

## Child Care Market Rate Survey Tool Evaluation

There are many ways of crafting questions for a child care market rate survey. However, some approaches to asking those questions help to ensure you gather data that leads to a statistically valid and reliable survey. Below are examples of some typical survey questions states use and corresponding improvements to those questions, along with an explanation of the changes made.

### Example

Program Identification
(1) Date: _____
(2) Program Name: _____
(3) Address: _____
(4) City: _____ (5) County: _____
(6) Zip Code: _____ (7) Phone: (____)_____ (8) Email: _____

### Improved Example

Program Identification
(1) Program Name: _____ License No. _____
(2) Program Site Address: _____
(3) City: _____ (4) County: _____
(5) Zip Code: _____ (6) Phone: (____)_____ (7) Email: _____
(8) Respondent/Title: _____ (9) Date Completed: _____

### Changes:

- Listing the “Date” at the bottom and asking when the survey was completed within the data collection period is preferable. Time difference can help to explain anomalies that may occur during data analysis.
- The “Program Site Address” identifies the facility location vs. the business mailing address. It also distinguishes different site locations for programs that operate in multiple locations. License numbers are assigned by site address.
- The “Respondent” name identifies the individual who completed the survey and who can be contacted if there are questions or incomplete responses. The “Title” indicates whether the respondent’s hold a prominent position within the child care program.

**Example**

**Program Information**

(1) What days of the week are you open for business? (circle all that apply)

Mon.    Tues.    Wed.    Thurs.    Fri.    Sat.    Sun.

(2) What are the usual hours of operation (e.g., 7:30 am to 6:30 pm)?

\_\_\_\_\_

(3) Does your child care program receive government subsidies?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes    \_\_\_\_\_ No

(4) Do you provide care to children that receive subsidies from the Department of Social Service’s Child Care Subsidy Program?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes    \_\_\_\_\_ No

**Improved Example**

**Program Information**

(1) What days of the week are you open for business? (circle all that apply)

Mon.    Tues.    Wed.    Thurs.    Fri.    Sat.    Sun.

(2) What are your program’s usual hours of operation (e.g., 7:30 am to 6:30 pm)?

From \_\_\_\_\_ am    To \_\_\_\_\_ pm

(3) Do you receive funding directly from the Federal, State, or Tribal government, such as state-funded pre-kindergarten or Head Start funds, that pays for some or all of the cost of care for children enrolled in your program?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes    \_\_\_\_\_ No

(4) If you answered “Yes” to question 3, do you also offer child care to children whose families are responsible for paying the price you charge (private-pay families)?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes    \_\_\_\_\_ No

(5) Do you accept children that receive assistance from the Child Care Subsidy Program?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes    \_\_\_\_\_ No

(6) If you answered “No” to question 5, please describe the reasons you do not accept children that receive assistance from the Child Care Subsidy program:

\_\_\_ Reimbursement rate too low

\_\_\_ Delay in reimbursement

\_\_\_ Not many families qualify for subsidy

\_\_\_ I cannot handle the administrative burden

\_\_\_ Communication from the state is poor

\_\_\_ Other (Please explain, your feedback is important to us):

\_\_\_\_\_

## **Changes:**

- *Entering the hours of operation in separate (“From \_\_\_\_ To \_\_\_\_”) data fields eliminates errors that can result from interpreting narrative responses. It also allows data analysts to create discrete data entry fields for the hours each program is open for operation.*
- *The improved question uses the language specified in the CCDF Final Regulations (Federal, State, and Tribal subsidies). Also, child care programs can receive government funding for purposes other than paying for tuition costs. The revised language specifically addresses government funding that subsidizes children’s tuition costs, such as state-funded Pre-K, CCDF contracted slots, Head Start, etc.*
- *The revised question reflects the primary purpose of the survey, which is collect information on the tuition prices charged for children that do not receive government subsidies. There is no need for the respondent to complete the remaining questions if the answer to question 4 is “No.”*
- *States are required to track the extent to which providers participate in the subsidy program and barriers to their participation. Although it’s not required to gather this information through a market rate survey, it may be useful to include this question as part of the survey.*

**Example**

**Capacity and Enrollment Information**

(1) How many children in the following age groups are enrolled in your program?

Infants \_\_\_\_\_

Toddlers \_\_\_\_\_

Pre-school \_\_\_\_\_

School-age \_\_\_\_\_

**Improved Example**

**Capacity and Enrollment Information**

(1) How many children in the following age groups do you serve?  
We are not asking for your licensed capacity. Instead, please indicate either the average number of children typically enrolled, or number of children you would like to serve.

Infants (birth up to 12 months) \_\_\_\_\_

Toddlers (13 months to 2 years) \_\_\_\_\_

Preschoolers (3 to 5 years) \_\_\_\_\_

School-age (kindergarten to 13 years, during school year) \_\_\_\_\_

School-age (kindergarten to 13 years, in summer) \_\_\_\_\_

**Changes:**

- *The number of children currently enrolled at any point in time may not accurately represent the size of a program. Asking for the average or desired enrollment levels provides a better estimate of the number of children a program serves. Licensed capacity can overstate the size of a program since many programs seldom operate at their full licensed capacity.*
- *Also, the improved example avoids errors by defining the ages of the children for each grouping and making a distinction between school-age care during the school year versus school-age care in the summer.*

**Example**

**Full-Time Price Information**

(1) Please provide your usual, full-time, maximum weekly rate for each age group listed below. Do not include discounts, Child Care Assistance Program subsidies, or scholarships. Answer only for the age groups you serve. If you do not normally charge on a weekly basis, please estimate what your weekly rate would be.

Usual Full-time Weekly Rates by Age Group			
Infant	Toddler	Pre-school	School-age
For each weekly rate you included, please indicate in the row below how many hours are covered by this weekly rate.			

**Improved Example**

**Full-Time Price Information Improved**

(1) Please tell us the price you normally charge private-pay families for full-time tuition for each of the child age groups listed below and how you charge (per hour, day week, etc.).

Private pay means the parent is responsible for the full price of tuition because the child does not receive federal, state or tribal government subsidies or scholarships.

1. Infants (birth to 18 months)

Amount Charged: \$\_\_\_\_\_ per (check one):  
Hour\_\_\_ Day\_\_\_ Week\_\_\_ Month\_\_\_ Other\_\_\_

2. Toddler (18 to 36 months)

Amount Charged: \$\_\_\_\_\_ per (check one):  
Hour\_\_\_ Day\_\_\_ Week\_\_\_ Month\_\_\_ Other\_\_\_

3. Preschool (3 yrs. to 5 years)

Amount Charged: \$\_\_\_\_\_ per (check one):  
Hour\_\_\_ Day\_\_\_ Week\_\_\_ Month\_\_\_ Other\_\_\_

4. School-age during school year (kindergarten to 13 yrs.)

Amount Charged: \$\_\_\_\_\_ per (check one):  
Hour\_\_\_ Day\_\_\_ Week\_\_\_ Month\_\_\_ Other\_\_\_

5. School-age during summer (kindergarten-13 yrs.)

Amount Charged: \$\_\_\_\_\_ per (check one):  
Hour\_\_\_ Day\_\_\_ Week\_\_\_ Month\_\_\_ Other\_\_\_

**Example**

**Part-Time Price Information**

(1) Please provide your usual, part-time, maximum weekly rate for each age group listed below. Do not include discounts, Child Care Assistance Program subsidies, or scholarships. Answer only for the age groups you serve. If you do not normally charge on a weekly basis, please estimate what your weekly rate would be.

Usual Full-time Weekly Rates by Age Group			
Infant	Toddler	Pre-school	School-age
For each weekly rate you included, please indicate in the row below how many hours are covered by this weekly rate.			

**Improved Example**

**Part-Time Price Information Improved**

(1) Please tell us the price you normally charge private-pay families for part-time tuition for each of the child age groups listed below and how you charge (per hour, day week, etc.).

Private pay means the parent is responsible for the part-time price of tuition because the child does not receive federal, state or tribal government subsidies or scholarships.

1. Infants (birth to 18 months)

Amount Charged: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per (check one):  
Hour \_\_\_ Day \_\_\_ Week \_\_\_ Month \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_

2. Toddler (18 to 36 months)

Amount Charged: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per (check one):  
Hour \_\_\_ Day \_\_\_ Week \_\_\_ Month \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_

3. Preschool (3 yrs. to 5 years)

Amount Charged: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per (check one):  
Hour \_\_\_ Day \_\_\_ Week \_\_\_ Month \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_

4. School-age during school year (kindergarten to 13 yrs.)

Amount Charged: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per (check one):  
Hour \_\_\_ Day \_\_\_ Week \_\_\_ Month \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_

5. School-age during summer (kindergarten to 13 yrs.)

Amount Charged: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per (check one):  
Hour \_\_\_ Day \_\_\_ Week \_\_\_ Month \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_

## **Changes:**

- *The instructions are clearer and provide a more complete explanation of what private-pay means. This helps to ensure that providers respond to the question the same way.*
- *The improved example avoids potential inconsistencies in the responses by defining the age groups.*
- *The question allows providers to identify their prices according to the way they normally charge parents (hourly, daily, weekly, etc.). It is not a best practice to ask providers to convert normal charges from to a rate unit specified in the survey. These conversions should only be done when the data are analyzed.*
- *The improved example asks providers to report rates for school-age care during summer months compared to during school year. This will provide a more accurate and understandable measure of the differences in prices for this age group.*

**Example**

**Defining Part-Time and Full-Time Care**

The Lead Agency omitted the question.

**Improved Example**

**Defining Part-time and Full-Time Care**

(1) Please tell us how your program defines full-time and part-time care using the following examples.

What are the maximum number of hours a child can be in care to be considered part-time and full-time? Please complete any that apply to your program.

Part-time Care	Full-time Care
Hours per day:	Hours per day:
Hours per week:	Hours per week:
Days per week	Days per week
Days per month:	Days per month:
Other:	Other:

**Changes:**

- *Child care programs have different pricing units or rates, e.g. hourly, daily, weekly, etc. The reported prices need to be converted to a common pricing unit during the analysis phase of the survey. Asking providers to define the way the charge improves the accuracy of the conversion and the validity for the of the rate setting process.*

**Conclusion**

A critical objective of the market rate survey is to capture information in a uniform manner. Questions that are unclear or that may be interpreted differently can lead to inconsistent responses that decrease the reliability of the survey. Lead Agencies can help to prevent this from occurring by pre-testing the survey instrument internally, with a small group of providers or members of the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care.