

# TEN CHILD CARE CENTER CHALLENGES AND WHAT THEY MEAN

You know how important your child care center is to your organization and your people. But your center is either not delivering on expectations or has operational issues that are threatening its viability.

If this describes your situation, here are possible contributing factors and what they mean.



## 1. Your center isn't filled

In this age of [significant child care shortages](#), most well-run centers have waitlists. If yours doesn't, it's not because people don't need it. It may mean you have an underlying quality problem that's steering parents elsewhere. A comprehensive child care survey of employees about center performance with actionable next steps and the resources to execute can help.



## 2. Your enrollment ebbs and flows

Changes in occupancy are to be expected. The question is, are you able to roll with them? One way is to leverage vacancies as back-up spaces for employees who need care in a pinch, helping to reduce absenteeism and increase engagement. A back-up care program, with the technology to instantly connect available spaces to people who need them, can both fill center demand and offer a critical support for working parents.



## 3. You're challenged to staff enough teachers

Like any population you employ, teachers have specific career needs and goals. Appealing to them means understanding their needs, and responding with unique and relevant benefits. Subsidized education towards an early education degree is enormously impactful for teachers. And providing it supports more than hiring; it also sets you up to retain committed teachers, provide consistent care experiences for parents and children, and raise the standard of education in the field.



#### 4. The curriculum is stale or the learning is suffering

Consider your core business. Hasn't it changed over the last 10, 20, 30 years? Your expertise in the field is the thing that keeps you at the top. It's the same with child care. What might have applied 10 years ago might no longer be relevant. A center staff that is well-versed in modern early learning practices can help deliver on your promise to parents.



#### 5. You have a waitlist, but you're still not getting the recruitment/retention benefits

A waitlist only says people need child care – it doesn't say they want yours. To get the retention benefits, you have to be the kind of center working parents make job decisions just to stay in; a place that inspires people to say, "I have never looked for another job because I do not want to interrupt [my son's] experience." That requires a professionally run operation that has teachers, accreditation, and operations people brag about.



#### 6. Your costs keep rising, and so does your subsidy

A well-run center will always have to balance enrollment with fixed and unexpected costs. And enrollment will fluctuate even as those operational expenses (fixed costs plus facilities upgrades, annual increases in equipment, technology) stay the same or rise. That's why managing day-to-day is just one job of a center – keeping it filled is another. The constant task of managing and growing enrollment is an undertaking that requires a whole team, not just a part-time HR person.



#### 7. Communicating with parents is difficult

In the modern, "get it now" era, phone calls or paper notifications are not enough. Immediate access – via mobile – is required. Parents expect it. Developing and managing app technology for your center is a must.



## 8. Parents say they don't feel included

A great learning program is not just teaching; it's benchmarks that enable parents to know exactly where their children are in their development. That comes from a curriculum designed for both purposes – one that has researched-based support for children, and mechanisms for communicating development and concerns to parents, both day-to-day, and at regular check-in intervals.



## 9. Demand isn't as robust as you expected

Do your hours match up with your office hours? If not, that's a problem. Demand in hospital centers, for example, is much higher when hours match the 12-hour shifts common for nurses and other clinicians. But expanding hours will require implementing a talent strategy for recruiting and retaining the teachers that you need.



## 10. Leadership is worried about sustainability

Your director is running ragged; your subsidy amounts are going up because of shrinking enrollment. Leadership is understandably questioning the numbers, but you know what the center says about your culture – and that parents who use it (and who couldn't work without it) would be crushed if it closes. This is never about the value of your center, but the way it's run. A tightly run operation can save substantially. But such efficiency requires careful decisions made by a knowledgeable, dedicated team, versus people asked to run the center off the side of their desks.

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**CONTACT US TO EXPLORE A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO CENTER MANAGEMENT.**

800-453-9383 | [clientservices@brighthorizons.com](mailto:clientservices@brighthorizons.com)

[brighthorizons.com/edassist-solutions](https://brighthorizons.com/edassist-solutions)

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