

Voices from the Front Lines of Early Learning



2017 Illinois Early Childhood Workforce Survey Report

The **first statewide assessment** of
early learning hiring and retention experiences
across funding streams in Illinois

Acknowledgments

The authors wish to thank the members of the **Illinois Innovation to Incubation (i2I) Team** (listed below), who provided support for the work, contributed to the conceptualization of this project and served as a valuable advisory and sounding body throughout the survey development and data analysis process. Sowmya Anand of the University of Illinois Survey Research Laboratory provided invaluable guidance on the design of the instrument and technical specifications, as well as conducting the data analyses. The survey would not have been possible without the cooperation and leadership of the Illinois Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development, the Illinois Department of Human Services, the Illinois State Board of Education, the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, the Illinois Head Start Association, the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services and the Chicago Public Schools, which distributed the survey to their early childhood programs. Former Illinois Secretary of Education Beth Purvis provided leadership and direction across the participating agencies and entities. Finally, the authors are grateful for the funding from the **Robert R. McCormick Foundation** and the **Illinois Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant** that made this report possible.



The Illinois Innovation to Incubation (i2I) Project

The 2015 National Academy of Medicine (NAM) report, *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation*, provides a blueprint for action to advance the early care and education workforce with a set of recommendations directed to stakeholders at the local, state and national levels. As a leader in the field of early childhood development services, Illinois was one of four states selected by the National Academy of Medicine to participate in the State Pathways to Implementation Project through the Academy's Innovation to Incubation (i2I) program. The Illinois Innovation to Implementation (i2I) Team—a group of cross-sector leaders and experts in early childhood workforce development policy—met to review and assess the status of the early childhood workforce, evaluate the policies in place to support educational attainment and ongoing professional development and make recommendations that incorporate the latest research on the complex knowledge and competencies required to provide high-quality care and education for children from birth through age eight. The Illinois i2I Team was jointly led by the Illinois Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development and the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Education and funded by the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.

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Introduction

Children are born learning. At every age and every stage—and in every environment—their growth and development are influenced by the quality of their interactions and relationships with caregivers and educators. Their development is not only rapid, but cumulative. The foundation for lifelong learning is laid during the first years of a child's life—from birth to age eight. Young children thrive when they have secure, positive relationships with adults who are knowledgeable about how to support their development and learning and responsive to their individual progress. Thus, the early childhood professionals entrusted with the care and education of young children bear a great responsibility.



A growing body of research has provided valuable insights into the science of early childhood development and how we can best support our nation's youngest learners. The science of child development and early learning confirms the critical importance of a well-trained early childhood workforce, as well as consistency and continuity in early care and education.

Yet, just when children most need a

consistent foundation of support, the field of early childhood education is fragmented and inconsistent. Early learning and child care services are governed by rules and regulations that vary by funding source. Consequently, we have a workforce with a wide range of degrees, credentials and experiences—and no unified system in place to assess the composition and qualifications of the early childhood workforce

and the hiring and retention needs of the field.

Early childhood programs in Illinois are governed by several different agencies, each with their own qualification requirements for early childhood educators. These include:

- the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), which governs licensing for child care programs;
- the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS), which governs state subsidies for child care through the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), as well as ExceleRate Illinois, the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS);
- the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), which governs the state-funded Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) programs for children from birth to age five and administers the federal Preschool Expansion Grant program; and
- the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), which governs the Head Start and Early Head Start programs serving pregnant women and children from birth to age five.

Across these funding streams, teacher and teacher-assistant qualification requirements vary widely. For example, teachers in licensed child care centers are required to have 30 college semester hours, with just six hours concentrated in early childhood, while teachers in state Preschool for All (PFA) programs must have a bachelor's degree and an Illinois Professional Educator License (PEL) with an

early childhood endorsement. National Head Start guidelines and ExceleRate Illinois require different targeted percentages of teachers with associate and bachelor's degrees and credentials.

Requirements are similarly complicated for assistant teachers. Assistant teachers employed in licensed centers require only a high school diploma, while assistant teachers in Head Start programs must hold a nationally recognized Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or an associate degree. Assistant teachers in PFA programs are required to have a paraprofessional certificate issued by ISBE, but no early-childhood-related coursework.

Survey Goals

The fragmentation of the early childhood education system, coupled with a history of chronic underfunding for early childhood programs, has resulted in a dearth of early childhood workforce data and data analysis at the state and national levels.¹ Therefore, one of the goals of the Illinois i2I team was to analyze existing data to assess the current state of the early childhood workforce—and to use this assessment to make evidence-based recommendations. Initially, the team gathered data from a range of agencies supporting early learning programs, including the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA), the Illinois Department of Children



and Family Services (DCFS) and the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS). Existing data sources served as a starting point, but there were substantial limitations due to data collection methods and a multiplicity of systems. The team determined that it was necessary to supplement existing data by creating and conducting this survey of early childhood administrators and hiring managers in Illinois across the different funding streams that support early childhood programs. Specifically, the aims of the survey were to:

- examine the relationship between the need for qualified early childhood teachers and assistants and the hiring experiences

of program administrators across targeted age ranges (e.g., infants and toddlers vs. preschoolers), program types (e.g., school-based vs. center-based vs. home-based child care) and funding sources (e.g., ECBG, CCAP, private tuition or Head Start and Early Head Start); and

- better understand the experiences and perspectives of those charged with recruiting, hiring and retaining qualified staff.

The results presented in this report represent the first comprehensive overview of the hiring needs and experiences, across all sectors, of the early childhood field in Illinois.



Methodology

The Illinois Early Childhood Workforce Hiring Survey was distributed via the listservs of the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA), the City of Chicago Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS), the Chicago Public Schools (CPS), the Illinois Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Development (GOECD) and the Illinois Head Start Association (IHSA).

These listservs represent all sectors and funding streams for early care and education (ECE) in Illinois: Early Childhood Block Grant programs, Head Start and Early Head Start programs, licensed and license-exempt child care centers and family child care.



Early childhood administrators on the listservs referenced above received an email from Illinois Secretary of Education Elizabeth Purvis with an invitation to participate in the survey and an online survey link.

The survey was conducted with convenience sampling. This sampling method was used because we do not yet have a comprehensive and accurate portrait of the Illinois early learning program landscape or the

early childhood workforce.

The Survey Research Lab (SRL) at the University of Illinois was engaged to provide input on question development, program the survey and conduct data cleaning and preliminary data analyses.

The survey questions were designed by UIC, GOECD and SRL in close collaboration with the Illinois i2I Team.

Hiring Survey Question Topics



Basic program descriptors:

- Location of program by zip code
- Size of program:
 - Number of staff members
 - Number of sites
- Program setting:
 - School
 - Community-based agency
 - Home
- Ages served
- Funding sources:
 - Child Care Assistance Program
 - Early Childhood Block Grant
 - Head Start and Early Head Start
 - Private tuition
 - Other

Hiring practices and experiences:

- Number of open positions in the past 12 months by role
- Length of time it takes to fill positions
- Average length of employment
- Reasons for staff turnover
- Average wage and benefits
- Barriers to hiring qualified staff
- Barriers to retaining qualified staff
- Need for bilingual teachers
- Need for special-education teachers
- Union participation of staff

“ We need programs and pathways for staff to get qualified, a gradual increase in educational expectations that are realistic and more money to pay people. In general, we need **people to understand what we do.** ”

— An Illinois Early Childhood Program Director



Implications of hiring experiences:

- Impact of hiring difficulties on overall program operations and quality
- Frequency of non-teaching staff filling in for teaching staff
- Use of long-term substitute teachers in school-based settings
- Beliefs regarding the impact of staff qualifications and experiences on program quality

Open-ended questions:

- What do you need for your program to be able to hire the staff that you want?
- Please tell us about your best (most satisfying) hiring experience and/or your most challenging hiring experience.
- Are there additional comments that you would like to share with us about hiring practices, recruitment, retention or related experiences?
- Would you be willing to participate in a focus group to share more about your experiences recruiting and retaining qualified staff?

The survey window remained open for 25 days in May and June 2017. The data was cleaned and analyzed by the University of Illinois Survey Research Lab in collaboration with the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Education. Additional coding of “other” responses and open-ended questions was also conducted.



Program Characteristics

A total of 914 respondents completed the survey. Of these, 706 respondents indicated that they were responsible for hiring teaching staff for their programs.

These 706 respondents were then guided through the remainder of the survey, while the 208 respondents who indicated that they were not responsible for hiring teaching staff were thanked and exited from the survey.

The survey contained a number of questions about program characteristics to give us a better understanding of each respondent's program type, region, size and funding sources, as well as the ages of the children served.

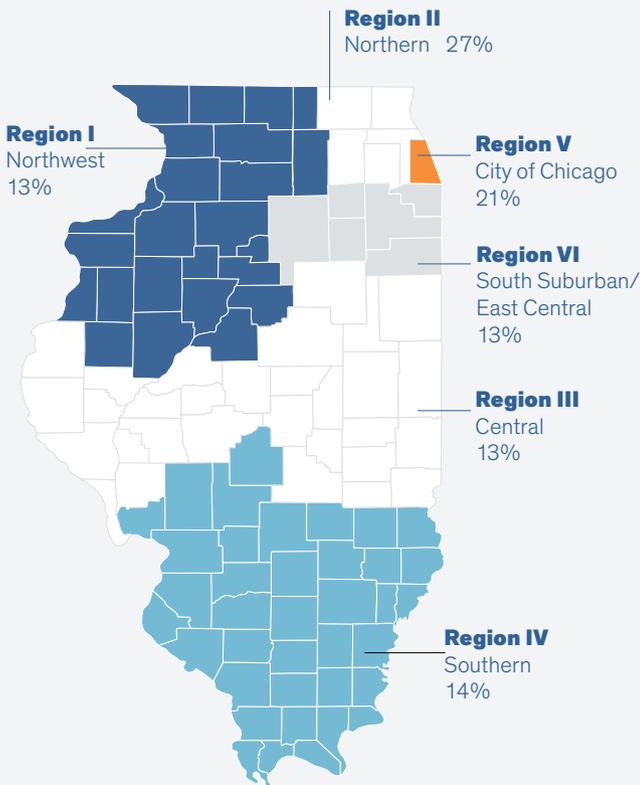


Geographic Location

The 706 respondents answered many questions about their programs, including questions related to the geographic regions in which their program sites were located (see Figure 1 on page 12). Nearly all of the respondents reported a zip code for their sites. Eighty-one percent (570) reported a zip code for a single site, while 124 (19 percent)

reported one or more additional sites in other zip code areas. When classifying the respondents' programs into six different regions in Illinois, only the zip codes reported for the primary sites were considered. The classification scheme was based on the state regions used by STARnet,² a professional development provider for the Illinois early childhood workforce.

Figure 1: Distribution of primary program sites across regions



Funding Sources

As is well documented, the early childhood field is often fragmented by funding source. The respondents were asked to identify all of the funding sources that they used to support their programs. This was presented as a “check all that apply” list of specific grant-funding sources such as Head Start, Early Head Start, Prevention Initiative and Preschool for All, as well as funding from the Illinois Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), private tuition, local government funding and other sources. About one-third (36 percent) of the programs reported only one source of program funding. Just over half of the respondents (54 percent) reported two to three funding sources, while 10 percent reported four or more funding sources (see Figure 2 at bottom left).

The two most commonly identified sources of funding were CCAP and private tuition, each with nearly 64 percent of respondents reporting their use (see Figure 3 on page 13). Almost one-third (32 percent) reported receiving grants from ISBE or CPS for Preschool for All or Preschool for All Expansion. “Other” responses included funding from the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), funding for serving children with disabilities and funding from the child welfare system.

The most frequent combination of funding sources was CCAP and private-pay clients,

Figure 2: Number of funding sources

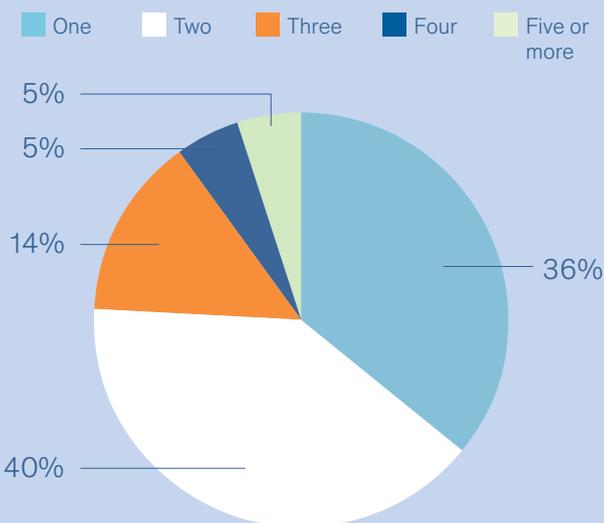
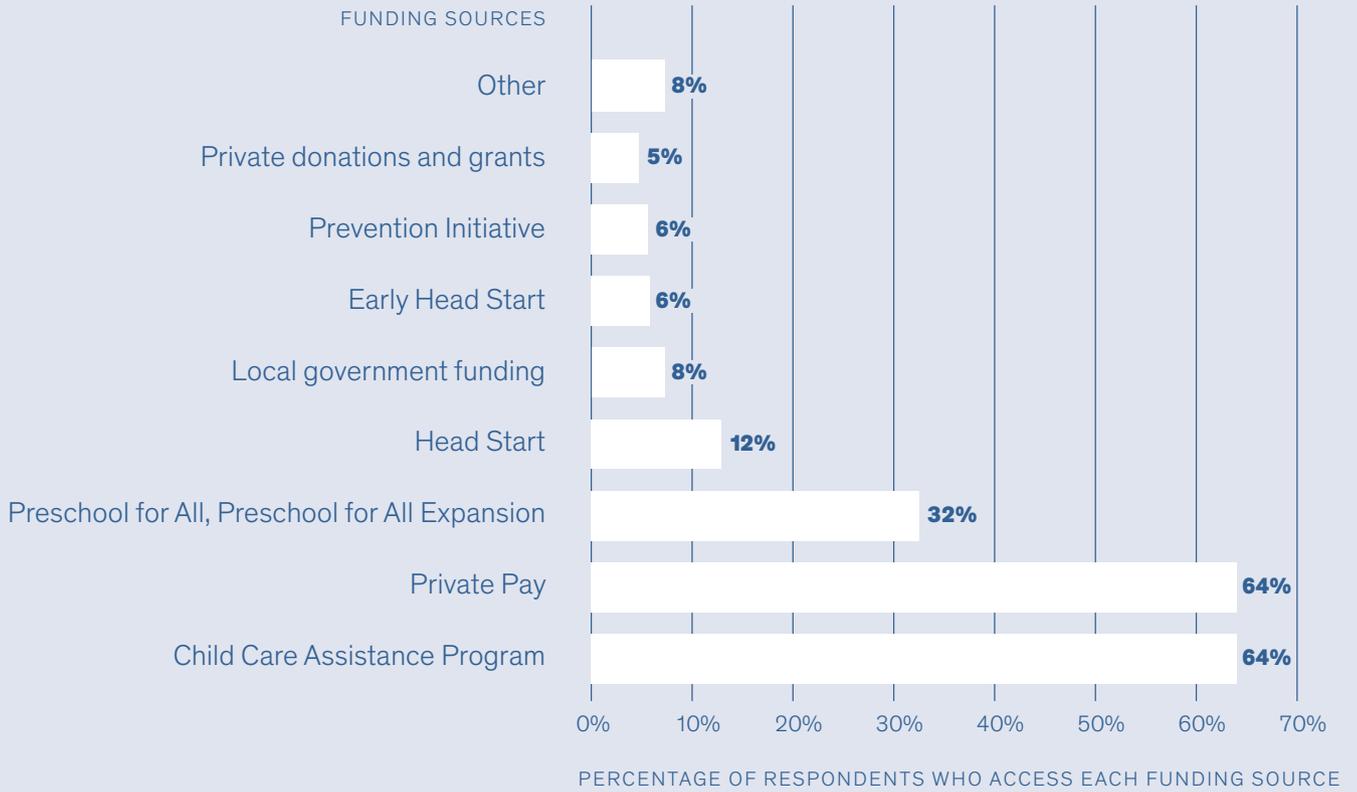


Figure 3: Types of funding used to support programs





with nearly a third (30 percent) reporting the use of this combination. No significant patterns emerged of other combinations of funding sources. All other combinations were reported by fewer than five percent of respondents. However, 14 percent of respondents reported relying solely on private tuition, 12 percent reported relying solely on funding from the Illinois State Board of Education and 10 percent reported relying solely on funding from CCAP.

Programmatic Governance

Eighty percent of respondents were child care providers licensed by DCFS, while 19 percent were school-based providers operating under the purview of a public-school district or private-school system. Of those licensed by

DCFS, 76 percent were center-based providers, while 24 percent were home-based providers.

Ages of Children Served

Respondents were asked about the ages of the children that their programs served. This was presented as a “check all that apply” question, with two response choices: children from birth through age two or children from three to five (preschool to entering kindergarten). Based on answers to this question, we created a single variable to reflect the ages served. Sixty-nine percent of the programs serve both age groups, 29 percent serve only children between the ages of three and five and just under two percent serve children age two and under.

Size of Programs

Respondents were asked to report on a number of variables, including the number of sites that need to be staffed, the total number of classrooms across all sites and the number of educators (teachers and teacher assistants) required to fully staff all of their classrooms. The vast majority of programs (80 percent) have only one program site, eight percent have two sites, seven percent have three to five sites and five percent have six or more sites. Eighteen percent of respondents reported hiring for only one classroom, while nearly half (47 percent) reported hiring for four or fewer classrooms. Half of the programs required 10 or fewer teachers and teacher assistants to achieve full staffing levels.

Figure 4: Hourly wages for licensed child care and school-based programs

	Licensed child care programs		School-based programs		Combined	
	MEAN	MEDIAN	MEAN	MEDIAN	MEAN	MEDIAN
Preschool Teacher	\$13.18	\$12.38	\$19.03	\$19.23	\$14.32	\$13.18
	RANGE (\$7.50 to \$24)		RANGE (\$8.90 to \$24)		RANGE (\$7.50 to \$24)	
Preschool Asst. Teacher	\$10.38	\$10.00	\$10.89	\$11.00	\$10.47	\$10.00
	RANGE (\$7.21 to \$15)		RANGE (\$6.50 to \$15)		RANGE (\$6.50 to \$15)	
Infant-Toddler Teacher*	\$12.00	\$12.00	*	*	\$12.04	\$12.00
	RANGE (\$8.25 to \$19)		RANGE (\$8.25 to \$19)		RANGE (\$8.25 to \$19)	
Infant-Toddler Asst. Teacher*	\$10.12	\$10.00	*	*	\$10.13	\$10.00
	RANGE (\$6 to \$13.94)		RANGE (\$6 to \$13.94)		RANGE (\$6 to \$13.94)	

* The number of infant-toddler teachers and assistant teachers in school-based programs is too small to provide data.

Average Wages

Survey respondents provided average wages for teachers and assistant teachers in their programs by the ages of the children taught. Figure 4 (above) shows that overall wages in the field are low and vary by setting, as well as the ages of the children served and the education levels of the teachers. The primary public funding streams supporting early care and education programs have different amounts of per-child funding, in accordance with specific programmatic expectations regarding services provided, as well as requirements for staff credentials, qualifications and experiences. This data is consistent with national findings.³ In Illinois, lead teachers in school-based programs, on average, are paid nearly \$6/hour

(or 44 percent) more than their counterparts in licensed child care programs not operated under the purview of a public or private school. National data corroborates these differences and further demonstrates that there is variation in compensation among individuals with the same qualifications across different types of employment (e.g., teachers with bachelor’s degrees in public school systems earn more than those with bachelor’s degrees in non-public-school settings).⁴ Also, consistent with national data, teachers in infant-toddler classrooms are compensated less than teachers working with preschool-age children. The wage data from licensed child care programs is consistent with the 2017 Illinois DHS Staffing and Salary Survey.⁵



2017 Illinois Early Childhood Workforce Survey Report

Key Findings: Staffing Needs

Calculating annual turnover rates was a critical goal of the survey. For this report, turnover is defined as a staff member leaving a position due to termination, resignation or promotion, as well as any unfilled positions resulting from structural changes such as program expansion. Both types of scenarios create open positions. Survey respondents were asked whether or not they had an open position in the past 12 months, and 60 percent responded in the affirmative.



To calculate annual turnover rates across staff in preschool and infant-toddler classrooms, we asked survey respondents to report on the number of employees that they needed to fully staff their programs and the number of open positions in the past 12 months. Turnover rates ranged from zero to more than 100 percent. Programs with zero percent turnover had no open positions in the past year and programs with turnover rates above 100 percent had positions that were open more than once in the past year. Figure 5 on page 18 shows that nearly

one-third of all programs had no turnover in the past 12 months. This percentage was consistent across program types. Programs with turnover rates of 100 percent or higher were reported only in classrooms licensed by DCFS.

The average turnover rate across all programs included in the survey was 37 percent. There were no significant differences in turnover rates between infant-toddler and preschool classrooms. However, when the data was disaggregated to separate school-based preschool programs from DCFS-licensed preschool programs, differences

Figure 5: Percentage of programs with no turnover or a turnover rate at or above 100 percent

	Licensed by DCFS		School-based
	INFANT-TODDLER CLASSROOMS	PRESCHOOL CLASSROOMS	PRESCHOOL CLASSROOMS
Percentage of programs with no turnover	29%	30%	31%
Percentage of programs with a turnover rate at or greater than 100%	10%	13%	0%

Figure 6: Average turnover rates across three program types

	Licensed by DCFS		School-based
	INFANT-TODDLER CLASSROOMS	PRESCHOOL CLASSROOMS	PRESCHOOL CLASSROOMS
Average turnover rate	37%	42%	21%

in the average turnover rate were identified. Figure 6 (above) shows that the average turnover rate in licensed preschool classrooms (42 percent) was double the average rate in school-based preschool programs (21 percent). Across all programs, there was a significant variance in turnover rates.

To get a better sense of the challenges associated with hiring and retaining staff, we asked the survey participants to report the average time that it takes to fill an open position and the average staff tenure across the four position types. Figure 7 (opposite page, top left) shows the average number of weeks that it takes to fill different positions. Lead-teacher positions take longer (from two to five weeks) to fill than assistant-teacher positions. On average, it takes a

quarter of a year to fill a lead infant-toddler teacher position and more than 10 weeks to fill a lead preschool-teacher position.

Lead teachers in preschool have the longest tenure when compared to lead teachers in infant-toddler classrooms and teacher assistants. Figure 8 (opposite page, top right) shows, on average, how long staff members remain in a given position. Lead preschool teachers stay a little over six years, but lead infant-toddler teachers have tenure averages of four years and three months—the exact same tenure average as assistant preschool teachers. Assistant infant-toddler teachers have the shortest tenure, with an average of three years.

Survey respondents also reported their perceptions of the level of difficulty in finding qualified candidates for different positions.

Figure 7: Average time (in weeks) to fill an open position

On average, how long does it take your program to fill open positions?

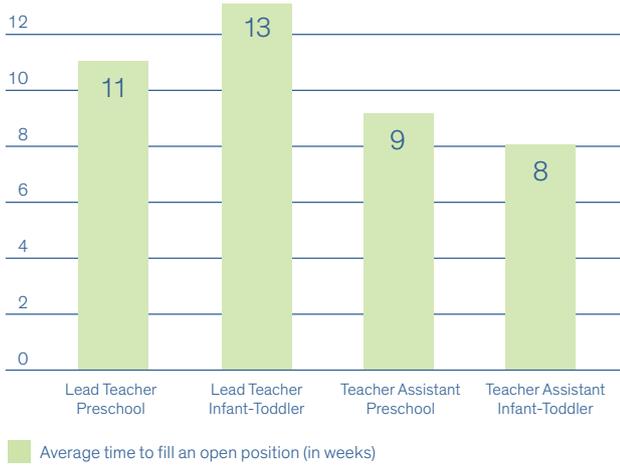


Figure 8: Average tenure (in years) of lead and assistant teachers

How long do teachers stay employed at your program?

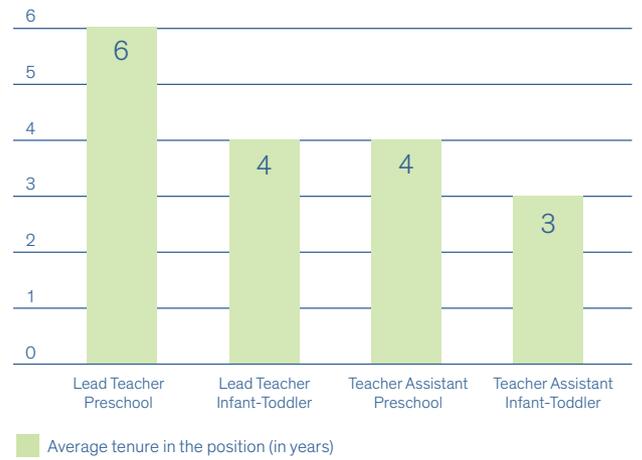


Figure 9: Perceptions of level of difficulty in hiring

When hiring new teachers for classrooms, how difficult is it to find qualified applicants?

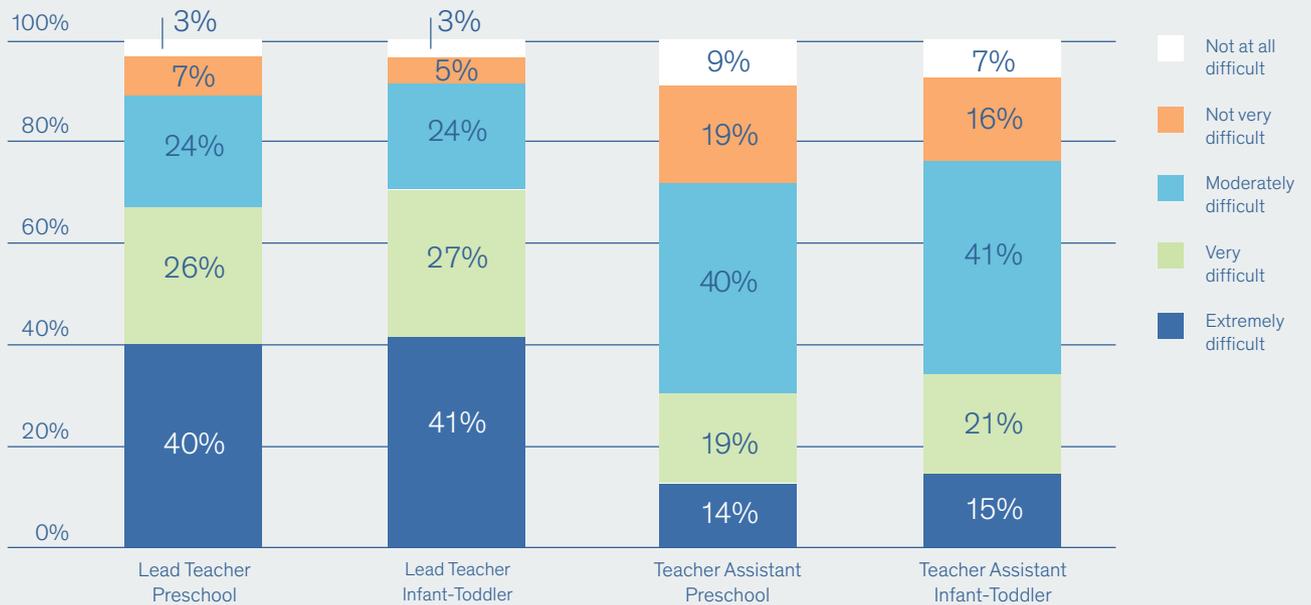


Figure 10: Perceptions of level of difficulty in hiring specialized teachers

How difficult is it to find bilingual or special-education teachers for your program?

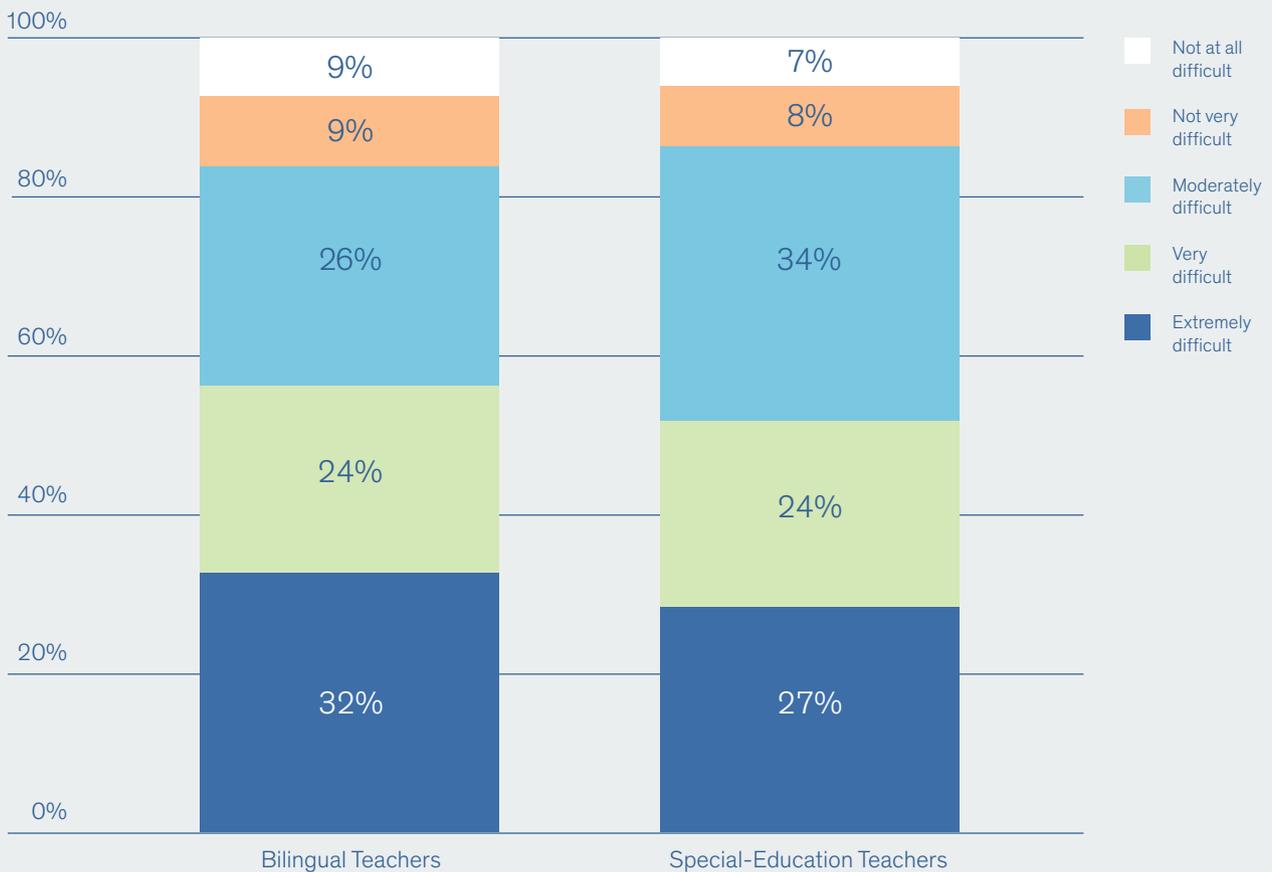


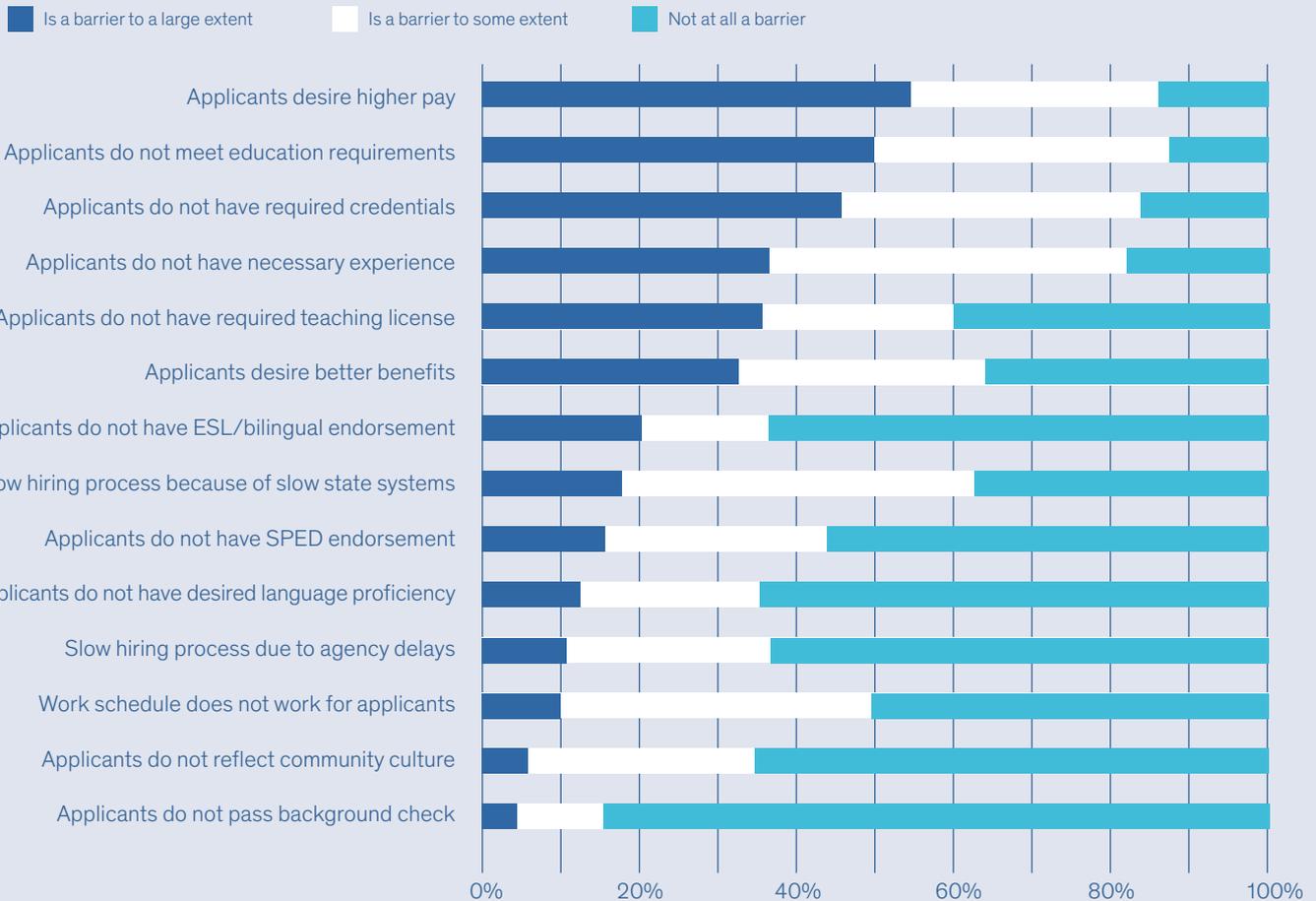
Figure 9 on page 19 shows that the respondents' perceptions corroborated the reported time necessary to fill positions: roles for qualified lead teachers are the most difficult to fill. More than two-thirds of the respondents reported that hiring new lead preschool and infant-toddler teachers was either extremely difficult or very difficult. Only about three percent reported that it was not difficult at all. Respondents' perceptions regarding the difficulty of hiring were aligned with their data related to the number of unfilled positions, the time that it takes to fill a position

and the amount of time that staff members remain in a given position.

Teachers with specialized skills and knowledge are critical components of high-quality early childhood programs. Survey respondents were asked to indicate their need for bilingual and special-education teachers. Forty-two percent of the respondents indicated that their program required bilingual teachers and 47 percent indicated a need for special-education teachers. Figure 10 (above) shows that more than half of all respondents indicating a need for bilingual or

Figure 11: Barriers to hiring

To what extent is this a barrier to hiring for a lead teacher in a preschool program?



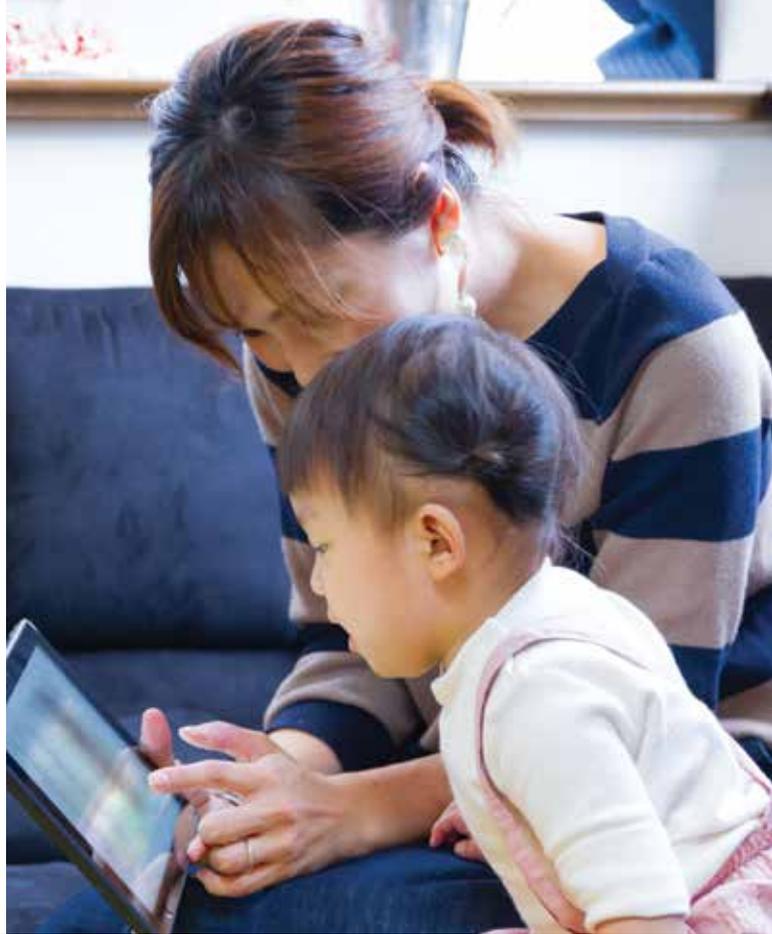
special-education teachers reported that finding these specialized teachers was either extremely difficult or very difficult.

Barriers to Hiring and Retaining Qualified Staff

The respondents were also asked to report on the extent to which a range of factors were barriers to hiring qualified staff across the lead and assistant teacher roles in both preschool and infant-toddler classrooms. Respondents were asked to rank each factor as a barrier to a large extent, a barrier

to some extent or not at all a barrier. Figure 11 (above) shows rankings pertaining to lead preschool teacher roles. Other roles had similar trends.

The greatest barriers, according to respondents across all groups, were related to compensation (including pay and benefits) and qualifications (including educational requirements, credentials and work experience). Work schedules, slow hiring processes and a mismatch between the applicants and the community being served were also seen as

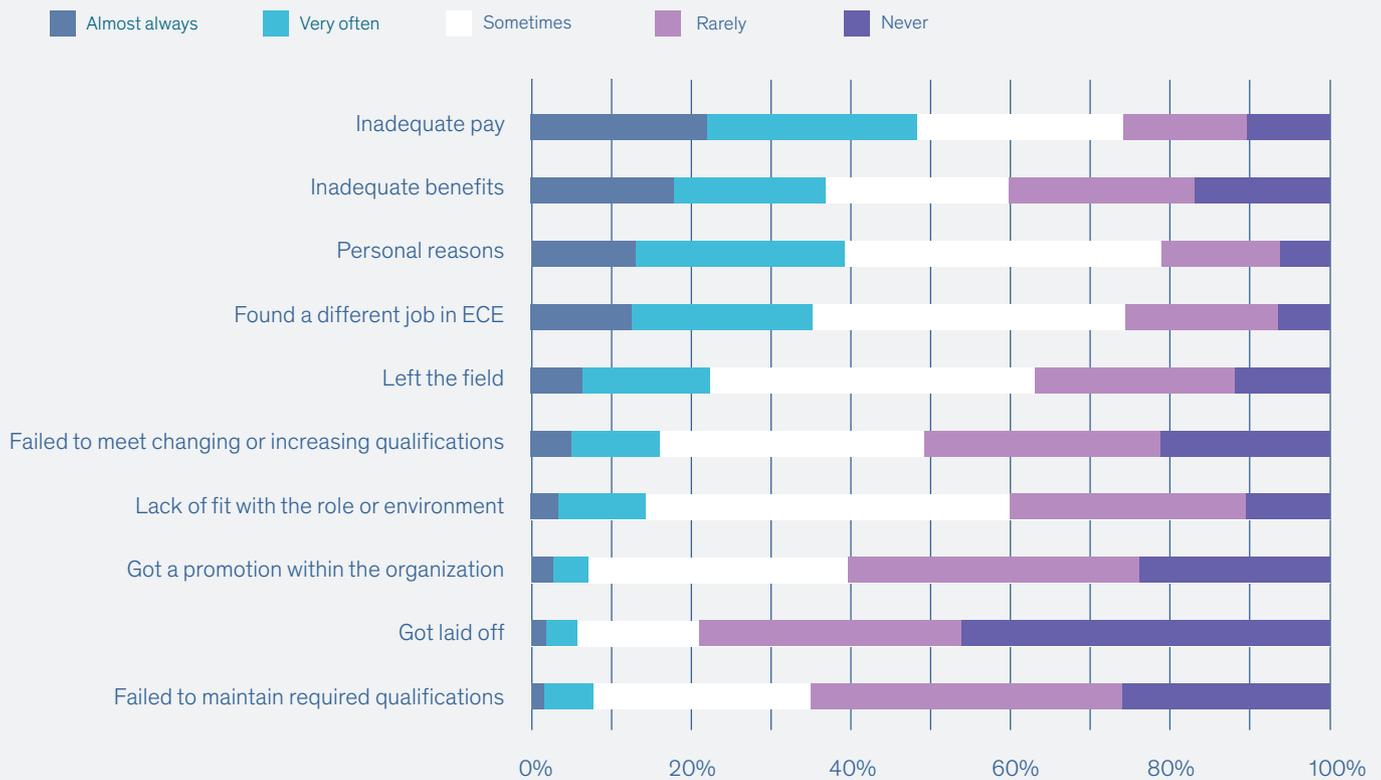


barriers, but to a lesser extent.

To identify common barriers to retention, respondents were asked to rate the frequency of reasons cited by staff for leaving their positions. The same top five reasons for leaving a position were consistently indicated across all four position types. The most common reason for leaving cited by teachers and teacher assistants in both infant-toddler and preschool programs was inadequate pay. Beyond compensation, there was a significant drop in

Figure 12: Barriers to retaining staff

How often is this a reason why lead teachers in preschool settings would leave their positions?



consensus among respondents regarding the reasons why staff members leave their positions.

Impact of Turnover on Programs

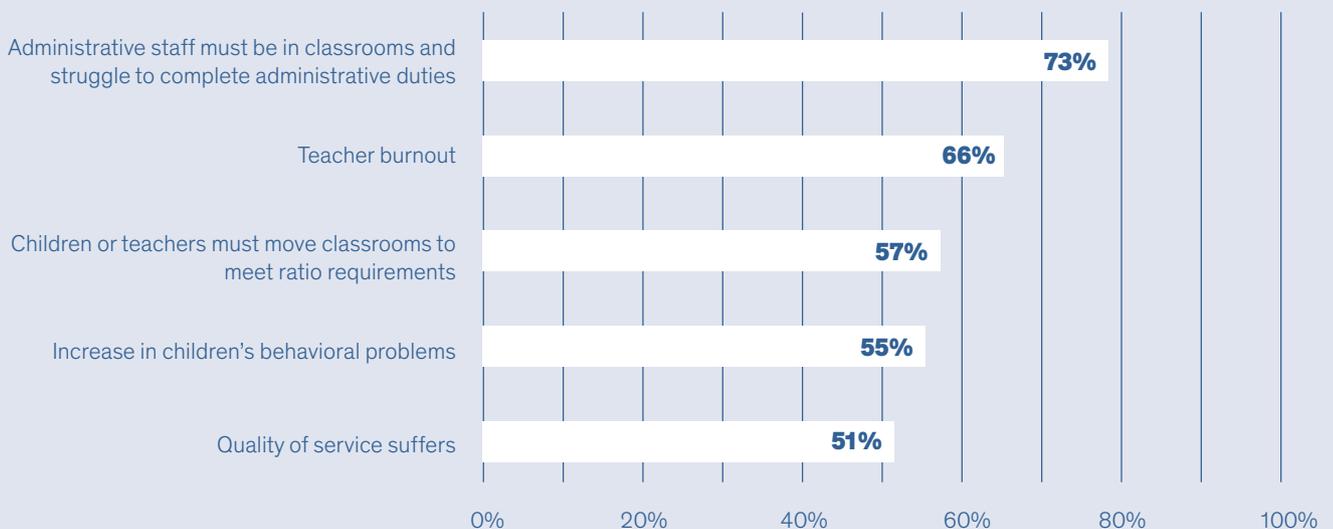
Consistency and continuity of care are critical features of high-quality early childhood programs. Learning happens when young children feel safe and cared for by trusted, healthy adults. Survey respondents were asked specifically to indicate the impact of unfilled

positions in their programs. The top five consequences and their associated frequencies are listed below in Figure 13. The majority of respondents also indicated that administrator duties and teacher-staffing patterns must be continually adjusted to compensate for open positions. Two thirds (66 percent) of respondents reported that open positions resulted in teacher burnout. More than half (51 percent) indicated that quality suffers as a result of unfilled positions.



Figure 13: Impact of not being able to fill open positions

What has been the impact of not being able to fill open positions?





Key Findings: Programming Needs

Several open-ended questions were included on the survey.

In total, 483 respondents replied to the question, “What type of resources or processes do you need to be able to hire the staff that you want for your program?” More than 90 percent of their responses fell into the following four categories: additional funding, a larger pool of qualified candidates, resources for finding qualified candidates and more and improved pathways for helping current staff members attain needed degrees and credentials. While qualifications were identified as a barrier to hiring, respondents did not identify lowering qualifications as a desirable strategy.



Within these four categories, respondents offered a range of more detailed explanations and ideas. While many respondents reported a need to pay higher salaries and offer better benefits to attract and retain talent, some also noted the need for tuition funding to enable staff to obtain credentials and degrees, including paid time to attend school and training programs, as well as funding for substitute teachers. Respondents reported a

need for a larger pool of qualified candidates (with the required degrees, credentials and experience), including those with specialized skills and training, such as bilingual candidates and candidates trained to work with children with special needs. Improved resources and processes for finding and matching appropriately qualified candidates to programs looking to fill positions were frequently noted as a need. Many early childhood programs

Figure 14: Strategies to address hiring and retention challenges



are small and have a limited capacity to support human resources departments and hiring processes.

Examples of specific strategies noted to address the four primary themes:

- Timely payments from funders
- Increases in child care subsidy rates
- Shared/pooled services for benefits, HR and other administrative and infrastructure needs
- More cohort models for helping staff attain higher levels of degrees and credentials
- New and innovative pathways for degree attainment

- More scholarships and attached stipends for the field
- Better connections with local colleges and universities for recruitment purposes
- A public relations campaign for the profession that emphasizes the importance of the work based on the neuroscience of early childhood development
- A web-based platform that early childhood educators in search of employment can use to post their resumes
- A job-posting site focused exclusively on early childhood educators



“

Programs need enough funding to pay decent salaries. However, **the biggest issue is a lack of qualified candidates** with associate and bachelor's degrees in early childhood education and essentially no candidates with a Professional Educator License (PEL). We have ads running constantly in multiple media (e.g., Indeed.com, Idealist, Career Builders, SocialService.com, etc.) and get very few applicants. They do not exist.

”

— An Illinois Early Childhood Program Director



Discussion

The leaders, owners, directors, administrators and others responsible for hiring and retaining qualified early childhood personnel in their centers, schools and organizations have been reporting problems related to staffing their programs for years. Common refrains are that turnover rates are high across all program types, that a lack of funding for adequate compensation is the greatest barrier to hiring and retention and that high turnover rates are detrimental to children and families.



The Illinois Early Childhood Workforce Survey Report brings together voices from the field and presents findings from the first study to examine the hiring and retention of early childhood staff across funding streams and regulatory bodies. The survey respondents were limited to those responsible for hiring and retaining staff. While some programs are larger — with multiple layers of teaching staff and ancillary departments or staff able to focus solely on human resources — many are operating on a much smaller scale. Almost half (47 percent) of the programs described in the survey have four or fewer classrooms, while nearly 20 percent have just

one. Despite policies that often encourage program administrators to access multiple funding streams to enhance program quality, more than one-third of programs (36 percent) access only one funding stream and another 40 percent access just two funding streams. Those responsible for hiring in small programs are also most likely to be working directly with teachers, teacher assistants, children and families at their sites. They also represent our most vulnerable programs, which makes them a critical resource for identifying the barriers to hiring and retaining qualified staff and providing recommendations for support and solutions.



Survey Findings Corroborate the Anecdotal Evidence

Turnover rates are high across all program types. Findings from the survey confirmed the widespread anecdotal evidence from the field regarding the difficulties related to hiring and retaining qualified staff in Illinois early childhood programs. These difficulties are especially pronounced for DCFS-licensed child care (nonschool-based) programs and for lead teachers (especially infant-toddler lead teachers). Turnover rates for lead teachers in licensed child care centers are twice as high (42 percent) as turnover rates in school-based programs (21 percent). On average, it takes nearly a quarter of a year to fill a lead infant-toddler teacher position, which leaves many of our state's youngest

children without qualified teachers for months at a time. The open-ended comments corroborated these findings, with many respondents indicating that there are just “not enough” qualified candidates at all levels.

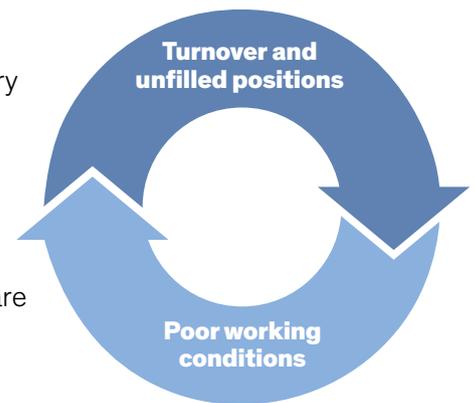
The lack of funding for adequate compensation is the greatest barrier to hiring and retention. Inadequate wages and benefits were the most frequently cited barriers to hiring and retaining qualified staff. This was an expected finding. While there is variation in wages across specific positions, the age range of the children taught and the funding streams that support the programs, inadequate compensation is not just anecdotal. It is a persistent, pervasive and well-documented problem. Data from the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) indicates that

the median annual earnings of child care teachers qualify them for public benefits across the U.S., including here in Illinois.⁶ Nearly half (46 percent) of child care workers in Illinois receive some form of public benefits (EITC, Medicaid, Food Stamps, TANF), at a cost of \$71.4 million.⁷

Wage data collected in the survey showed significant differences in wages for licensed child care and school-based preschool teachers. According to this data, teachers in school-based settings earn 44 percent more, on average, than teachers in licensed child care settings. The average wage for licensed child care teachers is \$13.18 per hour, while the average wage for school-based preschool teachers is \$19.03. The NSECE data also demonstrates that there is a great variation in pay among professionals with the same level of education across different settings.⁸ For example, teachers with a bachelor's degree in a school-based preschool program earn more than teachers with a bachelor's degree in a community-based preschool program—even when both programs are publicly funded. This lack of compensation parity perpetuates turnover in community-based programs.

High turnover rates are detrimental to children and families. Our survey results suggest a vicious cycle that has a direct impact on the quality of Illinois early childhood programs. When survey respondents were asked about the impact of turnover on their programs, more than three-quarters reported that administrators needed to be in classrooms and were therefore

neglecting administrative duties. Two-thirds reported teacher burnout from high turnover rates. The science of early learning highlights the importance of consistency and continuity in relationships, as well as adult well-being, for optimal learning and behavior. Administrators who must spend time in the classroom may be neglecting the crucial duties of providing the supportive organizational structure and culture necessary for teacher learning and effectiveness. Teachers and assistants who are working without leadership and administrative support and suffering from burnout cannot provide the emotional and educational support that young children need. Without this support, children are likely to exhibit more challenging behaviors. These factors combine to create working conditions that lead to staff turnover. This cycle of turnover and poor working conditions has a negative impact on the quality of care and education for too many young children in Illinois.



Conclusion

The survey respondents provided many suggestions for addressing the barriers to hiring and retaining qualified staff. Not surprisingly, survey respondents

cited “increased funding for wages and benefits” most frequently when queried about the resources that would help them address their hiring and retention challenges.

It is also important to recognize what the field did *not* suggest. In national-level reports about compensation, the message is often that salaries are still low, despite ever-increasing qualification requirements.⁹ While these increased qualifications were also identified as barriers to hiring and retention, survey respondents did not recommend lowering qualifications as a solution to this challenge. The survey respondents — many of whom work directly with teachers, teacher assistants, children and families — understand the complexity of the work and are well aware of the importance of a skilled workforce. Instead, they offered a range of proposals for recruiting more people into the field and providing additional professional development and educational attainment opportunities for the existing workforce. Specifically, they requested more clarity and uniformity with regard

to qualification requirements, as well as greater access to opportunities that will enable them to meet these requirements.

After analyzing the survey responses—which represent the collective voice of early childhood administrators throughout Illinois—it is clear that, despite the challenges that these administrators face with regard to hiring and retention, they remain deeply committed to developing a highly qualified early childhood workforce in Illinois. Yet their vision of high-quality care and education for Illinois’ youngest learners cannot be realized without substantial investment in the early childhood workforce. **Their message is a consistent and compelling one: The current early childhood systems do not fully support the cost of quality early care and education. The problem of pervasive turnover and its detrimental impact on children and families cannot be resolved without funding to ensure adequate compensation, as well as compensation parity across program types.**

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education (2016). “The Integration of Early Childhood Data.” https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ece/intergration_of_early_childhood_data_final.pdf

² STARnet Regions. <http://www.starnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Statewide-Starnet-Map.pdf>.

^{3,4} U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education (2016). “High-Quality Early Learning Settings Depend on a High-Quality Workforce: Low Compensation Undermines Quality.” https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ece/ece_low_compensation_undermines_quality_report_june_10_2016_508.pdf.

⁵ Whitehead, J. (2017). *Illinois Salary and Staffing Survey of Licensed Child Care Facilities* [PowerPoint presentation].

⁶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education (2016). “High-Quality Early Learning Settings Depend on a High-Quality Workforce: Low Compensation Undermines Quality.”

⁷ Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley (2016). “Early Childhood Workforce Index.”

⁸ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education (2016). “High-Quality Early Learning Settings Depend on a High-Quality Workforce: Low Compensation Undermines Quality.”

⁹ Whitebook, M., Phillips, D., and Howes, C. (2014). “Worthy Work, STILL Unlivable Wages: The Early Childhood Workforce 25 Years after the National Child Care Staffing Study.” Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley.



“ Programs need more public funding. I am fortunate that our school is in an area where there is a pool of women (e.g., moms) who don't ‘need’ to work, but do so out of a passion for the field. They are willing to work hard and extra hours for little pay compared to the public sector. I can't imagine how hard it would be to hire qualified help in a less affluent community. Many early childhood programs offer minimum wage or just slightly above. We start lead teachers at \$15/hour because that is what the Great Start program recommends as a reasonable starting wage for a teacher with a degree. Aides start at \$11/hour. Neither of these are livable wages. Even as a director with an early childhood degree and 20+ years of experience in the field, I make just over \$20/hour. This may be considered a livable wage but, compared to my peers in the public arena, it is less than what a first-year teacher earns. **The parents pay over \$1,000 per month (per child) for care already though. You can't ask them to pay more.** ”

— An Illinois Early Childhood Program Director

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