How Much Will Each Utah County Soon Lose in Child Care Funding?

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Written by: Jenna Williams



During the pandemic, the child care sector was decimated. Nationally, 16,000 childcare programs permanently closed and 100,000 workers left the industry entirely. But even before the pandemic began, Utah only had enough licensed child care to meet about 35% of our state child care needs.

Nationally, more than 3 million child care spots were saved by American Rescue Plan Funding. And Utah actually bucked the trend of closing child care programs. Thanks to federal intervention, Utah has **more** licensed child care slots available to families than before the pandemic began in 2020. This was thanks to federal funding that infused desperately needed investment into the long-ignored sector. Utah received close to $600 million in extra federal funding, starting in 2020, during the COVID pandemic to help keep child care businesses open so parents could continue to work.

This money will soon be completely spent. By June 2024, Utah will run out of money for almost all of the COVID-era support for our child care system. The following chart details the annual funding lost per county.

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County	Stabilization Grants and Workforce Bonus Amount 2022
Beaver	$789k
Box Elder	$2.2 Million
Cache	$8.7 Million
Carbon	$1.1 Million
Daggett	-
Davis	$23.6 Million
Duchesne	$482k
Emery	$112k
Garfield	$178k
Grand	$603k
Iron	$3.8 Million
Juab	$363k
Kane	-
Millard	$450k
Morgan	$28k
Piute	-
Rich	$2k
Salt Lake	$90.8 Million
San Juan	$600k
Sanpete	$8.6 Million
Sevier	$738k
Summit	$2.8 Million
Tooele	$4 Million
Uintah	$883k
Utah	$24 Million
Wasatch	$1.2 Million
Washington	$9.9 Million
Wayne	$8k
Weber	$21.7 Million
Total	$208 Million

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The majority of these funds went to **Child Care Stabilization Grants**, dispersed by the Utah Office of Child Care. These have been one of the most important factors in allowing Utah's child care sector to survive, and even expand. Since last January, the Office of Child Care has distributed $189 million of ARPA and CRRSA funds directly to child care programs statewide to ensure that they can continue to operate despite workforce shortages and rising costs of food and materials. The size of the grants are based on the licensed capacity of the eligible program.

More than 1,000 licensed and exempt programs are currently receiving monthly stability grants. Since the beginning of this program, around 1,500 programs have benefitted, serving more than 80,000 Utah children.

With these grants, child care programs have been able to do several critical things:

- Hire enough staff to ensure that their full program capacity can be utilized;
- Raise the wages of at least half of their workers to $15/hr, so they have even a slim chance of competing with fast food establishments and retail chains;
- Keep tuition costs down for families that are also struggling with inflation;
- Pay for critical facility maintenance needs that have been unmet previously due to cost.

The other major program that sustained Utah's child care sector was the **Youth and Early Care Workforce Bonus**, dispersed by the Utah Office of Child Care. Utah joined dozens of other states in using federal child care stabilization funding to pay child care workers a bonus of $2,000 per individual. This was meant to acknowledge the work and sacrifices of child care workers - most of whom remained working throughout the pandemic - as well as incentivize their continued participation in the field.

Before the pandemic, Utah's median hourly wage for child care educators was $10.47, on average less than a dog walker. $2,000 represents as much as 10% of the average child care worker's annual income, making the bonus incredibly impactful for providers and their families. 9,368 early care and education professionals received this bonus.

The funding above shows the combined funding amounts lost per county due to emergency funding expiration. But it is a floor, not a maximum. The totals do not take

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into account funding used for:

- **Co-pay Coverage:** Cover co-pays for families that use child care subsidies (ranges between $19-$807 per family): $18,181,881
- **Licensing-related Fees Coverage:** Cover the costs to eliminate barriers to licensure: $1,200,000
- **Regional Child Care Development Grants:** Grants for regional Care about Child Care agencies to expand child care access and improve care: $2,003,244
- **Training and Education:** Numerous professional development, continuing education, and training scholarships: $5,734,424

This over $572,000,000 of federal funding will soon end, destabilizing the child care sector. To read about the impacts, see our blog post: Utah's Child Care Crisis is About to Hit a Whole New Level.

To see the breakdown of child care funds per county, see the full excel file here. To request a city or town breakdown, please contact jenna@utahchildren.org.

To learn more about our campaign to invest in child care, go to UtahCareforKids.org.

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