

Survey

Family Child Care (FCC), COVID 19, and Care for School-Age Children in Georgia



Produced by the Professional Family Child Care Alliance of Georgia

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are deeply grateful to the family child care business owners in Georgia. Their efforts on behalf of the children and families of Georgia is an inspiration for all of us at the Professional Family Child Care Alliance of Georgia.

This report could not have accomplished without volunteers willing to donate their time and expertise to support family child care business owners across the state of Georgia. A special thank you to the family child care providers that responded to our survey and to:

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A digital copy of this report can be found at <https://www.pfccag.org/school-age-survey>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When schools reopen in the fall, what are the implications for Family Child Care (FCC)? In an ordinary year, it means school age children who attended full time return to school and the provider looks for younger children to fill those spots. In 2020, there is a world of unknowns for parents, school systems, and FCC providers and it revolves around COVID 19. Beginning in early summer, the Professional Family Child Care Alliance of Georgia (PFCCAG) thru its committee, the COVID 19 FCC Crisis Management Team (CM Team), began hearing from providers receiving calls from parents exploring whether the provider would be willing to: care for their child when schools reopened, offer supervision and support for their child who was in virtual school, or offer home school as part of the FCC program. The CM Team created a survey to better understand what was happening. To get a quick response, the survey was distributed by word of mouth and was conducted from July 11, 2020 to July 21, 2020. Ninety seven (97) providers responded representing 22 counties.

Key findings are:

- 62% received a call from parents looking for care for a school age child within the last 2 months; one provider reporting receiving 30 calls.
- 25% said the request was for Before and After school care, 16% Part Day (no digital learning) 45% Full Day Care (no digital learning), 30% Facilitate Digital learning, and 24% Home School. Note: 62 providers answered this question and multiple answers were allowed.
- 64% said they would need to make modifications to their program to accommodate school age children.
- 94% said it would be necessary for providers to receive additional financial support to offset program costs.
- 85% said DECAL should make accommodations for school-age children who need more than 2 hours of care before and after school.

Results can be used by providers in guiding their response to requests for care. Results will also be used by PFCCAG to offer information and supports to members and other providers serving school-age children. In addition, results suggest directions DECAL and other policy makers should consider when helping providers cope with the pandemic induced surge in requests for school-age children.

BACKGROUND

“a crisis within a crisis”

In response to the COVID 19 pandemic, PFCCAG established the FCC COVID 19 Crisis Management Team. The CM Team began in late March; it has 50 members, 6 Crisis Management Working Groups (CRMGs) and meets almost weekly. To learn more about the work of the CM Team, go to www.pfccag.org.

In late June, several FCC CM provider team members were getting calls from parents seeking care for their school-age children. The parents indicated concerns over what would happen when schools reopened. Some parents did not want their children exposed to the virus at school. Other parents

wanted care and supervision during the hours the child was attending virtually. Others requested the provider establish a “home school” program.

The CM Team anticipated there would be an increased demand for care as schools announced their plans for the fall reopening but was not sure of the extent of demand, nature of requests, or degree providers felt comfortable responding to these requests. The CM Team decided information was needed, and quickly, for providers and decision makers about the school-age care “crisis within a crisis” issue. Four members of the CM Team volunteered to develop questions for a survey and others developed the survey tool.

We recognized responses might not be representative of all FCC providers in GA but set about personally inviting providers to respond. The survey was conducted from July 11, 2020 to July 21, 2020. The goal was to take a quick “temperature reading” of at least 60 providers; 97 providers completed the survey. It should be noted the survey was completed before several large school systems announced they would be all virtual learning in the fall. Therefore, we assume survey results will indicate an even higher demand for FCC care and support to school-age children when school resumes.

In a July 27 article in the Atlanta Journal Constitution, “With in-person classes, parents face tough call”, reporter Ty Tagami wrote:

Like superintendents, parents have imperfect information for a choice that pits what is best for their children-and paying their bills-against illness and even death.

He might have added that family child care providers too face significant risks and unknowns in deciding whether and how to support parents and school-age children in hybrid and virtual school situations.

The survey consisting of 21 questions with some involving open ended questions.

Results can be used by providers in guiding their response to requests for care. Results will also be used by PFCCAG to offer information and other supports to members and other providers serving school-age children. In addition, results suggest directions DECAL and other policy makers should consider when helping providers cope with the pandemic induced surge in requests and the unique challenge of hosting virtual classroom attendees while in FCC settings.

Some providers are optimistic, some pessimistic, and most face a new round of unknowns. One provider said:

“I would have to create space for the school age children to complete the digital learning as well as incorporate times and moments where I can work with them and my smaller children throughout the day. My normal routine will definitely have to be revised. But I really think that it can be done with structure and boundaries.”

Another said:

“I stopped school age care 6 years ago to focus on 0-4 and give my all to this age group. Attention is different for these ages and needs, socializing, as well as napping and quiet time. It got harder and harder, so I made the conscious decision to stop. Now I'd have that issue all over again PLUS I sold all the age appropriate supplies. So, I would have to invest in that all over again.”

Many focused on the new program element of facilitating digital learning, stating concerns such as:

“Children will require academic supports that early childhood education teachers do not have.”

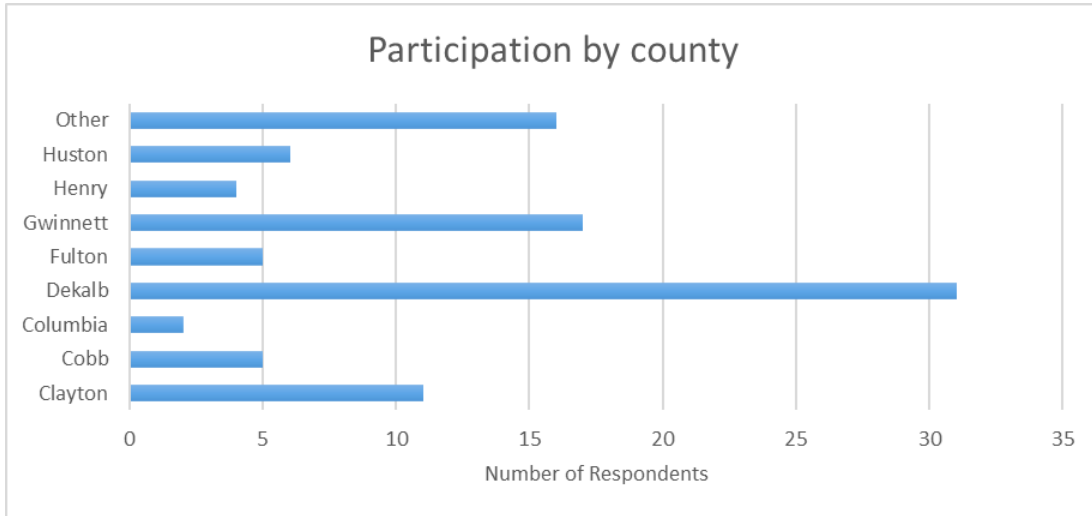
“We need assistance to help facilitate teaching these students.”

“I need a quiet space for learning, internet availability, possible staff assistance, a consistent way to send work to the teacher. I need to think about it more in depth. I would need the lesson plans ahead of time so I can correlate them to mine.”

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

The following includes the question asked, answers stated by number and percent, insights offered by providers in their own words, and PFCCAG comments based on data from the survey and experience helping providers cope with the pandemic crisis.

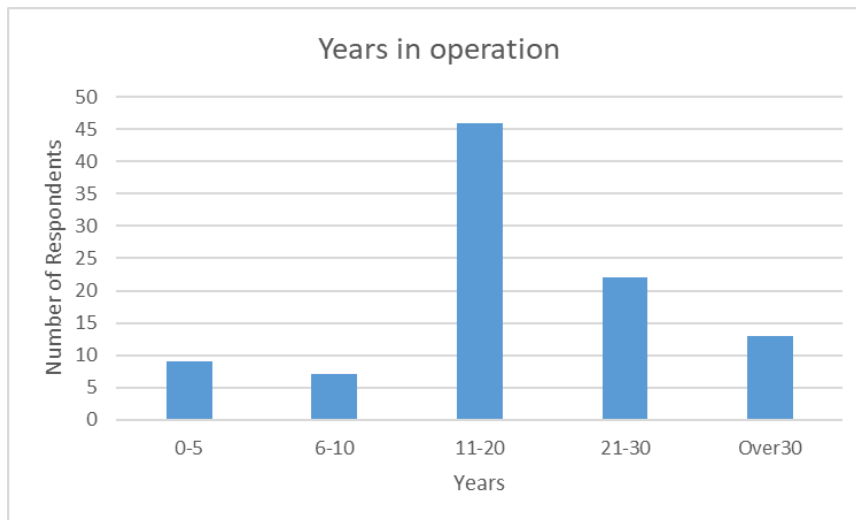
1. What county is your program located in?



County	Clayton	Cobb	Columbia	Dekalb	Fulton	Gwinnett	Henry	Huston	Other	Total
Respondents	10	5	2	31	5	17	4	6	17	97
Percentage	10%	5%	2%	32%	5%	18%	4%	6%	18%	100%

COMMENT: There was at least one respondent from each of the six DECAL regions. The following counties had one respondent: Ben Hill, Bibb, Chatham, Hall, Jefferson, Lamar, Macon Marion, Morgan, Muscogee, Rockdale, Spalding, and Telfair.

2. How many years have you operated your program?

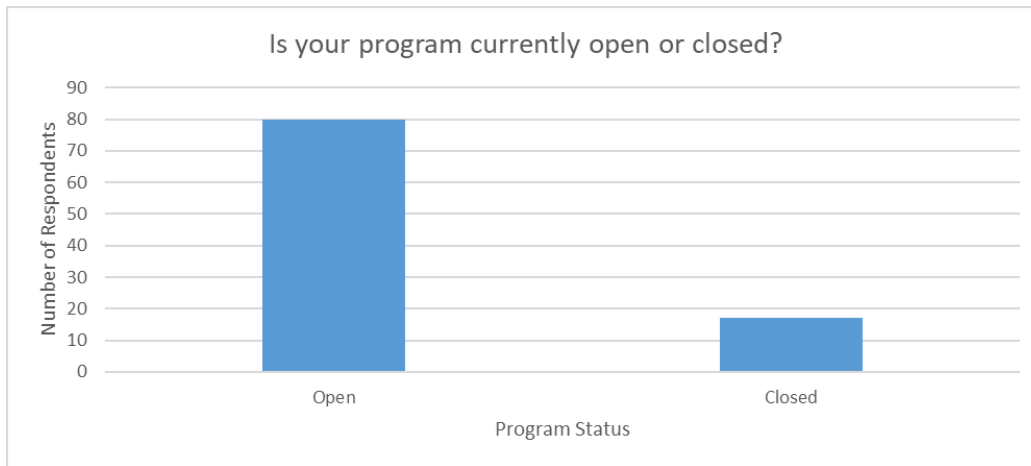


(2. How many years have you operated your program? Continued)

Years	0-5	6-10	11-20	21-30	Over 30	Total
Respondents	9	7	46	22	13	97
Percentage	9%	7%	47%	23%	13%	100%

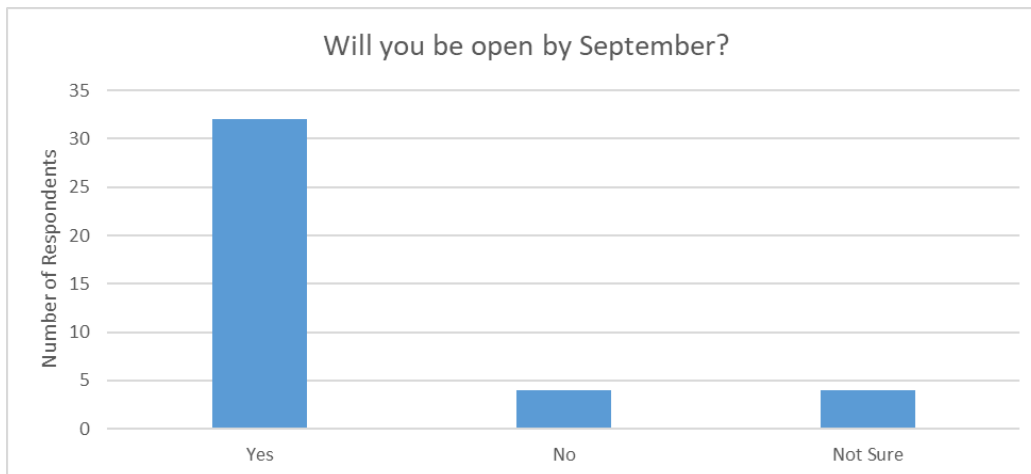
COMMENT: Answers ranged from 1 to 41 years.

3. Is your program currently open?



	Open	Closed	Total
Respondents	80	17	97
Percentage	82%	18%	100%

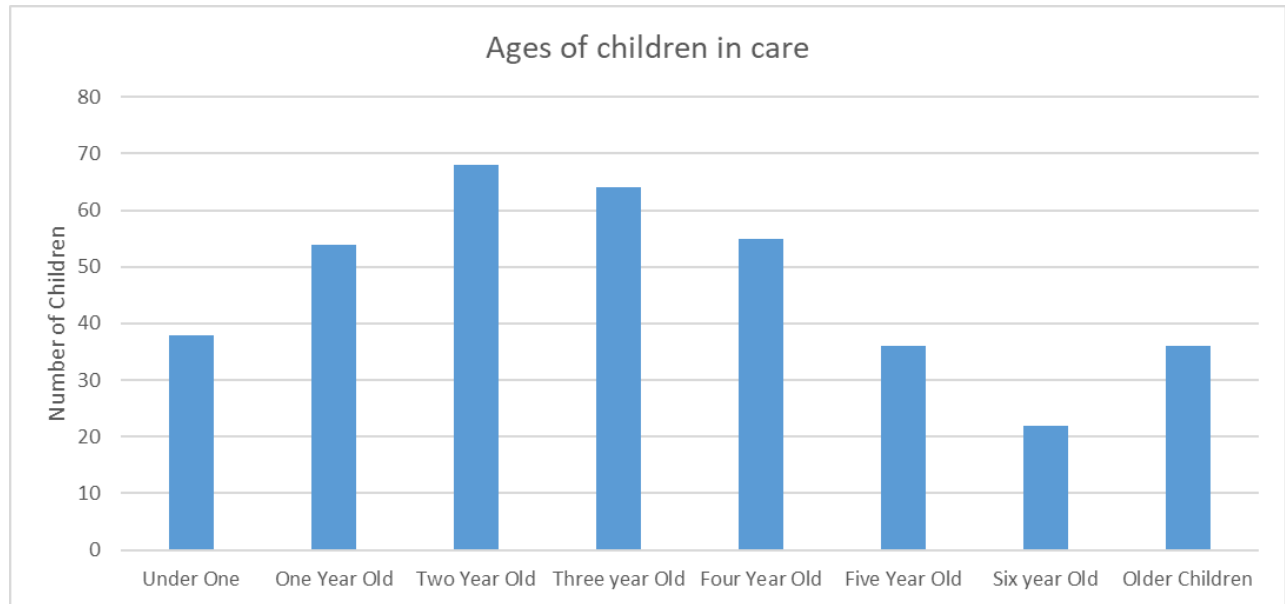
4. If your program is closed, do you expect to be open by the beginning of the fall school year?



	Yes	No	Unsure	Total
Respondents	32	4	4	40
Percentage	80%	10%	10%	

Note: Question was intended to only be answered by the 17 providers answering no on Question # 3. It appears some providers answering “Yes” also answered this question.

5. If your program is currently open, what are the ages of the children currently enrolled (full or part time) in your family child care program? Please check all that apply.



Ages	Under One	One Year Old	Two Year Old	Three year Old	Four Year Old	Five Year Old	Six year Old	Older Children
Number	38	54	68	64	55	36	22	36

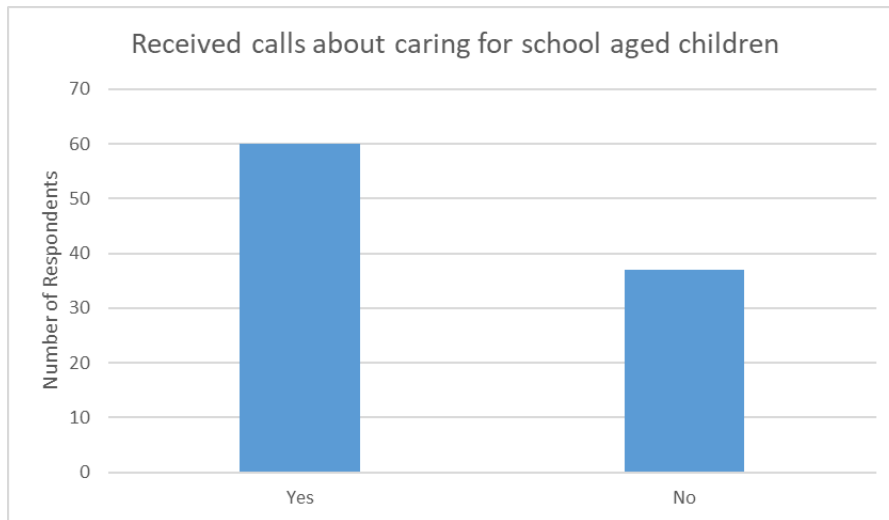
COMMENT: School Ageds. Of the 97 providers, 55 serve at least one 4 year old, 36 at least one 5 year old, 22 at least one 6 year old, and 36 at least one child older than 6. It is common for providers to add school-age children during the summer and on school holidays during the school year. For many providers they have experience and skills serving this age group, but other providers anticipate challenges adding school ages including:

“I am concerned that they may get bored or be too rough with younger children.”

Infant/Toddlers. Of the 97 providers, 38 serve at least one infant-child under 1 year, 54 serve at least one 1 year old, and 68 serve at least one 2 year old. Even in this relatively small sample, the presence of infants and toddlers says parents trust providers to offer a haven during the pandemic. COVID 19 forces parents and providers to become mini-epidemiologists, calculating risks and constantly reassessing decisions but at this window in time, FCC is a “go to” place for Infant/Toddler care.

Multi-Age Groups. Although the question was not asked in that manner, it is apparent from the distribution of ages served, that most providers operate a mixed age group and many of these groups range up to school-age. Mixed age groups are a unique characteristic of most FCC home programs. It appears providers will soon be serving a higher proportion of school-ages in their group. At the same time, some providers expressed strong concerns about the difficulty of programming and supervising a wide age range. PFCCAG will post resources for serving school-agers and mixed age groups on its website and coordinate with other professional and advocacy organizations to share resources and training on these issues.

6. Within the last two months, have you received calls from parents looking for care for school-age children for the upcoming school year?



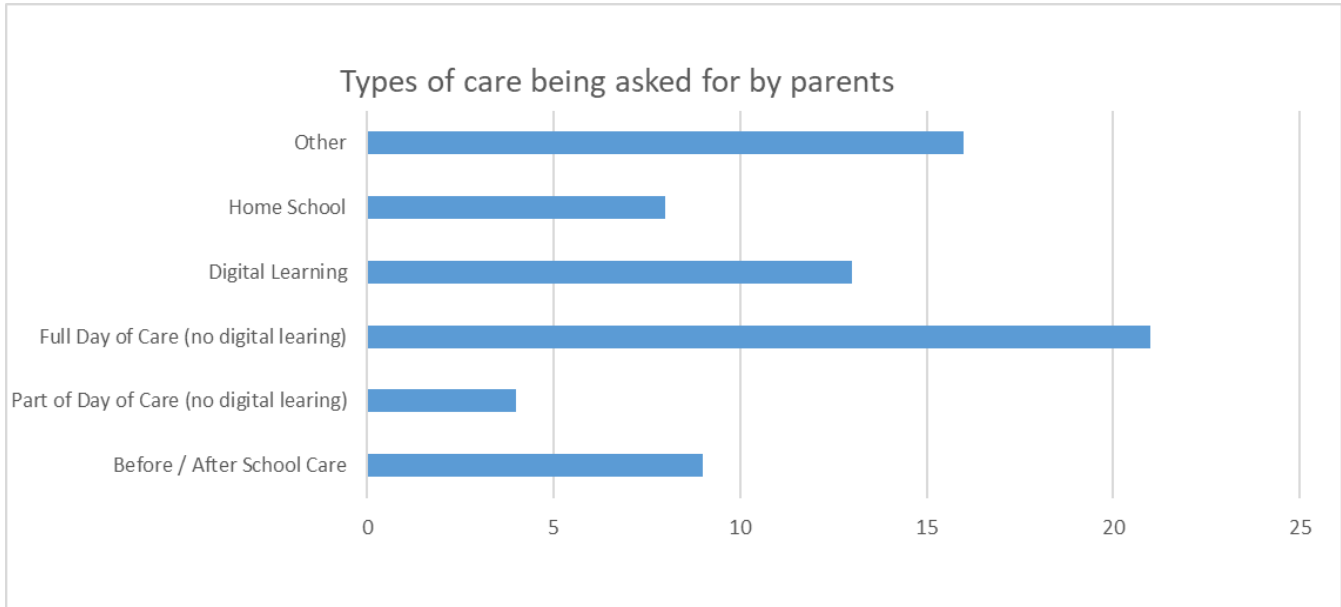
	Yes	No	Total
Received calls	60	37	97
Percentage	62%	38%	

COMMENT: One provider said:

“I have received about 30 calls from May up to Friday July 10.”

The survey was conducted between July 11, 2020 to July 21, 2020. Since then, several large metro Atlanta school systems announced they are starting the school year using the virtual classroom option. PFCCAG expects requests have increased because of school system decisions.

7. If you have received calls regarding care for school age children, the parents are looking for:

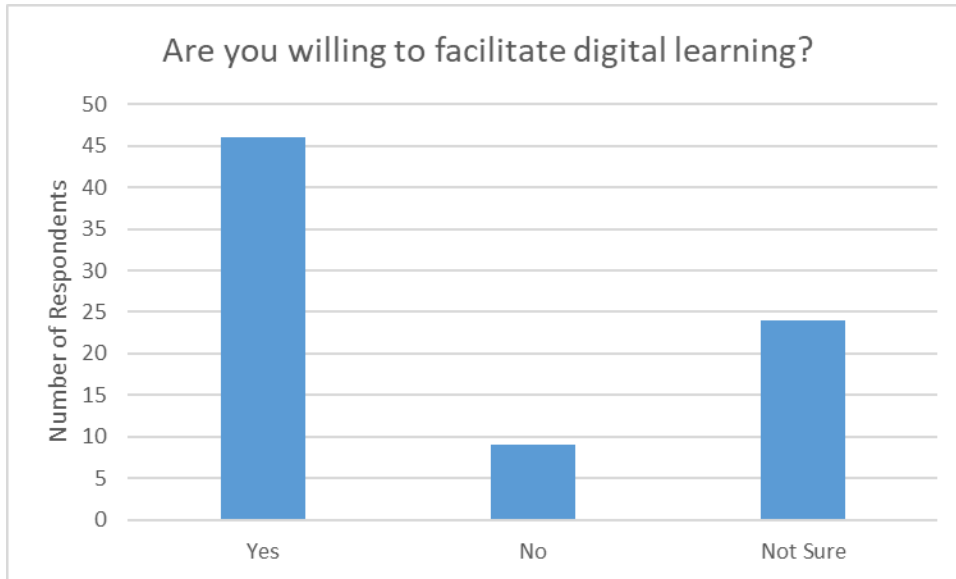


	Before / After School Care	Part of Day, Care	Full Day of Care	Digital Learning	Home School	Other
Number of providers receiving these types of calls	9	4	21	13	8	16
Percentage	13%	6%	30%	18%	11%	23%

COMMENT: Parent requests, at the time of the survey, concentrate on supervision and care of their school age child and less so on supporting the child’s digital learning experience. The fact that so many parents anticipated the need for full day care is significant. PFCCAG speculates that parents anticipated schools would not be open for in-school classes or were reluctant to send their children to in-school classes. It might also be that parents, while working from home, anticipate difficulty managing work and parenting duties and like the option to have their child in an FCC home. But whatever the reason, parents want or are at least exploring having their school-age child in an FCC home and they want the care to be full day.

Parent requests for providers to facilitate digital learning and home schooling are also significant. The digital learning issue is explored further in subsequent questions. PFCCAG did not anticipate the high response rate for “Home School” requests. There were no provider comments specific to offering a home school option so PFCCAG will need to track this option through follow-up communication with providers.

8. If requested, are you willing to facilitate digital learning for school-age children?



	Yes	No	Not sure	Total
Respondents	46	9	24	79
Percentage	58%	11%	30%	

COMMENT: FCC providers are known for their “Can do, I’ll tackle anything” spirit which is reflected in the “Yes” choice for many respondents. Comments suggest providers recognize the parents, schools, civic leaders are asking them to rise to the occasion when so much is uncertain and new options are called for.

At the same time, providers are unsure of expectations and responsibilities for students involved in virtual learning. Does the school expect providers to help with school assignments or have the bandwidth, connectivity, and technology to support digital learning? Do parents expect providers to take responsibility for the child’s progress and make sure assignments are completed or have the expertise of an elementary school teacher? Can providers multi-task one more time on one more dimension?

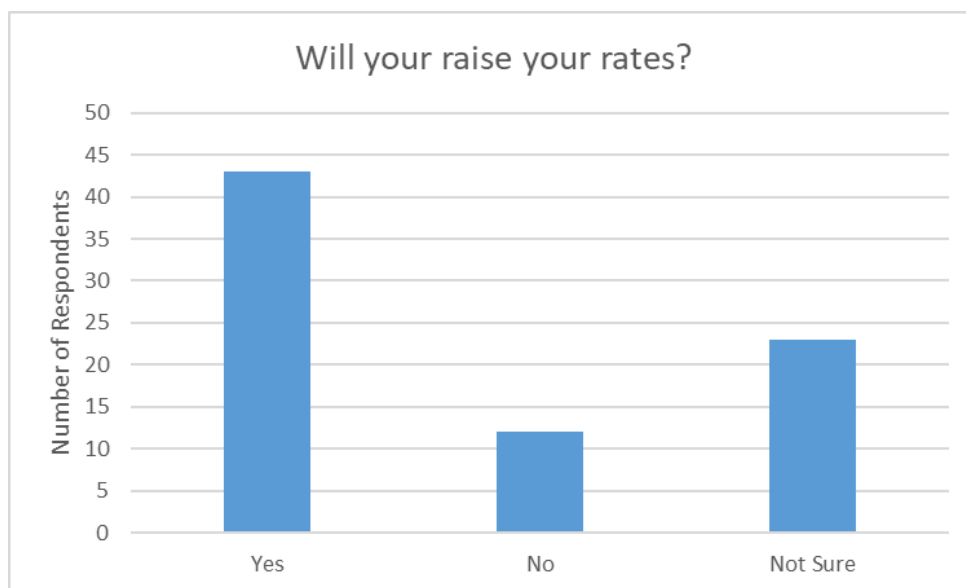
9. If you answered NO to question 6 above, please let us know what your concerns are.

COMMENT: Providers offered several comments addressing:

- Not enough physical space in the environment to accommodate school age children and their specific needs.
- Challenges in providing the type of support needed to facilitate digital learning (time, attention, quiet area) and maintain high quality interactions and supervision of younger children at the same time (multiple respondents).
- At least 4 said they would need to hire an assistant or add additional staff.

- Do/will not offer school age care of any kind (multiple respondents).
- Do not want children coming in and out of the program who are also in and out of schools during the school part of the day.

10. If you are willing to facilitate digital learning, will you raise your rates or charge an extra fee for this service?



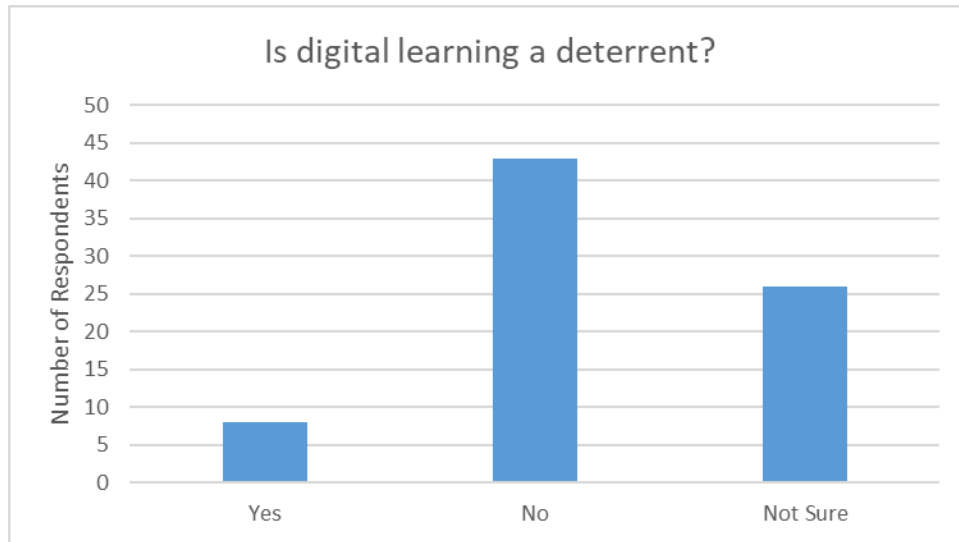
	Yes	No	Not sure	Total
Respondents	43	12	23	78
Percentage	54%	15%	29%	

COMMENT: Once children reach school-age, parents do not typically budget for full day child care. This expense will likely add personal and financial stress for parents. For some parents, this new bill comes at a time when they are unemployed. Even though providers are free to set their own rates, some will keep rates low in recognition of pandemic induced parental hardships. The CAPS program using CARES Act funding can be adjusted to help income eligible parents afford full day care for their school-ager, but the income eligibility requirement for CAPS is already low. Other sources of funds, federal, state, and local are needed so FCC providers do not become the bankroll of last resort as so often happens.

At the same time, providers are adding new and challenging duties and most providers surveyed feel they should be compensated for these duties. CARES Act funding could be used to offer “incentive pay” type payment to providers offering a digital learning component.

The high percent of providers who are not sure is also important. It is characteristic of the uncertainty reflected in many survey responses comparable to so many uncertain moments since the COVID 19 crisis began.

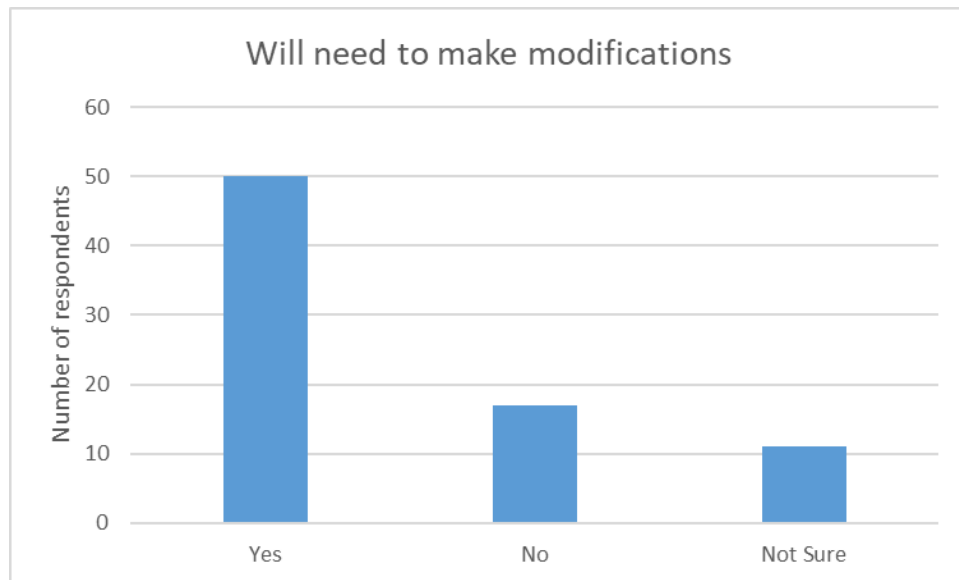
11. Would digital learning cause you to not accept school-age children?



	Yes	No	Not sure	Total
Respondents	8	43	26	77
Percentage	10%	56%	34%	

COMMENT: Providers need to make informed choices, and some will certainly choose not to serve school-age children or not to play a direct role in the virtual classroom experience of school-age children they serve. However, for providers “Not Sure” or “willing to support” virtual classroom experiences, PFCCAG will seek answers to their questions and look for ways to connect them to schools and other resources.

12. Will you need to make modifications to your program to accommodate school-age children?



(12. Will you need to make modifications to your program to accommodate school-age children? Continued)

	Yes	No	Not Sure	Total
Respondents	50	17	11	78
Percentage	64%	22%	14%	

COMMENT: PFCCAG tried to use questions #12 and #14 to draw a distinction between “physical” modifications and “supply/equipment” modifications but providers saw less of a distinction. They also quite correctly thought about “modifications to their daily program” as important and an appropriate response to question # 12. So, with the help of provider comments we can report on all three issues.

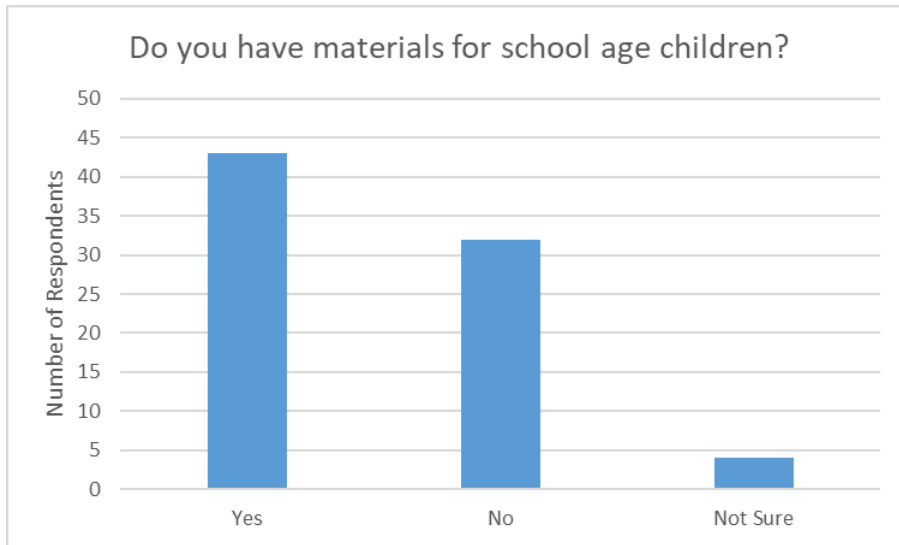
By way of background, many but not all providers have experience programming for school-agers before and after school and during school holidays. These providers know how to set a comfortable routine for school-agers, what supplies and equipment are age appropriate, when to invite school-agers to become involved with younger children, and when to offer “alone time” or time just to be with their peers. For other providers, it is time to bone up on the basic of integrating school-age children into a multiage group. This is only natural. PFCCAG applauds providers experiencing the opportunity to serve school-agers for the first time. We will help you as much as possible.

Providers also see the challenge to facilitate digital classroom learning as constituting a higher program plateau with potentially higher requirements for space, equipment, and oversight.

13. If you answered YES to question 12 above, what changes to your program will you make?

- Add appropriate size furnishings for school age children (larger children require desks or taller tables with larger chairs; plexiglass dividers; work area)
- Add a physical space so that school age children have a separate place to work undisturbed by younger children.
- Upgrade internet and add routers for more wi-fi access.
- Add more materials and equipment for school age children (materials, books, games, etc.)
- Add computers/laptops.
- Add staff to support children with digital learning
- Change meals and meal prep to accommodate larger portions and needs of school age children.

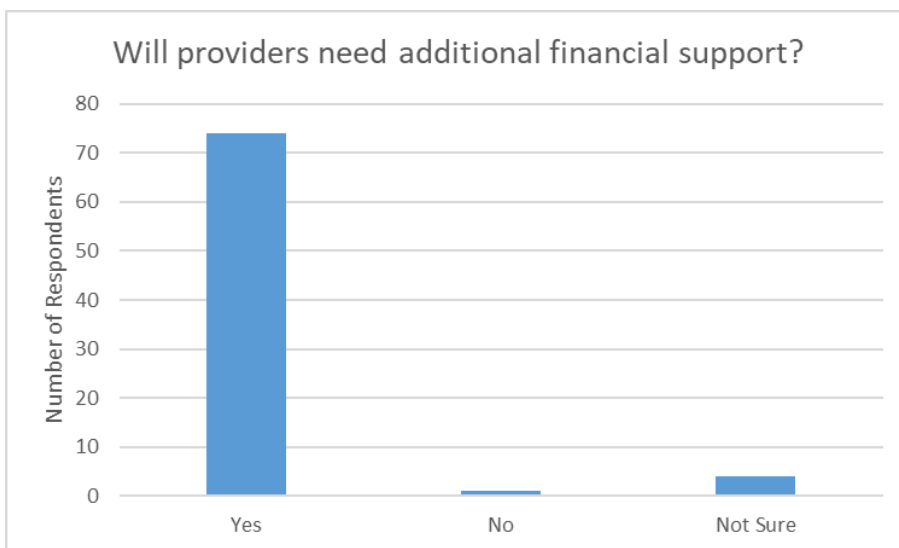
14. Does Your program have a variety of supplies and equipment (books, games, sports equipment, etc.) geared toward school-age children?



	Yes	No	Not Sure	Total
Respondents	43	32	4	79
Percentage	54%	41%	5%	

COMMENT: Many providers (54%) felt they did have a variety of appropriate supplies and equipment. This may be because they are already set up to serve school-agers and/or because providers participating in QR received grants for supplies and equipment including for school-age children. Many other providers (41%) felt they did not. For these providers, some form of start-up assistance would be welcome.

15. Do you think it will be necessary for family child care providers to receive additional financial support in the form of grants to offset program costs to care for school-age children?

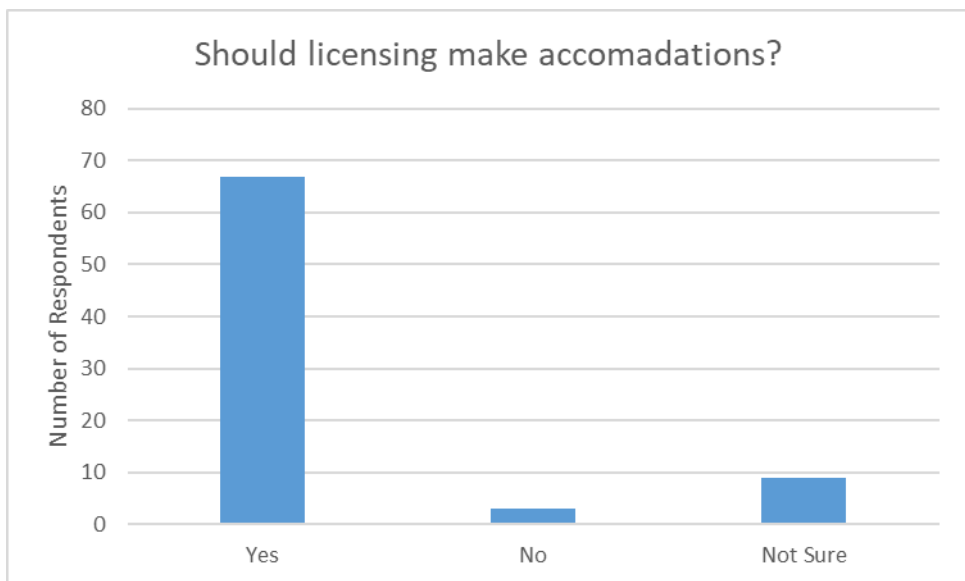


(15. Do you think it will be necessary for family child care providers to receive additional financial support in the form of grants to offset program costs to care for school-age children? Continued)

	Yes	No	Not Sure	Total
Respondents	74	1	4	79
Percentage	94%	1%	5%	

COMMENT: Clearly providers are hoping to not take the financial risk of gearing up and meeting a surge in school-age children alone. There are financial risks of reopening after a long drop in income, in purchasing age appropriate materials and equipment, in making physical space modifications, and in hiring an assistant. Simultaneously providers are trying to anticipate decisions parents are making about their child’s safety and educational needs and school systems decisions of whether and when to resume in school learning. Sadly, uncertainty is the hallmark of COVID 19. PFCCAG believes a new round of STABLE grant funding or local government/foundation funding would offer assurance that the financial risk will be shared

16. Should DECAL licensing make accommodations for school-age children who need more than 2 hours of care before and after school?



	Yes	No	Not Sure	Total
Respondents	67	3	9	79
Percentage	85%	4%	11%	

COMMENT: Eighty five percent (85%) of providers responding to the survey believe DECAL needs to play a role in addressing the surge in requests for school-age care since they are a result of the COVID 19 pandemic emergency. Currently DECAL Rules and Regulations Family Child Care Learning Homes Chapter 290-2-3 October 1, 2019 limits providers to the care of up to six children for pay “except that a Provider may care for two additional children three years of age or older for two designated one hour periods daily upon approval by the Department.” This exception is stated at 290-2-3-.03 Definitions (k) and again at 290-2-3-.07 Staffing and Supervision (15).

PFCCAG believes many, if not all, of the requests for care for school-age children will be for care longer than 2 hours and there should be a way to accommodate these requests on an emergency basis. We further

believe providers can effectively provide care and supervision of up to eight children when 2 or more children are school age children. This may not be appropriate during normal times but, as an emergency measure, it is appropriate.

We also recognize providers need to adjust their program to support school-age children in virtual, home school, or part week in-school programs. While these program adjustments involve new challenges and new learning, they have the potential to improve service delivery during the current emergency

The Rules and Regulations, section 290-2-3-16 Waivers and Variances, recognize possible circumstances where a waiver or variance to a rule may be granted. This section describes justifications for a possible waiver or variance and the process for individual providers to submit a request.

Because providers will need to understand section 290-2-3-16, it is included below:

“290-2-3-.16 Waivers and Variances. The Department may, in its discretion, grant waivers and variances of specific rules upon application or petition being filed on forms provided by the Department. The Department may establish conditions which must be met by the Home to operate under the waiver or variance granted. Waivers and variances may be granted in accordance with the following considerations:

(a) Variance. A variance may be granted by the Department upon a showing by the applicant or petitioner that the particular rule or regulation that is the subject of the variance request should not be applied as written because strict application of the rule would cause undue hardship. The applicant or petitioner must also show that adequate standards affording protection for the health, safety and care of the children exist and will be met in lieu of the exact requirements of the rule or regulations in question.

(b) Waiver. The Department may dispense entirely with the enforcement of a rule or regulation by granting a waiver upon a showing by the applicant or petitioner that the purpose of the rule or regulation is met through equivalent standards affording equivalent protection for the health, safety and care of the children.

(c) Experimental Variance or Waiver. The Department may grant waivers and variances to allow experimentation and demonstration of new and innovative approaches to delivery of services upon a showing by the applicant or petitioner that the intended protections afforded by the rule or regulation which is the subject of the request are met and that the innovative approach has the potential to improve service delivery.”

What Should an Individual Provider Do?

If a provider is at or near full enrollment (i.e., 6 children for pay), and have requests from parents of school-age children for care lasting more than 2 hours a day, she should submit a request for “Variance”, “Waiver” or “Experimental Variance or Waiver” as she sees fit. However, it appears to PGCCAG that a request for Variance based on “undue hardship” is the best option to take.

If a provider is at or near full enrollment (i.e., 6 children for pay), and has requests from parents of school-age children for care lasting more than 2 hours a day and the request also includes offering a program to support school-age children in virtual, home school, or part week in-school programs, she should submit a request for “Variance”, “Waiver” or “Experimental Variance or Waiver” as she sees fit. However, it appears to PGCCAG that a request for Variance based on “undue hardship” plus an “Experimental Variance or Waiver” is the best option to take.

Note. If a provider has an assistant or intends to hire an assistant, this information should be stated on the application.

How Does a Provider Submit a Request?

DECAL has a form [Application for Variance or Waiver](#) for submitting a request. Information on where to submit the request is on the form but in addition, DECAL recently established this e-mail address for submitting variance or waiver requests: CCS.Variance.Waiver@decals.ga.gov .

As a courtesy, PFCCAG recommends any provider applying, notify their individual licensing worker.

Filling Out the Form.

The first 3 questions on the form are contact information questions, questions 4-10 ask about the specific request the provider is making. It is important that each provider state in their own words why the request is being made, any alternative standards she proposes to meet and other elements of the request. At the same time, PFCCAG has a few comments.

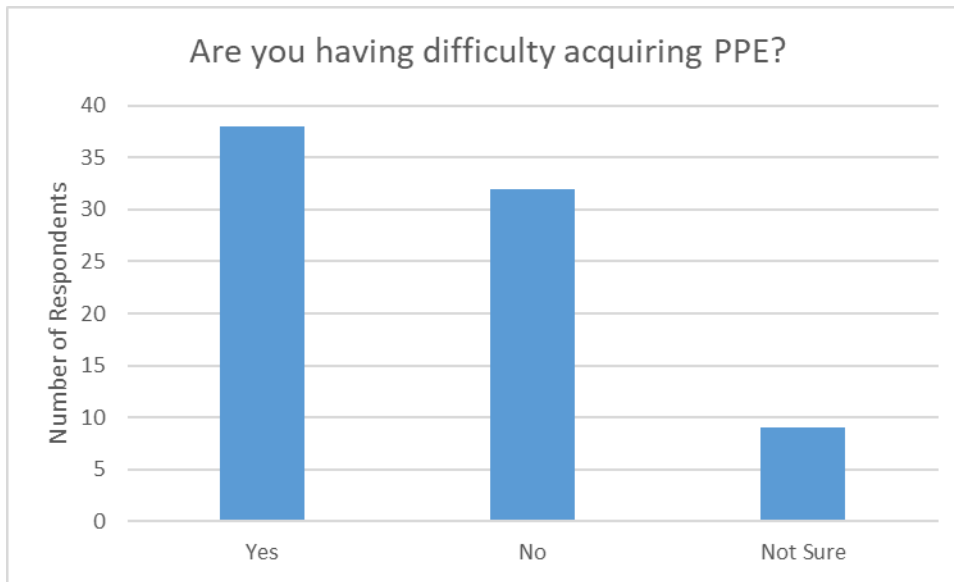
On Question 4, we suggest the provider state Sections “290-2-3-.03 Definitions (k) and again at 290-2-3-.07 Staffing and Supervision (15).”

On question 5, we suggest the provider chose “Variance”. Note: the form indicates “A variance is a request to permit some departure or variation from the literal requirements of the rule, e.g. the rule requires a six foot (72 inches) wide hall and your hall is 70 inches wide. A waiver is a request to dispense entirely with the specific rule”. Currently, PFCCAG believes a variance is the more appropriate choice.

PFCCAG also notes there is no place on the form to request an “Experimental Variance or Waiver” but providers seeking that option can state it in the text of Question 6.

On Question 10, PFCCAG recognizes there is no way to predict how long the pandemic emergency conditions will last or whether the surge will subside if many school systems return to on-school site programs, but a “length of time” statement is needed. Providers are free to choose the length of time answer as they see fit, but PFCCAG suggests January 31, 2021. If the variance or waiver is still needed after that date, providers can request an extension.

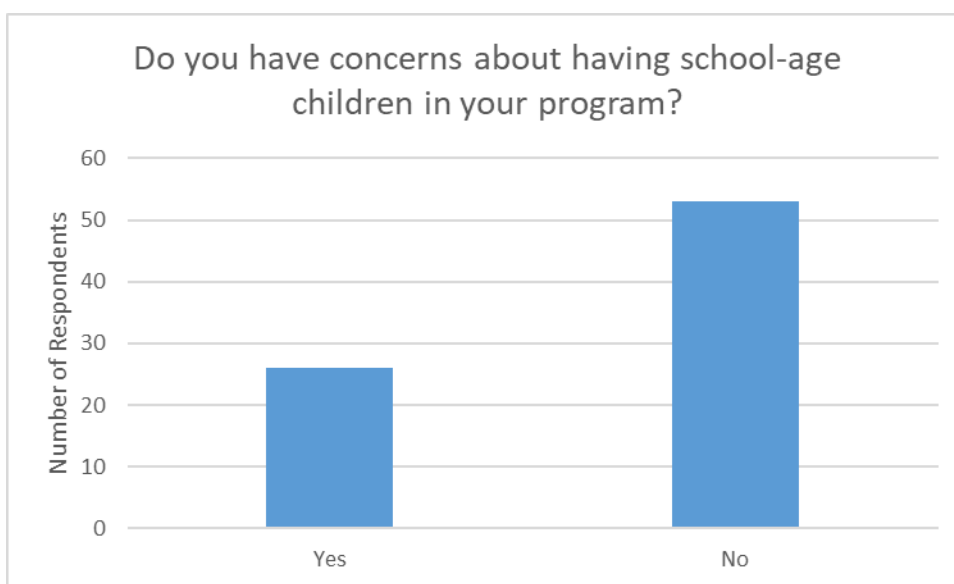
17. Are you having difficulty acquiring necessary PPE, cleaning, or other supplies that you would need to care for school-age children?



	Yes	No	Not Sure	Total
Respondents	38	32	9	79
Percentage	48%	41%	11%	

COMMENT: Although PPE, cleaning or other supplies are more available than in the early days of the pandemic, availability remains inconsistent. One provider said “I still can’t find a hand held thermometer” a comment emblematic of that fact that supplies are inconsistently available, and providers still use precious time in the search process.

18. Do you have concerns about having school-age children in your program?



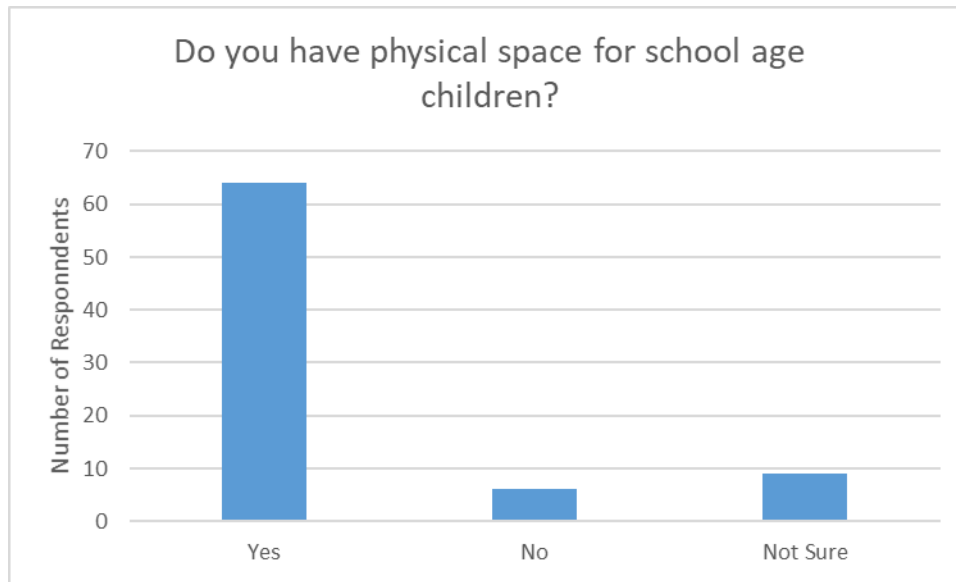
(18. Do you have concerns about having school-age children in your program? Continued)

	Yes	No	Total
Respondents	26	53	79
Percentage	33%	67%	

COMMENT: Question #18 and narrative Question #19 show it is a positive sign that two thirds (67%) of providers completing the survey did not state a concern. Comments included “I really don’t have any concerns.” and “I look forward to serving these children.”

For the one third (33%) who did have a concern, the issues ranged from education and child management issues such as “The age difference is challenging and time-demanding”, “Properly keeping them on tract with their on-line work” and “Supervision, especially outside” to fees, funding, and regulation. Or to say it more bluntly “If DECAL comes in and I got the school age here would I get written up for having them?”

20. Do you currently have enough physical space to accommodate school age children in your program?



	Yes	No	Not Sure	Total
Respondents	64	6	9	79
Percentage	81%	8%	11%	

COMMENT: This additional space may not be licensed space. While many providers have more space, they could dedicate to caregiving, they may not have clearance to use that space on their licenses.

21. Do you have any additional questions or comments about the need for school-age children once school begins.

COMMENT: Providers were still not finished raising issues or stating opinions. Comments addressed:

Need for coordination with schools over transportation and when children in one home came from different schools.

Need for DECAL licensing to be flexible with enrollment/ attendance variations based on school system variability.

Clarification of whether and when school-age children would need to be separated from younger children.

Need for support from parents, DECAL, DOE, CCR&Rs, community leaders, PFCCAG, and other professional organizations to all play our part supporting providers who rise to the occasion of serving school-age children.

ABOUT THE PROFESSIONAL FAMILY CHILD CARE ALLIANCE OF GEORGIA

WHO WE ARE

Our Vision: Working together to increase quality child care for Georgia's future.

Our Motto: Dedicate ~ Educate ~ Appreciate

Our Slogan: We are the VOICE of Family Child Care in GA

Our Goals:

- To advocate for quality child care and early education for all children in Georgia.
- Provide on-going quality training, networking opportunities and mentoring of family child care providers to improve the well-being of the children in their care.
- Develop and/or support local associations and partners dedicated to improving the quality of child care for all children in Georgia.
- Offer family child care provider incentives, benefits and on-going training for professional development, Quality Rating (QR), NAFCC Accreditation and college level credentials in ECE.

Find us at www.pfccag.org