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State Capacity Building Center

The Health & Wellbeing of Infant/Toddler Professionals: A Need for Compassion and Commitment

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Session Overview

- ◆ State of Infant/Toddler Workforce Health and Wellness
- ◆ Impact of Infant-Toddler Professional Wellbeing on Infant-Early Childhood Mental Health
- ◆ Infant/Toddler Professional Workforce Essentials
- ◆ State Strategies and Innovations
- ◆ Questions and Answers
- ◆ Thank You





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Current Status of Infant/Toddler Professional Health and Wellness

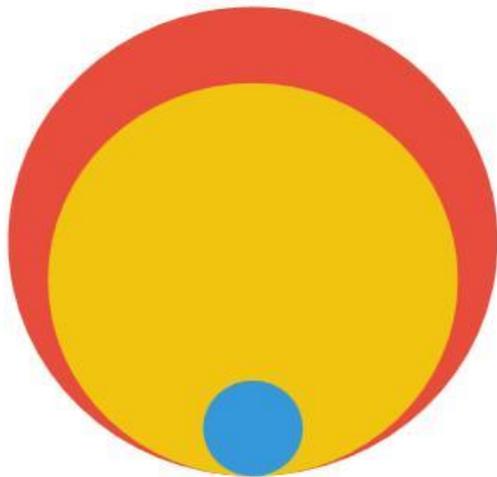
A Closer Look at the Infant/Toddler Professional Wellness

“The research picture is clear – quality of care and education matters to the lives of young children, and teachers and caregivers are central to providing that quality.”

Aletha Huston, Chair, IOM Committee on ECCE Workforce (Institute of Medicine & National Research Council [IOM & NRC], 2012, p.ix).

National Picture of Infants and Toddlers in Child Care Settings

Nearly 7 million children under the age of 3 spend some or all of their day being cared for by someone other than their parents

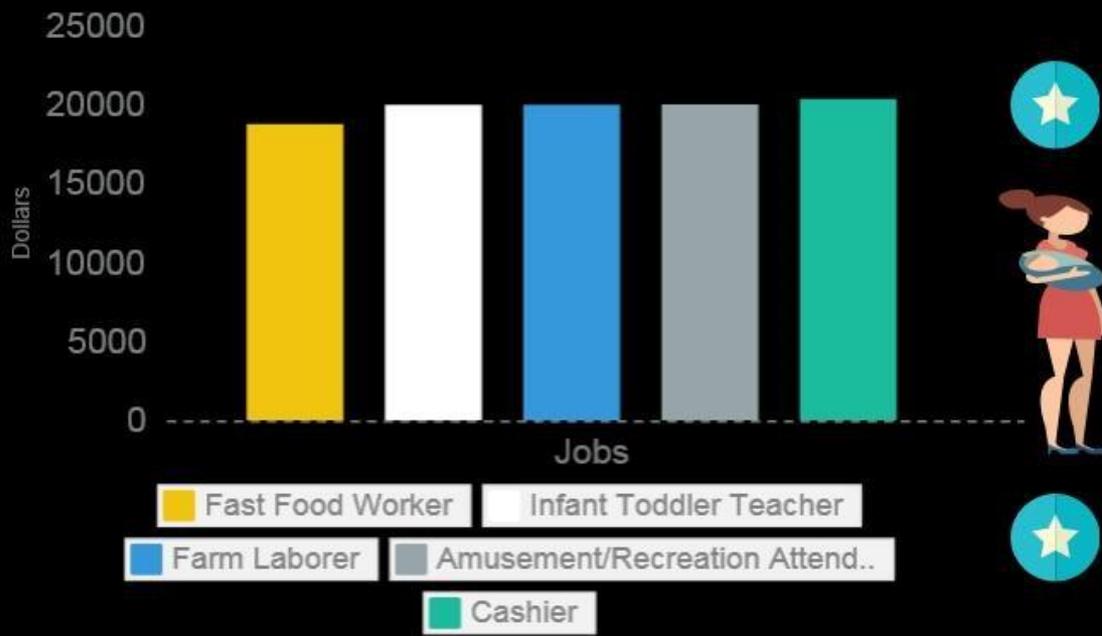


■ Poor Quality (~ 40%) ■ Average Quality (~50%)

■ Good Quality (~ 10%)

More than 40% of infants and toddlers are in child care of poor quality





Infant/toddler teachers earn the lowest wages, receive the smallest premium for their education

Because of their low earnings infant/toddler teachers likely experience the highest level of economic worry and reliance on public income supports

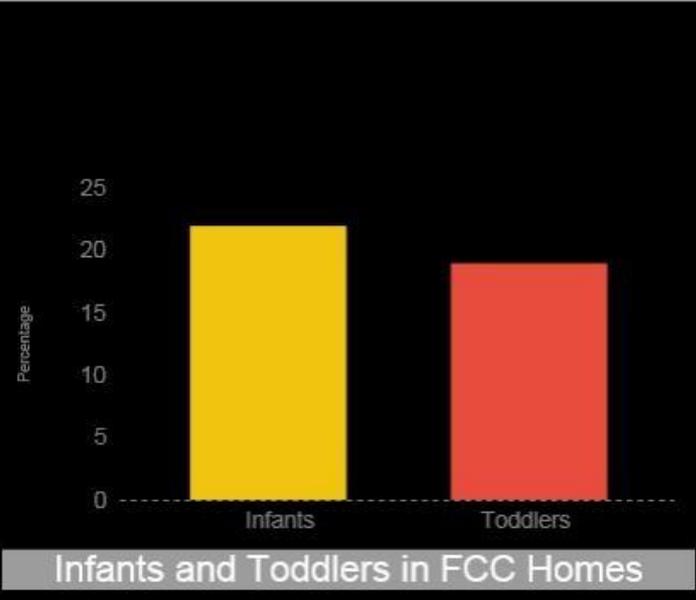
More than half of infants and toddlers receiving CCDBG are cared for in centers.



Toddlers in Centers



Infants in Centers



A family home is the second most common setting for infants and toddlers in CCDBG.

Quick Facts

EC workforce - 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.

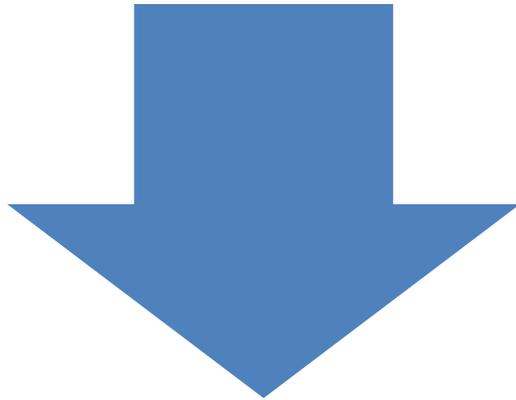
(National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team, 2013).

Early Childhood Workforce Wellness Study

Significantly higher proportions of chronic illness – **obesity, headache, depression** (Whitaker et al., 2015)

Nearly **25%** report clinically significant levels of depression (Whitaker et al., 2015)

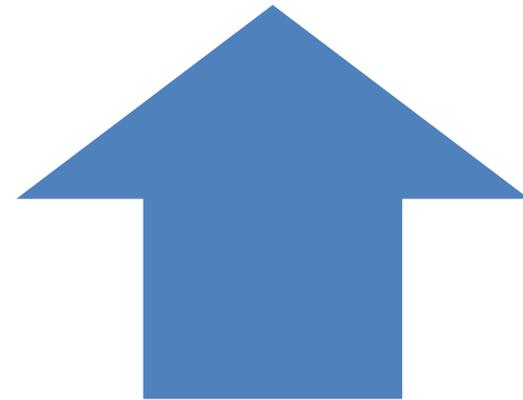
Why Early Childhood Workforce Wellness Matters



Nature, benefit and effects of early care and education depend in large part on the adults who care for children

Attitudes, education, training/professional development, compensation, and mental health impacts adults' interactions, behaviors and teaching practices

(National Academy of Sciences, 2012)



Health and Wellness: A Workforce Imperative

- ◆ Research indicates young children need consistent, sensitive, caring, and stable relationships with adults in order to thrive.
- ◆ Adults who are well, physically and mentally, are likely to have an easier time engaging in such relationships than adults who are struggling with chronic illness, such as depression (Whitaker, 2015)
- ◆ More workplace stress was associated with more conflict in teacher-children relationships (Whitaker, 2015)

Why Less Well than their Peers?

- ◆ It's hard and stressful work
 - ◆ Early childhood teachers face high demands
 - ◆ Our work tends to be undervalued by society.
 - ◆ Wages are lower than other professionals with comparable education levels.
-

Wellness Connection to Expulsion Research

- ◆ Data shows strong association between teacher depression and expulsion
(Gilliam, 2015; Whitaker, et al., 2013)
- ◆ Teachers who self report or who screen for depression are two times as likely to choose expulsion (Gilliam, 2015)
- ◆ Stronger association between teacher/child ratios, workforce supports, teacher depression and expulsion than between “challenging behavior” and expulsion (Gilliam, 2015)
- ◆ Depression converts to job stress

For early childhood educators whose job may be particularly stressful **because they are working with children living in poverty**—children whose difficult circumstances may affect their classroom behavior and needs—their wages indicate that the **teachers themselves may be living at or near the poverty line.**

Cause for Pause

- ◆ Research indicates that more workplace stress is associated with more conflict in teacher-child relationships. What implications does this have for how we implement our interventions?
-

The Good News!

States/Territories can combine **professional, program, and system** level strategies to raise program quality, and support and retain an effective workforce



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Infant/Toddler Professional Workforce Essentials

Practice, Program and System Level Strategies

Infant Toddler Professional Wellbeing Requires a Multi-Level Response



- ◆ Low wages, minimal value of the field and poor workforce conditions are problems that warrant policy response that address system building imperatives
- ◆ Some current solutions and efforts provide immediate and short term benefits

Promising Practice Approaches

- ◆ Access for to mental health consultants (Raver et al., 2012) and mentor-coaches (Downer et al., 2009).
- ◆ Mindfulness based stress reduction (Baumgartner et al., 2009) and training in contemplative teaching
- ◆ Mindfulness training for early childhood teachers was effective in changing teacher-child interactions in desirable ways (Singh et al., 2013)
- ◆ Mindfulness interventions can only succeed where working conditions reflect a compassionate culture (Taggart, 2015)

Mindfulness

Mindfulness, a technique of attending to one's thoughts and emotions without judgment, could act as a buffer to the teachers' stress and poor health (Goyal, et al, 2014).

Mindfulness Exercise Examples

- ◆ **Mindful Hand Awareness Exercise** Grasp your hands really tight and hold for a 5 to 10 seconds, then release and pay attention to how your hands feel. Keep your attention focused on the feeling for as long as you can.
- ◆ **Mental Focus Exercise** Stare at any object and try to remain focused on just that object for as long as possible. Keep a mental watch on when your mind starts to wander, then just bring it back to the object. The longer you can remain focused, the more your mindfulness will increase.
- ◆ **Tactile Exercise** Pinch your arm and pay close attention to how it feels and what your emotions begin doing. Pay attention to the pain it causes, and how it radiates out from the site where you pinch.
- ◆ **Melting Exercise** Sit and relax, and imagine yourself melting into everything around you. You might begin to feel at one with everything after some practice.

Mindfulness Exercise Examples (contd.)

- ◆ **Full Sensory Awareness Exercise** Wherever you are, just stop and look around when safe to do so. Become aware of everything that your senses pick up. How do you feel? Do you feel over-stimulated? Do you feel anxious?
- ◆ **I Exercise** Become aware of every time you use the word “I” in a sentence. This forces us to focus on how self-centered we all are. I was shocked when I started doing this...
- ◆ **Challenge Your Beliefs Exercise** Take one long held belief and pretend that you believe the direct opposite. Make a mental note of how you feel and what thoughts come into your mind.
- ◆ **Cause and Effect Exercise** Contemplate cause and effect for everything that you do for some predetermined amount of time..
- ◆ **Candle Staring Exercise** Stare at a candle flame for ten minutes straight while studying everything you can about it. When your mind wanders, become aware of where it’s going, then bring it back to the candle flame.

Contemplative Teaching

- ◆ Contemplative practices strengthen skills such as attunement with others, emotional self-regulation, awareness, resilience, flexibility, insight, empathy, intuition and morality.
- ◆ An independent assessment found that contemplative teaching has made “significant” progress in impacting the personal and professional lives of educators (Goyal et al, 2014).

Let's Practice



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State Strategies and Innovations to Recruit, Retain and Support and Infant Toddler Professional Workforce

Building Workforce Essentials

Provide scholarships and supports.

Supply ongoing and onsite coaching and mentoring.

Offer competitive salaries or financial incentives linked to qualifications and skills.

Establish health insurance, paid leave, and disability and retirement benefits

Building Workforce Essentials (cont'd)

Improve directors' administration and leadership skills (Rohacek et al., 2010) and methods of proactively preventing turnover

Use individual or business tax credits/deductions to finance programs, leverage additional private investment, and create incentives for programs to offer high-quality services

Partner with shared service alliances, family child care staff networks, or similar initiatives to promote economies of scale within EC and SA programs.

*Strengthening the Early Childhood and School Age (EC/SA) Workforce:
A Tool to Improve Workplace Conditions,
Compensation, and Access to Professional
Development*



About This Tool

A reference and resource tool—NOT designed to be read from start to finish

Tool includes:

- Research
- Definitions
- Examples
- Links to more information



Focus Areas

Workplace Conditions

Compensation

Access to PD



Focus Area: Workplace Conditions

Positive **workplace conditions** support staff retention *and* their ability to translate new knowledge and skills into effective practice



Focus Area: Compensation

Pairing an increase in competency with an increase in **compensation** can help programs retain skilled staff



Focus Area: Access to Professional Development

EC/SA
professionals
must be able
to **access**
professional
development to
gain new knowledge
and skills



Strengthening the Workforce Tool: Five Major Sections

1. Why Targeting Investments Matters
2. Funding Sources
3. Program Standards, Management, and Business Practices
4. Planning and Implementation Guide
5. Strategic Approaches: State Example



North Dakota Builds on Partnerships

- ◆ Increased the capacity to deliver accessible training by partnering with the national Aim4Excellence™ and Minnesota Eager-to-Learn online training program.
 - ◆ Program links onsite technical assistance and financial incentives to completion of training that leads to credentials.
-

Washington Focuses on Compensation and Conditions

- ◆ Used information from workforce data registry to:
 - Expand Washington Scholarships program for degrees and State-approved training
 - Establish recommendations for statewide salary scale to encourage optimal levels of compensation

Virginia's Infant Toddler Family Day Care

- ◆ Alliance of Family Child Care Homes
 - ◆ Manage fiscal and administrative and professional development tasks for network of programs
 - ◆ Participating providers agree to become members in a joint venture
 - ◆ Alleviates administrative costs and navigation of complex state and national regulations
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Key Messages for Improving Workforce Wellbeing

Addressing workplace conditions requires the examination of available funding and the packaging, staging, targeting, and prorating of investments of those resources.

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, we can combine promising PD and workforce retention strategies at all levels.

Innovative policies and initiatives can improve workplace conditions, compensation, and access to PD

Management and leadership skills of program administrators and FCC providers are essential to an effective system and to securing a better future for the workforce.

Create standards and policies for qualifications, salary schedules, and working conditions and define markers for program quality.

Questions and Answers



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