FIELD STUDY · NOVEMBER 2026

The Unanswered Call: How Missed Phone Calls Cost Childcare Centers Enrollments

A field study of after-hours phone coverage at 63 franchise childcare centers in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland and Ohio.

Prepared by Blue Shirt Media

Executive summary

A multi-location franchise childcare owner was running paid ads around the clock and booking only 2 to 4 tours a month. The ads were reaching parents. The phone calls those ads produced were not reaching anyone.

To measure the gap, we called 63 centers from four major childcare franchise brands on a weeknight evening. Sixty-two did not answer. The calls went to voicemail, rang out or failed. Parents rarely wait: most move on to the next center after a single unanswered call.

THE OPPORTUNITY

When 62 of 63 competitors don't answer, the center that does wins by default.

21% of callers who reach no one immediately call another business. A center that answers every call stops losing families and picks up the ones its competitors miss.

KEY FINDINGS

1 of 63
centers answered live after hours

98%
of calls went to voicemail, rang out or failed

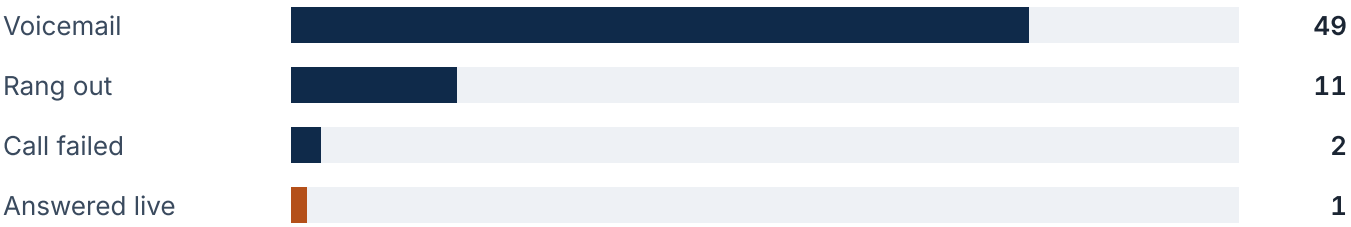
$14,910
average yearly tuition for one infant enrollment in Pennsylvania

01 · THE STUDY

Parents call after hours. Almost no one answers.

On November 19, 2026, between 7:30 and 8:40 PM local time, we placed test calls to 63 childcare centers from four major franchise brands across Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland and Ohio. Each call was logged with its outcome, using call status, answering-machine detection and review. No centers are named in this report.

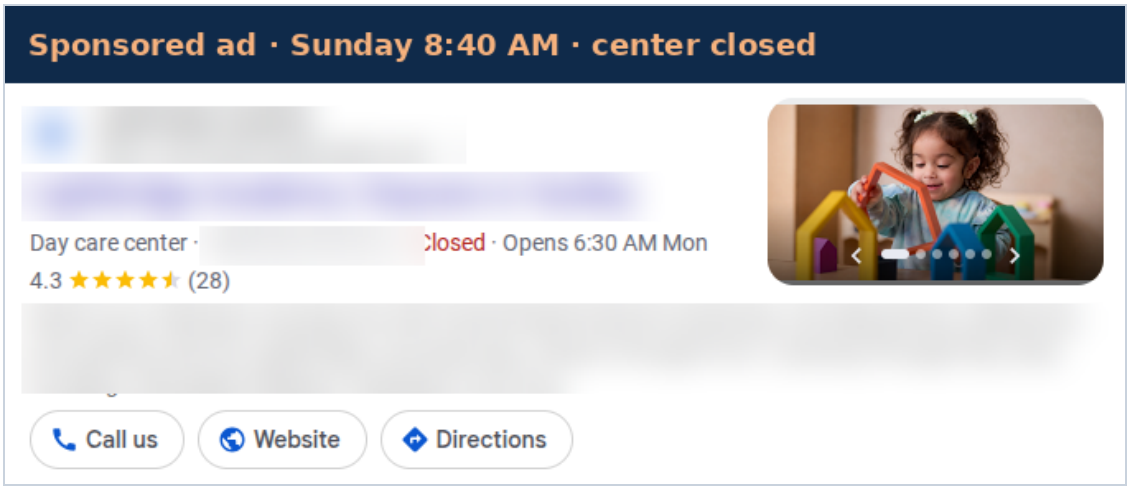
Exhibit 1. Outcome of 63 after-hours calls



Source: Blue Shirt Media test calls, Nov 19, 2026, 7:30–8:40 PM local time. n = 63.

> 62 of 63 centers did not pick up. The center that answers is the one parents reach.

Exhibit 2. A sponsored daycare ad running while the center was closed



Captured Sunday, Nov 22, 2026, 8:40 AM. The listing shows "Closed · Opens 6:30 AM Mon," yet the ad and its Call button are live. Brand details blurred.

02 · WHERE ENROLLMENTS ARE LOST

Calls are missed during the day and at night

Exhibit 3. When calls go unanswered

WHEN	WHAT HAPPENS	EVIDENCE
Drop-off and pick-up 7–9 AM, 4–6 PM	The busiest phone hours fall when every staff member is with children or at the door. Current and prospective parents reach voicemail even during business hours.	Peak call windows in an analysis of 5,000 daycare calls (Hazel, 2026)
After 6 PM	Working parents research childcare after their own workday ends, when centers are closed.	38% of daycare calls arrive after hours (Hazel, 2026). 43% of U.S. children have a parent working nonstandard hours (U.S. Census Bureau).
Nights and weekends	Paid ads keep running while the center is closed. Each click that turns into a call reaches voicemail.	21% of callers immediately call another business; 78% have abandoned one after an unanswered call (CallRail, 2025).

The cost of one missed call

$14,910

Average yearly tuition for one infant in a Pennsylvania child care center (Child Care Aware of America, 2024 data)

$178,920

Yearly tuition lost if one missed call a month becomes an enrollment elsewhere (12 × $14,910)

What parents feel when no one answers

"Is my child okay?"

A current parent checking in hears voicemail, and trust slips.

"Will anyone call me back?"

A new family doesn't wait. They call the next center.

"Can I count on them?"

An unanswered phone raises doubts about everything else.

03 · SOLUTION AND RESULTS

Answer every call. More tours follow.

Blue Shirt Media answers a center's phone day and night, using its own programs, hours and policies. The center keeps its number; missed and after-hours calls forward to us.

Every call answered. 24/7, including drop-off, pick-up, nights and weekends.

Tours booked on the call. Into Calendly, Google Calendar or the center's CRM.

Any language. Spanish, Russian and more.

Live transfers. Urgent calls and worried parents go straight to staff.

Follow-up built in. A text to every caller and a summary of every call to the director.

Multi-location ready. One number routes calls to the right school.

Exhibit 4. Results for a local service business client, August 2025 to May 2026

Calls answered	**6,289**
Callers' details captured and sent to the team	**3,266**
Calls on evenings, early mornings and weekends	**1,400+**
Calls in the busiest month, with no added staff	**1,081**

Source: client call log. After-hours count is approximate.

Be the only center that answers.

62 of 63 competitors send parents to voicemail. Every call they miss can be yours. Live in under 7 days. Book a demo at calendly.com/davesichel/blue-shirt-media-intro-sension and ask about our free trial.

HEAR THE DEMO

(609) 793-9807

Sources. Blue Shirt Media test calls, Nov 19, 2026 (n = 63). Hazel, "We Analyzed 5,000 Daycare Calls" (2026). U.S. Census Bureau, "Many Children Have Parents Who Work Nonstandard Schedules." CallRail survey of 1,000 U.S. consumers (2025). Child Care Aware of America, Pennsylvania price fact sheet (2024 data).