



“For parents impacted, by parents impacted.”

The State of Childcare in NY State: A Need for Respite Care

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Rise began this childcare campaign after our [PAR Report](#) published in September 2021 informed us that a lack of childcare was an entry point for some families into the web of child welfare involvement. We knew we needed to address the issue of childcare as an organization. In January 2022, we developed a strategy to address childcare and joined forces with other organizations across NYC in the fight for access to adequate childcare.

From March 2023 to August 2023, Rise’s Parents’ Platform Organizing Team surveyed NYC parents on their needs, concerns, and experiences regarding childcare and mandated reporting, both of which are reasons for child welfare involvement.

The results reflect the harms of the current system while identifying gaps in accessibility of resources, the lack of support, and racial and cultural biases that New York City caregivers are facing while seeking out help or care.

A lack of or inadequate child care serves as a pipeline to investigations from mandated reporting and thus, involvement with the family policing & child welfare system.

Respite care can be defined as a safe, short-term relief for primary caregivers when last-minute childcare needs arise. It can look like in-home services, emergency childcare, or assisted living facilities.



Figure 1.1 Courtesy of Rise

Over 48% reported that respite would grant them time for self-care, healing and their mental health. The second next highest percentages, **over 46%**, were relief from day to day responsibilities, and for emergencies/times of crises.

- Over 40% were uncomfortable disclosing disability/mental health status out of fear and due to stigma

- **Over 22%** reported that their child has an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP).
- **53.5%** of caregivers want support child care and mandated reporting can be avenues to investigations.
- **46.7%** prefers voucher to come from an entity outside of ACS and/or without ACS' oversight

We focused our surveys on respite care because respite child care will reduce involvement with the family policing system, and strengthen family well-being overall. Not having access to quality and safe child care is a predictor of suspected neglect, which results in traumatic and intrusive investigations.

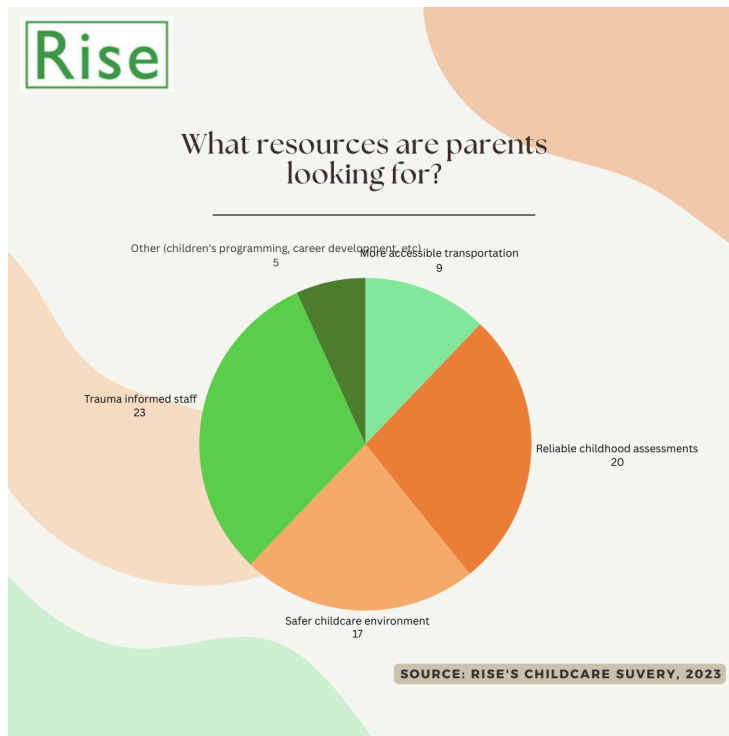


Figure 1.2: There is a glaring lack of support and resources for parents. Based on our survey, these are the top five parents and families are looking for when seeking help from service providers.

This is why accessible respite care, without connections to ACS is so crucial: 1.) childcare is too expensive, 2.) a lack of access to childcare or improper childcare (such as an older sibling watching a younger sibling) is linked to "neglect" reports and 3.) there are not enough child care providers in NYC to meet the needs of families.

Although NY State government has promised **\$7,000,000,000** (7 billion) for child care over the

course of 4 years, the Senate and Assembly recently [passed legislation for families to have full time child care](#) that's not tied directly to work and school hours, and [removed the minimum wage requirement to be eligible for child care assistance](#), there's still a lot of work to be done.

The results from the survey revealed striking data. There is a top need for respite care with parents wanting relief from day to day responsibilities (37.5%). **73.5%** of participants said childcare is provided in their borough, and **17.6%** are receiving childcare from friends and family. Most participants are receiving childcare outside of the home such as in a daycare, community center, and/or after-school program, etc, Out of the five boroughs, Manhattan participants were more likely to be receiving child care outside of Manhattan and more families opted for childcare in the Bronx as it's cheaper.

- Between 2020-2023, there was an increase in families using ACS-issued child

care vouchers. Correlates with increase between January 2020 and September 2023 from 51,038 to 45,898) for SCR intakes. (On NYC ACS data site).

- The average number of children using vouchers for child care increased 25%, calendar year-to-date, January through September (from 49,423 in 2022 to 62,008 in 2023). (page 2)
- The average number of children using ACS-issued low-income child care vouchers rose 165%, calendar year-to-date, January through September (from 7,524 in 2022 to 19,969 in 2023). *Data from: [NYC ACS Data Flash Report 2023](#).

Child Protection

- The number of SCR intakes increased 5%, calendar year-to-date, January through September from 43,556 in 2022 to 45,898 in 2023 and consolidated investigations declined 2% from 33,054 to 32,515 (*NYC Children 2023 Flash report, pgs. 4-5*).
- The number of CARES case openings increased 49%, calendar year-to-date, January through September from 4,561 in 2022 to 6,805 in 2023 (*pgs. 6-7*).
- The percent of investigations that were indicated fell 1.4 percentage points, calendar year-to-date, January through July from 29.6% to 28.2% (*pg. 8*).
- The average child protection caseload in September 2023 was 7.1 per child protection specialist. Staten Island had the highest caseload at 7.8. (*pg. 9*)

Difficulty in accessing child care has led to a disproportionate number of women leaving the workforce during and after the pandemic. In NYC, 41% of Black and brown women cannot return to work because of lack of child care. Leaving the workforce has a lifelong impact, decreasing long-term earnings and increasing difficulty in re-entering the workforce. The operating hours of many child care centers are not inclusive of the work schedules of parents who have evening jobs. To access affordable child care, parents often have to navigate “[infant care deserts](#),” with lengthy and out-of-the-way commutes because there are limited options closer to home. A [child care desert](#) is defined as an area that doesn’t have enough licensed and registered child care professionals and daycare providers to adequately serve the population.

According to data from the [Citizens’ Committee for Children](#), a lack of quality and affordable child care correlates to a family’s risk of family policing involvement. The cost of affording child care often exceeds half of the median income of families living in communities most impacted by family policing. Research shows that difficulty finding child care is a stronger predictor of “maternal neglect” than almost any other factor.¹

¹ Chapin Hall. (2021, Jun., Rev.). *Family and Child Well-Being System: Economic & Concrete Supports as a Core Component*. Retrieved from:

<https://www.chapinhall.org/wp-content/uploads/Economic-Supports-deck.pdf>

²[NYC Children 2023 Flash Report](#)

However, with the added layer of ACS's oversight of child care vouchers, for many families, accessing child care means exposing themselves to the harm of the system in order to meet basic needs. ACS oversight of child care vouchers can deter parents/caregivers from applying.

Child care subsidies for low-income mothers are linked to decreases in neglect reports²; yet, New York City parents who seek child care vouchers describe the process as time-consuming and overwhelming. Families who choose to apply for subsidized child care find that the process can take months. This delay can lead to a loss in job opportunities and limit their available time less time to dedicate to the process of re-entering the workforce, making it harder for parents' to support their families and care for their children. Moreover, the income level required to be eligible to access subsidized child care is so low that families earning minimum wage do not qualify and are left to cover the cost on their own.

Parents are clear that they want resources and support—but they do not want these family supports to come from ACS. Through Rise's community conversations and report backs, we've witnessed impacted parents imagine a future where the family policing system is no longer the gatekeeper of resources. They envisioned being able to turn to their communities to access services, peer support and healing approaches to preventing and addressing harm. Now more than ever, policy changes must be led by and for the parents and communities most impacted by the family policing and criminal legal systems.

Although this is a constant battle, there have been a few wins. Bill #[A01303](#) was recently passed. This legislation removes the requirement for parents and caretakers to earn a minimum wage in order to be eligible for child care assistance. By decoupling child care from work hours, this would help increase access for many New York State parents and families.

With this report, Rise hopes that it will offer a look into some of the concerns and experiences of impacted communities when it comes to child welfare, and continue the conversation of how we can properly address them.

Acknowledgements: We would like to thank all the parents that participated in completing our surveys and wrote testimonials. We would also like to thank our Executive Director, Jeanette Vega-Brown, and all of Rise's staff, funders, and supporters. We couldn't do this work without you.

² Chapin Hall. (2021, Jun., Rev.). *Family and Child Well-Being System: Economic & Concrete Supports as a Core Component*. Retrieved from: <https://www.chapinhall.org/wp-content/uploads/Economic-Supports-deck.pdf>