FIRST STATE Pre-K

Delaware Can't Afford to Work — or Grow — Without Child Care

Two surveys, one story: Hundreds of parents of young children and employers representing 25,000+ workers statewide agree that child care is so unaffordable and unavailable that Delaware is losing workers, businesses, and families.

Families Say Delaware Is Becoming "Unlivable" Due to Child Care — Employers Say It is Impacting Their Bottom Line.

Costly tuition, long waitlists, and inaccessible state benefits mean Delaware parents increasingly cannot find child care for their children. Employers are suffering as a result.

> *Employees' schedules are incredibly limited due to child care… coming in late or having to leave early due to child care issues.*
>
> –New Castle County Employer

92%

92% of employers say child care issues hurt their employees—and **76% say** it hurts their business

87%

More than 87% of parents report challenges finding child care

40%

Nearly half (40%) of families say the state is becoming "unlivable" due to child care challenges

1/4

1 in 4 caregivers have considered leaving Delaware because of child care challenges

> *We are strongly considering moving out of state… We've had to adjust [our] schedule so now we only have a single day to spend together as a family.*
>
> –New Castle County Parent

It "Doesn't Pay to Work," And Businesses Are Paying the Price.

A majority of local employers are suffering the consequences of Delaware's child care shortages, while parents are forced to rearrange their lives to support their children.

1/3

1 in 3 employers cite productivity declines, lost hours or services, and unusual staff turnover

2/3

2 in 3 employers see their employees miss work, see reduced hours, and report absences at least monthly

1/3

1 in 3 parents have turned down a job or promotion, cut hours, or left work to meet child care demands

> *Child care impacts staffing, which is critical to growing my business. Staff is expensive and training takes a long time. If someone experiences frequent tardiness or absences, the operations suffer, as do the staff picking up the slack.*
>
> –Sussex County Employer

Delaware's Workforce Is Running on Empty, While Employers Struggle to Find and Retain Staff

Families are Struggling Worse than You Think.

Many Delaware families are fighting an uphill battle to afford basic costs, sacrificing their quality of life in the process.

1/2 — **1 in 2 families have** gone into debt to pay for care

1/5 — **1 in 5 have skipped** meals or sacrificed basic needs

2/3 — **2 in 3 employers hear** frequently (at least weekly or monthly) from staff about child care struggles

> *Any disposable income goes to child care and paying down debt. We can't move to a larger home or support local businesses.*
>
> –New Castle County Parent

> *It doesn't make sense for them to work full-time when their paychecks are going to child care, so they opt to resign their position.*
>
> –New Castle County Employer

Locked Out of Benefits, Stuck in Neutral.

A growing number of working families find themselves earning too much to qualify for state benefits but too little to afford their bills. A pay raise at work could mean the loss of benefits.

Middle-class families report feeling "locked out" of state support.

> *There's virtually nothing to support our lifestyle and we'll be moving within five years.*
>
> -Kent County Parent

> *Having affordable, reliable and flexible child care options is critical for working families. Our employees will be at their best when their families are taken care of and thriving.*
>
> –New Castle County Employer

Benefits like Purchase of Care subsidy are not initially available to families who earn more than ~$64,000 income, but a family of four needs ~$100,000 to survive while paying child care costs.

What Now? Tell State Officials to Invest in Child Care.

62% of Delawareans support a modest tax increase to fund child care for all.

62%

What Can Parents, Providers, and Community Members do?
Visit the First State Pre-K coalition at www.firststateprek.com and join our mailing list to stay up to date on the latest advocacy opportunities.

What Can Employers Do?
See strategies other Delaware businesses are using to support working families in our employer action toolkit: bit.ly/4nAs2A9.

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Scan the QR code to see all of the partners involved in the surveys.

For more information, check out our full package of results materials at www.firststateprek.com.