

Wisconsin Credential Evaluation Overview



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES



National Center on Child Care Professional
Development Systems and Workforce Initiatives (PDW Center)
Jointly funded by ACF's Office of Child Care and Office of Head Start

This document provides an overview of Wisconsin's evaluation of its Infant/Toddler and Administrator Credentials. Information is provided in four sections:

- I. [Background](#);
- II. [Methods](#);
- III. [Initial Findings](#); and
- IV. [Summary](#).

I. BACKGROUND

In response to Wisconsin's quality improvement systems goal to examine the impact of the State Infant/Toddler and Administrator Credentials, the PDW Center's Research Specialists (at Child Trends) assisted the Wisconsin registry (The Registry) with an evaluation study. The PDW Center worked with The Registry to develop and conduct online surveys with early childhood practitioners who had completed the Administrator or Infant/Toddler Credential. Then they surveyed these practitioners' employers.

Wisconsin's The Registry developed a set of credentials for early childhood practitioners: Administrator, Inclusion, Infant/Toddler, Leadership, and Preschool. Each credential is a sequenced set of credit-bearing courses (12–18 credits). For each one, participants must complete a portfolio or project and a capstone course, which demonstrates the knowledge gained. The credentials are awarded by The Registry (<http://www.the-registry.org/>).

II. METHODS

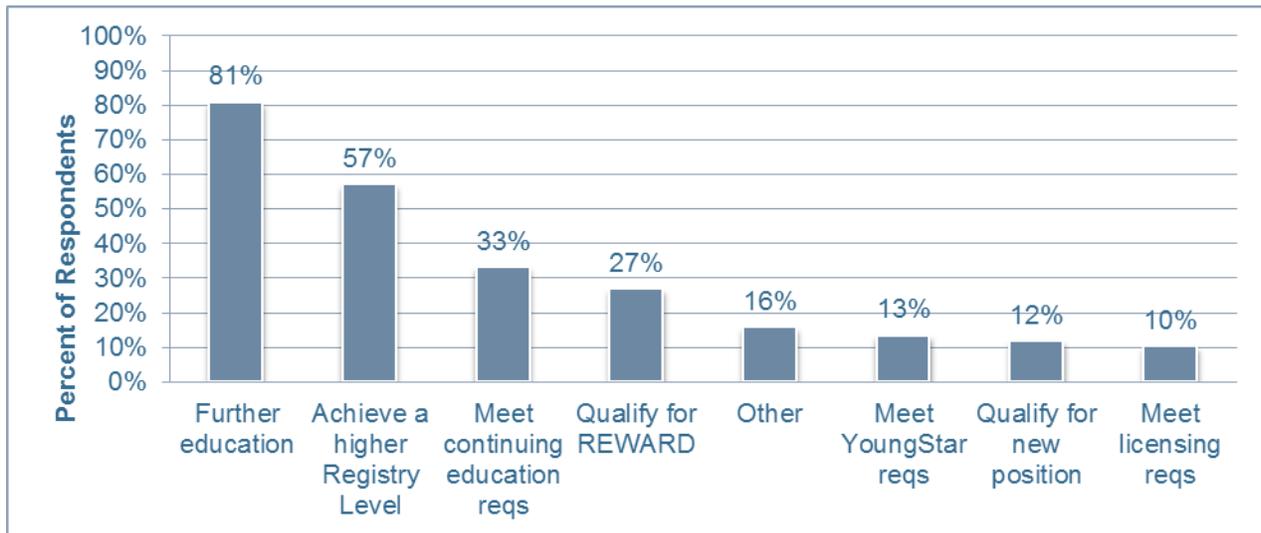
- The Registry staff sent surveys to three groups: Infant/Toddler Credential recipients, Infant/Toddler recipients' current employers, and Administrator Credential recipients.
- The Registry staff sent the survey for Infant/Toddler Credential recipients to 566 individuals. Of these, 126 responded, resulting in a response rate of 22%.
- The Registry staff sent 272 surveys to employers of Infant/Toddler Credential recipients. Of these, 58 responded, resulting in a response rate of 21%.
- The Registry staff emailed the survey to 856 recipients of the Administrator Credential. Of these, 247 responded, at a response rate of 29%.
- The Registry data was also updated and analyzed. PDW Center Research Specialists examined education and employment of credential holders, and compared these to practitioners who had not earned any of The Registry credentials.

III. INITIAL FINDINGS

The Infant/Toddler Credential

- Patterns of employment and education, measured before and after achieving the credential, suggest that a small percentage of those surveyed attained higher levels of employment and education after receiving the credential.
- The majority of practitioners pursued the Infant/Toddler Credential to further their education and/or to reach a higher level in The Registry (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Responses to "Why did you choose to pursue The Registry Infant/Toddler Credential?" (n=126)



- The vast majority of those surveyed believed that the credential had helped them to implement practices such as using a developmentally appropriate curriculum, communicating with families, and showing more professionalism.
- Practitioners who earned the Infant/Toddler Credential report regularly engaging in the practices covered in credential courses.

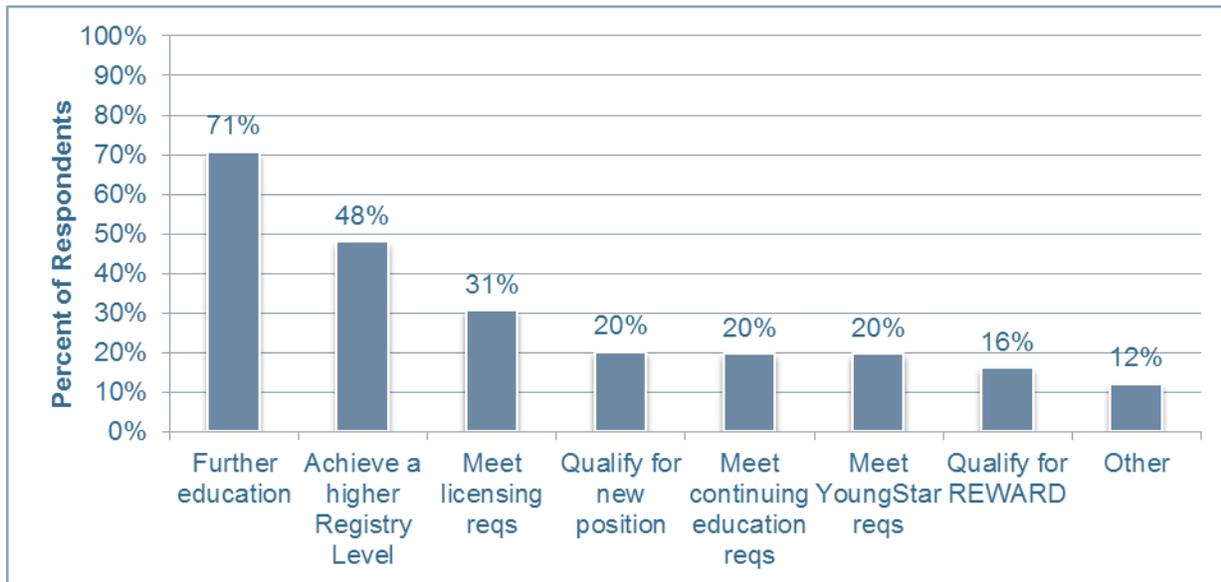
Employers of practitioners who had taken the Infant/Toddler Credential

- Nearly 80% said that they consider the Infant/Toddler Credential when making hiring decisions.
- About one-third of employers said that the Infant/Toddler Credential has more of an impact than other types of education.
- About one-third said that staff with the Infant/Toddler Credential are more effective in applying certain early childhood practices than those without a credential.

The Administrator Credential

- Patterns of employment and education before and after achieving the credential suggest that a small percentage of those surveyed attained higher levels of employment and education after taking the credential.
- The most frequent reasons for taking the Administrator Credential were to further their education and/or to reach a higher level in The Registry (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Responses to "Why did you choose to pursue The Registry Administrator Credential?" (n= 2,470)



- Most practitioners surveyed reported that the credential had helped them to implement practices such as offering professional growth and guidance to staff, organization and efficiency, and effective communication with staff, families, and community partners.
- Practitioners who had earned the Administrator Credential report regularly engaging in the practices covered in credential courses.

Registry Data Analyses

- Analysis of registry data revealed that in the larger sample, there was little change in employment and education level after earning an Infant/Toddler or Administrator Credential. However, for a relatively small group of practitioners, the credentials serve as a steppingstone that leads to higher levels of education and employment.
- Education level and employment differ significantly for practitioners with an Infant/Toddler or Administrator Credential and those with no credential from The Registry. Practitioners earning a credential are more likely to achieve a higher level of overall education and reach higher employment positions (Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1. Current education level for practitioners with and without a credential

Credential	High School	Some College	One Year Diploma	Associate Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	Doctoral Degree
Yes (n=1,970)	1%	51%	3%	23%	19%	3%	<1%
No (n= 8,489)	29%	24%	2%	14%	26%	4%	<1%

Table 2. Current employment level for practitioners with and without a credential

Credential	Family Child Care	Agency Staff	Childhood Professional	Assistant Teacher	School-Age Teacher	Teacher	Administrator	Center Director (<50 children)	Center Director (>50 children)
Yes (n=1,471)	21%	2%	2%	2%	<1%	28%	9%	10%	26%
No (n=7,107)	9%	1%	1%	10%	7%	60%	2%	4%	5%

Practitioners with a credential are more likely to achieve higher levels of education, e.g., 1% have a high school diploma and 51% have some college compared to 29% and 24% of those without a credential, respectively. Those with a credential are more likely to be an administrator or center director than those without, e.g., 45% compared to 11% and more likely to be family child care providers, e.g., 21% compared to 9% without.

IV. SUMMARY

Taken together, results from the three surveys and analysis of The Registry data suggest that the Administrator and Infant/Toddler Credentials serve important purposes in the Wisconsin professional development system for early childhood practitioners. For some practitioners, The Registry Credentials can lead to higher achievement in education and employment.

Practitioners and employers alike believe that the credentials improve the practices of staff in their daily work. Practitioners who pursue the Administrator and Infant/Toddler Credentials have significantly higher educational and employment attainment than practitioners who have not taken any of The Registry Credentials. This suggests that the credentials play an important role in the opportunities available to early childhood practitioners in Wisconsin.