

Strengthening the Early Childhood and School-Age Workforce Executive Summary



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES



National Center on Child Care Professional
Development Systems and Workforce Initiatives (PDW Center)
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To support the Office of Child Care's and the Office of Head Start's priority of a strong early childhood (EC) and school-age (SA) workforce, the PDW Center developed a series of briefs, a guide for planning and implementing, and a tool on targeting workforce investments. These resources are designed to help State/Territory decisionmakers increase and retain a skilled workforce by improving their workplace conditions, compensation, and access to professional development (PD). These resources and full citations are available at <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/resource/strengthening-early-childhood-and-school-age-workforce>.

This brief outlines the content of *Strengthening the EC and SA Workforce: A Tool to Improve Workplace Conditions, Compensation, and Access to Professional Development*.

FOCUS AREAS

- 1. Workplace conditions:** Positive **workplace conditions** support staff retention *and* staff's ability to translate new knowledge and skills into effective practice.
- 2. Compensation:** Pairing an increase in competency with an increase in **compensation** can help programs retain skilled staff.
- 3. Access to professional development:** EC and SA professionals must be able to **access PD** to gain new knowledge and skills.



KEY MESSAGES

- Improving workplace conditions, achieving fair and equitable compensation, and increasing access to PD for the EC and SA workforce requires a combination of strategies.
- It is important to address workplace conditions, compensation, and access to PD in the overall context of quality improvement and broader EC and SA systems.
- Addressing workplace conditions, compensation, and access to PD as part of a PD system requires the examination of available funding and the packaging, staging, targeting, and prorating of investments of those resources.
- Aligned PD systems can help States/Territories reduce duplication, streamline processes, and increase career mobility. **Every reduction in cost, time, and attrition makes it possible to target more funding to program stability and staff salaries.**
- To raise quality *and* retain effective educators, States/Territories can combine promising PD and workforce retention strategies at the professional, program, and system levels.
- Innovative policies and initiatives can improve workplace conditions, compensation, and access to PD.
- The management and leadership skills of center administrators and family child care providers are essential to making the most of the current system and to securing a better future for the workforce.
- Standards and policies can set expectations for staff qualifications, salary schedules, and working conditions and define markers for program quality.

SECTION SUMMARIES

Strengthening the EC and SA Workforce is a reference and resource tool and is not designed to be read from start to finish. It includes research, definitions, examples, and links to more information in five major sections. We encourage you to go directly to the sections that you find most meaningful. The following provides key points from each of the tool's five sections.

1. WHY TARGETING INVESTMENTS MATTERS

- Workplace conditions, compensation, and access to PD affect the recruitment and retention of all EC and SA staff.
- Investment in high-quality EC and SA programs is smart economic development.
- High-quality programs require an effective workforce.
- Acquiring critical knowledge, skills, and dispositions can make educators more effective.
- Workforce turnover is detrimental to promoting stable, consistent relationships between educators and young children.

2. FUNDING SOURCES

- Data on funding allocations, participation rates, and results inform strategic decisions and impact outcomes.
- Policymakers and other leaders need more data and analyses to determine the most effective ratio of investments in scholarships, training, wage supplements, and management skill development. They also need more information to prioritize and sequence implementation of these investments over time to achieve the greatest results.

3. PROGRAM STANDARDS, MANAGEMENT, AND BUSINESS PRACTICES

- Business and personnel practices play a critical role in providing positive workplace conditions, offering professional salaries and benefits, and supporting staff's access to PD.
- Program leaders who secure adequate funding and have personnel management skills are better able to recruit and retain highly skilled and well-compensated staff.

4. PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

- An effective, aligned approach to supporting improved workplace conditions, compensation, and access to PD requires comprehensive decisionmaking and implementation strategies.
- This five-step process can support States/Territories as they move toward system innovation: State/Territory teams can (1) map existing efforts, (2) develop goals, (3) gauge readiness to change, (4) implement a plan, and (5) review the results.

5. STRATEGIC APPROACHES: A STATE STORY

- The current financing structure cannot meet the costs needed to deliver high-quality programs and retain highly qualified staff. However, aligned systems make it possible to target more funding to program stability and staff salaries.
- A State story that describes an intentional, multifaceted, and effective approach demonstrates how leaders can successfully address workplace conditions, compensation, and the workforce's access to PD, one strategic step at a time.