

State and Territory Administrators Meeting (STAM 2013)

Workforce Plenary Highlights

Size and Characteristics of Early Care and Education Workers and Caregivers: Initial Findings from the National Survey of Early Care and Education

Ivelisse Martinez-Beck

Team Leader for Child Care Research/Senior Social Science Research Analyst, ACF Office of Planning, Research & Evaluation

I am very excited to present the panel for the first plenary session on the workforce. . . we're going to do the first release of findings from the National Survey of Early Care and Education. After a couple of years of design and implementation, we finally have data from the workforce survey.

We have with us today members of the National Survey of Early Education team. First, Linda Smith; she is going to provide a few comments about the National Survey. Then Rick Brandon, who is a co-principle investigator, is going to do the presentation on the findings. Marty Zaslow, who was also part of the team as a consultant, is going to put the findings in context of the current policy and initiatives that are in place today.

Linda K. Smith

Deputy Assistant Secretary and Inter-Departmental Liaison for Early Childhood Development, ACF

Basically, the quality of the workforce is the single biggest thing that this field needs to deal with because at the end of the day, the quality of the interaction between the adult and the child is the single biggest indicator of quality and success with children. And so this study is huge for us.

We've done a lot of analysis of the workforce issues. We know that over the next 10 years, to meet the need for the President's initiative, we will need over 100,000 new early care and education teachers in this country.

And we can't get there unless we know where we are, and that's why this study couldn't be coming at a more important time to this Nation than right now.

Rick Brandon

Principal, RnB Consulting

The objective of what we're going to try today is to report on the initial findings. This is the first comprehensive, nationally representative portrait of the early care and education workforce.

We had four integrated surveys based in the same geographic areas drawn from 50 States -- center-based workers, and two sets of home-based workers. We derived from the administrative lists, which many of you are used to talking about as formal home-based providers, and drawn from a household-based sample of everybody caring for children not their own, often referred to as family, friends, and neighbors.

In addition to the reports we will be doing out of the national survey team, there will be a public use database available in the fall of 2014, and researchers will probably spend the next 10 years mining this very rich set of data.

Let me go into a little more detail about how we define the early care and education workforce. As you all know better than I, workers don't just operate on their own; they operate in a context. There are three major components to the early care and education workforce. We surveyed over 10,000 individual workers, about 4,800 classroom staff, about 3,800 home-based providers from the administrative lists, and about 1,500 home-based providers from the household sample.

The data that we're giving today on center-based workers is only on those directly to care for children in a classroom or group and we're only focusing on those serving children birth through 5.

The workforce will be divided by low-income communities versus other income communities, by rural versus urban. We will have this nested design that lets us talk both about worker characteristics and workers in the context of their classroom, their program, and their community.

We estimate about 1 million paid center-based workers. We know that, out of that million workers, about 45 percent, or 447,000, are classified as lead teachers. About 21 to 22 percent are either full teachers or instructors or assistant teachers; and only about 11 percent are aides.

These workers are located at about 130,000 centers; a center in our terminology is a location. There may be multiple programs at a center, and a center may be part of a larger entity—a YMCA, a community-based organization, a large chain—many different configurations, all of which we document. About 20 percent are in high-poverty areas. Now that doesn't mean that only 20 percent are serving low-income kids. The majority of the low-income population does not live in densely low-income areas.

There are many ways we categorize centers—for profit, nonprofit, government. We’re using a four-way breakdown. Is the center actually operated or directly sponsored by a school or a school district? We then look at anybody who’s funded by Head Start.

Sixty percent of the workers are in the other early care and education settings. Only 7 percent are in school-sponsored centers; 13 percent are in Head Start–funded but not school sponsored; and about 20 percent are in public pre-k–funded centers.

There’s particular interest in accessibility for infant care. One-third, 34 percent, are caring for infants and toddlers.

Over half of all center-based workers in the United States have a college degree, either the AA or BA level, and about a quarter have a 4-year degree. But this is very different if you look for those caring for younger children and those caring for preschool children. Only 19 percent of those serving the younger children have a 4-year degree, whereas 45 percent, almost half of those serving preschoolers have a college degree.

More than a quarter of those serving the younger children have a high school degree or less—very low education. Of the lead teachers, 43 percent have a bachelor’s degree or higher. Of the full teachers, 38 percent, and of the assistant teachers, about 22 percent have a college degree. So, as you would expect, it relates significantly to the role.

How much are early care and education workers paid?

The overall average for center-based workers serving children birth through 5 is \$10.60 an hour, but that ranges from \$9.00 an hour for those with high school or less, only slightly higher than that for those with some college, but up to \$11.00 an hour for those with an AA, and \$14.70 with a BA or higher. A quarter of early care and education workers with bachelor or higher degrees are earning no more than \$10.50 an hour.

The average wage for individuals with a BA according to census data is \$27.00 an hour for those with a BA or higher in the U.S. So even the median with bachelors or higher are earning only about half of the average of what a BA worker in the overall U.S. economy earns.

School-sponsored centers pay significantly higher at all levels of education, and it’s the single dominant determination of wage differences. We also see that Head Start pays significantly more for an AA than for people without.

Let’s now go to the home-based workers. We estimated over 3 million home-based providers serving children birth through 5. Those from the household-based sample are about 90 percent what you normally call family, friend, and neighbors, or informal. They are not paid or caring

only for related children. About 10 percent of them, which is still a very large number, are operating like a business.

We have some conventional wisdom about the early care and education workforce being a low attachment, rapid turnover, people in and out of the field and often not educated. Our data is beginning to ask is that conventional wisdom correct? Almost three-quarters of center-based workers are full time. Very few, only 11 percent, work very long hours, more than 40 hours a week. Very, very few work more than 50 hours a week. Half of center workers have more than 13 years' experience and are still working.

We found that the median number of years of experience for a center-based staff was 10 years of experience; for home-based providers on the administrative list, almost 14 years; for those in the household sample, only 5 years.

In terms of are they coming right fresh onto the job, only 4 percent are there with less than 1 year experience. We all know that the research shows that as important as education and training are, it's the attitudes and orientations to children and childrearing that's the most important predictor of the observed quality of care.

We have a whole series of scales that we're just beginning to analyze, and we'll be able to make direct comparisons and compare whether those staff serving low-income kids in low-income communities have similar or different attitudes and orientations from others. We have a whole series of questions on use of curriculum, on how much professional development and what type of professional development they participated in. And we asked workers whether they're serving special needs children, physical or emotional needs, learning disabilities; it's hard to get at whether you're serving dual language learners, but we'll be able to identify which and how many are serving those children.

So what are the potential applications for some of the policy questions that everybody in the field is struggling with right now? We found that the qualifications of center-based versus home-based workers vary greatly. A much higher group percent than we thought have college degrees, but it's much higher in the center based than in the home based, and it's higher serving preschool-age children than those serving infants and toddlers.

What does it cost to buy in the open market now to, if you will, buy a worker with a higher degree? Basically, we're finding it costs about \$3 an hour per degree—\$3 dollars more for an AA degree than high school-educated worker, and another \$3 dollars an hour to move from AA degree to a BA degree. But those are still, as we mentioned before, way below overall U.S. payments for workers with college degrees.

Marty Zaslow

Director of the Office for Policy and Communications, Society for Research in Child Development (SRCDD)

What are some of the key features that jump out at me when I hear this presentation? Probably the most important is that the data are both encompassing and differentiated. This is really the first time that we have numbers that include both paid and unpaid and that use complementary data collection strategies, so we have a clear picture of the home-based care providers.

We already see very important subgroups beginning to emerge. We see the differentiation between paid and unpaid, according to the location and funding source for center-based care, ages of children, educational attainment.

Some very interesting patterns are already jumping out, and these include that different subgroups have different strengths. So the center-based caregivers working with 3- to 5-year-olds have the greatest education attainment, but the ones with the greatest experience in the field are the home-based providers from the administrative list.

There were some encouraging surprises in these data. The percent with college degree in center settings overall, and especially those working with 3- to 5-year-olds is a higher number than we've seen previously. Why might we be seeing higher numbers for center-based staff? There have been important initiatives pushing for higher education, for example, in Head Start and also expansions of State-funded pre-k. We may be beginning to see the effects of this.

It's also very important to point out that median years of experience in these data is longer than previous reports we're not talking about job turnover at the center level here, but we're talking about average years of experience this is encouraging. This tells us that if we invest in this workforce, we're investing in people who stay and this includes in the home-based samples.

We are just at the beginning of these analyses, so what are some of the important things we're going to learn as we move forward? We're going to be able to look at education and wages of the workforce by the characteristics of the children they serve, and it will be possible to examine the relationships between the availability of benefits and such individual worker characteristics as education level, attitudes and orientations, and stress, morale. And at the center level it'll be possible to look at benefits in relationship to turnover rate, in relation to price, funding sources, professional development that's going on, supervision, and support. So we're going to be able to contextualize benefits in a way we've never been able to before.

This data set has an extraordinary amount of information about funding sources and co-funding. And this will be very important for considering the potential within communities to expand pre-kindergarten.

The data on wages by education and type of sponsorship will be important for developing estimates of the funding that would be needed to expand slots in pre-k. How much is it going to cost in a particular context?

Eventually, we're going to be able to relate the supply side and the demand side information in these surveys, and look at questions like utilization patterns in light of characteristics of availability, accessibility, and programmatic features.

This is going to be very, very informative, to help communities think about how to target their expansion efforts—where quality improvement efforts are needed, how to strategize about these things.

We need this in-depth, extremely rich portrayal of the workforce, but then as the policy initiatives move forward we're going to have to track the changes. The current definitions for standard occupations that cut across all Federal data collection bifurcate between child care workers and preschool teachers. Child care workers only provide physical care and watch over children. Preschool teachers instruct. All of us sitting in this room know that anyone working with a young child does both, that the balance may differ, but we urgently need a unified definition.

Even with the data on child care workers, with the definition that we think is problematic, we can't separate out the early childhood workforce. We want to let you know that a group is working on proposing changed definitions of this, and we'd love your input, especially on how to track changes over time.