

HOW CAN WE IMPROVE EDUCATION AND COMPENSATION FOR CHILD CARE TEACHERS?

Supporting career development in early childhood education

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HIGHLIGHTS

Programs to support teacher's educational attainment can help teachers

- *develop a career path,*
- *earn higher wages, and*
- *provide higher quality child care.*

Child care teachers are often under-paid and lack education credentials, which leads to high staff turnover and poorer quality care for children during their most critical years of brain development. Currently, one in four child care educators in Texas has an associate's degree or higher, but most are being paid so little that they qualify for government assistance programs such as subsidized child care.¹ These low wages and benefits contribute to high staff turnover and staffing shortages in the field. When an educator earns a bachelor's degree, s/he often leaves for higher paying jobs at public school Pre-K or Head Start. Low wage jobs often experience high turnover, but this trend is particularly troubling for child care. Turnover rates at child care providers are often closely related to program quality indicators, so high turnover makes achieving and maintaining quality difficult.²

Not only is specialized early childhood education (ECE) training shown to improve teacher effectiveness and student outcomes, but degrees and credentials help Texas child care teachers build a career. It is clear that the child care workforce needs to reach higher levels of education, but it is unreasonable to ask them to take on this debt since their wages are so low that they often qualify for welfare programs. When child care providers actually achieve these higher levels of education, they should be compensated appropriately. Tying together scholarships with wage supplements is an ideal model. Financial incentives to encourage child care teachers to pursue higher levels of education and to stay with their employer help improve the number of qualified teachers and reduce turnover at a child care program.

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Scholarships. Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and its 28 Local Workforce Development Boards (Local Boards) are investing in child care teacher education in various ways. At least 8 of the 28 Local Boards provide their own scholarships for child care teachers to obtain the Child Development Associate (CDA) training and/or certification. Similarly, TWC invested in two free online statewide CDA training programs. TWC also invests in scholarships for the CDA and for associate's degrees through the T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) Texas scholarship program, which includes a bonus to reward child care providers when they advance and complete their degrees.

Wage Supplements and Retention Bonuses. Local Boards can build on the incentives offered through the T.E.A.C.H. program. Wage supplements can be tied to educational achievements or steps on a career ladder. Retention bonuses can reward an employee for remaining with their employer for a specified amount of time.

Apprenticeship Programs. Another promising option to help teachers improve their education and compensation is the apprenticeship model. An apprenticeship program combines paid on-the-job training with related classroom instruction that increases an apprentice's skill level and wages. Apprenticeship programs allow low-wage or unemployed workers to jumpstart their careers and establish clear career pathways, helping workers gain professional skills and increase their long-term earning potential. New

and existing child care teachers could receive training through an apprenticeship program while also meeting employer needs for a skilled and stable workforce. Apprenticeship programs are one way local communities can tap into new funding sources and invest in child care teachers. A report on this option will be released in August 2019.

Shared Services. The Shared Services model can help providers reduce some of their operating costs related to administrative duties, janitorial services, and food services. Providers can reinvest this savings in their employees by improving staff compensation.

Quality Set-Aside Funds. Local Boards have received quality set-aside funds to improve the supply and quality of services for infants and toddlers. One way these funds can be used is for providing financial incentives that increase the supply and quality of infant and toddler care. This means Local Boards can use these funds to pay wage stipends to infant and toddler teachers.

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NOTES:

1. CHILDREN AT RISK calculations using American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2012-2016. IPUMS-USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.
2. Cassidy, D. J., Lower, J. K., Kintner-Duffy, V. L., Hegde, A. V., & Shim, J. (2011). The day-to-day

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