

SURVEY OF PARENTS & CAREGIVERS

MAY 12-17, 2020

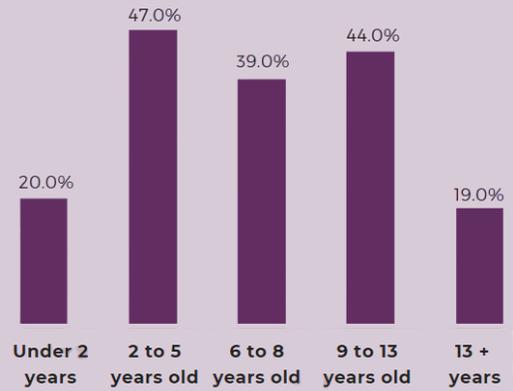
Voices for Virginia's Children, Virginia PTAs, Families Forward Virginia



SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS

The sample collected from May 12- May 17 included 880 respondents from a geographically representative sample of Virginia. The survey was offered in English & Spanish. While the focus age for the children we were seeking information on was 0-13, approximately half of the respondents had a preschool age child ages 2 to 5 years old. The survey asked respondents to state the best guess of their current monthly income - one-third of respondents reported having an income under \$4,000 per month, a level at which many families would qualify for financial benefits for their children such as free and reduced lunch or child care assistance.

AGES OF CHILDREN

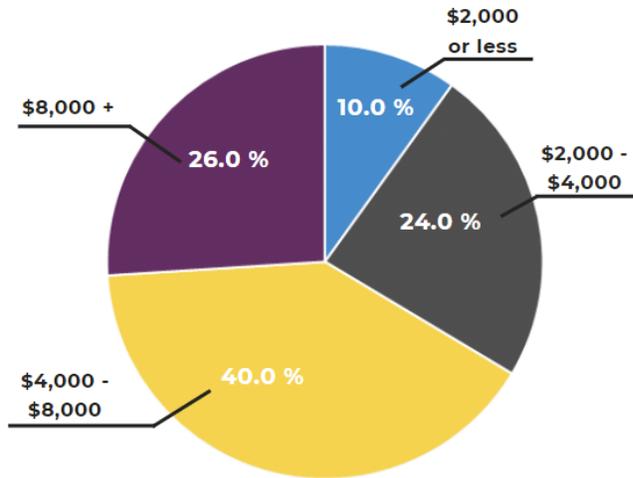


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|------------|-----|
| Under 2: | 20% |
| Ages 2-5: | 47% |
| Ages 6-8: | 38% |
| Ages 8-13: | 44% |
| Ages 13+: | 19% |



SPOTLIGHT ON FAMILIES FACING ECONOMIC HARDSHIP

FAMILY MONTHLY INCOME



| | |
|------------------|-----|
| \$2,000 or less: | 10% |
| \$2,000-\$4,000: | 24% |
| \$4,000-\$8,000: | 40% |
| \$8,000+: | 26% |

One-third of families facing economic hardship were more likely planning to be working on a job site than families not experiencing hardship. They were also more likely to desire financial assistance to afford child care.

- 28% of families earning less than \$4,000 per month expected to work on a job site in the coming months compared to 18% of higher income families.
- 37% of families earning less than \$4,000 per month selected financial assistance to afford child care as “top 3” priority to address their immediate concerns.



FAMILIES ARE WARY ABOUT RETURNING TO CHILD CARE

Families at all income levels were consistent in their approach to sending their child to a caregiver or camp. Most families were currently keeping in their children at home with them and planned to continue doing that as businesses re-opened in the coming months.

- In early May, 90% of parents reported that their children were home with them and more than 70% said they would keep their child home with them in the coming months. Parents of school-age children were more likely to report keeping their children home.
- Only 3% of parents reported sending their child to child care currently and not more than 16% of parents reported they planned to return to child care before July. Parents of infants and toddlers were slightly more likely to report a plan to return to child care in the coming months than parents of children in other age groups.
- 11% of parents of children at any age reported that they were “unsure” about their plans for child care in the coming months.

PRIOR TO PHASE I OPENING





FAMILIES ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE SAFETY OF THEIR CHILDREN AND BALANCE IN THEIR LIVES

The overwhelming choice for the biggest concern of parents was keeping their child safe and healthy, 63% of all respondents selected this as their #1 concern with 86% identifying this as a “top 3” concern. Other top 3 concerns were balancing work and family demands (70%) and allowing their children to have socialization (54%).

“

EVEN IF THE CAMPS OPEN UP, I'M NOT SURE I WILL FEEL SAFE SENDING MY KIDS TO THEM. I ALSO KNOW THAT I CAN'T KEEP WORKING 40+ HOURS A WEEK FROM HOME WITH MY KIDS AT HOME.

~ School-age parent from Prince William

”

FAMILY FRIENDLY WORK POLICIES WOULD HELP PARENTS FEEL LIKE THEY HAD A BETTER PLAN

Families would like to see their employers be responsive to their needs to balance work and family life. 54% of parents responded that flexible work arrangements would make them feel like they had a better plan and 35% said that paid time off would help.



ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE FROM GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ON HEALTH AND SAFETY NEEDED

41% of respondents said that they would feel like they had a better plan if they could receive additional guidance on their children's health and safety from government officials.

“

I AM CONCERNED THAT THE RACIAL DISPARITIES WILL INCREASE DURING THIS PANDEMIC. IN MY OPINION, OUR LOCAL DISTRICT HAS NOT PROVIDED ENOUGH SUPPORT OR ANY SUPPORT REALLY FOR THE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF STUDENTS AND FAMILIES DURING THIS TIME. WE ARE IN A CRISIS AND INSTEAD OF PUSHING EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS ONLY IT WOULD HAVE BEEN NICE TO SEE TANGIBLE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT OFFERED.

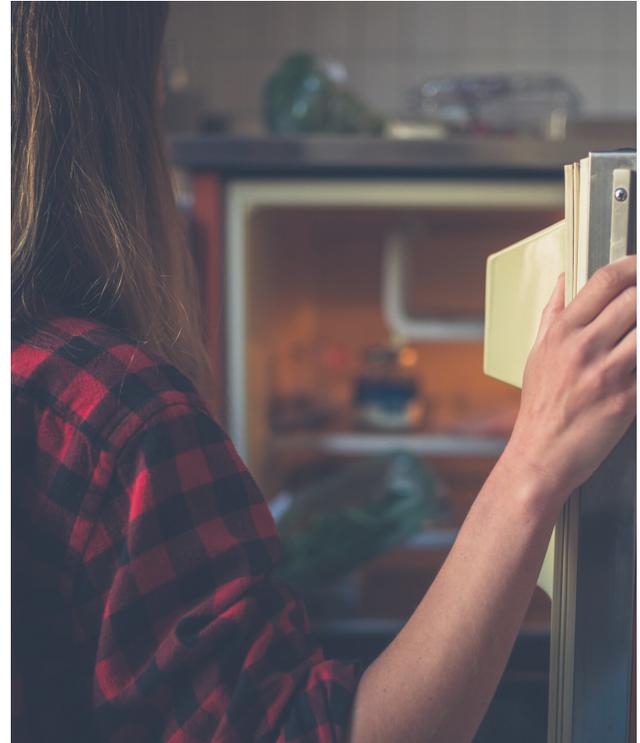
~ School-age parent from Danville

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FINANCIAL CONCERNS OF FAMILIES COULD BE ADDRESSED THROUGH FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR CHILD CARE AND FOOD

More families facing economic hardship indicated that financial assistance to afford child care would make them feel like they had a better plan. 37% of families facing hardship listed this as a top choice. Close to one-third of families completing the survey indicated they were unable to provide basic needs for their families during the health crisis with access to health care services, fresh fruit and veggies, and groceries most commonly selected as unmet needs by families.

“ **NOT HAVING INTERNET AT HOME HAS BEEN ONE OF THE BIGGEST BURDENS. OUR CHILDREN HAVE HAD TO COME TO WORK EVERYDAY ONE-HALF HOUR AWAY FROM HOME TO ACCESS INTERNET SERVICES FOR SCHOOL AND EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES.** ”
~ School-age parent from Louisa



ACCESS TO INTERNET CAN PREVENT BARRIERS TO SERVICE DELIVERY

With educational offerings and health services moving to internet-based platforms it is important to better understand how families access the internet. 17% of all respondents reported problems accessing the internet with most of those respondents identifying poor internet quality or lack of broadband access as the biggest barrier.



“ I JUST NEED ANSWERS. ”

~ Preschool parent
from Woodbridge

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1

Parents are being protective of their children when faced with many unknowns about the health crisis and are worried about how to protect and provide for their family. When officials can speak directly to the needs of parents or include the perspective of parents in their decision-making processes, they will help to address the needs of 11.8% of adults 18 years and over living with a child in Virginia.

2

Additional guidance and assistance will help families feel like they are more secure in their decisions. More than 40% are looking to government officials for additional guidance on health and safety and more than one-third identified additional financial assistance for child care as a needed support.

3

While many child care programs are open (40% of centers & preschools, 80% of family day homes according to VDOE), many parents are hesitant to send their children to child care. Child care providers and camps are instructed to follow CDC guidance but many families are uncertain if their children and families will be safe if they return.

4

Parents are feeling stressed to balance the role of parent and employee. Employers should consider family-friendly policies such as flexible work arrangements and paid family leave. State leaders can require employers to provide more paid leave options. And policymakers and local leaders can prioritize support for parents in their response to provide guidance.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1

ENSURE ACCESS TO SAFE CHILD CARE FOR WORKING PARENTS

Our state government sets the rules for safety in child care settings for children 0-13 and provides financial support to around 20,000 low-income working families. Our state leaders are doing their part, with additional federal funding, to make sure the new normal in child care is safe and enriching. Parents need to see more examples of the safe care provided by child caregivers. To ensure parents can afford child care, the state should re-examine eligibility policies such as maintaining eligibility for assistance while looking for employment to offer assistance to more families.

2

PROVIDE GUIDANCE ON SAFE PRACTICES AT CHILD CARE AND CAMPS AND SHARE THESE EXAMPLES WIDELY

It is difficult to stay on top of all of the research and guidance on keeping your family safe and which activities are low risk vs. high risk. Many child care programs and camps are going to great lengths to implement CDC guidance and keep kids safe. Parents would likely feel more comfortable returning to care when they can see that their children will be safe.

3

PROMOTE PAID LEAVE AND FLEXIBLE WORK POLICIES

When it comes to taking care of a child's health or well-being and their own health, parents shouldn't have to feel pressured to choose between work or caring for a child. Elected officials in Congress and in Virginia will consider enhancing paid leave and sick leave policies.

4

INVEST IN BROADBAND ACCESS SO THAT PARENTS AND CHILDREN CAN WORK AND LEARN FROM HOME

With many health and educational services for children and families now offered through internet platforms, internet access is critically important to reach families. Government leaders should prioritize expanded broadband internet access to reach more families, and to continue to serve them in new effective ways once the health crisis has ended.

5

SUPPORT STRESSED PARENTS—BOTH EMOTIONALLY AND FINANCIALLY

Stressed out parents can lead more stress out children. To keep our kids and our workforce healthy, policy makers should ensure that proposals for health care access include mental health supports. And families should be provided the opportunities to engage with other parents or parent coaches through evidence-based practices such as home visits or Circle of Parents groups. To protect families from financial hardship, the response to increase unemployment benefits has helped many. Families will need other longer-term supports such as increased SNAP and TANF benefits and extended eligibility.

6

PLANS TO RETURN TO SCHOOL OR CHILD CARE SHOULD INCLUDE DIALOGUE WITH PARENTS

With a number of conversations and surveys continuing to focus on plans to return to school or care, leaders should seek out the perspectives of parents to ensure plans are responsive to their needs to protect their children and balance their work responsibilities. Including parents in the conversation will help identify ways to support a child's first teacher, their parent.

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