

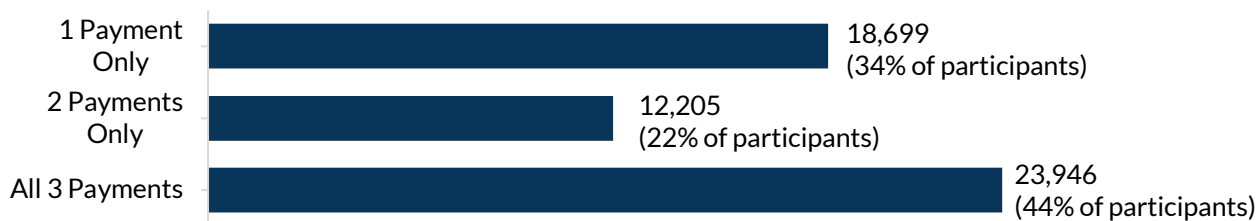
Pandemic Relief Funding for Georgia's ECE Workforce Through Providing Our Workforce Essential Recognition (POWER)

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During the COVID-19 pandemic, Georgia's Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) used state and federal pandemic relief funding to implement approximately 30 initiatives to stabilize the early care and education (ECE) industry and support young children and their families. Of those, the largest workforce-focused pandemic relief project, Providing Our Workforce Essential Recognition (POWER), included three rounds of \$1,000 unrestricted payments to eligible ECE professionals.¹ **This snapshot summarizes findings specific to POWER from Child Trends' larger evaluation of DECAL's pandemic relief initiatives.** Additional evaluation findings, along with details about the study design, can be found in companion briefs and reports on [DECAL's website](#). Throughout, we include quotes from ECE teachers to contextualize our findings.

Nearly 55,000 members of the ECE workforce received at least one bonus payment of \$1,000 through POWER. Interestingly, although eligible workforce members could receive all three rounds of POWER payments, only 44 percent of recipients received payments for all three rounds (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. POWER participants receiving one, two, or all three payments (n = 54,850)

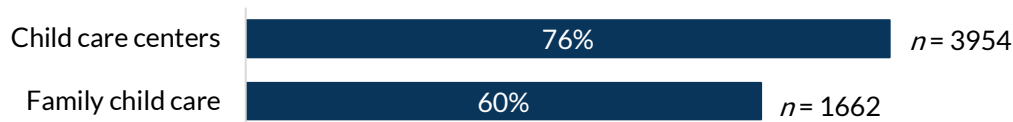


Source: Child Trends' analysis of POWER administrative data.

Approximately 5,000 programs participated in POWER. **There was higher participation in POWER among school-based Georgia's Pre-K programs and center-based programs than among family child care providers (see Figure 2).** There was also higher participation among larger centers compared to smaller centers. Additionally, programs participating in Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS), DECAL's child care subsidy program, participated at a higher rate than non-CAPS providers. Further, among programs in Quality Rated, Georgia's Quality Rating and Improvement System, those that had higher star ratings were more likely to take part in POWER than those with lower star ratings—potentially because these types of programs had greater capacity to navigate the administrative burden, or because programs that participated in CAPS or Quality Rated were more familiar with DECAL processes.

¹ ECE professionals eligible for POWER included 1) approved teaching and non-teaching staff in licensed programs monitored by the Department of Defense or Head Start/Early Head Start whose employers submitted a POWER application; and 2) lead and assistant teachers in school-based Georgia's Pre-K programs.

Figure 2. Percentage of child care centers and family child care providers receiving at least one POWER payment



Source: Child Trends' analysis of POWER and licensing administrative data.

Note: Payments to school-based Georgia's Pre-K programs were automatic.

Teachers found POWER to be the most helpful type of support among all the pandemic relief initiatives. **The majority of teachers reported that the most helpful aspect of the POWER payments was being able to use the funds for necessities such as rent, bills, groceries, and clothing.** Teachers also reported that POWER funds helped them avoid using their own money for classroom materials.

Most teachers reported that POWER was the most helpful pandemic relief support they received.

"Well, it's definitely the extra security because as early educators, we don't really get paid that much so we basically live paycheck to paycheck. So when we got that extra like \$1,000, it was helpful because I'm like well, I don't have to worry about waiting until Friday to get paid. I can put gas in my car now."

"It was, I mean it was helpful. You know, COVID was a crazy time for some people, so I know that that came in handy for a lot of people. Like I said, helped us out a lot. We paid some bills, got caught up or even got ahead, and maybe it was able to treat the kids a little here and there for, like, an ice cream or take them out to eat. But mainly was just pay things off."

"As a teacher, sometimes you have to use some of your personal money to spend money for your classroom, everything you are not getting support from your school. If you want to do something... you have to spend some money from your personal side."

Teachers shared their appreciation for DECAL's willingness to support them during the pandemic, mentioning that POWER, in particular, made them feel appreciated, that someone was looking out for them, and that they had not been forgotten.

"It made me feel appreciated. I guess it was like someone was kind of looking out for us."

"I felt appreciated for what we put into for the classroom coming in and working during the pandemic with the hours being cut, the classroom sizes decreasing. Things became overwhelming. So I felt appreciated with those and then it just helped financially for myself in the household for finances."

Overall, teachers perceived POWER to be the most helpful support out of all the pandemic relief projects, with approximately 55,000 teachers receiving at least one POWER payment. While teachers were eligible for three rounds of payment, only 44 percent received all three, perhaps highlighting issues with turnover or misunderstandings about eligibility criteria. Teachers reported using POWER payments to help purchase both necessities and classroom materials and were appreciative of the support, noting the challenges of being an early childhood educator.

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