

IOWA EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE STUDY

Compensation is Key for Addressing our Childcare Crisis

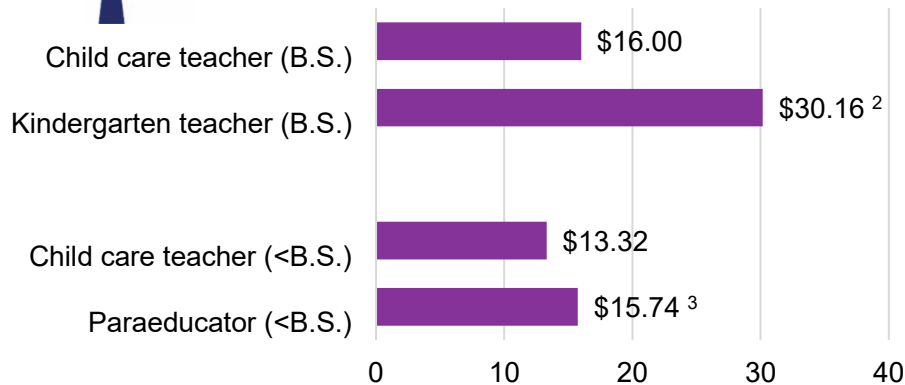
Iowa faces a significant challenge in recruiting and retaining a workforce to serve our early childhood programs. To better understand this challenge and foster evidence-based solutions, the Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children (Iowa AEYC) sponsored a statewide early childhood workforce study. This study was designed to update the earlier [2016 study](#)¹, and focus on understanding both home based and center based provider needs through surveys and focus groups. Between August and September of 2022, 4,282 valid surveys were collected, showing high engagement of participants and providing a representative sample for representing the workforce. Importantly, there were at least two respondents from each of Iowa's 99 counties.

¹ Child Care Services Association. (2016). 2016 Working in Early Care and Education in Iowa. Retrieved from <http://www.iowaaeyc.org/2016%20Iowa%20ECE%20Workforce%20Study%20-%20Final.pdf>



HIGHER WAGES ARE THE KEY TO RETENTION

Hourly wage by education level compared to other educators



² Median hourly rate in 2020 of kindergarten teachers. Retrieved from: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment. (2020). Early Childhood Workforce Index 2020, Iowa. University of California, Berkeley. <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/workforce-index-2020/states/iowa/>

³ Mid-range hourly wage in 2021-2022 for elementary paraeducators in a large suburban school district. Retrieved from: Iowa City Community School District. (2022). *Paraeducator Benefits 2021-2022*.

Child care teachers with comparable qualifications make less than teachers in public education settings, and this affects retention. While child care teachers or assistant teachers with a bachelor's degree had higher hourly pay than those with an associate's degree, **workers with a bachelor's degree are paid 47% less than kindergarten teachers**. Efforts to increase income and training in the early child care and education field are desperately needed.

Of the survey respondents not currently working in the field, **52% said they would like to return but they would need better compensation and benefits**.

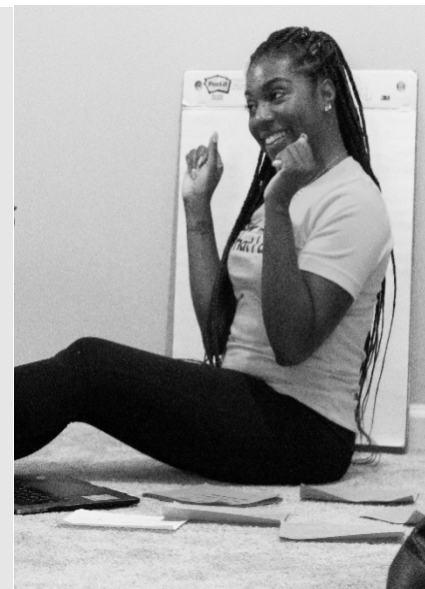
Providers are more likely to stay in the field when they earn higher wages

Providers currently participating in WAGE\$ are more likely to express they will stay in the field as long as they are able, even among the most educated providers. **Among workers with a bachelor degree or more, participants enrolled in WAGE\$ were 32% more likely to report they would stay in the field compared to their counterparts not participating in WAGE\$.**

Providers overwhelmingly reported that they are in the field because they feel that their work is meaningful (80%) while only 22% of providers reported staying in the field because of good benefits or salary.

Aligned with this, national evidence⁴ indicates that staff turnover decreases as wages increase. **Among workers making less than \$12.50 per hour, over 21% of staff leave within the course of 1 year.** Meanwhile, among providers making over \$20 per hour, only about 10% or less leave within the course of 1 year.

⁴ Grunewald, R., Palmer, V., & Nunn, R. (2022). *Examining teacher turnover in early care and education*. Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. <https://www.minneapolisfed.org/article/2022/examining-teacher-turnover-in-early-care-and-education>



Pay is low, and many workers rely on public benefits

Why not reinvest that into supporting our child care workers through their work?

The early childhood education workers overwhelmingly reported compensation as being the primary need for them to stay in the field.

- **53% of workers live in households with incomes below \$50,000**, putting them below the federal poverty threshold for a household of three. Over 80% of unmarried providers have a household income of less than \$50,000.

40% of workers rely on at least one public benefit such as Medicaid, WIC, SNAP, CCA, Hawk-I, and others. 30% of respondents use Medicaid.

Vision for a Stable Early Care and Education (ECE) Workforce in Iowa ⁵

Iowa's ECE workforce is *recognized as professional and compensated competitively*

Implement a salary scale for ECE tied to professional levels identified in NAEYC's Unifying Framework for the ECE workforce

Consider 'Early Care and Education' a high demand occupation

Continue to move toward parity with K-12 teacher compensation

⁵ Iowa AEYC (2021). Vision for a Stable Early Care and Education Workforce in Iowa. <http://www.iowaaeyc.org/2021%20Moving%20the%20Needle%20on%20Compensation%20Recommendations.pdf>

A full report of the findings from the 2022 Iowa Early Childhood Workforce Study will be released Spring of 2023. Stay in touch via i2d2.iastate.edu or follow us on LinkedIn via the QR code below.

This brief is provided by I2D2, a program of Iowa State University and Early Childhood Iowa committed to putting the state's most informed, passionate, and data-driven resources to work ensuring all Iowa children are successful from birth. The present workforce study was funded by the Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children.

