

# Targeting Early Childhood and School Age Workforce Investments



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 to 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 offers quick facts from research on targeting EC and SA workforce investments. It also outlines promising State strategies to align PD systems to 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.**

## QUICK FACTS

- ★ The EC workforce is comprised of about 1 million center-based teachers and caregivers, 1 million paid, home-based teachers and caregivers, and an additional 2.7 million unpaid, home-based teachers and caregivers.
- ★ Center-based teachers and caregivers earn a median hourly wage of \$10.60. Preschool teachers' median hourly wage is \$11.90, and infant/toddler caregivers' median wage is \$9.30.
- ★ In 2012, about 75% of center- and home-based teachers and caregivers reported that they had some form of health insurance.
- ★ Fifty-three percent of center-based teachers and caregivers have college degrees; 35.5% have bachelor's or graduate/professional degrees.
- ★ Center-based teachers and caregivers working full-time have a median early childhood education experience of 14 years and only 4% have less than 1 year of experience.

(National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team, 2013).

## PROMISING STRATEGIES

States/Territories can combine **professional**, **program**, and **system** level strategies to raise quality and retain effective educators.

- ★ **Provide scholarships and supports.** Financial supports help individuals access and complete specialized EC development education or training. The vast majority of States with Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H.) Early Childhood® scholarship and wage incentive projects report less than a 10% turnover rate among 2-year associate degree scholarship recipients (Child Care Services Association, 2012).
- ★ **Supply ongoing and onsite coaching and mentoring.** Technical assistance (TA) methods like coaching and mentoring appear more likely to change teacher practice than traditional workshops (Campbell & Milbourne, 2005), sharpen family child care providers' skills, and

increase the providers' sensitivity to children (Bromer, Van Haitsma, Daley, & Modigliani, 2008).

- ★ **Offer competitive salaries or financial incentives linked to qualifications and skills.** Strategies offering compensation parity and rewarding increased qualifications can attract and retain staff in centers. For example, the WAGE\$<sup>®</sup> initiatives report turnover rates from 0–12% among participants (Child Care Services Association, 2012).
- ★ **Establish health insurance, paid leave, and disability and retirement benefits.** A combination of one or more of these benefits has been linked to EC workers' intention to stay in the field (Cornille, Mullis, Mullis, & Shriner, 2006; Holochwost, Demott, Buell, Yannetta, & Amsden, 2009).
- ★ **Improve directors' administration and leadership skills (Rohacek et al., 2010) and methods of proactively managing turnover (Cassidy et al., 2011).** Program leaders with these skills are better fiscal managers and promote increased staff stability.
- ★ **Explore how individual or business tax credits/deductions can finance programs, leverage additional private investment, and create incentives for programs to offer high-quality services (Stoney & Mitchell, 2007).** Tax credits give parents an incentive to choose high-quality early learning programs and create a market demand. Tax credits can also ease the financial burden of investments that providers make to reach a level of quality that entitles parents to a tax credit. Finally, tax incentives for private industry create opportunities for businesses and employers to invest in their workforce by contributing to the quality of EC and SA care choices in their communities.
- ★ **Partner with shared service alliances, family child care staff networks, or similar initiatives to promote economies of scale within EC and SA programs.** Shared services networks give EC and SA programs additional fiscal flexibility, allowing them to increase staff compensation and improve workplace conditions, thus increasing staff satisfaction and retention (Stoney, 2004).
- ★ **Build on and coordinate with other PD system efforts.** North Dakota increased the capacity of its child care resource and referral system to deliver training that is accessible anywhere by partnering with the national Aim4Excellence<sup>™</sup> and Minnesota Eager-to-Learn online training program. The program also links onsite TA and financial incentives to completion of training that leads to credentials. In 2011, Minnesota used general revenue funds to pay for the program, which was started with funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.
- ★ **Examine usage/uptake of allocated funds for PD and workforce compensation and conditions.** Washington used data from its Managed Education and Registry Information Tool (MERIT) system to plan for expansion of the State's Early Achievers Opportunity Grants program and the Washington Scholarships program for State-approved training and degrees. The State is also using MERIT data to develop a recommended statewide salary scale to promote adequate compensation for the workforce.
- ★ **Repackage resources to target a combination of the supports and financial assistance that individual professionals and programs need so they can change practice and improve quality.** Delaware is enhancing its scholarship and bonus program by targeting resources to programs that serve a large percentage of children with high needs. Wage supplements are linked to educational attainments and program quality level. Program standards recognize incremental salary schedules. Program administrators receive TA to implement a wage scale, support program quality, and improve practice.