THE THIRD SHIFT
CHILD CARE NEEDS AND ACCESS FOR WORKING MOTHERS IN RESTAURANTS

By The Restaurant Opportunities Centers United

Center for Law and Social Policy
Family Values @ Work
Institute For Women’s Policy Research
MomsRising
National Organization For Women

National Partnership For Women & Families
National Women’s Law Center
Wider Opportunities For Women
9To5, National Association Of Working Women

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The Third Shift

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9to5, National Association of Working Women | 9to5.org

This report was a collaborative effort of the nine organizations that co-authored this report.

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INTRODUCTION

The restaurant industry is one of the largest sectors in the United States economy and is projected to be among those with the largest growth by 2020.1 It currently employs over 10 million workers.2 Between 2000 and 2010, our economy as a whole shed jobs at a rate of -0.2 percent.3 However, food services and drinking places are projected to create over 860,000 new jobs between 2010 and 2020.4 Similarly, our economic output in the last ten years ambled along at a rate of 1 percent of growth, while restaurants grew one and a half times faster, adding $134.7 billion to our economy. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects the industry’s growth to continue apace over the next ten years.5

Despite the industry’s growth and potential for lifting the livelihoods of its workers, especially for women and mothers, working conditions have deteriorated and wages have not kept pace with growth. In fact, restaurant occupations employ the highest proportion of workers earning at or below the federal minimum wage.6 Food preparation and service-related occupations comprised over one-quarter of all U.S. workers who earned the federal minimum wage and almost 60 percent of all U.S. workers paid below the federal minimum wage.7 Restaurant workers are also often denied common employee benefits, such as medical benefits and sick leave. For example, in 2012, 77 percent of service sector workers, including restaurant workers, did not have paid sick leave.8

The vast majority of restaurant workers are unable to provide basic economic security (see Sidebar: Economic Security for Restaurant Workers) to themselves and their families, meaning they must routinely choose what necessities their families will forego as they struggle to make ends meet.

All of this takes a terrible toll on women—especially mothers—working in restaurants. Over half of the workers in food preparation and related occupations are women,10 mostly concentrated in the lowest-paying occupations. Almost 2 million restaurant workers are mothers—15 percent of employees in the industry.11 More than half of them, 1.2 million, are single mothers with children in the household. More than 1 million are single moms with children under age 18. A mother as the primary source of income, or breadwinner mom, is not unique to the restaurant industry. Across the economy, four in ten households with children under age 18 have a female breadwinner, according to a 2013 Pew Research Center report.12

Mothers pay both a gender penalty, as well as a motherhood penalty; earning less than males, fathers, and their childless female counterparts. Overall, female restaurant workers working full time, year-round, are typically paid 79 cents for every dollar earned by their male counterparts.13 Women with children pay a wage penalty of approximately 4 percent per child across all industries.14 Research has found that the motherhood penalty

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**Economic Security for Restaurant Workers**

Basic economic security is defined by the ability to afford housing, utilities, food, transportation, child care, health care, emergency and retirement savings, and other personal expenses. Many Americans do not receive wages sufficient to meet these basic needs, and are forced to choose among them, rely on public assistance to make ends meet, or incur debt to keep food on the table. Emergency expenses become tremendous strains and basic expenses such as food and electricity are regular burdens. Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) has developed the Basic Economic Security Tables Index (BEST)—a measure of the local costs of these basic expenses for various household types—to have a clear understanding of the wage necessary to ensure economic security. WOW found that economic insecurity is pervasive in today’s America: 45 percent of all Americans live in households that lack economic security, and are unable to cover those basic needs.

Economic insecurity is much worse among workers in the restaurant industry. In 2011, 72 percent of adult servers who worked in the last 12 months had total household incomes below the BEST for their family types. Eighty-one percent of these individuals were women. Seventy nine percent of households headed by an adult server who worked in the last 12 months had total household incomes below the BEST. Of those households, 80 percent were headed by women, 51 percent were headed by single women, and 27 percent were headed by single moms.9
Overview of Child Care and Early Education Programs

The major federal child care program is the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG). This program provides funds to states to help low-income families pay for care while parents work or participate in education or training activities and to support efforts to improve the quality of care. States set policies for child care assistance—on eligibility criteria, parent copayments, provider reimbursement rates, and other areas—within federal parameters. CCDBG funding for Fiscal Year 2013 is over $5.1 billion. Nearly 1.7 million children from almost 1 million families received child care assistance each month in Fiscal Year 2010 (the most recent year for which data are available).16

Another important source of funding for child care is the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant. States can transfer up to 30 percent of their TANF funds to CCDBG, or use funds directly within TANF for child care. States’ use of TANF dollars for child care (including both transfers and direct funding) was $2.9 billion in FY 2011 (the most recent year for which data are available).17

This funding for child care assistance, however, falls far short of meeting the need. Only one out of six children eligible for child care assistance under federal law receives it.18

The federal Head Start/Early Head Start program provides comprehensive early education, health, nutrition, and other support services to infants, toddlers, and preschoolers from families in poverty. The program also works with families and offers opportunities for parent education and engagement. The program received $7.97 billion in funding and served 956,497 children in FY 2012.19 But, Head Start reaches only about two-fifths of eligible preschool-age children,20 and Early Head Start reaches less than 4 percent of eligible infants and toddlers.21

Forty states funded prekindergarten programs in 2011-2012, spending a total of $5.1 million and serving over 1.3 million children.22 The programs primarily serve four-year-olds, with only some states serving three-year-olds. Most states target their programs toward at-risk and low-income children, but a few states make their programs available to all children whose families want them to participate. The programs generally operate on part-day schedules. States vary widely in the quality standards they set for their prekindergarten programs and in other aspects of their programs.

has the most severe impact on low-wage workers, including restaurant workers.15

This research report seeks to answer three key questions:

1. What are the child care needs of mothers who work in restaurants?
2. What access to child care do they currently have?
3. What strategies would help these mothers access the child care they need?

METHODS

In order to comprehensively address the questions outlined above, we primarily used three sources of data for this report. First, to establish the scope of child care needs and access for mothers working in restaurants at a national scale, we used national surveys from the Census Bureau. We analyzed data from the Current Population Survey to assess how many mothers are employed in the industry and what their demographic characteristics are.

Second, the Restaurant Opportunities Centers United (ROC-United) conducted a survey focused on restaurant workers’ child care needs with over 200 mothers working in the restaurant industry in five cities: Chicago, Washington D.C., Detroit, Los Angeles, and New York. The survey, fielded throughout the fall of 2012 to spring 2013, included questions about how women currently dealt with child care needs, how child care needs affected their career and their family, and what potential solutions might work for them.

Lastly, the report captured the lived experiences of mothers through focus groups and interviews. We developed the interview questionnaire and focus guides based on themes that emerged from survey responses. The guide included questions about barriers that mothers experienced to child care access and their thoughts on solutions. We conducted focus groups in four cities, with 13 participants, and also held in-depth interviews with three mothers in Houston, Detroit, and Los Angeles.

The data were gathered and analyzed by the nine organizations who co-authored this report: ROC-United, 9to5, National Association of Working Women, Center for Law and Social Policy, Family Values @ Work, Institute For Women’s Policy Research, MomsRising, National Partnership For Women & Families, National Women’s Law Center, and Wider Opportunities For Women.
RESULTS

For the mothers we surveyed, the restaurant industry was the primary source of employment. With a third of the mothers reporting they earned at or below minimum wage, more than 15 percent relied on more than one job, balancing two to three, in order to make ends meet. The mothers worked, on average, 35 hours a week in the restaurant, earning a salary of $7.65 an hour or $386.70 a week, including tips (based on ROC-United's calculations of Child Care Survey data, 2012-2013). More than a quarter of the mothers who completed our survey worked as servers. Half of the mothers surveyed earned $60 in tips a week. More than half of mothers had one child under the age of 4, who needed at least 24 hours of child care a week. In fact, 70 percent of our respondents had at least one preschool-aged child, 5 and under, who needed care.

The mothers we surveyed and interviewed reported that they faced three barriers to meeting their child care needs as working mothers in the restaurant industry.

1. **Affordability of Child Care**
2. **Accessibility**
3. **Career Mobility**

There are two compounding factors that make this situation unsustainable for working mothers in restaurants:

1. **Lack of Paid Sick Days**
2. **Work/Life Imbalance**

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Table 1: Summary of child care barriers and recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Key Findings</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affordability</td>
<td>Mothers spent 35% of their weekly wages on child care.</td>
<td>Raise the minimum wage for tipped and non-tipped workers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More than half of the mothers said that paying for child care was a concern.</td>
<td>Employer subsidies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligibility for Child Care Assistance</td>
<td>Less than 7% of mothers receive child care assistance.</td>
<td>More public funding for child care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access Given Schedules and Distance</td>
<td>Half of the mothers reported having an unpredictable and erratic schedule.</td>
<td>Accessible care during nontraditional hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two out of five had a last-minute shift change, which impacted their child care.</td>
<td>Predictable schedules.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mothers spent an average of 53 minutes to commute to child care and then work.</td>
<td>Care provided close to or in home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Mobility</td>
<td>Almost a half of the mothers suffered negative consequences at work when they arrived late or left early due to child care.</td>
<td>Care provided at nontraditional hours, close to home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A third said that child care impaired their ability to work desirable shifts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. AFFORDABILITY

1.1 High Cost of Care

Due to federal and state spending decisions, many essential supports for women and children, including child care assistance are being scaled back. This comes at a dire time, when poverty and hunger among children is increasing, as well as hunger.25 We need more money invested in our future generation, not less of it. The investment not only goes towards our nation’s children, the future generation, but also the mothers who raise them.

Cuts in child care spending have a disproportionate impact on working mothers, many of whom are concentrated in low-wage industries and head 40 percent of our households with children.25 The greatest challenge to accessing child care that the surveyed mothers cited was the high cost of child care. Mothers reported spending an average of 35 percent of their weekly wages on child care. The average cost of child care for those surveyed was $87 a week for one child or $112 for all children. Almost two-thirds of the mothers reported that paying for child care was a concern (see Figure 1).

Two-thirds of mothers reported that they had chosen their child care arrangements based on their economic constraints. Most mothers said that they would change their arrangements if they could afford to do so.

Half of the mothers surveyed relied on informal care—specifically, either a family member or a neighbor—as opposed to child care provided in a center (see Figure 2). Thirty percent had a relative care for their child, while 20 percent had someone outside of the family.

Formal child care commanded a greater portion of a mother’s wages than informal care, when her child was preschool age (see Figure 3). Thirty percent of mothers with children in formal day care had costs exceeding three-quarters of their earnings. In comparison, only six percent of mothers whose children were cared for in an informal setting had to spend more than 75 percent of their wages. The majority of mothers who used informal care spent less than a quarter of their earnings on care.

Informal care is important for mothers working nontraditional-hours, although many would also like to have access to affordable and accessible formal child care options. For example, Erickah is a 31-year old mother who works as a cashier in a quick-serve restaurant in Detroit, Michigan.26 Erickah is fortunate that her mother lives close by and watches Erickah’s six-year old daughter when...

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FIGURE 1: Child Care Cost Indicators for Working Mothers in Restaurants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paying for care is a concern for me</td>
<td>17.27%</td>
<td>14.27%</td>
<td>68.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The cost of care is important in my choice of care arrangements</td>
<td>14.36%</td>
<td>10.85%</td>
<td>74.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would change my care arrangements if I could afford to do so.</td>
<td>17.27%</td>
<td>14.27%</td>
<td>68.46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ROC-United Child Care Survey, 2012-2013

If you’re in the restaurant industry in a waitress role, then you depend on tips. If [you] don’t get any tips, you can’t pay the bills, because you only get paid $2.65 an hour, so your paycheck is worthless to you. I make, on average, $90 a week, $125 on a good week. But, that’s not even making daycare.” —Daniella, Detroit25
Erickah works. However, Erickah worries about the educational enrichment opportunities for her daughter. If given the option, she would provide her daughter access to professional care.

Child care costs per child did not decrease with more children in care (see Figure 4). While more than half of mothers surveyed had one child, 40 percent had two and 6 percent had three. A second child’s child care expense was slightly greater than the first; at $89 on average. A third child’s care was less expensive, at $85.

While the ranks of mother-headed households have risen, public monies available for children have plummeted by $2 billion from 2010 to 2011.27 Overall spending on children by the government fell by 23 percent since 1960, from 20 to 15 percent of the domestic budget, according to the Urban Institute. While poverty and hunger rates among children are projected to increase, spending on children is projected to decrease from 10 to 8 percent of the federal budget over the next ten years.28

Research has shown that when children have access to high-quality programs throughout early childhood, their educational and life outcomes improve dramatically. Yet, care for infants and toddlers is scarce in many communities and often difficult to afford. The average cost of full-time infant care ranges from approximately $4,500 to nearly $15,000 a year, depending on where a family lives and the type of care.29 These costs can be a particular burden for parents with infants who typically have not had time to...
accumulate savings. Because parents of infants often have not yet accumulated savings, these costs can be particularly burdensome for them.

When parents receive assistance so they can afford child care they are able to earn more income. And when they have more income, they can provide more resources for their children and ensure they are well-nourished and better educated. Parents can offer a less stressful home environment for their children and interact more positively with their children. However, most families are not able to afford high-quality child care and early education.

Together, all of these factors create challenges for mothers as they struggle to support their children. Not only do mothers suffer when they don’t receive adequate support,30 children do too.31 Several studies have shown when families cannot get help paying for child care, they often struggle to pay their bills, feel stressed, and worry about the quality of their child care.32 Conversely, when families are able to access affordable, high-quality care, parents are more likely to get and keep a job and children—particularly children in low-income families—are more likely to have the early learning opportunities that prepare them to enter school ready to succeed.33

Profile of Vimala’s Curryblossom Café

Vimala Rajendran, a mother of three, was in a difficult situation. Her husband, with whom she emigrated from India to the U.S., abused her. She decided to leave her marriage, but then found herself a penniless single mother, without a job or immigration papers. She started to cook community dinners, based on donations, out of her home in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. The fame of her cardamom brownies, chana masala, and Tandoori chicken grew, attracting the support of the nascent food justice movement in the college town. The dinners grew in size, until 2010, when Vimala opened a restaurant, named the Curryblossom Café.

A sign on the door of the restaurant greets diners, “food is a human right, and no one will be turned away.” The same courtesy is extended to the restaurant’s workers. Staff are paid a living wage of $10 an hour, including tips. Workers receive free meals on the job and half-off meals at all other times. Curryblossom Café partnered with local health practitioners, including eye doctors, chiropractors, and massage therapists, to offer services to the workers at a fee of $20 a month. If an employee is sick, but can’t afford to take the day off, Vimala will tell them to go home and rest, and they will still receive wages for the day.

We interviewed Manu Rajendran, Vimala’s daughter, about how the restaurant supports their workers’ child care needs.

What difficulties do you see for parents that work in the restaurant industry?

“For a lot of restaurant workers, it’s hard to get quality time with their families when their kids are home from school or on weekends, because those are often the time slots that are most demanding of workers. If workers are being paid below minimum wage and working for tips, those are the ideal hours that they would like to get so that they can actually get more tips. So ... a model that gives ... a base wage that starts them at $10 per hour and paying folks equally for whichever shifts they work, makes it possible for them to earn enough that they don’t have to choose to not spend quality time with their children.

We have workers who have to leave in the middle of the day if their kid gets sick or something, we’re really open to that, we really support that and encourage people to let us know what their emergency child care needs might be so that we can spot each other.

Are your workers able to access public child care support?

There used to be a policy of giving Pre-K support for families that are 200 percent of the federal poverty line. But the [legislature is] about to reduce that to 100 percent of the poverty line, which will cut off a ton of families working on restaurant worker wages.

You’ve got to pay workers enough so that if they work full-time, they can cover the needs of their families, and have the option to have a stay-at-home parent. But I’m sure that’s not the standard case ... It would be great to have the option to give people a child care voucher or something that they could put forward if they don’t have a stay-at-home parenting option.
Popular opinion is in support of raising the minimum wage. A poll conducted by Gallup in 2013 found that 71 percent of the public supported an increase in the minimum wage. In addition, in an economy that still has a long recovery in the wake of the Great Recession—at a time when there are still more than 2.4 million fewer jobs than there were in December 2007—a minimum wage increase would inject an economic stimulus. In 2011, a Chicago Federal Reserve Bank study found that for every dollar increase in the minimum wage, households with minimum wage workers generate $2,800 in new consumer spending annually.

1.2 Low and Poverty Wages

More than a third of the mothers we surveyed earned less than the federal minimum wage. Half of the mothers interviewed work in tipped occupations, where the federal tipped minimum wage has been set at $2.13 an hour for more than twenty-two years. These wages are barely enough for mothers to pay for child care expenses, let alone other living costs. Nearly half of the mothers in the restaurant industry are women of color, and one-quarter are Latina (see Figure 5). Thirty percent are immigrants. Almost one-third live below the poverty line and rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, commonly referred to as food stamps, to feed their families.

Women, including mothers, also face discrimination in hiring, promotion, and pay. The largest occupational category of food preparation and serving related occupations is servers. Servers also comprise the largest group of tipped workers in the industry, relying on tips as the bulk of their income. Seventy-one percent of servers are women and nearly one in five is a mother. Female servers working full-time, year-round, typically are paid 68 cents for every dollar paid to their male counterparts. The annual median earnings for full time, year round servers are $17,000 for women, and $25,000 for men, a discrepancy of $8,000.

Labor constitutes a small portion of input costs in restaurants, so a minimum wage increase would increase costs for consumers only slightly. According to the 2012 report A Dime A Day, low wages comprise 36 percent of the total payroll in the restaurant industry. A 35 percent increase in the minimum and a 119 percent increase in the tipped wages, over three years would benefit over 4 million restaurant workers (44 percent of restaurant workers), as well as 29 million low wage workers in the entire economy. The resulting increase in the labor costs for restaurants would be 6.8 percent, a small portion of employers’ overall operating costs.

A conservative estimate of the impact on consumers, assuming that all labor cost increases are passed to consumers in the form of price increases, is less than 1 percent. For an average family that spends $2,600 per year to eat out at restaurants, the increase is minimal: less than $20 a year or a dime a day.
one out of six potentially eligible children benefit from public subsidies for care. Without sufficient funding to serve all eligible children, states—which determine child care assistance policies within federal guidelines—limit access to assistance by setting restrictive eligibility criteria or putting families who meet the eligibility criteria on waiting lists. In 2012, 23 states had waiting lists or stopped accepting new applications for child care assistance.

Mothers working in restaurants are affected by these limitations on child care assistance. Since states do not have funds to serve all families who are eligible, they often do not make extensive efforts to inform families that child care assistance programs exist. Eighty-six percent of the mothers that ROC-United surveyed reported that they were unaware of available subsidies or of employer-sponsored programs, such as cafeteria plans (see Figure 7). Of the 14 percent who knew assistance was available for child care, less than half received help from the program. When asked about why mothers might not take advantage of such programs, if aware of them, some respondents suggested that the application process could be intimidating. Others reported that they did not meet eligibility requirements.

As described later in the report, inconsistent scheduling is a major characteristic of work in restaurants. Mothers have trouble maintaining eligibility for child care assistance when they have little control over their schedules, and their number of hours worked changes. One mother we spoke to in Baton Rouge, Louisiana was currently unemployed. She needed child care in order to find employment in a restaurant, but needed to work 30 hours a week in order to qualify for child care assistance. Other mothers found themselves in a similar Catch-22 predicament, where they weren’t able to meet the eligibility requirements to receive child care assistance because they lacked child care support.

A related issue is that few states have adequate reimbursement rates for families receiving child care assistance. Inadequate reimbursement rates deprive providers serving families who receive child care assistance and discourage some providers from serving these families, further diminishing the available support for these families.

Although employers can and should play a larger role in helping their employees gain access to affordable, high-quality child care, it is unlikely that employers will expend the resources to sufficiently address the child care needs of their workers. Therefore, even if employers do step up, additional federal and state resources—as discussed above—will be essential.

Child development researcher Taryn Morrissey and urban planning professor Mildred Warner note that most employers don’t have the scale or capacity to build on-site child care centers. Vouchers, on the other hand, can easily be structured within an employee benefit program, such as flexible spending accounts. Cornell University offers a case study of the positive consequences of employer-sponsored child care assistance. The school offered vouchers to their employees starting in 2001. A study initiated by the human resource department at the school eight years after the program’s inception found that offering child care vouchers for their employees improved retention rates and productivity. Seventy percent of recipients reported that receiving the grant positively influenced their decision to continue working at Cornell because of the child care vouchers. Three-quarters of the employees reported an increased sense of dedication and loyalty to their employer because of the child care benefit. Seventy-two percent experienced less work-family stress, resulting in greater concentration at work, engagement with tasks, and productivity in their jobs.

**FIGURE 7: Child Care Subsidies, Awareness and Usage by Working Mothers in Restaurants, 2012-2013**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not Aware of Subsidies</th>
<th>Aware of Subsidies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>86%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"It’s a process to apply for assistance, a time-consuming process that can take a full day. You need all kinds of documentation, like how many hours you worked. You can wait a whole day to submit your application, just to find out that you can’t be seen.” —Losia, Washington, DC
The restaurant opportunities centers united

Profile of Losia Nyankale, Washington, DC

Losia Nyankale, 29, is originally from South Africa. Her family came to the United States when Losia was three years old, escaping violence in their native South Africa. Losia’s family had been heavily involved in the anti-Apartheid movement, and many of them lost their lives due to the conflict. When the family moved to the United States, they settled in Maryland, where Losia was raised and spent most of her life. She now lives and works in Washington, D.C.

As a restaurant worker who has been in the industry for over 10 years, Losia has seen it all - from sexual harassment and discrimination, to lack of benefits like paid sick days. Her own experiences and her family’s activism in South Africa have deeply impacted and shaped Losia’s consciousness and commitment to fighting for justice.

As a single mother of two kids, ages four and five, Losia is one of many mothers who are living every day on the edge of financial crisis. Losia does not have access to paid sick days, just like over 80 percent of all restaurant workers in the District. For families like Losia’s, who are stretched thin and struggling just to cover the basics, missing even one day of wages could mean no food on the table for her kids, or not enough money to pay the rent.

A few years ago, Losia’s mother was laid off from her job as a Head Start teacher, and suffered a stroke shortly thereafter. At the time, Losia was in school studying broadcasting, but had to leave school to care for her mother, which turned out to be very difficult with a low-wage restaurant job that did not offer paid sick leave. There were days when she couldn’t even visit her mother in the hospital because she was not allowed to take a day off. Even when she was allowed to take time off, she knew she couldn’t afford to do so—not when her salary was less than $3 an hour.

When Losia’s second child was born, her employer made it clear that if she wanted to keep her job she would have to return to work right away. So despite the doctor’s orders, Losia was forced to return to work immediately, leaving her son and daughter in the care of a babysitter. She was not able to care for them the way she would have wanted to because she had to work long hours to support them and pay the rent. Even when they were sick, she could not afford to miss work to care for them herself.

The cost of child care has been a primary concern for Losia. She reports being caught in a tough balancing act. Even if she were to pick up more shifts to earn a little more money, she would have to pay a babysitter to watch her children, which she can barely afford to do now.

Losia hopes to go back to school someday, but knows that it will be difficult without better wages or access to more child care or paid sick days. For Losia, a raise in the minimum wage would mean that she would be able to afford quality child care for her children, and she would be able to go back to school. Having access to paid sick days would mean that the next time she gets a call from her children’s school telling her that one of them is sick, she would be able to go home and care for them.

Two out of five mothers we surveyed agreed that they would stay at their current job, if provided with a child care subsidy, even if they didn’t like their boss (see Figure 8). One out of three was willing to stay in a dead-end job without promotional opportunities, if offered child care subsidies.

FIGURE 8: Child Care Subsidies and Employee Turnover of Working Mothers in Restaurants, 2012-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stay in job even if less promotional opportunities</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay at job even if didn’t like boss</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ROC-United Child Care Survey, 2012-2013
2. ACCESSIBILITY

2.1 Erratic and Unpredictable Schedules

Restaurant workers are most often scheduled by shifts, namely the breakfast, lunch, and dinner shifts. Managers will schedule workers for certain shifts each week based on how busy the restaurant is. For workers who have children, a schedule change can complicate child care arrangements. Almost half of the mothers surveyed reported having an unpredictable schedule. Almost 40 percent said their schedule changed on a weekly basis, and 5 percent reported that it changed daily.

“I used to have a job that was on-call at hotels [working in banquet service], usually on evenings; I used to have to leave [my children] with [my] sister. But sometimes I would get called in, and my sister was not available, so I would suddenly have to leave them with someone else and I never knew if they had been fed, showered.”

—Teresa, Los Angeles

Two out of five mothers reported that they had a last-minute shift change that impacted their care needs (see Figure 10). The consequences the mothers experienced ranged from having to ask a family member to watch their children to losing their child care provider. In fact, 18 percent of mothers reported losing their child care provider because of scheduling changes.

Unfortunately, child care providers do not always accommodate the needs of working mothers. Forty-four percent of mothers surveyed indicated that their providers were only somewhat flexible or inflexible about changes due to work scheduling changes (see Figure 11).

“I had to pay more for day care if I got there late to pick up my child. That’s standard. They charge more if you’re even a minute late, like $20 if you’re one minute late. Then, if I’m late 10 minutes after that, another $20.” —Sandra, Chicago

FIGURE 9: Predictability of Schedules for Working Mothers in Restaurants, 2012-2013

Source: ROC-United Child Care Survey, 2012-2013
Erratic scheduling is a common practice in many low-wage industries, including retail and restaurants. Emboldened by the weak economic recovery, some business owners have adopted a just-in-time workforce model, a pool of workers whose hours fluctuate depending on how busy the restaurant is.52

Restaurant workers are often asked to stay later than their scheduled shifts. However, when mothers are asked to stay later than scheduled, there are often significant repercussions on their child care responsibilities. Almost a third reported having to pay a fine to the child care provider.51

### Table 2: Benefits of Improved Scheduling Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved employee retention</td>
<td>Replacing an hourly employee is estimated to cost between 30 and 50 percent of a worker’s annual salary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive human capital outcomes through a more productive workforce</td>
<td>Greater flexibility leads to higher worker engagement and commitment, which is positively associated with better job performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible reductions in health care expenditures</td>
<td>Unpredictable and unstable schedules increase job stress; health care expenditures are nearly 50 percent greater for U.S. workers who report high levels of stress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More stable and predictable child care and family life</td>
<td>Predictable schedules allow parents to plan child care and family responsibilities in advance; predictable and stable work hours improve the stability of child care, which benefits parents, providers, and children.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While this tactic seems like a profitable move on the part of the employer, ultimately, unpredictable schedules hurt the bottom line (see Table 2). Employee retention and productivity falls when schedules are unpredictable. When this happens, employers need to spend more money replacing workers, an expense that could equal up to 50 percent of annual pay for employers. The cost of losing a worker can be even more significant, as every worker replaced places an additional burden on the employer, ultimately, unpredictable schedules hurt the bottom line.

For six years, when her children were young, Teresa worked as an on-call banquet server and had a very unpredictable schedule which made it extremely difficult to arrange care for her small children. Her sister would care for her kids on most days while Teresa was at work. However, there were days when her sister was not available to stay with Teresa’s kids, so she would ask her neighbor to care for her kids. When Teresa’s son was one-and-a-half years old, and was still being breastfed, Teresa was called to work suddenly and had to leave her son with her neighbor. Her son was not yet weaned off breast milk, so he would not drink formula and went hungry that day. She explains, “I often had to turn down jobs or quit because the schedule was not desirable. I’m a single mother. I needed to find a job whose schedule would allow me to leave my kids with my family or neighbors, and, where I made enough money to pay for care.” Teresa paid her neighbor $100 per week to care for her children, which was a large expense for her.

While this tactic seems like a profitable move on the part of the employer, ultimately, unpredictable schedules hurt the bottom line (see Table 2). Employee retention and productivity falls when schedules are unpredictable. When this happens, employers need to spend more money replacing workers, an expense that could equal up to 50 percent of annual pay for employers. The cost of losing a worker can be even more significant, as every worker replaced places an additional burden on the employer, ultimately, unpredictable schedules hurt the bottom line.

2.2 Lack of Nontraditional-Hour Care

While 40 percent of the U.S. labor force works nonstandard hours, including nights and weekends, child care resources available during those times are rare.55 In 2012, there were 117,000 child care centers and 209,000 family child care homes, according to the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies.56 A 2011 report based on focus groups with 163 parents in seven locations around the country found that care wasn’t easily available during nontraditional hours.57

Professionals have adopted practices to address nontraditional hours.58

Teresa, 31, came to the United States without documents from Colima, Mexico in 2000. She reunited with her siblings who were living in Los Angeles after her mother passed away. Teresa is a survivor of domestic violence, and also left Mexico in order to raise her children in a safe environment. She has worked in the hospitality industry for over 11 years, waiting tables, as well as preparing and cooking food. Teresa balances two jobs, one as a server at a jazz bar and grill, and the other as a food prep worker and cashier at a deli. She is a single mother of a 15-year-old daughter, and a 12-year-old son.

For six years, when her children were young, Teresa worked as an on-call banquet server and had a very unpredictable schedule which made it extremely difficult to arrange care for her small children. Her sister would care for her kids on most days while Teresa was at work. However, there were days when her sister was not available to stay with Teresa’s kids, so she would ask her neighbor to care for her kids. When Teresa’s son was one-and-a-half years old, and was still being breastfed, Teresa was called to work suddenly and had to leave her son with her neighbor. Her son was not yet weaned off breast milk, so he would not drink formula and went hungry that day. She explains, “I often had to turn down jobs or quit because the schedule was not desirable. I’m a single mother. I needed to find a job whose schedule would allow me to leave my kids with my family or neighbors, and, where I made enough money to pay for care.” Teresa paid her neighbor $100 per week to care for her children, which was a large expense for her.

While Teresa’s children are older now and her employers are slightly more flexible with scheduling, she continues to struggle financially. She says, “My economic situation is very difficult. Having a job is a blessing, but having a higher wage for me, as a single mom, would allow me to be able to spend more time with my children. And mothers with younger ones would be able to pay for quality care.” With a minimum wage increase, she says, “I would be able to give my kids more of the basic necessities. It would also allow me to save up so that I can support my daughter who will go on to college soon.”

Moreover, Teresa has lost jobs because she does not have proper documentation and has been paid significantly lower wages because of her immigration status. This resulted in her accumulating heavy debts, and now she struggles to pay them off. This has not only affected her economically, but psychologically as well. She says it has caused her to go through periods of depression. Teresa loves providing great dining experiences for guests, and hopes that she will someday receive a livable wage and be able to control her schedule that will best fit her family’s needs. Teresa says, “A majority of people want to have a good job that’s well-paid, but we need to be comfortable with our care arrangements, and have peace of mind and tranquility knowing that our children are okay.”

While this tactic seems like a profitable move on the part of the employer, ultimately, unpredictable schedules hurt the bottom line (see Table 2). Employee retention and productivity falls when schedules are unpredictable. When this happens, employers need to spend more money replacing workers, an expense that could equal up to 50 percent of annual pay for every worker replaced. Predictable schedules have been linked to higher productivity in workers and a lower likelihood of performance issues, such as absenteeism.53

Schedule rigidity—when workers have little or no control over the scheduling of work hours—is a problem for both workers on predictable and unpredictable schedules. For example, if a worker’s child care provider becomes unavailable, even with a predictable schedule, both the worker and child can suffer if she is unable to alter her schedule without suffering a penalty.

Employers should take the high road to profitability by adopting predictable scheduling practices that also allow for flexibility in the face of family emergencies. Sixteen percent of retail executives have embraced computerized scheduling systems.54

In 2011, the National Restaurant Association endorsed an online employee scheduling system, in which managers post schedules in advance online.55 These systems can allow workers to view schedules and to be alerted of any changes through various technologies.
Profile of the Chambliss Center for Children in Chattanooga, TN

The Chambliss Center for Children is a 141 year-old organization that provides child care 24 hours a day, every day of the year, for families in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The center has evolved to meet the needs of local families over time—its previous incarnations include providing food and clothes for the needy and serving as an orphanage. In 1969, the board decided to shift directions. It saw that many of the children in residential care were children of single parents; these parents often had difficulty accessing child care while they worked and eventually had their children taken from them. The center shifted to providing care to accommodate cases such as these.

The Chambliss Center for Children now serves over 300 children, from six weeks to 12 years of age. The President and CEO, Phil Accord, estimates that about half of the parents served work in restaurants such as Hardee’s or Cracker Barrel, or in retail establishments. The families served are racially diverse: over half of the children are Black, 35 percent are white, and about 5 percent are Latino. Their three-pronged model of affordability, accessibility, and quality caters to single parents. The center has a sliding scale fee, starting at just $55 per week for one child. Because fees paid by parents cover only about a quarter of the cost to run the center, the bulk of funding comes from outside sources, including federal Child Care and Development Block Grant funding, Head Start/Early Start funding, the United Way, and the City of Chattanooga.

The center also focuses on accessibility, providing care around the clock and serving a wide range of ages. “You have to be responsive to the needs of your clients - you can’t just offer 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. and say ‘you have to fit your needs to us.’ You have to adjust to your clients’ needs,” says Accord. The center also has the highest quality rating available through the state rating system.

The Chambliss Center works to support families in other ways, including not charging parents for late pick-ups and providing fresh produce from its garden through a partnership with a local food retailer. Says Accord, “We know when you’re a single parent, you’re struggling. You’re probably in poverty because you’re a single parent with a single income, but you have total responsibility—you’ve got to maintain your car, apartment, shopping expenses. We do everything we can to make their job easier.”

The average commute total to work for the mothers we surveyed was 35 minutes, but including travel time to a child care provider increased the time to 53 minutes (see Figure 12). Jasmine in Chicago told us that her daily one-way commute was one hour and a half: 45-minutes from home to her child care provider, then another 45 minutes from her provider to work.

**FIGURE 12: Average One-Way Commute to Child Care and Work for Mothers Working in Restaurants (in minutes), 2012-2013**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child Care</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Total Transport</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27.18</td>
<td>34.74</td>
<td>53.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ROC-United Child Care Survey, 2012-2013

through Monday and Friday, but a few state- and local-level studies indicate that the supply is limited in many communities.

- A 2007 study by Illinois Action found that of the full-time child care centers and homes, only 16 percent offer care during the evening, 11 percent at night, and 8 percent during the weekend.

- Only 2 percent of licensed child care centers and 41 percent of family child care homes in Sacramento County offer weekend, overnight, and evening care.

- A 2002 report in Maine found that only 2 percent of licensed centers and 6 percent of family child care homes provide nontraditional hours.

The Child Care and Development Block Grant does not stipulate restrictions on or access to nontraditional-care, but this is not always made easily accessible. Without specific provisions, this type of care is not always accessible.

### 2.3 Lack of Accessible Transit to Work and Child Care

Transportation can be a barrier to child care because communities where need is high are underserved.
Profile of Erickah, 66  Detroit, Michigan

Erickah is a 31-year old, single Black mother who lives in Detroit with her six-year old daughter. She has lived most of her life in the Motor City, but has family ties to Mississippi. Her parents migrated northward, in search of middle-class jobs during the Great Migration. Erickah worked as a cashier at a fast food restaurant, making on average $8 an hour. “I was barely making it,” she remembered, “For child care costs, [employers] assume that we’ll get help from somewhere else, like the state.”

She receives some child care assistance, which helps to cover a portion of her costs, but not all. She also struggles with the gaps in coverage by assistance. “The state doesn’t pay every week when it’s due,” Erickah shared. “If there’s a balance, they just let it accumulate.” Erickah is fortunate that her child care provider is understanding, but not many are flexible about late payments. “She could easily be like, ‘until this is paid, your daughter can’t come here.’”

When the day care facility isn’t open during Erickah’s night and weekend shifts, her backup provider is her mother. But when her mother isn’t available, Erickah is in a bind. “If I’m working a shift and I don’t get out until three o’clock, my daughter’s school ends at 3:30, who’s picking her up?” She worked out an arrangement with an employee of the center to take her daughter home, but Erickah bears the double cost of both the additional child care as well as transit.
Mothers told us that having children was a barrier in the restaurant industry for hiring and promotions. Eleven percent of mothers are able to earn living wages in the industry as middle management (see Figure 13). That’s far less than 18 percent of fathers who are managers and slightly less than the 12 percent of women without children.

Susanna is a 49-year-old who works as a server to support her four children in Chicago. She said that employers will ask on interviews about whether the applicant has children and how many. She had to hide the fact that she had children on a job interview in order to get a job. Susanna found out a coworker had been pregnant after she had already given birth because her colleague kept her pregnancy a secret for fear of losing her job.

Mothers we talked to felt that their ability to work desirable shifts and advance in their careers was significantly impacted because they lacked reliable child care.

Mothers we talked to felt that their ability to work desirable shifts and advance in their careers was significantly affected because they lacked reliable child care. Our survey asked mothers about the consequences for their jobs when their child care arrangements failed. More than half of the mothers we surveyed lacked alternative child care arrangements that they could call on (see Figure 14).

The consequence most common to the mothers we surveyed was arriving to work late or leaving early because of child care needs (see Figure 15). Not surprising, most mothers never used paid sick days to care for their children; indeed, 82 percent were not guaranteed paid sick days. Use of vacation followed a similar pattern. Vicky, a server in Detroit, Michigan, told us about how she was penalized for taking a family vacation. When she returned, she said that her employer didn’t give her desirable shifts in the following weeks.

Almost half of the mothers we surveyed (44 percent) experienced a negative work-related consequence as a result of arriving late or leaving early (see Figure 16). A few mothers described verbal abuse when arriving at work late or leaving early.

---

**FIGURE 13: Career Mobility in Restaurants, in percent, 2010-2012**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tipped</th>
<th>Back of the house</th>
<th>Front of the house</th>
<th>Managers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mothers</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childless Women</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Women</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Men</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Petal Alfonso is 43-years old and worked as a barista until she was harassed and fired for being pregnant. Photo by Dina Cedano, taken for ROC-NY Gender Committee Photo Exhibit.
early. One told us that her manager verbally harangued her. Another said that all workers were punished when one arrived late.

Not all shifts are created equal. Night and weekend shifts often garner more tips for restaurant workers and therefore, are seen as more desirable. However, because of the lack of child care, almost a third of the mothers we surveyed weren’t able to work the desirable shifts. Child care centers are typically open only during traditional office hours and aren’t available to second and night shift workers. One mother told us, “The hours that child care is available is not always in line with my work schedule, I can only work when the child care center is open.” Another said that her “son’s day care closes at 6:30 p.m., so I cannot work night shifts.”

Mothers surveyed felt they could earn more if child care was available. “I could work more shifts if I didn’t have to worry about child care,” said one mother, “I could double my paycheck.” A second mother told us, “I can only work in the mornings, which leaves me with very little money.”

Our economy is dependent on the work of mothers in the growing restaurant industry, not only because of the labor they provide in feeding and serving us, but also because they raise children. Children are the future of this economy—the next generation of workers, small business owners, and leaders who will take us through the twenty-first century and beyond. With better public policies and employer policies, we can help mothers better manage their work and family responsibilities and ensure their children have the opportunities they need to succeed.

Two compounding factors make child care challenges detailed above—lack of affordability, accessibility, and career mobility—even more difficult for mothers. The first is the lack of paid sick days for working mothers in restaurants, which means that mothers can’t take a day off when their child care facility can’t care for an ill child. The second is the work/life imbalance, caused by low pay and erratic and unpredictable work schedules, which makes it difficult for mothers to cope with work and family demands.
Informal abuse (verbal, attitude) 4%
Denied promotion or career opportunities 8%
Suffered a negative job evaluation 9%
Given fewer or less desirable shifts 23%
Formal disciplinary action (demotion) 18%
Given a warning 38%

FIGURE 16: Negative Consequences Due to Child Care Needs for Working Mothers in Restaurants, 2012-2013

Profile of Sandra Gomez, 68 Houston, TX

Sandra Gomez earned a degree in Restaurant and Hotel Management from a university in Mexico. With 10 years of experience under her belt, Sandra worked her way up from hostess to a public relations position in a restaurant in Mexico. Five years ago, Sandra moved to the United States in order to seek more opportunities. Now she is 32-years-old and has started all over again as a waitress. With low wages and irregular hours, Sandra, mother of a four-year-old child, continues to encounter the challenges of finding quality child care at an affordable price.

Before Sandra found a child care provider in Texas, she relied on her husband and network of friends. Still, finding child care was often a challenge and her work suffered. On one occasion, Sandra’s daughter became sick and consequently she asked for the day off. Her management allowed her to stay home but did not schedule her for the rest of the week. Although Sandra told her manager that she only needed one day, he insisted she take more unpaid time off. Sandra explained, “I couldn’t go into work Thursday and Friday, and those are the best days... I lost those hours, the tips, everything. And it’s hard because when your daughter is sick you have to pay for the medicine. It’s when you need more money.”

Eventually Sandra found child care through a church that serves low-income mothers. At $100 a week, Sandra can afford the care, but recognizes that the lower prices mean compromises in quality. Sandra’s child care provider has two child care centers, one for the low-income families that rely on subsidies, and the other for wealthier families that can pay full price. Sandra noticed that her daughter’s best teachers were eventually transferred to the private child care center, which offered their staff better pay.

Sandra makes other more personal compromises, too. Since her child care provider is a church, the program introduces religion to the children. Although Sandra is religious, she explains, “I would rather teach my daughter about god at another age when she can understand. But because they are giving you a good price you need to allow the teachers to pray and to do other things”.

Sandra acknowledges that her wage does not yield the quality of care or the choices that wealthier parents can afford. “It’s like if you are not paying a lot, how are the teachers going to be paid more? If I would have had more money I would pay for better day care.”

Lack Of Paid Sick Days

Mothers face other barriers in restaurants, besides low wages, namely the lack of paid sick leave. Almost two in five mothers working in restaurants lack any health insurance, either through their employer or via public subsidy. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, among workers in the accommodation and food services sector, 45 percent have access to paid vacations, 35 percent have access to paid holidays, and only 10 percent have paid personal leave.

Paid sick days can be a lifeline for workers, who need time off to recover from an illness or care for a sick child, but can’t afford miss a shift. However, only nine percent of the mothers we surveyed were paid when they took off from work to care for a sick family member. Mothers working in restaurants face the choice of either sending their child to a caretaker or school while sick, or staying home to care for their child and forgoing a day’s paycheck. This has significant consequences for families’ economic security. According to the Economic Policy Institute, a family with two wage earners, who lack paid sick days, and two children would lose their entire health care budget if one earner missed three days of work. Taking three and a half sick days without pay is equivalent to one month’s rent. A single parent household earning the average wage with
Profile of ChildSpace Philly

Sheree Tucker, a mother of five adopted children, has been a child care provider for 27 years. Twenty-one of those years have been at Childspace, a worker-owned cooperative based in Philadelphia, PA. Childspace began as a single child care center in 1988 through the efforts of three mothers, one of whom had experience in worker-ownership; it has since expanded to three sites throughout the city. According to Sheree, the impetus for creating the center was the mothers’ desire to create an environment where women could feel valued while also providing high quality child care.

Many of Sheree’s colleagues have also been working at Childspace for a decade or longer. “It’s like a family,” she says. Sheree believes that the high teacher retention rate at Childspace greatly benefits the children they serve, as they see the same faces every day, year after year. One of the key reasons Sheree has stayed at Childspace so long is the level of flexibility and support around family needs. When Sheree’s parents became ill, she was able to use her paid sick time to care for them. After they passed away and she adopted their five foster children as her own, the children were able to immediately receive care at Childspace, and virtually at no cost.

“Childspace has been very supportive to me and my family throughout the years...especially with my life and how things have changed from when I first started at the daycare center as a single person with no children to automatically going to a single person with five kids. They were very helpful and accommodating with bringing my children to the daycare center and just opening up space and not saying ‘oh you have to wait’ but ‘just bring them.’”

Sheree says that another important benefit of working at Childspace is that current workers are given priority when new positions are being filled. Sheree started as an assistant teacher and has since been promoted to head teacher of the toddler classroom. When that position opened up, the director knew Sheree’s potential, and simply offered her the job. However, Sheree had a very different experience when working in a child care center at a local university. After working for four years as an aide, a teaching position opened up, but “I had to apply for it as if I didn’t even work there,” says Sheree. “The Director didn’t ask me if I might be interested.”

Sheree credits the board of workers for making Childspace such a supportive work environment. “Everyone has an equal say - no matter if they’re a director or some other position,” says Sheree. In addition, Sheree says that worker-owners consider not only their own needs as employees, but also the needs of the business. Some years, for instance, the worker-owners have decided that — as much as they might like to — they cannot afford raises. Although board members represent a diversity of opinions and perspectives and don’t always agree, they ultimately support the group’s decisions, and the end result is a child care center that values workers and children alike.

two children would fall below the poverty line if the earner missed work for three days in a month. Taking three and a half sick days without pay is equivalent to one month’s worth of groceries.

Sandra is a 32-year old-mother who balances caring for a four-year old with her job as a server in Houston, Texas. She asked for a day off from work once when her daughter was sick. Her supervisor penalized her by not giving her shifts for the rest of the week. “I lost those hours, the tips, everything,” she said. “And it’s hard because when your daughter is sick you have to pay for medicine,” Sandra added, “It’s when you need the money.” Sandra herself was ill for a week and, as a result, lost a whole week’s worth of wages. She wasn’t able to pay her bills and debts for that month.

As for raising the minimum wage, public opinion is in support of legislation guaranteeing a minimum number of paid sick days for workers to care for themselves, children, or other family members. A 2010 survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago found that three quarters of those polled favored guaranteeing paid sick days. Seventy-five percent also agreed that paid sick days are a basic right for workers, just like a decent wage.
Research also shows that providing paid sick days helps the business bottom line by reducing employee turnover, absenteeism, and other costs. Replacing workers is one of the highest expenses for a business owner, comprising anywhere from 25 percent to 200 percent of annual compensation. Employees who have paid sick days are less likely to be fired due to illness-related absence, thereby reducing turnover costs. Employees are also less likely to voluntarily leave their position if their employer institutes workplace benefits and standards like paid sick days, thereby reducing turnover costs. Paid sick days help guarantee public health and safety for consumers in restaurants and other businesses: sick workers with paid sick days are more likely to stay home.

**Work/Life Imbalance**

Another great challenge faced by low-wage restaurant workers is work/life balance—workers’ ability to spend quality time with their children outside of work, as well as the quality of work they are able to do as a result of having to worry about the other child care challenges described in this report. The mothers surveyed for the report shared their frustrations in balancing the demands of both work and family. Over a third of respondents found that work negatively impacted their family obligations (see Figure 18.)

![FIGURE 17: Working Mothers in Restaurants Who Receive Paid Sick Days, 2012-2013](image)

Source: ROC-United Child Care Survey, 2012-2013

"If I had that paid time off I would be able to stay home and get better. I would be able to stay with my kids, and not worry about missing my wages and worried about how to pay for my kid’s medicine…I worry that if I ask for too many days, they will let me go. There is no job security."

—Sandra, Houston

![FIGURE 18: Work and Family Demands for Mothers Employed in Restaurants, 2012-2013](image)

Source: ROC-United Child Care Survey, 2012-2013
RECOMMENDATIONS

Given that mothers are often primary or sole breadwinners in today’s economy and that the service economy is a growing source of employment, we are calling for innovative solutions to improve workers’ ability to access quality, affordable child care; give workers more control over their work schedules and reduce the incidence of unpredictable and unstable work schedules; and increase family economic security and child well-being. These goals can be achieved through both changes in public policy and employer practices, as described in the recommendations below.

1. **Raise the minimum wage, for both tipped and non-tipped workers so mothers can better afford quality child care.**

   More than a third of the mothers we surveyed earn less than the minimum wage. Half of them work in tipped occupations, where the tipped minimum wage has been set at $2.13 for the past twenty-two years. Raising the minimum wage for tipped and non-tipped workers would reduce the rate of poverty and reliance on public assistance among these mothers and increase their ability to access child care that meets their needs in terms of location, quality, and flexibility.

2. **Expand access to child care subsidies to ensure mothers have greater access to professional child care.**

   Policymakers should provide significant new federal and state investments in child care assistance and child care quality improvements to meet the actual needs of low-income workers, support education and outreach to women regarding these subsidies, and facilitate the process for low-wage workers to apply for these subsidies.

3. **Fund child care provided during nontraditional hours and close to home, including certification and subsidies for relatives providing in-home care.**

   Forty percent of the U.S. labor force works nonstandard hours, including nights and weekends, but child care resources available during those times are rare. Policymakers should incentivize the provision of child care during nontraditional evening and weekend hours by child care providers. They should also support the development of new child care facilities in multiple locations, reducing the distance many women have to travel to find care. Policymakers should also streamline the process of certifying and subsidizing relatives providing in-home care.

4. **Establish a minimum standard for earned sick days.**

   A paid sick days standard that allows job-protected time off to care for children and other family members would both help mothers in the restaurant industry manage their work and family responsibilities, as well as improve individual, family, and community health and safety. Especially since most formal child care facilities require parents to remove sick children from the facility, allowing mothers to earn paid sick days to care for their children is a necessary complement to allow these women access to child care. A paid sick days standard that allows job-protected time off to care for children and other family members would both help mothers in the restaurant industry manage their work and family responsibilities, as well as improve individual, family, and community health and safety.

5. **Enact legislation that would allow workers greater control over their schedules.**

   State child care assistance policies could be amended to allow parents to keep their children in a regular child care arrangement even if the parent’s work hours vary, rather than only providing assistance to cover those hours the parent works in a particular week—which can make it difficult to retain a child care slot. Additionally, several states have passed “show-up” pay legislation, which requires employers to pay workers a few hours when they show up to work and are told they are not needed that day, and split-shift legislation, requiring premium pay for shifts split in increments across multiple shifts, both common practice in the restaurant industry. Stricter over-time enforcement might also prevent unscheduled changes to a work day, as would legislation requiring advance posting of work schedules.
6. Publicly support collective organizing among restaurant workers.

Government, employers, and non-governmental social sector organizations should foster and support organizing among restaurant workers to improve wages and working conditions in their workplaces and publicize the public benefits of these collective actions.

7. Incentivize High Road employer practices, including predictable schedules, greater employee schedule control, child care subsidies, and paid sick days.

Policymakers and the public should support the efforts of restaurant owners who have taken the high road by addressing the needs of their workers as a central part of their business plan. This includes providing more predictable schedules and providing benefits that help families find and pay for child care. Employers should also consider allowing employees with children greater control to alter start and end times, or modify schedules to allow for a more stable work and child care balance. Employers who provide such amenities could be supported with public incentives or by conscientious consumers.79
ENDNOTES


9. Calculations by Wider Opportunities for Women.


25. Name has been changed.


32. Karen Schulman and Helen Blank, In Their Own Voices: Parents and Providers Struggling with Child Care Cuts (Washington, DC: National Women’s Law Center, 2005); 10; Children’s Action Alliance, The Real Reality of Arizona’s Working Families—Child Care Survey Highlights (Phoenix, AZ: Children’s Action Alliance, 2004); Deborah Schlick, Mary Daly, and Lee Bradford, Faces on the Waiting List: Waiting for Child Care Assistance in Ramsey County (Ramsey County, MN: Ramsey County Human Services, 1999) (Survey conducted by the Minnesota Center for Survey Research at the University of Minnesota).


47. Interview, April 2013.


52. Ibid, p. 11.


56. Last name not published by request. Interview, April 2013.


65. Name has been changed. Interview, April 2013.

66. Focus group, April 2013.

67. Name has been changed. Interview, April 2013.

68. Name has been changed by request. Interview, April 2013.


72. Ibid.

73. Ibid.

74. Interview, April 2013.


