



# BTC Brief

BUDGET & TAX CENTER

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### MEDIA CONTACT:

ALEXANDRA F. SIROTA

919-861-1468

[alexandra@ncjustice.org](mailto:alexandra@ncjustice.org)

### BUDGET & TAX CENTER

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north carolina  
JUSTICE CENTER

P.O. Box 28068

Raleigh, NC 27611-8068

[www.ncjustice.org](http://www.ncjustice.org)

## NC without child care: Emergency support to state's early education infrastructure is needed now

By ALEXANDRA F. SIROTA, Budget & Tax Center Director

The effectiveness of North Carolina's response to the COVID-19 pandemic should be measured by how it supports families and children in staying healthy and safe and how it minimizes the economic harm to our families and communities from necessary public health measures.

The early childhood sector, which has been deemed an essential service by the governor, is on the front lines of responding to COVID-19 by providing child care to other essential workers. It also will be an essential part of the recovery and should increasingly be valued for its critical role in serving families in communities across the state and promoting the broader goals for health, educational attainment, and well-being.

For those child-care centers that remain open, it is critical that child-care workers are supported with hazard pay and personal protective equipment to keep them safe. At the same time, child-care providers serving those who receive child-care assistance must be reimbursed at a closer to true cost for delivering quality care, which in the near-term should bring providers below the state average to at least that level of reimbursement.

Families in low-wage work also will continue to need access to child-care assistance and should not be asked to pay 10 percent of their income in co-payments. Even in good times, that policy was counter-productive to supporting families in making ends meet.

For child-care centers that have closed, state policymakers must take a different approach that looks toward supporting their long-term sustainability. In a recent survey conducted by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, 32 percent of respondents from North Carolina child-care providers said their businesses could not re-open after two weeks of closure

without public support.<sup>1</sup>

North Carolina can't afford to lose child-care centers or in-home day cares. Nearly half of children already live in communities considered child-care deserts for having too few options for child care.<sup>2</sup> When people are able to return to work, being able to access quality affordable child care will be critical in supporting employment goals while also providing long-term continuity and stability for children's healthy development.

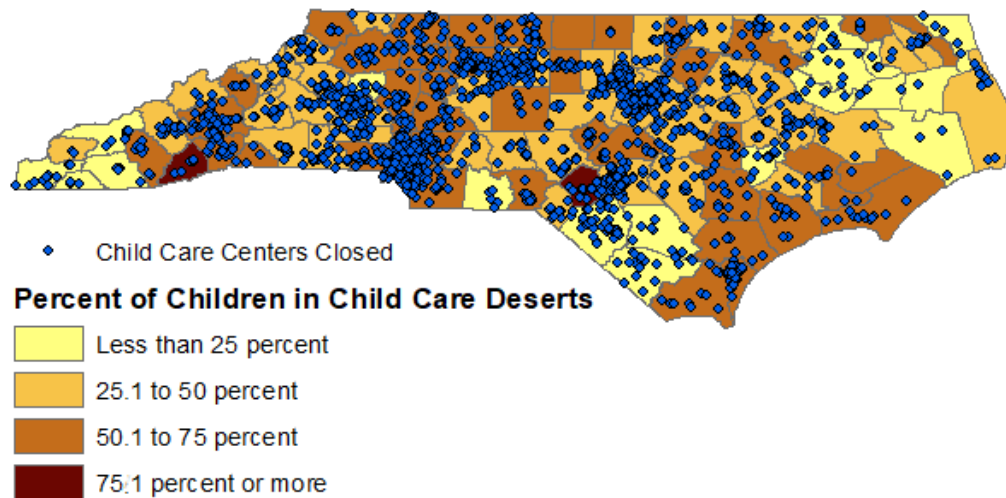
Data available on currently closed child-care centers show that the impact of closures is statewide and will impact the accessibility of programs for families. Across North Carolina, 43 percent of child-care centers and family-home day cares were closed as of April 14. The state could lose 735 child-care centers or family-home day cares if survey respondents' concerns about reopening are realized.

The county trends show an even more striking picture. Forty counties saw more than half of their child-care centers or family-home day cares close in April. Only Person County had fewer than 10 percent close, while nine counties — Avery, Caswell, Cherokee, Clay, Jones, Montgomery, Polk, Yadkin, and Yancey — saw more than 80 percent of their child-care providers close.

In counties where more than 50 percent of young children live in child-care deserts, the average closure rate was 47 percent.

**Figure 1:** Child-care center and family-home day care closures in North Carolina risk increasing the number of children without access to quality care.

*Closed child-care centers as of April 14, 2020, and the percent of children in child-care deserts by county*



Source: NC Partnership for Children.

1 [https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/state\\_by\\_state\\_child\\_care\\_crisis\\_coronavirus\\_surveydata.pdf](https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/state_by_state_child_care_crisis_coronavirus_surveydata.pdf)  
 2 <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2018/12/06/461643/americas-child-care-deserts-2018/>

**Appendix:** County data on child-care closures and indicators of child-care need

COUNTY	PERCENT OF CHILDREN 0-5 RECEIVING SUBSIDY	PERCENT OF CHILDREN IN CHILD-CARE DESERT	PERCENT OF CHILD-CARE CENTERS AND HOMES CLOSED	MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME	PERCENT OF INCOME SPENT ON CHILD CARE (MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD)
Alamance	7%	52%	26%	\$44,281	27%
Alexander	7%	25%	75%	\$44,523	25%
Alleghany	9%	27%	71%	\$38,944	18%
Anson	10%	0%	27%	\$38,123	27%
Ashe	11%	52%	43%	\$40,293	21%
Avery	6%	33%	80%	\$37,109	26%
Beaufort	12%	43%	32%	\$41,101	25%
Bertie	9%	18%	44%	\$31,287	24%
Bladen	5%	23%	37%	\$32,396	21%
Brunswick	7%	65%	41%	\$51,164	25%
Buncombe	7%	50%	58%	\$48,464	32%
Burke	8%	40%	48%	\$40,854	25%
Cabarrus	4%	55%	48%	\$60,716	38%
Caldwell	10%	30%	57%	\$40,735	23%
Camden	2%	57%	60%	\$68,327	27%
Carteret	5%	52%	52%	\$51,584	26%
Caswell	5%	68%	96%	\$39,428	29%
Catawba	8%	47%	35%	\$48,649	28%
Chatham	7%	45%	33%	\$59,684	43%
Cherokee	11%	25%	100%	\$38,115	25%
Chowan	9%	7%	36%	\$41,979	24%
Clay	12%	0%	86%	\$37,070	26%
Cleveland	4%	28%	39%	\$40,002	22%
Columbus	6%	16%	54%	\$36,261	25%
Craven	5%	68%	18%	\$49,391	25%
Cumberland	6%	34%	47%	\$44,737	27%
Currituck	3%	14%	62%	\$65,758	27%
Dare	4%	50%	74%	\$55,640	34%
Davidson	6%	38%	28%	\$45,806	26%
Davie	5%	65%	59%	\$53,493	25%
Duplin	7%	52%	42%	\$36,679	21%
Durham	6%	34%	41%	\$56,393	43%

Source: Percent of children receiving child-care subsidy and percent of income spent on child care from NC Child Care Services Association, April 2019; percent of children in child-care deserts from Center for American Progress, December 2018; and percent of child-care centers and homes closed from special data request to NC Partnership for Children, data on closures from April 14, 2020.

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Edgecombe	6%	30%	29%	\$32,929	31%
Forsyth	6%	53%	28%	\$48,369	28%
Franklin	6%	57%	46%	\$48,344	32%
Gaston	6%	56%	28%	\$46,626	26%
Gates	5%	71%	33%	\$52,481	23%
Graham	9%	35%	75%	\$36,030	24%
Granville	7%	39%	26%	\$52,089	30%
Greene	9%	47%	21%	\$36,989	24%
Guilford	6%	41%	45%	\$49,253	31%
Halifax	10%	56%	49%	\$33,573	26%
Harnett	4%	57%	21%	\$50,323	26%
Haywood	12%	34%	75%	\$45,538	26%
Henderson	6%	51%	57%	\$50,454	29%
Hertford	13%	0%	33%	\$35,806	26%
Hoke	5%	80%	39%	\$45,713	24%
Hyde	2%	0%	75%	\$40,532	34%
Iredell	6%	62%	46%	\$55,957	36%
Jackson	10%	62%	78%	\$45,078	27%
Johnston	6%	32%	30%	\$54,610	29%
Jones	10%	40%	83%	\$37,256	25%
Lee	5%	53%	25%	\$49,272	29%
Lenoir	7%	22%	45%	\$37,515	27%
Lincoln	5%	50%	59%	\$50,782	36%
Macon	12%	43%	60%	\$38,776	28%
Madison	5%	22%	50%	\$40,659	28%
Martin	7%	40%	33%	\$40,563	25%
McDowell	7%	21%	60%	\$35,969	23%
Mecklenburg	5%	51%	46%	\$61,695	44%
Mitchell	8%	29%	67%	\$42,534	26%
Montgomery	7%	38%	85%	\$38,254	22%
Moore	7%	50%	27%	\$54,468	30%
Nash	5%	46%	32%	\$46,187	25%

Source: Percent of children receiving child-care subsidy and percent of income spent on child care from NC Child Care Services Association, April 2019; percent of children in child-care deserts from Center for American Progress, December 2018; and percent of child-care centers and homes closed from special data request to NC Partnership for Children, data on closures from April 14, 2020.

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New Hanover	7%	50%	50%	\$51,457	30%
Northampton	7%	40%	57%	\$33,508	31%
Onslow	4%	68%	23%	\$48,162	22%
Orange	7%	33%	38%	\$65,522	45%
Pamlico	10%	61%	33%	\$45,211	24%
Pasquotank	6%	36%	34%	\$47,264	24%
Pender	5%	74%	23%	\$49,357	31%
Perquimans	6%	36%	38%	\$44,039	25%
Person	7%	74%	8%	\$44,921	26%
Pitt	7%	44%	37%	\$43,526	31%
Polk	6%	70%	80%	\$48,412	26%
Randolph	6%	57%	23%	\$43,598	25%
Richmond	7%	53%	52%	\$33,607	23%
Robeson	9%	25%	55%	\$32,407	26%
Rockingham	9%	56%	69%	\$41,700	25%
Rowan	7%	60%	53%	\$46,978	25%
Rutherford	9%	43%	52%	\$38,573	22%
Sampson	7%	39%	49%	\$37,765	25%
Scotland	8%	33%	40%	\$32,739	22%
Stanly	5%	31%	21%	\$46,017	24%
Stokes	6%	60%	50%	\$44,490	23%
Surry	8%	52%	60%	\$39,071	24%
Swain	7%	9%	57%	\$35,271	23%
Transylvania	7%	80%	64%	\$44,559	28%
Tyrrell	7%	0%	67%	\$32,411	22%
Union	3%	54%	40%	\$70,858	38%
Vance	11%	55%	42%	\$35,246	24%
Wake	6%	43%	30%	\$73,577	43%
Warren	9%	49%	44%	\$35,443	27%
Washington	11%	0%	33%	\$34,557	26%
Watauga	4%	47%	76%	\$41,541	25%
Wayne	6%	55%	36%	\$41,766	24%

Source: Percent of children receiving child-care subsidy and percent of income spent on child care from NC Child Care Services Association, April 2019; percent of children in child-care deserts from Center for American Progress, December 2018; and percent of child-care centers and homes closed from special data request to NC Partnership for Children, data on closures from April 14, 2020.

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Wilkes	6%	58%	59%	\$37,173	30%
Wilson	8%	42%	37%	\$42,095	25%
Yadkin	3%	73%	85%	\$41,126	23%
Yancey	4%	75%	83%	\$37,610	23%

Source: Percent of children receiving child-care subsidy and percent of income spent on child care from NC Child Care Services Association, April 2019; percent of children in child-care deserts from Center for American Progress, December 2018; and percent of child-care centers and homes closed from special data request to NC Partnership for Children, data on closures from April 14, 2020.