

Summary of Hurricane Helene Child Care Impact Survey Responses

Survey Overview

In response to the State of Emergency declared on **October 8, 2024, under Executive Order 10.01.24.01**, the Department of Early Care and Learning distributed a survey to 1,153 licensed child care programs in the 66 counties covered by this executive order. The survey was sent out on Friday, October 18, 2024, and remained open for three weeks to gather insights into the impact of the emergency on these programs. With **600 respondents**, the survey achieved a **52% response rate**. Note that not every respondent answered all questions, which is reflected in the analysis that follows.

Program Types of Respondents

As shown in Table 1, more than two-thirds of respondents (68%) were child care learning centers (CCLCs), while the remaining 32% were family child care learning home (FCCLH) providers.

Table 1. Respondent program type (n=600)

Respondent program type	Percent
Child Care Learning Center	68%
Family Child Care Learning Home	32%
Total	100%

County of Respondents' Programs

Executive Order 10.01.24.01 applied to 66 counties in Georgia. Table 2 highlights the top six counties with the highest number of survey respondents, accounting for over half (51%) of the total responses.

Table 2. County of respondents' programs (n=600)

County	Percent
Chatham	19%
Lowndes	10%
Richmond	9%
Columbia	5%
Bulloch	4%
Liberty	4%
Other	49%
Total	100%

Operational Status of Respondents' Programs During the State of Emergency

Most respondents (80%) reported temporary closures during this period, defined as not operating for one or more days but having since reopened or planning to reopen. The average duration of closure was 11 days. Notably, no respondents reported permanent closures due to the State of Emergency.

Table 3. Operational status of respondents' programs (n=516)

Operational status of respondents' programs	Percent
Closed Temporarily - Not operating for one or more days but has since reopened or plans to reopen.	80%
Partial Operation - Some interruption in services or hours such as closing early or unable to use full facility due to damage.	15%
Uninterrupted Operation - Remained open, providing uninterrupted child care to children and families since the State of Emergency.	6%
Closed Permanently - My program has ceased operations and will not reopen. This closure is final.	0%
Total	100%

Reasons for Facility Closure or Service Interruption

The primary reason for facility closures was the loss of utilities, with 89% of respondents reporting power or water outages. Safety precautions were also a key factor, with 54% of facilities closing out of concern for safety related to the State of Emergency. Property damage, such as downed trees, led to closures for 49% of respondents, while environmental impacts, including area-wide damage and road closures, affected 47%. Additionally, 42% of respondents cited a lack of access to essential resources needed to operate, such as food supplies.

Table 4. Reasons for facility closure (n=470)

Reasons for Facility Closure	Percent
Loss of Utilities - The power or water was out of service	89%
Precaution - Out of concern for safety related to the state of emergency	54%
Property Damage - Such as downed trees	49%
Environmental - Area-wide damage or repairs needed in the community, including road closures	47%
Lack of Access to Resources to Operate – Such as food supplies	42%
Staffing Shortage	35%
Structural Damage - Damage to roof, windows, or other parts of the building	30%

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Low Child Attendance	16%
Flooding or Water Damage	12%
Mandatory Curfew	10%
Other	7%

Note: Respondents could select multiple options, so percentages do not sum to 100%.

Enrollments Before and After State of Emergency

Table 4 shows the changes in enrollment reported by respondents due to the State of Emergency. A majority of respondents (58%) reported no change in enrollment. Approximately one-third reported a decrease, with an average loss of 8 enrollees per respondent. A smaller portion (9%) reported an increase, gaining an average of 3 enrollees.

Table 5. Respondent enrollment change (n=498)

Enrollment Change	Percent
Remained the same	58%
Lost enrollees	32%
Gained enrollees	9%
Total	100%

Respondents' Additional Accommodation Capacity

Respondents were asked if they could accommodate additional children without exceeding their program's licensed capacity. Table 5 shows their answers, with most respondents (70%) indicating they could not accommodate additional children at the time or could accommodate fewer than 10 children.

Table 6. Respondents' additional accommodation capacity (n=502)

Respondents' additional accommodation capacity	Percent
No, my program cannot accommodate additional children at this time	40%
Yes, less than 10 additional children	30%
Yes, 11 - 20 additional children	16%
Yes, 21 - 30 additional children	7%
Yes, more than 30 additional children	7%
Total	100%

Impact of State of Emergency on Staff

Respondents were asked how many of their staff members were directly impacted by the State of Emergency in ways that affected the operation of their child care program. Examples of impact included staff members who were displaced from their homes or experienced transportation

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disruptions that prevented them from coming to work. Most respondents (68%) reported at least one directly affected staff member, with an average of six staff members impacted per respondent. The remaining 32% of respondents reported no directly affected staff members.

Table 7. Impact of state of emergency on staff (n=498)

Impact on Staff	Percent
Respondents with staff directly affected	68%
Respondents with no affected staff	32%
Total	100%

Additionally, respondents were asked if they had any staff members who could temporarily work at another facility where assistance was needed. Almost all respondents (97%) indicated they did not have any staff available for temporary work at another facility, while a small minority (3%) indicated they did.

Disruptions to Respondents’ Transportation Services

Among respondents who reported having transportation services (n=180), 41% experienced disruptions primarily due to fallen trees, debris, power outages, and flooded or blocked roads. Common themes from the comments are summarized below, along with example responses to the question: “Please describe the nature of the disruption to your transportation services. What caused the disruption, and how did it affect your operations?”

Table 8. Comments about the nature of the disruption to transportation services (n=90)

Theme	Count of Respondents	Example Responses
Road and Facility Access Blocked (Trees, Debris, Flooding)	30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Due to trees blocking the roads we were unable to pick up any children." • "Hazardous road conditions stopped our transportation." • "Seven trees fell down in the yard."
Power and Communication Outages	24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Lost power for 3 days, lost the playground fence." • "The power was out for 5 days and I had to throw/loss food." • "No way to communicate with families about transportation due to power and cell phone outages."
Facility and School Closures	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "We were closed for 2.5 days." • "School was closed until October 16th 2024." • "Our program lost power Thursday-Wednesday so we had to close during that time."
Suspension of Transportation Services	18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "No transportation was provided because power was out, trees were down everywhere." • "We did not provide transportation services due to debris, limbs, and power lines down."

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Theme	Count of Respondents	Example Responses
Vehicle and Property Damage	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "During the hurricane, trees fell on vehicle and all vehicles were a total loss." • "Our van was damaged and had to be repaired."
Financial and Operational Challenges	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "This has caused a major financial burden for our center because of not being able to get reimbursed for the food." • "We lost 2 trucks of frozen and refrigerator foods because we had no power for over 10 days and no water."

Capital Improvement and Repair Costs Due to Storm Damage

Nearly half of the respondents (49%) reported incurring costs for capital improvements or repairs to their child care facility due to storm-related damage, including structural repairs and significant restorations. A smaller portion (34%) indicated that they had not incurred any costs related to storm damage. Additionally, 16% of respondents noted that, while they had not yet incurred costs, they anticipated needing repairs in the near future.

Table 9. Capital improvement and repair status (n=495)

Capital improvement and repair status	Percent
Yes, I have incurred costs for capital improvements or repairs due to storm-related damage to my facility, such as structural repairs or other significant restorations.	49%
No, I have not incurred any costs for capital improvements or repairs due to storm-related damage to my facility.	34%
Not yet, but we anticipate repairs.	16%
Total	100%

Among respondents who reported incurring costs for capital improvements or repairs, the most common issues were roof and ceiling damage (91%), fence and playground damage (87%), and the need for tree and debris removal (64%). The damage primarily resulted from fallen trees, high winds, and extensive flooding caused by the recent storm, leading to widespread facility repair needs.

Key themes included severe damage to roofing and ceilings, with some respondents facing full roof replacements. Playground and fence repairs were also common due to fallen trees and wind damage. Additionally, nearly a third of respondents reported significant food and supply losses due to power outages, while others highlighted structural and exterior damage, HVAC and electrical repairs, and water-related interior issues.

Table 10. Comments about the types of repairs or improvements needed (n=309)

Theme	Count of Respondents	Example Responses
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Roof and Ceiling Repairs	82	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Roof needs to be replaced, ceiling in one of the classrooms needs to be replaced." • "Roof blew off, cost to replace \$21,000." • "Shingles were removed by storm from roof."
Fence and Playground Repairs	78	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Playground fence destroyed, 2 major leaks in roof." • "Fence surrounding playgrounds destroyed by falling trees." • "Playground equipment damaged; fence repairs needed for safety."
Tree and Debris Removal	58	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Large tree fell in parking lot, cost \$400 to remove." • "Tree removal near playground; fence and toy replacement needed." • "Multiple trees removed from backyard and playground area."
Food and Supply Loss Due to Power Outage	31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Lost all food in refrigerator/freezer due to power outage." • "Total food spoilage; cost to replace over \$7,000." • "Lost perishable food due to 10-day power outage."
Structural and Exterior Damage	29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Significant damage to siding and exterior of building." • "Metal roof, windows, and exterior sign damaged by storm." • "Siding and windows damaged; gutters need repair."
HVAC and Electrical Repairs	24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "AC unit repair, power outage caused electrical issues." • "Electrical damage to exit signs; AC repair needed." • "Fence and AC unit repairs, electrical system affected."
Interior Damage (Floors, Walls, Doors)	18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Flooring repairs due to water damage, walls need repainting." • "Ceiling tiles replaced after leaks; doors and baseboards replaced due to water damage." • "Interior doors and floor seal need repairs from water damage."