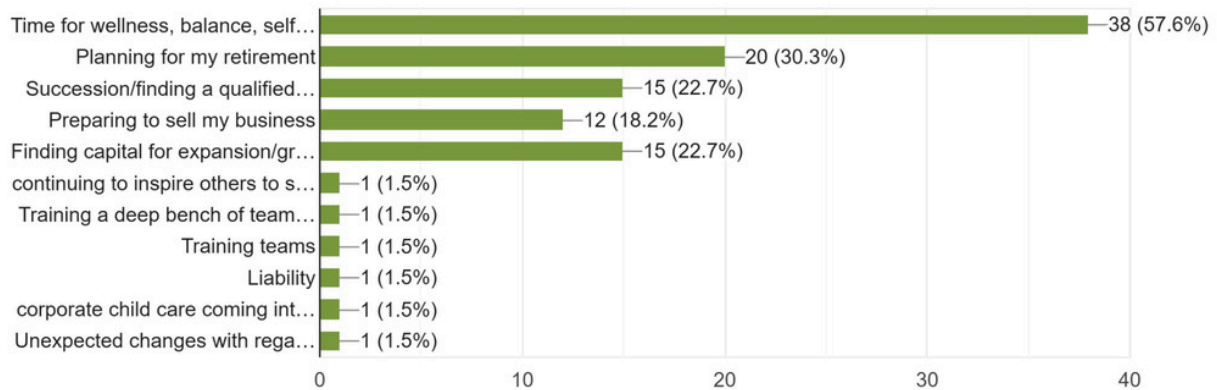
72 responses



Individual Business Leader Challenges

What are your most pressing personal concerns as a child care owner?

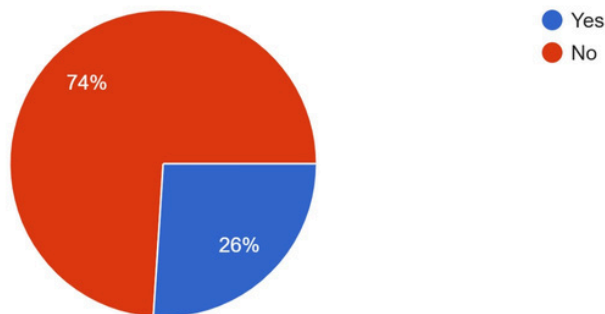
66 responses



GCCA is committed to understanding the needs and challenges of Child Care Centers and what factors may be influencing their ability to serve the needs of children and families across the State. As such, a portion of the survey was focused on capacity.

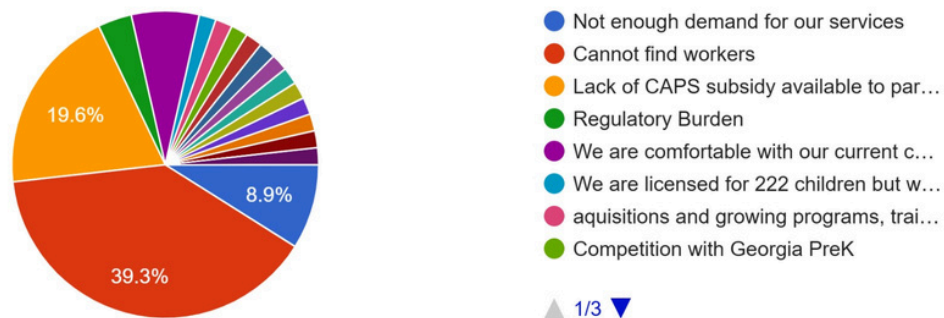
Are you currently operating at full capacity

73 responses



If you answered "No", what are the key factors impacting your ability to grow to full capacity?

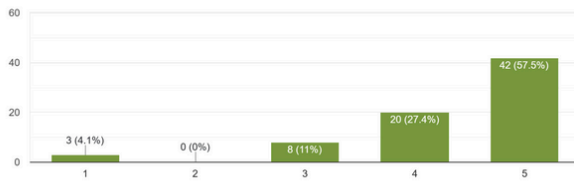
56 responses



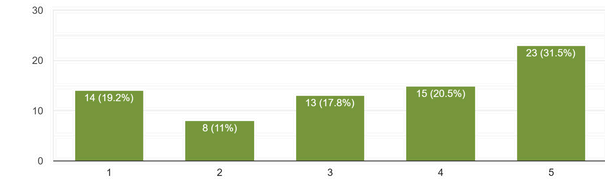
Other expressed factors: Workforce shortages, Georgia Pre-K expansion removing preschoolers from child care settings, CAPS subsidy changes, parents cannot afford quality care.

The survey closed out by inquiring what specific steps that GCCA can take to better support its members including peer supports, training and advocacy:

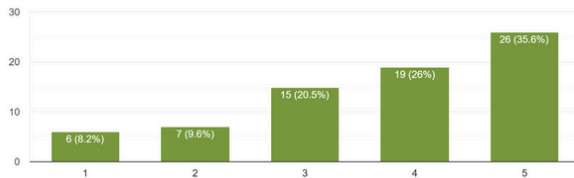
GCCA is exploring the launch of free "Peer Huddles" which are facilitated small groups designed to help members have deeper conversation and focus o...n 1= not very appealing, 5= extremely appealing
73 responses



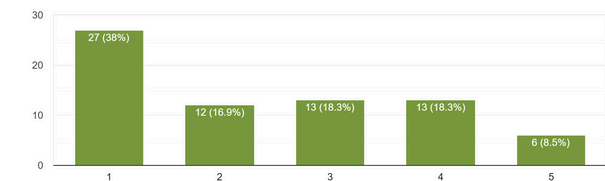
CAPS- Child Care Assistance Program 1= not very appealing, 5= extremely appealing
73 responses



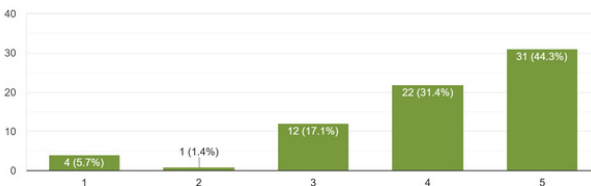
Mental Health and Wellbeing 1= not very appealing, 5= extremely appealing
73 responses



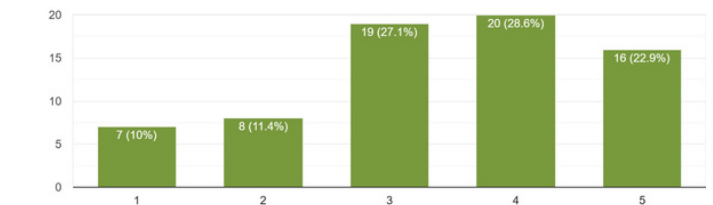
Men in Child Care (ECE leaders who identify as Male) 1= not very appealing, 5= extremely appealing
71 responses



Leader in You (Leadership Skills Development) 1= not very appealing, 5= extremely appealing
70 responses



NextGen (For leaders 25-4) 1= not very appealing, 5= extremely appealing
70 responses



GCCA MEMBERS IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

GRATITUDE

Thanks (GCCA) for all you do!

EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

We need help with staff retention, gaining more QR stars, reducing supply and food costs, enrollment strategies, and grant funding.

REGULATORY SUPPORTS

I strongly believe in having quality child care but continually increasing QR requirements are causing such an increase in rates that all children will not have access.

FUNDING SUPPORTS

Childcare funding from (the) state needs to be at the top of everyone's priority list.

INCREASING WAGES

It is getting more and more difficult to hire and maintain quality staff. Wages are low and once we get them trained or they finish school they are off to the school system.

ADVOCACY

(We are) fighting for more State and Federal funding to help out with low enrollment and paying teachers higher rates.

ADDRESSING KEY CHALLENGES

Insurance is difficult to find.
The cost of everything is rising.

SUPPORTING CENTER TO DECAL COMMUNICATION

(2024) CAPS changes were too fast and impacts were very difficult for providers and parents. Changes should be communicated more clearly and everyone should know further in advance to allow for planning.

PROVIDING FOUNDATIONAL SUPPORT

Building a support team / Payroll strategies (cutting costs without cutting quality staff or shorting staff) , processes and procedures



By engaging our member's voices, GCCA identified key challenges facing the child care industry in the State of Georgia including:

- **Workforce:** Increasing challenges in recruiting, hiring, and retaining high-quality staff.
- **Funding:** Reduced state subsidies are limiting some families' ability to afford child care services, forcing families to difficult choices like leaving the workforce or risky choices such as the use of unlicensed care.
- **Pace of Change:** Rapid changes to the Child Care Assistance program (CAPS) and the Quality Rated Program are diminishing families' access to child care. This is leading to a benefits cliff for families and leading to instability in the child care industry.
- **Child Care Leader Wellbeing:** Child Care Leaders are feeling overwhelmed and require support in areas such as personal health and wellness, succession planning and operational sustainability.
- **Access:** Despite accessing diverse funding streams, most Centers remain heavily reliant on private pay and face operational challenges due to external factors such as eliminated flexible funding, rising costs of wages, food, insurance and facility maintenance

THE ROLE OF GCCA-- A VOICE FOR THE INDUSTRY!

ADVOCACY

The Georgia Child Care Association is engaged daily with lobbying and advocacy and serves as both a thought leader and strong voice for the child care industry.

GCCA is fully committed to advocating for more State and Federal investment in child care.

GCCA Priorities

- Increasing the number of children who can access the CAPS program
- Adding ECE teachers as a priority category in the CAPS program
- Eliminating zone differentials in CAPS reimbursement rates and aligning all child care reimbursement rates to the highest level zone rates.
- Address the factors influencing the rising cost of insurance for the child care industry.
- Supporting State investment in flexible funding streams to help child care providers with rising costs that are influencing child care rates.

GCCA engages routinely with partners in early childhood advocacy to be a voice for child care industry leaders, proposing solutions which will stabilize the child care industry and increase access.



THE ROLE OF GCCA-- A VOICE FOR THE INDUSTRY!

EDUCATION

In 2025, GCCA is dedicated to continuing on a decades-long commitment to delivering comprehensive and ongoing educational opportunities tailored to the specific needs of child care owners, directors, and teachers. These initiatives include:

Major Conferences: Two (2) large-scale conferences designed for owners and directors. Each GCCA Conference is designed to build leadership, enhance business skills, and equip leaders with the knowledge they need to grow their businesses.

Virtual Teacher Mini-Conferences: Four (4) mini-conferences for teachers to supply them with the tools they need to care for children effectively. These sessions will help reduce teacher burnout, retool them in the classroom and improve the overall quality of care.

Empowering Self Advocacy: GCCA is committed to helping Child Care Leaders to develop their self-advocacy skills. We empower members to share their stories with decision-makers and identify a personal plan of action. Key activities for 2025 include a GCCA Advocacy Day at the Capitol and quarterly meetings with key Executive Leaders from DECAL. In addition, members are encouraged to pursue opportunities to grow their leadership through Board and Committee involvement.

Technical Assistance: GCCA provides daily technical support to members ensuring timely and practical guidance.

Building Community: Through monthly Town Hall meetings, the Annual Membership Meeting and other outreach events held statewide-- GCCA fosters collaboration and connection.





SUPPORTING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: A COMMUNITY CALL TO ACTION

The Georgia Child Care Association (GCCA) is dedicated to supporting early childhood leaders and programs, ensuring every child has access to high-quality education and care. **We cannot do this work alone!**

We invite our community, businesses, and stakeholders to join us in strengthening this vital industry.

Here's how you can help:

Make a Donation to GCCA and our Philanthropic Arm- Early Education Development Alliance (EEDA)- Contribute financial support to fund education and support and resources for child care providers.

Sponsor an Event- Partner with us to sponsor key events that bring child care leaders together for education and collaboration.

Collaboration/Advocacy- Join our efforts to raise awareness and influence policies that improve the child care industry.

Engage Your Network- Spread the word about the importance of early childhood education and encourage others to get involved.



Together, we can elevate the importance of early education and secure a brighter future for Georgia's children. Thank you for your partnership!

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