



Snapshot of the 2015 Idaho Early Childhood Workforce

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Method

An email survey of the Idaho early childhood workforce in Fall 2015 resulted in 1,048 respondents from six early childhood program sector frames: Child Care sector (teachers, assistant teachers, and administrators in the IdahoSTARS Professional Development Registry and providers in the Idaho Child Care Program); Head Start/Early Head Start sector (teachers, assistant teachers, and family advocates); Developmental Preschool sector (teachers in Part B, 619 classrooms); Idaho Infant Toddler Program (Part C) sector (developmental specialists and service coordinators); Maternal, Infant, Early Childhood Home Visiting Program sector (home visitors); and, the Private Preschool sector (teachers).

Key Findings

Similarities among Sectors

- Respondents in the early childhood workforce share a desire to continue education and training, with 92% of respondents reporting they will seek more education/training about children, families, and practices.
- More than 50% of respondents in each sector have a college degree (including one year vocational/technical degrees to graduate degrees.)
- Most respondents desire a professional development system to support their growth (66%).
- Over 80% of respondents show preferences for self-directed learning for professional development. Technology training modes were preferred that include internet searches, reading on their own, and short on-line courses.
- Fewer than 20% of respondents in all sectors, except the Infant Toddler Program (33%), report working with specialists when a child has a special need.
- Fewer than 20% of respondents in all sectors, except the Infant Toddler Program (38%), report referring a child for formal assessment if they believe the child is not developing typically.
- Influences for respondents to stay in the field were: making a difference in children's lives (94%); opportunity to influence families (91%); pride in serving society (88%); flexibility in work schedules (84%); caring supportive co-workers (84%); working with an administrator as a mentor (70%); opportunities to advance in their position (56%); membership in a professional organizations (55%); and, scholarships to earn degrees (54%).
- Reasons that influence leaving the field were: low salaries (82%); inadequate benefits (72%); emotional burnout (71%), inflexible work schedules (70%); and limited advancement opportunity (51%).

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Differences among Sectors

- Salaries and benefits for respondents in publically funded programs were significantly higher than those in the Child Care, Private Preschool, and Head Start/Early Head Start sectors. Notably 45.3% of Child Care sector respondents receive no benefits.
- A greater proportion of respondents in the Child Care (62%), Private Preschool (59%), and Head Start/Early Head Start (56%) sectors than in other sectors report individual salaries that place them below the US poverty threshold. A greater portion of respondents in the Child Care sector (28%) and Head Start/Early Head Start sector (23%) live in households with total incomes that place them below the US household poverty threshold, than respondents in other sectors.
- Education levels were highest among those in publically funded programs (which require college degrees), though at least a half of respondents in every sector had degrees, certificates, or college credits. The most reported majors were early childhood education, elementary education, and early childhood special education.
- Over 25% of respondents in the Child Care and Head Start/Early Head Start sectors are currently seeking a college degree, while fewer than 13% in other sectors are currently in a degree program. The most common majors are early childhood education, early childhood/early childhood special education, sociology, and elementary education.
- Program services offerings varied across programs, reflecting the mission and function of sectors. Obvious differences in types of services offered to children and families were notable. For example, family social activities were reported by respondents in all sectors, but were particularly high for the Head Start/Early Head Start sector (93%) and Home Visiting sector (91%), and much less so by those in the Developmental Preschool sector (38%) and the Infant Toddler Program sector (33%). Family educational events were reported by 97% of Head Start respondents, while fewer than half of Child Care respondents (42%) and Developmental Preschool respondents (41%) report offering family educational events.

IdahoSTARS

- Membership in the IdahoSTARS Professional Development Registry was highest among those in the Child Care sector (77%), Private Preschools sector (62%), and Head Start/Early Head Start sector (42%). About 10% of those in other sectors report membership, while 25% reported they were unsure what this is.
- Membership in IdahoSTARS Steps to Quality, a quality rating and improvement system for child care, was 55.4% for respondents in the Child Care sector.
- Nearly 50% of all respondents report using IdahoSTARS activities, though IdahoSTARS trainings were accessed primarily by those in the Child Care, Private Preschool, and Head Start/Early Head Start sectors. Some respondents in each sector report attending IdahoSTARS trainings.
- Some respondents received IdahoSTARS scholarships for college courses (13.5%). Of those, 80% report changes in their practices as a result of taking college courses. A raise at work resulted for 23% of those in the child care sector and 52.4% of those in the Head Start/Early Head Start sector. Fewer than 10% got a better paying job in child care (9%), and only 1% reported getting a better paying job in a different early childhood sector.
- A large portion of respondents (42.1%) report completion of at least one IdahoSTARS Essential Training, with many of those respondents receiving an IdahoSTARS scholarship for the Essential Training. Respondents in the Child Care sector (65.3%), Private Preschool sector (39.7%) and Head Start/Early Head Start sector (21.8%) are

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the highest users for Essential Trainings. Over 70% of respondents who took Essential Training report positive changes in strategies they use as an outcome of taking the training.

- Almost half of respondents (46% n=444) participated in an IdahoSTARS approved training other than an Essential Training. Participation in IdahoSTARS approved trainings was spread across sectors, including 65.7% of Child Care sector respondents, 28.4% of Head Start/Early Head Start respondents, 17.2% of Infant Toddler Program respondents, 18.5% of Developmental Preschool respondents, 42.9% of Private Preschool respondents, and 13.5% of Home Visitor respondents.

Early Learning Guidelines

Over half of respondents (57.8%) report their programs use the Idaho Early Learning Guidelines to plan curriculum, to determine children's developmental characteristics, to identify guidance strategies, and to evaluate outcomes. More respondents in the Developmental Preschool sector (90.2%), the Head Start/Early Head Start sector (72.0%), and the Child Care sector (58.7%) report using the Early Learning Guidelines than respondents in the Infant Toddler Program (39.3%), the Private Preschool sector (35.6%) and the Home Visiting sector (25.7%). Notably, 23.2% of respondents report being unsure if their program uses the Guidelines, and 3.3% report they do not know what the Guidelines are.

Children with Diverse Needs

Respondents in all sectors of the workforce report serving children with identified diverse abilities, and their families.

- Most respondents in each sector report currently working with children with identified diverse abilities, though over a quarter of those in the Child Care sector (26.8%) and the Private Preschool sector (27%) report they do not.
- Across sectors, respondents report they see children with a wide variety of identified diverse abilities in their programs. The most reported categories include social and emotional needs, behavioral challenges, speech or language delay, and food allergies. Those in the Child Care and Head Start/Early Head Start sectors report asthma a common category.
- Sector respondents in Developmental Preschools (81%), Head Start/Early Head Start (80%), Infant Toddler Program (76%), and Home Visiting Programs (96%) are most likely to refer children to specialists, while fewer respondents in the Child Care sector (40%) and Private Preschool sector (59%) report referring.
- Sector respondents in the Developmental Preschools (97%), Infant Toddler Program (97%), Head Start/Early Head Start (93%), and the Home Visitor Program (86%) report working with specialists when they serve a child with diverse abilities. Fewer respondents in the Child Care (55%) and Private Preschool (67%) sectors report working with specialists when a child has a diverse need. Notably, in the Child Care sector, 44 percent report never or rarely working with a specialist. Some first line, direct service early childhood workers appear to be working independently when it comes to serving children with diverse needs.
- When asked about experiences with children who exhibit behaviors that do not respond to typical guidance strategies (challenging behaviors), the most reported behaviors are aggression toward other people, lack of self-control, defiance, and inability to stick with a task. Those who work with infants and toddlers report their top challenging behaviors are sleeping and eating challenges, lack of self-control, and inability to stick with a task.
- Respondents report the top strategies they use to support children with challenging behaviors are adjusting schedules, routines, and activities to a child's needs, using consistent and dependable routines, and teaching children alternative ways to act and speak. The least chosen strategies are time out, sending notes home to the family, and playing games that offer scenarios for practicing self-control.

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- Though almost all respondents in each sector report serving children with challenging behaviors, almost no respondents report referring or working with a specialist when a child has challenging behaviors. Those in first line, direct service appear to be working independently when it comes to serving these children.

Recommendations

1. Examine fiscal and non-fiscal costs and benefits of an umbrella statewide early childhood professional development system that includes participation of those across the workforce sectors.
2. Establish tracking mechanisms to monitor salaries and benefits across Idaho's early childhood sectors.
3. Examine non-fiscal and fiscal impacts of benefits across sectors. Examine the fiscal value of reduced fees for child care and private preschool employees' children in the programs where they work.
4. Examine existing advancement opportunities and create strategies for advancement opportunities for those in the early childhood workforce.
5. Examine economic outcomes for those who receive additional education in all sectors in Idaho's early childhood workforce.
6. Monitor level status of those in the IdahoSTARS Professional Development Registry to make projections of the number of providers who intend to move through the system taking college credits and the associated need for IdahoSTARS scholarship support.
7. Examine economic outcomes for those in the child care workforce who receive additional education (i.e., college degrees, essential trainings, and approved STARS trainings) and for those who move through incentive levels in the IdahoSTARS Professional Development Registry.
8. Examine the practical impact of IdahoSTARS activities on evidence-based quality practices in programs.
9. Examine knowledge of those in the workforce about roles, responsibilities, and activities of professionals in early childhood sectors other than their own.
10. Consider cross-sector collaboration to establish criteria for professional development activities that support independent learning (i.e., internet searching, independent reading, short online courses, and webinars).
11. Examine resources and professional development needs of classroom teachers (particularly non-special education teachers) in the Child Care sector, Private Preschool sector, and Head Start/Early Head Start sector for supporting children with diverse needs, including challenging behaviors.
12. Examine how universal design to accommodate all children is embedded in pre-service and in-service professional development across sectors.
13. Identify content and topics for training that apply across sectors to maximize access to and use of professional development resources.
14. Examine the availability and use of preservice and in-service training/education opportunities that focus on children and families in low-income households or poverty situations.
15. Investigate strategies for differentiating professional development activities that respond to variations of age and experience levels of the workforce.

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16. Recognize, acknowledge and celebrate the belief of those in the early childhood workforce that they make a difference in the lives of children and families and that they take pride in the work they do for society.
17. Monitor early childhood workforce turnover rates across sectors to inform personnel preparation efforts.

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