



MASSACHUSETTS AFTERSCHOOL PARTNERSHIP: WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

PPUA 7673 Capstone Report – Spring 2023



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Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership Workforce Analysis

Overview

The Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership (MAP) is a non-profit organization that upholds a mission to improve the lives of children by fostering the support and expansion of high-quality afterschool and summer learning programs.¹ MAP strives for equity and inclusion, so that every child has an equal educational experience inside and outside of school. MAP implements a framework of increased access, particularly for low-income communities, people of color, and individuals learning English as a second language. The organization also aspires to promote increased quality of education during out-of-school hours to support a variety of developmental outcomes. Finally, MAP supports partnerships to connect schools, students, educators, and community organizations. Through its work, MAP has partnered with the United Way, the YMCA, the Boys and Girls Club, the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Daycare, Boston Afterschool and Beyond, and other organizations. The programs MAP serves allow students the opportunity to participate in STEM, athletics, and arts and music, while simultaneously providing support to working families. Demand is high, as out-of-school programs play a key role in closing the achievement gap for low-income students and students of color. MAP is a proud affiliate of afterschool and summer programs state-wide.

While MAP goes through great lengths to provide professional development for afterschool educators, it now faces challenges recruiting and retaining staff members; a problem exacerbated by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. In order to pinpoint the root of this staffing crisis, MAP sought an analysis of the afterschool educator shortage facing the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. MAP hypothesizes that social determinants of health such as housing insecurity, economic instability, and lack of access to affordable healthcare may contribute to the current staffing crisis. Although MAP gathered some Covid-19 related data, it lacked substantial information on the well-being of its frontline workers.

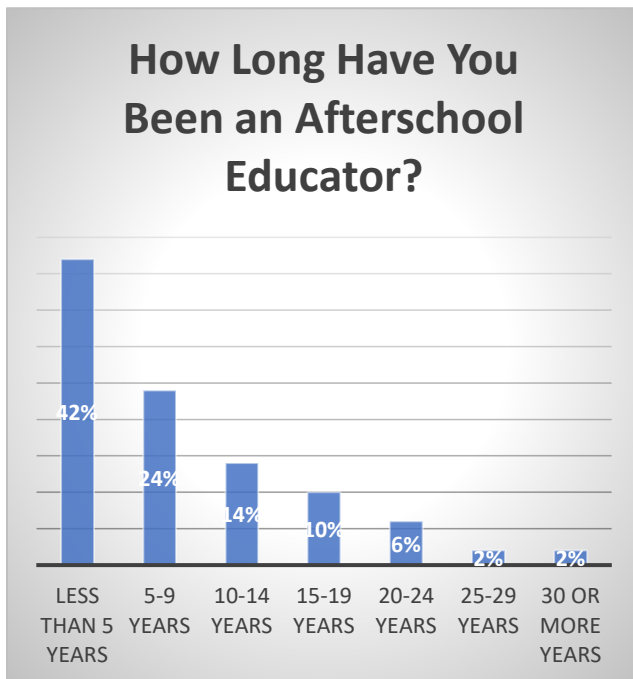
Our team has compiled a report of aggregated data using both quantitative and qualitative frameworks. Working with our client, we composed a detailed survey that was administered to afterschool educators inquiring about demographics, income, transportation, access to affordable housing, access to healthcare, working conditions, and general quality of life. We relied primarily on our organizational contact, Chloe McElligott, to distribute the survey, raise awareness and send friendly reminders to afterschool educators. That outreach included a series of \$50 gift cards supplied by MAP to respondents who provided contact information to incentivize participation and procure potential interviewees. The survey was sent to a pool of about 1,800 individuals, although not all of these folks serve as afterschool educators. All in all, we received a total of 50 survey responses. While this number was lower than our goal, survey turnout ultimately pleased both the capstone team and our client. We were able to provide a quantitative analysis of the data and administer 8 in-depth interviews with willing participants that provided more qualitative insights. We also prepared a visual presentation for our client to accompany the final report.

Quantitative Analysis of Survey Responses

Demographics

The quantitative analysis of the data starts with a demographic breakdown of the survey participants and provides context for the lived experiences of this cohort of educators. The demographic breakdown will also help understand the limitations of our survey data. Eleven of the fourteen counties in Massachusetts were represented in this survey, displaying good state-wide participation. Of the fifty survey participants:

- 62% are between 25 and 44 years of age
 - 38% are ages 25-34
 - 24% are ages 35-44
- 42% have spent fewer than five years in an afterschool educator role
- 76% identify as cisgender women
- 74% self-identify as non-Hispanic, white
- 48% have annual household incomes between \$50,001 and \$100,000, while 32% report that they make no more than \$50,000 each year
- 68% have earned at least a bachelor's degree
- Half are homeowners
- The median monthly housing payment is \$1,150
- The median monthly childcare payment is \$1,125



38% of participants being ages 25-34 is significant because the midpoint of that age range is 30. As of 2022, the median age of U.S. adults when they have their first child is 30. New parents place great importance on how high their salary is because of the addition of childcare costs to their monthly expenses.² 48% of survey participants indicating annual household incomes between \$50,001 and \$100,000 is not reflective of statewide or national data on childcare educators' socioeconomic status. 46% of U.S. childcare workers are on some form of public assistance,³ while the median annual salary of Massachusetts childcare workers is \$34,920.⁴ The near three-quarters of survey participants identifying as non-Hispanic, white is inconsistent with national

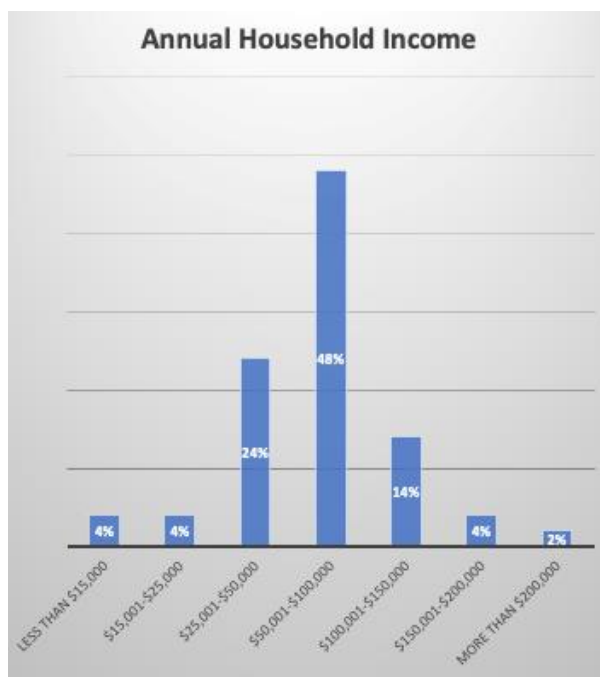
and state data. 40% of the national childcare workforce are people of color, and the majority of Massachusetts's childcare centers are small businesses led by BIPOC women.⁵ Lastly, the 42% of

survey participants with fewer than five years of experience in the afterschool educator role appears to be consistent with the problems of recruitment and retention brought up by MAP’s affiliated afterschool programs, as well as trends at the national level. The U.S. childcare industry has a turnover rate of 13.0%, nearly four times the average turnover rate for all non-agricultural jobs.³ The result of such a high turnover rate is Massachusetts’s childcare workforce being 12.0% smaller than it was in 2019.⁴ This trend not only impacts the quality of care provided to students due to increased pupil-instructor ratios while educators are being recruited, but also presents problems of lost institutional and community knowledge among staff during such transition periods.⁶ There are numerous reasons why afterschool educators depart the field, but we hope that our data can illuminate trends associated with high staff turnover rates seen over the past three years.

Housing & Childcare

Housing and childcare costs persist as some of the greatest concerns for Americans, especially for working families. The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent record high levels of inflation have exacerbated these concerns, with low-income, single-parent households in Black, Hispanic, and Indigenous communities, most severely impacted over the past three years.⁵ With wages stagnant when compared to inflation and the cost of living, educators in childcare programs across the country left their roles in search of higher-paying jobs. Massachusetts is a prime example of this problem, as the state boasts the third highest average market rent price for a two-bedroom apartment in the nation at \$1,893⁷ and has an average monthly mortgage payment of \$1,442, \$283 higher than the national average.⁸ When combined with the state’s average monthly childcare cost of \$1,115⁹ and median household income of \$84,385,¹⁰ most families can expect to spend between \$30,684 and \$36,084 annually to ensure that their children have their basic needs met at home and in childcare facilities. Massachusetts childcare workers experience higher financial precarity given that the majority of them make under \$50,000 annually.

Using a Likert scale of 1 to 10, we asked survey participants “How much stress does your monthly housing payment cause you?” and “How challenging is it to access childcare in your area?” For both questions, 1 represented a relatively non stressful experience while 10 represented an experience that brought on a great deal of stress for MAP educators. For housing payments, survey participants indicated a median score of 6 and average score of 5.7, suggesting some degree of stress. Survey data also generated median and average scores of 5 and 4.94 on the question of childcare accessibility. Although 56.9% of survey participants have



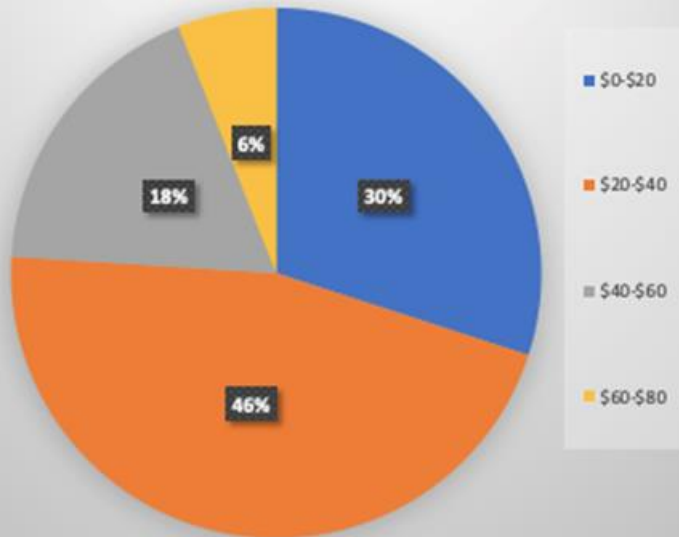
no children and 86.3% do not need childcare at the moment, it is important to remember that only 20% of the survey participants have annual incomes over \$100,000. Given that 76% of the participants are female and women typically bear the brunt of lost income and job opportunities due to taking time away from work to care for their children,¹¹ it is of utmost importance that MAP's participating programs prioritize assisting their educators with finding affordable housing and childcare options. Additionally, these results demonstrate the limitations of the data given that the median income for childcare workers in Massachusetts is \$34,920 and can be lower than the combined annual costs of childcare and housing.

Though MAP is a nonprofit with a relatively small full-time staff working with thousands of educators in hundreds of afterschool programs across the Commonwealth, the organization and its affiliates have the advantage of operating in a state where both the public and private sectors are working to reduce the weight of housing and childcare costs for workers. While direct provision of relief may be difficult, there are multiple actions that MAP can consider such as directing affiliate programs to provide current educators and new hires with resources from MassLegalHelp¹² and the Massachusetts Association for Community Action,¹³ as well as surveying their educators to obtain a clearer picture of the type of targeted assistance they can provide in relation to their available resources.¹⁴ Although it would be ideal to recommend that childcare facilities across the state increase their workers' wages, this suggestion has become increasingly infeasible given that the federal government's financial assistance to education facilities ended in 2022, is unlikely to continue due to a lack of bipartisan consensus within and between both houses of Congress, and most facilities in the state are small businesses. Additionally, parents are no longer receiving high child tax credit payments from the federal government due to Congress not passing President Biden's 2022 Build Back Better bill. The Massachusetts state government will be the most reliable source of increased funding for childcare centers until it is politically feasible for federal legislation to be passed. Taking advantage of the state's legislative and corporate environment that is largely in support of increased easing of employee housing and childcare costs will not only assist in MAP's efforts to reduce turnover rates, but also help its affiliate programs demonstrate that they are invested in their educators' quality of life following a three-year period of great social and economic disruptions.

Additional recommendations include:

- Join the Massachusetts Business Coalition to work alongside the diverse cohort of Massachusetts nonprofits and for-profit entities that are advocating for increased resource allocation for childcare and afterschool programs, including greater benefits for educators⁴ and a stronger partnership with the state's colleges and universities to help recruit and train early childhood educators.¹⁵
- Assist programs with developing either a Dependent Care Assistance Program (DCAP) or Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account (DCFSA) to provide their educators with financial aid to cover the costs of childcare.¹⁶

How Much \$ Do You Spend on Your Weekly Commute



Transportation

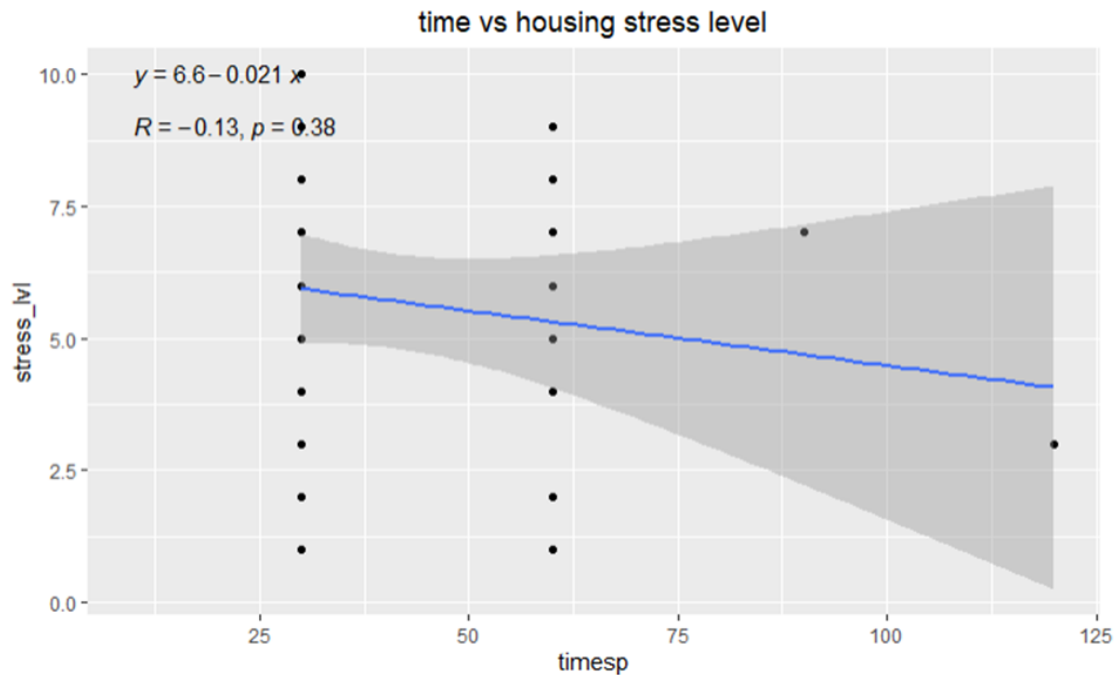
Based on our survey questions about transportation, we found 88% of respondents use personal vehicles to commute to work, while only 4% walk to work. In terms of time, 66% of respondents spend less than 30 minutes commuting, 29% spend between 30- and 60 -minutes; only 2% spend more than 60 minutes going to and from work. As the figure to the left shows, 30 % of respondents spend \$20 or less on weekly commuting costs, 46% are \$20-\$40 and 24% spend over \$40.

	type	time	cost	count
1	Personal Vehicle	less than 30 minutes	\$20-\$40	15
2	Personal Vehicle	less than 30 minutes	\$0-\$20	13
3	Personal Vehicle	30-60 minutes	\$20-\$40	6
4	Personal Vehicle	30-60 minutes	\$40-\$60	5
5	Personal Vehicle	less than 30 minutes	\$40-\$60	3
6	Personal Vehicle	30-60 minutes	\$60-\$80	2
7	Walk	less than 30 minutes	\$0-\$20	2
8	Commuter rail	60-90 minutes	\$20-\$40	1
9	Other	More than 90 minutes	\$60-\$80	1
10	Personal Vehicle	30-60 minutes		1
11	Taxi / Rideshare	less than 30 minutes	\$40-\$60	1

Our team then used R to aggregate the type, time, and cost of commuting. From the table above, the largest portion of respondents drive less than 30 minutes and spend an average of \$20-\$40 on their weekly commutes to work. The next largest portion of people also spend less than 30 minutes commuting, but at a lower cost, averaging less than \$20 per week. For the

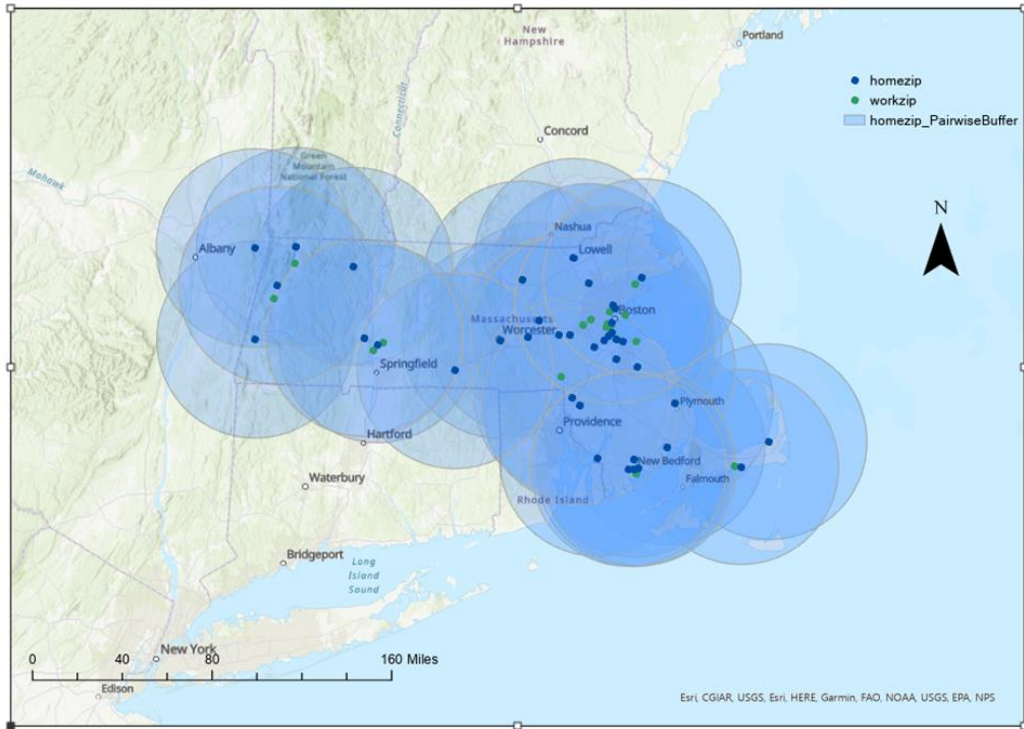
three groups, the cost of transportation increased but travel time decreased. The remaining respondents who utilize public transportation, walk, or use other modes of transportation, account for a very small portion of the whole. To sum it up, most people will choose personal vehicles with low cost for commuting when possible. Most spend less than an hour commuting.

The data made us curious about the relationship between commuting time and housing stress. We set a null hypothesis that commuting time is related to stress levels regarding housing security. We merged the data regarding how much stress monthly housing payment causes and plotted a scatterplot below.



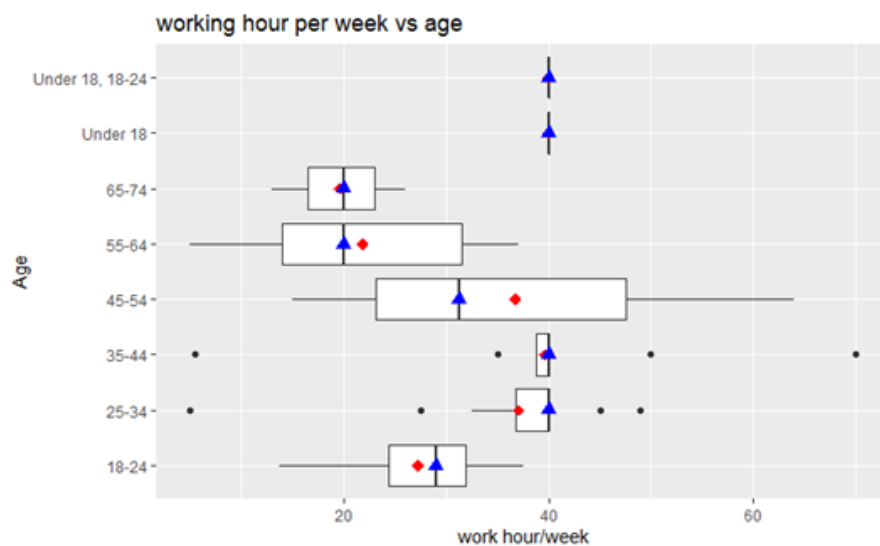
We can see that the p value is 0.38 and R value is -0.13. P value is close to zero which means a weak linear relationship. R value is close to zero means that we can reject the null hypothesis. So, based on the data, housing stress levels do not seem related to commuting time.

We collected then zip code data about afterschool staff home and workplace on using the zip codes provided by survey respondents. We used a geocode table function in ArcGIS pro to plot the location of home and workplace to the map. Based on a recent traffic study, the average speed of a car is 65 mph.¹⁷ In 30 minutes, cars can travel 32.5 miles. Based on the location of one's home, we generated a 32.5-mile radius buffer around reported locations. In the figure posted below, blue dots represent home locations, and green dots represent workplace locations. We can see all the workplace dots are covered by a buffer of home location bubbles. This means that a personal vehicle is the most efficient way for commuting.



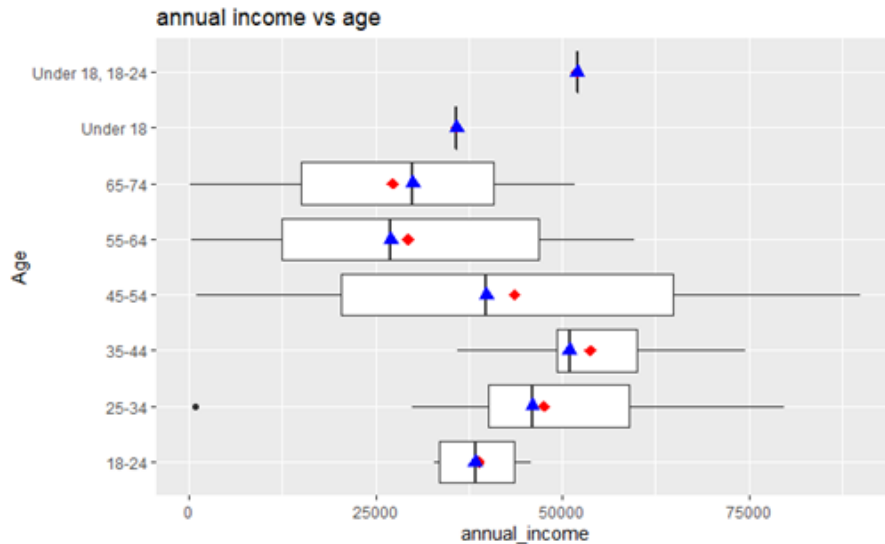
Work Conditions

When asked, “what type of afterschool program do you work in?” There was a relatively even distribution between athletics/fitness, in school enrichment, STEM/STEAM education, theater and performing arts, visual arts and crafts, and others.

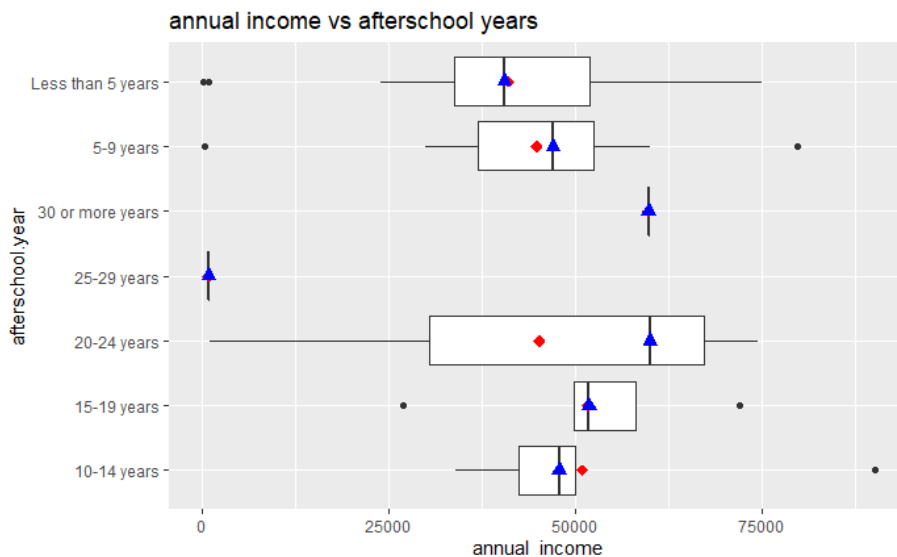


We aggregated age and working hour per week data and created a boxplot graph. Red rhombus represents averages, while blue triangles represent the median number. All central boxes of age group are not normal distribution, except 65-74. Age 45-54 has the largest width of the central

box. A large central box can indicate higher variability in the data. This means the variance of working time in the 45-54 group is large. We can also see that 35-44 aged people average the most working hours per week.



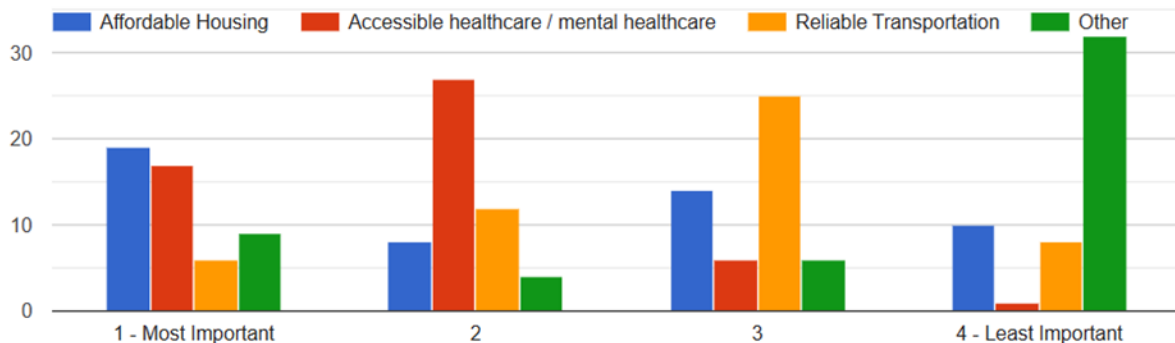
We also aggregated age with annual income and plot. Regarding annual income vs. age, we can see the boxplot is asymmetric. Age 45-54 group also has the largest variance in annual income. We also found that the 35-44 age group has the highest average and median income.



For annual income vs. how long they have worked as an afterschool educator, we can see 20-24 years group has the largest variance in annual income, but also has the highest median income. The 30 or more years group is the highest average and median income.

Furthermore, in response to the age of afterschool participants, the largest percentage of Afterschool educators work with children in the age group of 5-10.

If your job at the Afterschool program could provide you with additional benefits/supports, what would you prioritize? (Please rank all choices)

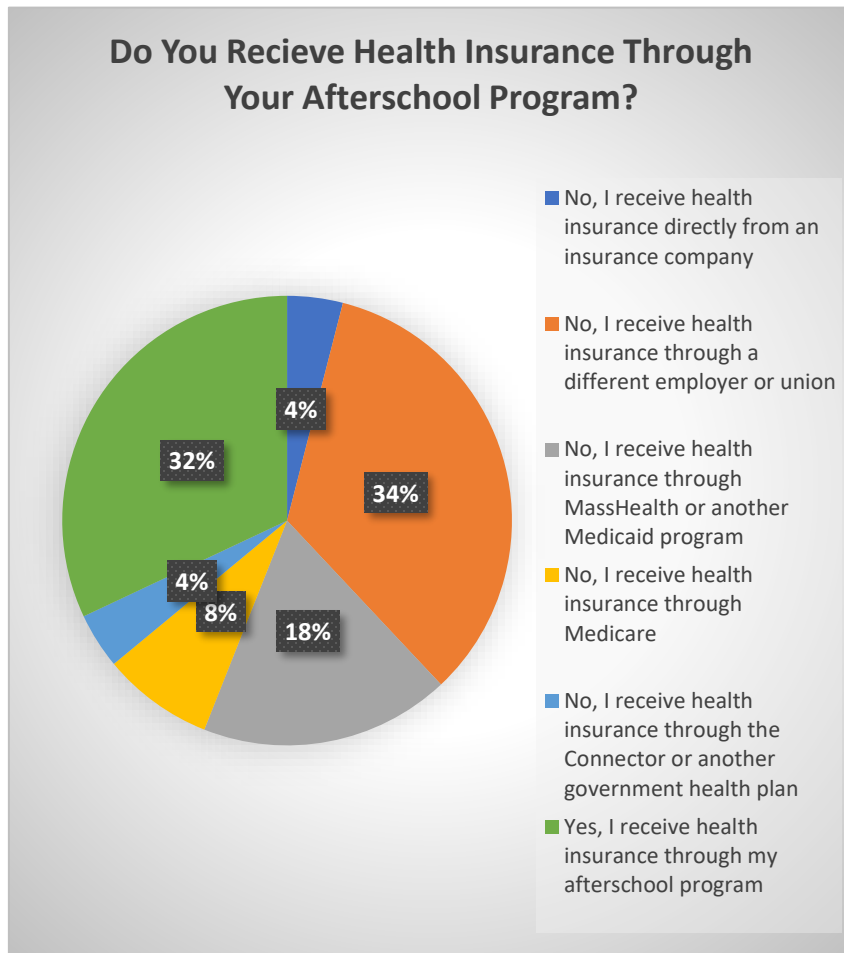


The graph above shows which additional benefits people want to prioritize. The X-axis represents the level of importance from 1 to 5, while the Y-axis represents how many people chose each benefit. When asked how afterschool programs could provide additional benefits, we found that most respondents reported housing as the area in need of the most assistance. The second most important was accessibility to healthcare/mental healthcare. Third was reliable transportation.

We also asked questions about personal reasoning for working in afterschool programs, long-term career goals, and highlights and challenges. People work in afterschool programs because they love to work with children, seek extra income, hope to enrich their own educational experiences, and aim to generate a positive impact on young children and teens. For long-term career goals, most respondents listed marketing, expanding, and supporting programs, working in education and youth development, and enjoying working at afterschool programs for those reasons. Respondents also hope to promote child development. Additionally, afterschool educators have a more relaxed atmosphere, and do not have to work as rigorous school days as grade school educators. Regarding challenges, the most notable are staffing and management issues, including managing part-time staff, poor administrative support, and lack of experience.

Based on our analysis, afterschool programs can provide more housing allowance to employees and improve income for workers who have been working in afterschool programs for 20-24 years. Also, general improvement of parking facilities appears necessary, as well as giving transportation subsidies to workers who don't own a car.

Healthcare

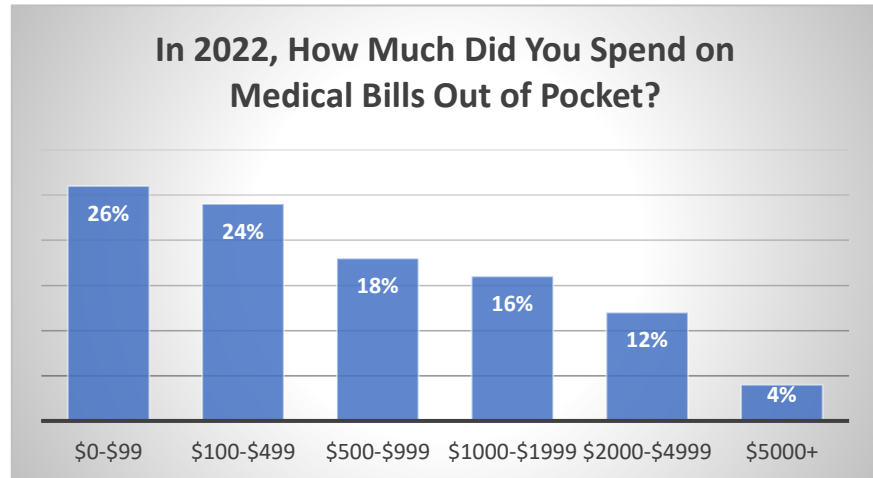


Providing affordable healthcare continues to be one of the most debated and discussed challenges facing the nation. While Massachusetts finds itself at the forefront of healthcare access, issues such as affordability and quality remain. Studies have shown that individuals who earn lower incomes, including childcare teachers such as afterschool educators, generally suffer from inadequate access to benefits and are subsequently subjected to substandard health conditions.¹⁸ Furthermore, mental health determinants continue to be damaging and harmful to the American workforce. While the rate of

adults seeking professional help to improve mental health has increased in recent years, a 2021 Forbes article highlighting the perception of mental health in America found that 47 percent of Americans still believe that seeking therapy is a sign of weakness.¹⁹ To properly assess the current state of health care among afterschool educators, we asked a series of questions regarding general affordability, access, and quality of health care.

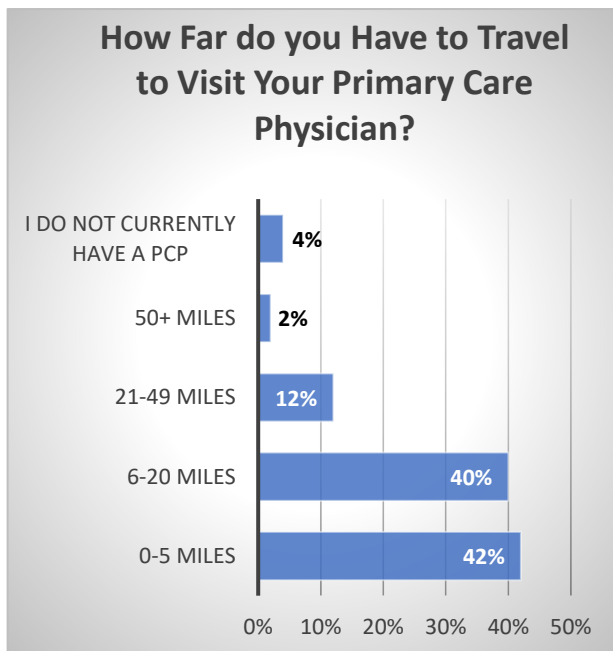
When asked whether their afterschool employer offered health insurance options, 60 percent of survey respondents answered yes, in line with the employer-based insurance system dominant in the United States.²⁰ On the other hand, 40 percent of afterschool employers do not offer health insurance, suggesting access limitations for some afterschool educators. One respondent noted that full-time employees were offered benefits, while hourly employees were not, so if the afterschool worker was also a full-time employee of the school, they were eligible for benefits but if they solely worked as an afterschool educator, they were not eligible.

Specifically asking whether they personally receive health insurance through their afterschool employer, 32 percent of survey respondents said they do. Statistically speaking, this means that more than 50 percent of respondents who were offered health insurance by their



afterschool employer are utilizing these benefits. Thirty-four percent reported that they receive health insurance from a different employer or union; that being said, only 36 percent of respondents reported also working as an educator during regular school hours. Eighteen percent of respondents said they receive benefits from MassHealth or another Medicaid program, keeping consistent with some reports of lower income levels. The remaining 16 percent of respondents received benefits via the Connector, Medicare or directly from an insurance company.

Inquiring about yearly out of pocket spending on medical bills, 68 percent of respondents claimed they spent under \$1000, while 32 percent reported they spent more than \$1000 in 2022. This suggests that afterschool educators generally spend slightly less than average on out-of-pocket medical expenses as the average American under the age of 65 spent \$1,236 on out-of-pocket medical expenses in 2022.²¹



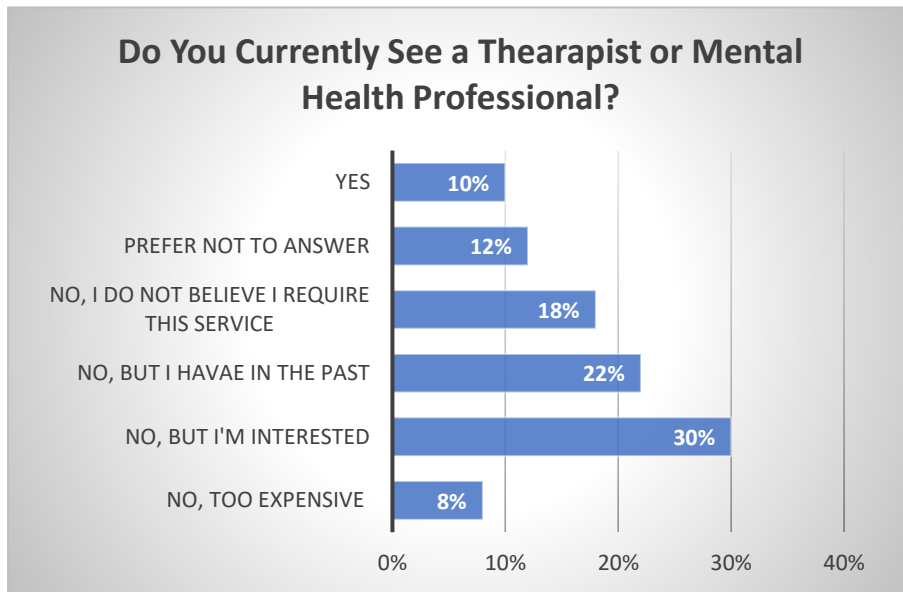
Regarding geographic accessibility of health care providers 82 percent of survey respondents reported that they travel 20 miles or less to get to their primary care physician. Fourteen percent reported that they travel 21 miles or more and 4 percent responded that they do not currently have a primary care physician. One respondent noted that the quality of health care providers near her home were exceptionally sub-par, so she was happy to travel further to receive adequate care. In general, it appears that a large majority of afterschool educators do not have to travel far to receive health care. This is not surprising, as Massachusetts is a geographically small state that is densely populated, and even the most rural areas host healthcare facilities.

When asked to rate access, affordability, and quality of their healthcare on a scale from 1-10 where 1 represents lack of access, unaffordable and low-quality health care and 10 represents easy access, affordable and high-quality health care, respondents reported an average of 7.10 for access, 5.58 for cost and 6.16 for quality. This data suggests that afterschool educators are slightly less concerned with accessibility of health care and more concerned with cost and quality; but even there, the levels of concern are not great. The range of access and cost spanned from 1 to 10, while quality ranged from 2 to 10, suggesting a wide variance in this statistic. In general, all three of these averages could be elevated to increase more equitable health care outcomes.

In regard to mental health, only 10 percent of respondents reported that they currently attend therapy, while 18 percent said they do not currently attend therapy but have done so in the past. On a national level, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has reported that almost 20 percent of American adults currently seek professional help regarding mental health, suggesting that

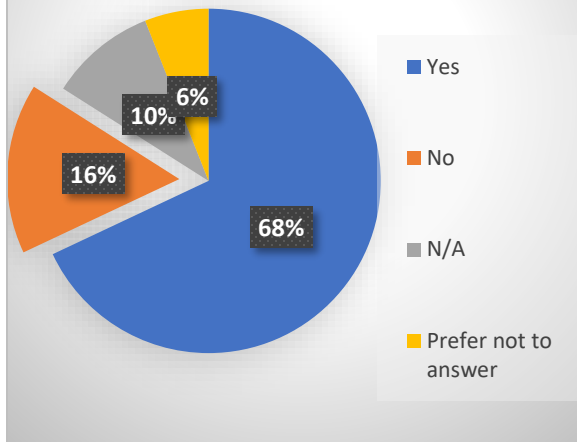
afterschool educators are less likely to seek therapy than what national statistics report.²²

Thirty percent of respondents noted they do not seek therapy but are interested, while 8 percent reported this service was too expensive. Eighteen percent said they do not believe they require this service,



and 12 percent preferred not to answer. One respondent specified that he had to stop therapy due to the cost, and that he was interested in seeing a psychiatrist but could not afford it. Focusing on the 38 percent of respondents who were either interested or could not afford professional help regarding mental health is an important step towards fostering a more mentally healthy environment. This may include increased mental health awareness, nudging tactics, or discounted therapy sessions for afterschool educators. Recently, increased political tensions, adverse effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, and a dramatic spike in school shootings have weighed heavily on educators nationwide, suggesting that an increase in mental health resources should be at the forefront of any educator-based policy reform.

In 2022, Did You Have Easy & Affordable Access to Required Medications?



Finally, 68 percent of respondents stated that they had easy and affordable access to any medications they required in 2022, while 16 percent did not. This tells us that for some afterschool workers, access to medications is a struggle, and financial assistance or increased healthcare coverage is required.

Some jurisdictions are specifically targeting health care access for childcare workers. For example, Washington, D.C. recently passed an initiative approving free universal healthcare for all childcare workers.²³ Providing a similar state-wide policy in Massachusetts for afterschool and childcare workers would make a substantial difference in ensuring that proper healthcare options are equally available to all afterschool educators.

Recommendations:

- Increase mental health resources – partner with Massachusetts Network of Care,²⁴ NAMI Compass²⁵ or a similar support and information-based organization to promote mental health awareness, nudge employees to seek professional help, and assist individuals in finding affordable care that is covered by their individual insurance.
- Lobby Beacon Hill for access to free healthcare for childcare workers including afterschool educators based on the legislation recently passed in Washington, D.C.
- Procure a grant or “rainy day fund” to help afterschool employees pay for necessary medications or outlying medical bills.

Qualitative Analysis of Interviews

Interviewing Afterschool Educators - Diving Deeper

Massachusetts has long had the reputation of having one of the highest quality public education systems in the country. However, as in many states, Massachusetts' afterschool program quality has room for improvement. During the Covid-19 pandemic, afterschool programs across the United States closed their operations, and programs that attempted to move their programming to a virtual format had varying levels of success. Three years later, many programs are assessing their health and effectiveness with respect to staffing challenges, resource allocation, and student experience. Many after school programs pivoted their content to meet the unique needs of the circumstance presented by the pandemic, particularly an increased focus in social-emotional learning areas.²⁶ As these changes occurred, many afterschool programs endured, but with varying levels of confidence and morale compared to before the pandemic. As highlighted throughout this report, afterschool educators in Massachusetts continue to face challenges, some due to impacts of the pandemic, others specific to a program's unique circumstances, geography, or operational approach. We interviewed eight afterschool educators around Massachusetts to get more detailed and personal accounts of these challenges (see table below for more details about interviewees). The following are noteworthy reflections and observations that emerged from these conversations.

Anonymous Interviewees	Age	Years as Afterschool Educator	Gender (self identify)	Ethnicity	Zip Code
1	45-54	10-14	Female	White	02571
2	35-44	< 5	Female	Black/African American	02368
3	45-54	< 5	Female	Black/African American	02136
4	25-34	< 5	Female	White	02124
5	25-34	< 5	Female	White	01581
6	35-44	< 5	Female	White	02673
7	55-64	< 5	Female	White	02724
8	55-64	25-29	Female	White	02703

Staffing and Retention

In summer 2021, the Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership partnered with Beacon Research to survey hundreds of Afterschool program directors and administrators. This research led to many valuable insights regarding post-pandemic needs, challenges, and general conditions of after school program operations across Massachusetts. One major highlight of this report is the analysis of challenges faced by afterschool programs. Directors and administrators were asked to think about the challenges their program faced and indicate which was a major challenge, a minor challenge, not much of a challenge, or not a challenge at all. The challenge that stood out was *Staffing Shortages and Finding Staff*. Almost two years later, our interviews with afterschool educators support this insight:

- 87.5% of our interviewed educators mentioned that staff retention and hiring was one of the priority issues that their program needed to address.
- 50% of interviewees mentioned that they do not view afterschool education as a long-term career, and that it is either a supplemental income source for those who have another primary income, or it is a foot-in-the-door job to gain experience in a steppingstone to other school-time or full-time educator opportunities; 25% claim that the only way an individual in a single household can make a career staffing their afterschool program is as a Director, not as an educator; 12.5% were full-time public-school educators who staffed their school's afterschool program because there wasn't sufficient staff to maintain their required ratio, and their afterschool role was due to their dedication to their students and their school; 12.5% mentioned that they are at the end of their career and will likely work in their afterschool program for the remainder of their career, though they acknowledged that they do not need the income and it is a means to remain 'productive and contributing to the community'.
- When the interviewees were asked to share their perspectives on why retention is a priority issue, 75% mentioned a lack of funding and insufficient wages as the *only reason*; 25% mentioned a lack of funding and insufficient wages *AND* a lack of acknowledgement/respect from other educators, from administrators, and from parents/guardians.
 - Interestingly, 62.5% of interviewees indicated negative treatment by parents/guardians at some point in their interview.
 - *"The parents arrive to pick-up and treat us like 'the help'".*
 - *"The parents are always asking us why their children haven't finished their homework, probably because they don't want to go home and do the work of making sure it gets done."*
 - *"I spend two hours offering STEM enrichment and homework help after a full day of teaching, and the parents just assume we are babysitting."*
- When asked what Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership can do to rectify and/or support their respective staff retention issue, 100% of interviewees asserted that an increase in wages to meet increasing cost of living and a more comfortable lifestyle, so as to disincentivize searching for a higher paying job outside afterschool education; 37.5% mentioned, in addition to a wage increase, that staff would be more likely to stay

if their program had sufficient funding to allow for staff to achieve a higher standard of curricula, content, resources, and thus increase educator morale.

Compensation for OST Staff

In the Beacon Research study conducted in 2021, directors and administrators of afterschool programs were asked how concerned they are about various factors. Second only to hiring and staff retention, compensation for afterschool educator staff was *very concerning* to 64%, *somewhat concerning* to 28%, and *not concerning* to only 8%. This aligns with the interviews we conducted.

- When asked about how MAP and state/local government can support the educators (not the afterschool program) in any way, 75% of interviewees mentioned increased wages as the most important category of support, while 25% mentioned professional development and curricula resources.
 - Perhaps not surprisingly, the 75% who prioritized increased wages were part-time educators in the first fifteen years of their careers, while the 25% who prioritized professional development and curricula resources are within five years of retirement.
- The interviewees who mentioned increased wages as most important were then asked to estimate a percentage increase in wages that would address their compensation concerns:
 - 50% estimated 20% or 25% increase in wages.
 - 25% estimated 100% increase (“*closer to double what I make now*”)
 - 12.5% mentioned that a better pension or retirement contribution would suffice.
 - 12.5% were uncertain: “*I don’t really know, hard to estimate, I just feel underpaid, and I see young people earning more from passive income doing barely anything*”.

Administration and Program Operations

Interviewees were asked to reflect on the nature of their afterschool program and share the challenges unique to their program.

- 75% of interviewees mentioned specific administrative/operational challenges. Of note, these interviewees all work for afterschool programs that take place in public schools, and their administrators are typically school-wide, not specific to the afterschool program.
 - “*Administration doesn’t prioritize hiring for us - they rely on college work-study placements and teachers in training to fill these roles.*”
 - “*Administration only comes knocking when they need something from us - information, quotes, etc.*”

- *“Administrators prioritize athletics way more than afterschool programs - we always get the last pick of rooms, and they get new gear, and we get their old gear”.*
- *“Administrators just care about increasing enrollment, without considering how it impacts the educators and staff”.*
- The 25 % of interviewees who did not indicate challenges with administration all work for stand-alone after school programs that do not take place at a public school and have dedicated administrators.

Access to Housing

Teachers are finding it increasingly more difficult to afford to live near where they work. As of the most national recent data available in 2016, the national average percent of a teacher’s income spent on housing is 32%. Massachusetts ranks as the fifth most unaffordable state for teachers, with educators having to spend 46% of their income on housing.²⁷ Considering that afterschool educators are not paid as well as full-time school-time educators, access to housing was a noteworthy challenge for multiple interviewees.

- *“Single or divorced afterschool educators can typically only afford a one-bedroom apartment, often without laundry services. I go to a laundromat directly after work twice a week.”*
- *“The afterschool teachers I know that have a house typically have family wealth or have a partner with their household’s primary income.”*
- *“I live a fifty-minute drive away from my job because I can’t afford to live closer.”*
- *“Many of our staff are willing to work here because they are still so young that they live with their parents and don’t have to pay rent.”*
- *“I’ve lived in the same house I own for forty years; I am lucky compared to other staff who can barely afford their rent.”*
- *“I can only afford my rent because of a program called THRIVE, through them I get access to workforce housing vouchers.”*
 - *Note: Tools to Help Residents in Vulnerable Areas (THRIVE) operates in Cape Cod: <https://haconcapecod.org/thrive/>*

When asked what non-compensation-related support/resources can be provided by MAP to alleviate housing access, interviewees had a few thoughts:

- 25% of interviewees mentioned financial literacy trainings/courses to help afterschool educators learn about how to better spend and invest their money.
- 25% of interviewees mentioned access to official affordable housing support agencies or directing educators to low-income-qualification opportunities.
- 37.5% of interviewees reiterated the importance of increased compensation.
- 12.5% of interviewees were *“Not sure”*.

Transportation/Commute

In Boston, the average travel time from work to more affordable communities are at least 30 minutes.²⁸ Increased travel time and commute challenges can have an impact on afterschool educators, and thus on the programs where they are employed.

- *“I Uber to and from work every day, 1.5 miles each way, usually \$10-15 per day. I can’t afford a car and I can’t carpool because my coworkers live in the other direction”.*
 - Note- This respondent lives and works in Cape Cod
- *“There’s so much staff turnover that we usually don’t become friendly enough with each other to initiate carpools.”*
- *“All the afterschool educators either drive their own car or take public transportation. But our parking lot is pretty grim - our cars are clunkers and we’re often covering for each other to leave and get work done on our cars.”*
- *“I take the bus and the T every day, and the bus schedules are never accurate, so I spend a lot of time at bus stops”.*

This said, 50% of those interviewed mentioned that they drive their own cars to work, and transportation isn’t a significant issue for them. Overall, the qualitative analysis of transportation-related challenges tracks with the quantitative analysis, though interviewees seemed to provide more details about their specific challenges, which they may not have mentioned in the quantitative survey.

Health, Wellness, and Access to Medical Care

Massachusetts ranks as the healthiest state in the United States, according to Boston University and Sharecare researchers’ Community Well Being Index Rankings in 2021. We asked interviewees about their access to health care resources, medical care and medicine, and mental health resources.

50% of interviewees have access to health insurance via their afterschool program, 37.5% have access to health insurance via another individual in their household, and 12.5% have MassHealth. Multiple interviewees mentioned that their near-retirement-aged coworkers decided to work at the program to have access to health care.

- While 62.5% of interviewees noted that they do not face challenges with respect to access to health care or medical care, 37.5% expressed specific challenges:
 - *“I have to pay out of pocket for hearing aids, and they’re really expensive. They’re not covered by MassHealth”*
 - *“Across the board, adults are not having good access to mental health care. There is a backlog of residents within town who cannot get appointments to therapists. Healthcare for emotional wellness is poor across the board. staff, parents, children.”*

- *“I want to see a therapist, but I don’t have time. I teach a full day, after which I staff the afterschool program, and then I come home to take care of my kids.”*
- Multiple interviewees indicated that health care access is not a topic typically shared amongst their staff, so if other staff are facing health/medical care access challenges, they are likely not shared during a workday.

Miscellaneous

We ended each conversation by asking afterschool educators to share anything that may be helpful for Mass Afterschool Partnership to know about challenges they face:

- *“When daytime educators have disruptive students with extreme behavioral challenges, they have support from administration, principals, etc. In the afterschool program, we are left to fend for ourselves, and it really hampers the quality of the program.”*
- *“My program is staffed by full-time teachers, and most of us eat cafeteria food every day, because we don’t have time, energy, or enough pay to afford groceries or eating out!”*
- *“My program is in a school, and I feel like the classroom teachers look down on the afterschool staff - like we’re not on their level and we don’t deserve the same respect”.*
- *“Raises are obviously welcome, but more advanced technology and learning resources would be even better. iPads, robotics, things like that”.*
- *“Grants for field trips would be good and would offset transportation costs”.*

Conclusion

The Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership (MAP) serves as a vital resource to further youth development in a manner that allows for a full and fair education in school as well as within afterschool programs. A commonality among survey and interview respondents illustrates that there is a lack of resources being administered to afterschool programs.

Out of over 1,500 recipients of the survey, only afterschool staff completed the survey. The resulting survey responses only lead to eight in-depth interviews. Interviewees offered a valuable insight into their work/life dynamic as an afterschool educator. Some of the most glaring commonalities among survey responses and interviewed highlighted a need for more mental health services. Interview respondents made a point to discuss the amount of work that they bring home with them. Many educators find themselves overworked and at the mercy of their limited staff. Interviews served as a crucial understanding into the needs of educators, and the lack of resources being distributed across the state.

Rural and urban areas alike face staffing shortages. Issues such as housing and transportation are also common pain points, due to unaffordability in certain areas. While survey data suggest that transportation did not have a significant impact, interviewees, commented about longer commutes due to unaffordability of housing close to work. Some of the most valued opportunities outside of pay increases to staff, would be increased trainings and support sessions. Many educators view these as vital resources to themselves and their staff.

Educators in both the survey and interviews highlighted their passion for the career. MAP should focus on providing the resources needed to retain passionate staff and increase enrollment of new educators.

Endnotes

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