

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS: THE EARLY CARE & EDUCATION WORKFORCE IN LOUISIANA

April 2024



The Louisiana Policy Institute for Children completed its first-ever survey of child care staff, focusing on the compensation and experiences of Louisiana's early care and education workforce. These survey results provide a comprehensive view of the early care and education workforce in our state, including current wage and benefit information for all types of child care staff, not just teachers and directors. These staff include janitorial and food workers, as well as office managers and assistant teachers.

These findings highlight a stark reality about the early care and education sector:

While the individuals who care for and educate young children in Louisiana are overwhelmingly educated and credentialed, the average rate of pay in the sector is insufficient to support them, especially if they choose to have children of their own. As a result, one-third of early care and education staff are thinking of quitting their jobs, despite caring deeply about their work.

OUR FINDINGS

Demographics:

- **Louisiana's early care and education workforce is made up of educated and credentialed professionals**, with over 80% of early care and education teachers and directors having at least an early childhood credential, and more than one-third holding a bachelor's or graduate degree.
- **Teachers tend to be younger and newer to the profession than other staff, and over one-third of employees have 5 years of experience or less.** Providers of all types face challenges with staff turnover. These findings reinforce our previous research that shows over two-thirds of child care providers are concerned about short- and long-term staff turnover.
- **The majority of child care staff work in the communities where they live.** Child care businesses are truly small, local businesses that directly support their local economies by ensuring that parents can go to work.
- **Statewide, child care is predominantly staffed by people of color.** Low wages in this sector contribute to ongoing racial wage gaps.



Compensation:

- **Compensation rates vary by region, but most still earn less than a family-sustaining wage.** Most educators still make less than \$15 per hour, and in some regions, the majority of child care workers make less than \$12.
- **Child care employees are stressed about their finances.** Most child care employees are stressed about their finances and worry about money at least monthly.
- **Less than half of respondents had access to medical insurance or retirement benefits**, and nearly half of child care employees participate in Medicaid or Medicare programs. When medical or retirement benefits are offered by employers, child care employees utilize them at high rates.

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Job Satisfaction & Staffing

- **Over 80% of early care and education staff would choose their same career again.** Most child care employees are satisfied in their careers and plan to remain at their current employer, and over half indicated that they were likely to stay for the next 5 years.
- **However, almost one-third of child care workers are thinking about quitting their job.** The majority of child care workers indicated higher wages would increase their likelihood of remaining with their employer
- **Higher pay is likely to improve retention for the majority of child care workers in all roles and at all provider types.** Almost 80% of the child care workforce earns less than \$20 per hour, and most earn less than \$15 per hour. In Louisiana, the current family-sustaining wage for a family with two working parents and two children is \$23 per hour per adult.



OUR TAKEAWAYS

These survey results show that while child care workers enjoy and take pride in their work, that alone may not be enough for them to remain with their employers long-term. Louisiana cannot continue to rely only on child care workers' affinity for their work to sustain them in their jobs, especially if they have a family of their own to support. The early care and education sector has risen to meet the state's quality expectations; it is time Louisiana recognized these professionals as the highly skilled and educated workforce that they are and compensated them accordingly. **To maintain the quality early care and education system Louisiana has created and increase workforce retention will require additional funding streams at the local, state, and federal levels.**

Options for increased funding include:

- Utilizing the Louisiana Early Childhood Education Fund to continue leveraging state and local dollars together. The Fund has several sources of revenue, but some do not generate money. State lawmakers should evaluate these funding sources and maximize their value;
- Diversifying federal investments to support increased funding for the Child Care Development Block Grant, the Preschool Development Grant, Head Start and Early Head Start, and the Child Care Means Parents In School programs; and
- Exploring options for regional taxation bodies to allow cities, parishes, and school districts to collaborate on local solutions for increased early care and education funding.

Survey Methodology

LPIC developed and administered the Louisiana Child Care Employee Compensation survey online through Survey Monkey from May 30, 2023, through June 16, 2023. Prospective respondents included any individual currently employed by a child care provider in Louisiana. Within the survey window, 724 responded to the survey, answering some or all of the survey questions.

For questions where some survey respondents did not provide an answer, the included results percentages reflect calculations based only on the number of survey respondents providing an answer to the question. For example, if only 100 survey respondents answered a question, the results would reflect what percentage of those 100 respondents selected each answer.