

Attention: Request for Public Comment
U.S. Department of Commerce
U.S. Census Bureau
Household Pulse Survey
Request for Revision of a Currently Approved Collection

March 2, 2021

RE: OMB Control Number: 0607-1013

We are pleased to have the opportunity to share our thoughts related to the request for public comment concerning the U.S. Census Bureau's intent to revise questions contained in the Household Pulse Survey.

For more than 30 years, Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies have worked to strengthen access to and use of high-quality child care by:

- providing consumer education, child care and community service referrals, and child development information to families;
- delivering a broad spectrum of professional development services (including training, consultation, coaching, and mentoring) for classroom practitioners and program administrators/owners;
- collecting, analyzing and reporting data about child care supply and consumer demand in order to effectively address needs as well as identify system strengths and weaknesses to inform and implement policy, planning and strategic investment; and
- working collaboratively with public and private sector stakeholders to address and fulfill child care needs.

At local, regional, state and federal levels, CCR&R agencies have long advocated for access to high-quality child care both as a work support for parents and also a safe setting for children that will promote their healthy development. In addition, we have long advocated for and sought strategies to address supply shortages and ways to ensure that the needs of working parents and their children are met. It is through this lens that we offer comments.

We strongly agree that the Census Bureau Household Pulse survey should be revised to ask questions related to child care. How these questions are structured is extremely important so that responses can be understood within the correct context.

To us, there are two different areas for which it would be helpful to gain a better understanding about current parent preferences and challenges: use and need for paid child care by parents with children under age five and use and need for paid child care for school-age children (typically children enrolled in elementary school, ages 6-12). Parents could make different decisions based on the age of children. Parents could have new challenges in affording child care for school-age children as school districts vary in whether they are operating remotely, in some form of hybrid operation, or open for onsite instruction as they were before the current public health pandemic. Many parents depend on child care to work or return to work. Therefore, understanding the challenges faced by parents during the pandemic would be helpful to develop strategies that can best meet the needs of working parents and their children.

Children Under Age 5

In thinking about the universe of parents with children under age 5, it would be helpful to understand if those parents who were paying for child care before the pandemic are still relying on the use of paid child care during the pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, about 32.2% of children birth to age four were in some type of paid child care. It would also be good to understand whether paying for child care is

currently difficult (or not), and if parents are not using paid child care for their children under age 5 for a specific reason (the cost is too high, concern about COVID-19 exposure, parents are home with a child, etc.), and whether the availability of affordable child care is necessary for them to work or return to work. Last, it would be helpful to understand what families believe they can afford to pay weekly for child care.

We suggest the following questions for parents with children under age 5.

Prior to March 2020, were you paying for child care for a child or children under age 5? Yes or No

If yes, are you paying for child care currently for a child under age 5? Yes or No

If yes, how easy or difficult has it been for you to pay for child care within your budget?

- Very easy
- Somewhat easy
- Somewhat difficult
- Very difficult

If no, what is the reason you are not using paid child care at this time?

- The cost is too much
- Concern about COVID-19 exposure
- I am home with my child/children at this time
- My child/children are being cared for by my spouse
- My child/children are being cared for by my family (non-spouse, but a relative)
- My child/children are being cared for by a friend or neighbor

Is the availability of affordable child care necessary for you to work or return to work? Yes or No

How much can you afford to pay weekly for child care for your child under age five?

- Zero
- \$50-\$99 per week
- \$100-\$149 per week
- \$150-\$200 per week
- \$200 or more per week

School-age Children (Age 6-12)

In thinking about the universe of parents with school-age children (age 6-12, generally elementary school), it is not relevant whether they used paid care prior to the pandemic. Before the onset of COVID-19, about 21% of children between the ages of 5-14 were in some type of paid child care (generally “before & after” school care). However, parents today face new challenges related to care during the out-of-school time for elementary school-age children given the large number of school districts that remain operating either remotely or in some type of hybrid schedule where students are not onsite in their elementary school five days per week. For many parents, finding and affording full-day child care for their school-age children is a new challenge.

We suggest the following questions for parents with elementary school-age children (age 6-12).

Do you currently have school-age children age 6-12? Yes or No

If yes, are you paying for child care currently for a school-age child? Yes or No

If yes, how easy or difficult has it been for you to pay for child care within your budget?

- Very easy
- Somewhat easy
- Somewhat difficult
- Very difficult

If no, what is the reason you are not using paid child care at this time?

- The cost is too much
- Concern about COVID-19 exposure
- I am home with my child/children at this time
- My child/children are being cared for by my spouse
- My child/children are being cared for by my family (non-spouse, but a relative)
- My child/children are being cared for by a friend or neighbor

Is the availability of affordable child care necessary for you to work or return to work? Yes or No

How much can you afford to pay weekly for child care for your school-age child?

- Zero
- \$50-\$99 per week
- \$100-\$149 per week
- \$150-\$200 per week
- \$200 or more per week

We have been following the Household Pulse survey for nearly a year. The information available by state related to the percentage of families who have lost income since March 2020, the percentage behind on rent or mortgage, the percentage struggling to afford the purchase of food, and other questions have been helpful in understanding the impact of COVID-19 and the challenges families face. Because access to and the use of child care has also been impacted by the pandemic and raised new challenges for families and communities, we are interested in better understanding the nature of these challenges so that our work and the work of policymakers can be informed by real-time data in developing child care strategies.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments. Should you wish to discuss in further detail, please contact [Grace Reef](#), President, Early Learning Policy Group, to arrange a zoom meeting for us to share our on-the-ground experiences with families and child care providers if that is helpful to you in making revisions to the Household Pulse Survey.

With best regards,

Child Care Resources Inc. (Charlotte, North Carolina)
Oklahoma Child Care Resource & Referral Association, Inc. (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma)

Quality Care for Children (Atlanta, Georgia)
Southwestern Child Development Commission Inc. (Sylva, North Carolina)
4C for Children (Cincinnati, Ohio)
Child Care Aware of Virginia (Richmond, Virginia)
Child Care Council of Nassau, Inc. (Long Island, New York)
Child Care Council of Suffolk, Inc. (Long Island, New York)

