

CCR&R Infant/Toddler Educator Needs Assessment 2021



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OchsCenter

CCR&R Infant/Toddler Educator Needs Assessment

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Purpose and Methodology

Purpose

Signal Centers, Inc., and the Tennessee Child Care Resource & Referral Network (CCR&R) is interested in learning about the needs of Infant and Toddler educators. Although the CCR&R network primarily provides training and coaching, they also want to hear about the needs of Infant and Toddler educators beyond these areas. To accomplish this, they contracted with the Ochs Center to conduct an independent Needs Assessment study.

Methods and Procedures

The Needs Assessment was designed to be an iterative process. The first phase of the Needs Assessment was the collection of qualitative data to better understand the work environment and challenges facing infant and toddler educators. CCR&R and Ochs Center staff identified key informants to include in the study through their extensive experience in child care and insights into the needs of infant and toddler educators. The key informants were asked to participate in either an in-depth Interview or a focus group conducted by Ochs Center staff. Ochs Center staff conducted 10 interviews with the following key informants:

- 1 executive director and 1 chief executive officer of non-profit agencies who serve children
- 2 owners of family child care agencies
- 1 director of a child care center
- 1 director of state funded agency
- 1 infant and toddler educator
- The CCR&R Director and Chief Officer of Statewide Initiatives
- The Deputy Director of CCR&R Specialty Programs
- 2 lead coaches of the CCR&R Infant and Toddler Program

Three focus groups were conducted with a total of 11 CCR&R infant and toddler quality coaches. The focus groups were moderated by Ochs Center staff. Findings from this phase of the assessment is found in Appendix A of this report.

The second phase of the process included an online survey with Infant and Toddler educators and Directors. The survey content, informed by findings from Phase 1, included questions about level of satisfaction with their job, challenges, and resources that would help them to be more successful in their job. An email with the survey link was sent by the Director of CCR&R to 1,738 educators and Directors in late July requesting their participation in the survey and cooperation in sharing the link with other Infant and Toddler Educators. A follow-up reminder was sent a week later.

Surveys were completed by:

- 160 Infant and Toddler educators
- 40 Family or Group Home providers who serve infants and toddlers
- 37 directors
- 35 educators who serve in older classrooms

Non-response bias must be considered when interpreting survey results. While non-response bias may be present, most of the experiences and opinions expressed in the survey were also shared in focus groups and key informant interviews. The consistency in results between different modes of data collection and across various groups of educators increases confidence in the validity of the survey data. Results of the online survey are found in the Appendix B to this report.

The third phase of the assessment was to collect input from Infant and Toddler educators and childcare professionals to develop recommendations for how to address the concerns and challenges shared in the previous phases. Focus groups and key informant interviews were conducted by Ochs Center staff to solicit suggestions and recommendations for improvement. Ochs Center staff conducted 5 focus groups and 33 key informant interviews. Participants in the focus groups and key informants included:

- Child care directors
- Assistant child care directors
- Family child care owners
- Signal Centers CEO
- Educators
- CCR&R staff

Findings from the three phases of data collection have been compiled and synthesized. Results from the full assessment are reported below.

Results and Findings

Who are Infant and Toddler educators who responded to the survey?

Infant and Toddler educators are committed to their profession and revealed a respect for developmentally appropriate practices and a deep level of commitment to the children and families who depend upon child care to support the well-being of their children. The typical Infant and Toddler educator who responded to the survey is mid-age – the average age reported by educators is **41.3** years old while the average age of Family or Group Home providers who serve infants and toddlers is **53.1** years old. The majority of survey respondents were White. However, approximately four out of ten Family or Group Home providers (41.2%) indicated they were Black compared to one out of four Infant and Toddler educators (25.7%). Less than one out of ten respondents (8.0%) indicated they were Hispanic or Latino.

Educators have a deep breadth of knowledge and bring years of experience to their jobs. Infant and Toddler educators reported in the online survey they had an average of **10.8** years of experience as a child care educator and an average of **8.4** years as an Infant and Toddler educator. Family and Group Home providers had more experience – **22.7** years as a child care educator and **20.0** years as an Infant and Toddler educator. The overwhelming majority of Infant and Toddler educators have training or educational degrees beyond high school. While Family or Group Home providers were less likely to have a college degree, more than one out of three (35.3%) had obtained an Associate’s degree or a Child Development Associate (CDA).

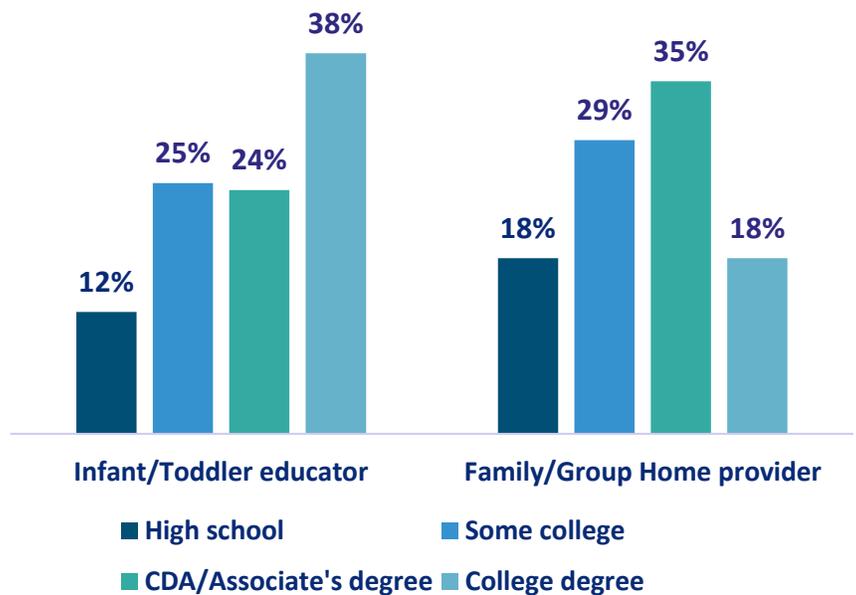


Figure 1: Level of education

What are the challenges experienced by Infant and Toddler educators?

While educators and child care professionals who participated in the study represent different roles in the child care industry, their input and observations were remarkably consistent when identifying and discussing challenges currently facing infant and toddler education. The content and questions included in the online survey were informed by findings from the focus groups and key informant interviews conducted during Phase 1 of the needs assessment. One of the questions provided educators the opportunity to identify challenges they had faced as an Infant and Toddler educator.

Challenges experiences by Infant and Toddler educators



Figure 2: Challenges experienced by Infant and Toddler educators

Infant and Toddler educators reported a high incidence (71%) of not being recognized as a professional but instead being viewed as a “babysitter”. More than half of educators reported a high rate of stress. These findings, in addition to comments shared in the key informant interviews and focus groups, suggest four themes of concerns and needs for educators:

1. Lack of recognition for early child care as a profession and the need for educational opportunities
2. Workplace environment
3. Classroom design and curriculum
4. Low wages and lack of benefits

The remainder of the report is organized by themes. The report discusses the challenges and strategies for addressing these areas of concerns.

Lack of Respect for the Child Care Profession

Most of the key informants in this study expressed concern about the lack of recognition for the importance of early childhood education in the development of a child. Being seen as a babysitter and not as an educator was the most frequently experienced challenge reported in the online survey. Regardless of perceptions, the greatest predictor of success in life is early brain development and early education is the foundation for future education successes. Moreover, high quality child care contributes to the overall well-being of the child, their family, and ultimately society. Yet, early educators are too often not seen as an educator who is responsible for the physical and intellectual stimulation of infants and toddlers. “Being a babysitter and being a teacher are two different things,” stated one person. Educators need to feel valued, respected and recognized by directors, other staff, parents, and society for their contributions to the physical and emotional well-being of the infants and toddlers.

Changing the image of Infant and Toddler educators is a shared responsibility. Viable solutions for increasing the level of respect afforded Infant and Toddler educators were offered by study participants. The first step, according to one participant, was for each “teacher to recognize that they are a professional and not a babysitter.” Furthermore, Infant and Toddler educators must fully embrace this image by perhaps changing the way they dress.

“If you don’t want to be treated like a babysitter don’t dress like one.”

Also, the way that early childhood educators speak to parents could also change the way the educator is viewed. For example, they should talk to parents about fine motor skills and other skills that the children are learning rather than reporting that their children “played” or “colored a picture”. Educators could also use portfolios that follow the children as they develop to show parents what they are really learning in class.

Educators should continue to advocate for opportunities to continue their own education and to stay abreast of new research

WAYS TO ELEVATE RESPECT

Elevating the profession is a shared responsibility.

Educators must embrace their role as a professional. This requires dressing and interacting with parents in a professional manner.

Educators should explore all opportunities to continue their education and training.

All state agencies should revise forms and websites to replace “day care” with early education care.

about early child education. Many stated a desire to further their education and training to expand their understanding of developmentally appropriate practices. Though not all considered it necessary for child care educators to earn a college degree, many welcomed the opportunity to attend conferences and in-service trainings; receive one-on-one coaching and mentoring from master teachers or directors; or participate in virtual learning. Some educators advocated for requiring some type of licensure to be able to teach infants and toddlers.

Public officials and government agencies also have a role in elevating the profession. Regulations and media exposure influence how child care is perceived by the public. An example of this is the lack of focus on the industry until something bad happens. Finding opportunities for positive stories could be a mechanism for portraying the value of early childhood education to the wider community.

Finally, it was recommended that all parties who are involved with early childhood education should embrace and incorporate new language that describes educators' roles – there is a big difference in being referred to as “educator” and “teacher”. It was suggested that TDHS and other state offices “scrub” the words day care and replace them with early education care on all forms and websites. Furthermore, it would be helpful if agencies took “day care” out of their name and new agencies were not allowed to use that name when opening.

SOURCES OF STRESS

“Their job is more life and death.”

Young children more likely to choke or be injured in the classroom.

Crying, biting, eating on demand, and need for individualized attention associated with developmental stages.

No opportunity to “take a break” to revitalize.

Not feeling supported.

Expectations of first-time parents.

Required paperwork.

Child’s lack of social development due to pandemic.

Workplace Environment

Educators in infant and toddler classrooms too often find themselves overworked and stressed. Meeting the immediate needs of infants and toddlers is challenging but is imperative to the well-being of the child. In the online survey, stress was the second most frequently cited challenge experienced as an Infant and Toddler educator. There are many sources of stress for these educators.

Perhaps the most alarming, but realistic stressor for an Infant and Toddler educator, is that the outcome of the care they provide could be life or death for infants and toddlers. It is easier for a young child to choke or be injured in the classroom. Additionally, infants and toddlers can be a challenging age group because of their constant need for individualized attention and comfort. Adding to the stress is their methods for communicating their needs – crying and biting. The stress is exacerbated if the educator is responsible for too many children. Attempting to meet the needs of too many children at one time can induce tremendous stress.

Staffing issues or too few educators being available were also identified as a source of stress. Educators often need to move children around to maintain the required ratio. This places an added burden on both the educator and the child due to the lack of a bond and understanding between the educator and the child. Lack of adequate staffing prevents educators from being able to take a short break to emotionally and physically recharge.

Added to these stressors is a lack of feeling supported or sense of camaraderie that “we are all in this together”. Educators often report that don’t feel like a member of a “team” with other educators and often find themselves constantly being questioned by parents and being required to explain themselves. This is especially true with first time parents who have unrealistic expectations that child care centers will be like home.

Meeting regulatory requirements and completing required paperwork adds to an already stressful environment. The stress of being an Infant and Toddler educator can too often feel overwhelming.

Finally, the pandemic has added to the stress. The pandemic has reduced the opportunity for children to socially interact with others that has resulted in more challenging classroom behavior. The pandemic has heightened the need for more thorough cleaning and sanitation. The need for hyper-vigilance in monitoring coughs and runny noses has resulted in feeling they are “on high alert all the time.” This in turn, has left educators feeling physically and emotionally exhausted.

Numerous suggestions were offered to mitigate these stressors.

- Provide early childhood educators with more specialized training so they feel better prepared for their jobs. The training needs to focus on child development as well as health and safety for infants and toddlers. It was recommended that the initial training should occur within the first two months of employment. Job shadowing or providing new teacher with a mentor would greatly improve a new teacher’s probability for success.
- Teach educators and children sign language to facilitate better communication of needs between child and educator.
- Make a “floater” available to allow the educator time for planning or an opportunity to step away from the classroom for a few minutes to “regroup”.
- Create an environment and work schedule that fosters team building among educators. Scheduling the same two teachers in the classroom every day creates more harmony.
- Directors should be intentional in scheduling quality time with the children – without telephone or other distractions – to build a relationship with the infants and toddlers. This relationship is invaluable when an urgent need or crisis occurs.
- Create opportunities for parents to be able to talk to the educator daily.
- Practice continuity of care so children stay with the same teacher for a few years to promote stronger bond between educator, children, and parents.
- Create a form that can be “checked” instead of handwritten to reduce required daily paperwork for each child.
- Directors and owners should be more intentional in expressing appreciation and saying, “thank you.” Gift cards and providing lunches and snacks result in educators feeling more appreciated.
- Create a formalized wellness program for educators.
- Create a network of educators to share ideas about managing the stresses of infant and toddler.

Classroom Design and Curriculum

A well-equipped classroom is key to a successful early education experience. According to one educator, “Changing the things in the room, changes the behaviors as well.” Almost half of Infant and Toddler educators (45%) identified a well-equipped classroom as a resource that would help them to be more successful. According to study participants, educators need to create a “peaceful, home-like environment which is stimulating, but not over stimulating.” It should be a happy and nurturing place. The space should be “bright and colorful, inviting, and with happy, engaged children,” and “loving energy in the care space.” It is also important to have easy access to outdoor space so children have the opportunity to be exposed to fresh air and outdoor playtime.

The classroom needs to be safe and stimulating to facilitate appropriate physical and emotional development for infants and toddlers. The classroom should be equipped with materials and toys that encourage brain development and emotional learning. According to study participants, an engaged educator who is creative in using the materials available is just as important as the materials themselves. Toys do not need to be battery-operated and flashy. Toys that offer the child the opportunity to explore and investigate are more stimulating.

Recommendations for ensuring that classrooms are properly designed and maintained are:

- Funding to purchase new or replacement material is always needed. Grants have been a “god send” but there is a need for permanent subsidies to be used to purchase educational toys and materials.
- Providing staff time to clean and sanitize toys and educational materials.

WELL-DESIGNED CLASSROOM

- enough storage for materials and toys
- space for furniture, especially a rocking chair, and play equipment
- designated cozy area built for an educator to fit with the children
- low shelves with lots of touchable books
- open baskets with a variety of toys, rattles, animals, and blocks
- changing table

The development needs for children from birth to 3 are often not well understood and do not receive adequate attention. Educators and child care professionals shared that more focus is placed on the curriculum needs for preschool classrooms to meet parent’s expectations for their children to be kindergarten ready. This often results in the needs for infant and toddler appropriate curriculum being overlooked.

However, there are varying opinions about what an appropriate curriculum would look like. Some Infant and Toddler educators feel that a “canned” curriculum is not needed. Instead, they believe that routines are the curriculum. Other educators prefer to use, or model established curriculum. Several approaches or resources were recommended by educators.

- Reggio or Reggio-inspired classrooms because it is emergent teaching and emergent learning. This style of teaching is best supported and supplemented with various educational materials such as Mailbox, Pinterest, TN-ELDS, We Learn from LifeWay, Frog Street and Baby Doll Circle Time. It is child led and more materials are made available that complement what the child knows and is interested in.
- Creative Curriculum
- Environment Rating Scale
- Child Care Education Institute
- KinderCare has created their own curriculum

Regardless of whether a “formal” curriculum is used, there was widespread agreement that additional opportunities for learning and training are needed for Infant and Toddler educators. Several training topics that are needed to better equip Infant and Toddler educators for success were identified.

Developmentally appropriate practice

This training would increase understanding of age-appropriate development – including social and emotional development. The training would help educators to better define appropriate expectations and to identify age-appropriate activities to support timely achievement of milestones for infants and toddlers. This training should also enable educators to be able to distinguish between typical behavior and aggressive behavior. Finally, the training should provide practical strategies for dealing with challenging behaviors such as biting and hitting.

How to communicate effectively with parents

Educators indicated they needed training on how to effectively have hard conversations with parents when bad news is shared. They expressed the need for assistance in developing strategies that can be transferred from school to home. Learning how to create an environment and strategies to facilitate open communication between parents and educators and to demonstrate that parents are valued is also needed.

Using curriculum and lesson planning

This training would focus on sharing curriculum options with educators and the framework for decision-making about which curricula, if any, would be most appropriate for the educator's classroom setting. This training should also focus on teaching the necessary skills to enable the educator to create and follow lesson plans.

Classroom management

This training would discuss how to effectively manage a classroom, including appropriate discipline and setting boundaries.

Professional development

This training would focus not only on increasing knowledge and skills related to early childhood development but would also focus on how to increase the level of professionalism in the industry. It would discuss the importance of dressing and behaving professionally in the work environment.

Inclusion

Training is needed on how to design classrooms to accommodate children with special needs and creating an environment that fosters positive interactions with other children.

Autism

Content is needed to train educators how to recognize the signs of autism, how to deal with the child's behaviors, and how to successfully create an inclusive environment in the classroom.

Diversity

This training should focus on how to expose children to different cultures and to increase cultural competence. The training should be mindful that many childcare settings lack diversity among the children and staff.

Communication

This training would focus on how to improve effective communication with all groups. Effective communication can better foster team building with co-workers and parents.

Self-care

Infant and toddler educators work in a stressful environment. Attending a training on how to design and implement self-care strategies could result in more effective teaching and increase retention.

Low Wages / Lack of Benefits

The final recurring theme that emerged was the lack of a living wage for educators. Overall, Infant and Toddler educators indicate they are somewhat or very satisfied with their job. However, the level of satisfaction with their current salary and benefits is significantly lower. Family or Group Home providers reported a higher level of satisfaction with all aspects of their job – overall, salary and benefits – than did those who are employed as an Infant and Toddler educator. The results of the online survey found differences between Infant and Toddler educators who are employed in agencies and family or group home providers in the types of benefits received. More than half of family or group home providers (57.5%) indicated they receive no benefits compared to 10.6% of those employed by an agency.

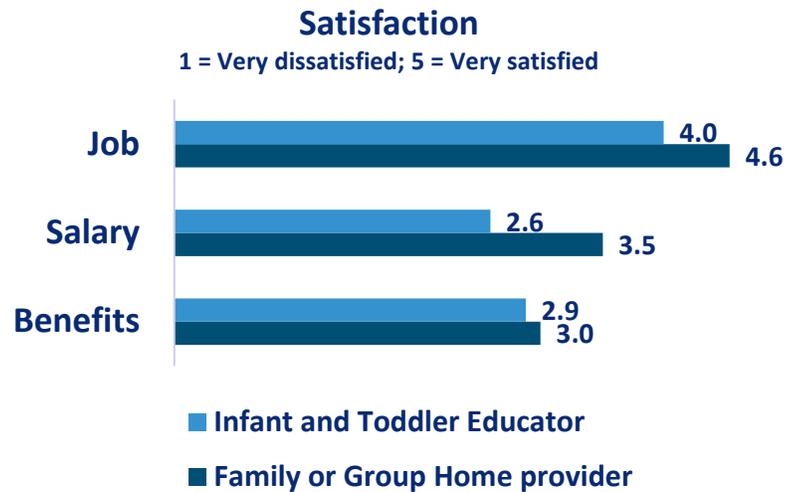


Figure 3: Satisfaction with job, salary, and benefits

<i>What benefits do you receive?</i>	Infant/Toddler educator	Family or Group provider
<i>Paid vacation</i>	56.9%	25.0%
<i>Paid sick days</i>	40.6%	12.5%
<i>Training or tuition reimbursement</i>	26.3%	2.5%
<i>Health insurance</i>	26.3%	2.5%
<i>Retirement / 401 k or 403b</i>	20.6%	0.0%
<i>Free or reduced tuition for children</i>	15.0%	10.0%
<i>Life insurance</i>	16.9%	2.5%
<i>Mental health / behavioral health services</i>	10.6%	2.5%
<i>Wellness benefits</i>	8.1%	2.5%
<i>No benefits are offered</i>	10.6%	57.5%

Table 1: Benefits received

Received Child Care WAGES[®] Tennessee supplement

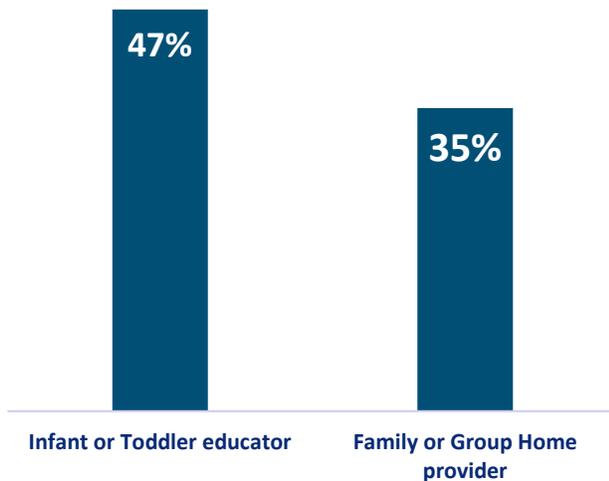


Figure 4: Recipients of Child Care WAGES[®] Tennessee

In an effort to address low wages and lack of benefits, Tennessee Department of Human Services implemented the Child Care WAGES[®] Tennessee to reward Early Childhood Educators with financial incentives based on their education and continuity of employment. However, less than half of Infant or Toddler educators and Family or Group Home providers had taken advantage of the program. Educators who work in the eastern region of the state were more likely to report they received the supplement – 60.9% compared to 44.9% in the middle region and 41.9% in the western region. Of those who had received the supplement, more than half – 52.2% of Infant and Toddler educators and 61.5% of Family or Group Home providers – indicated the supplement was very important in their decision to remain employed as a child care educator.

Reasons for low participation rates and suggestions for increasing the rates were explored in key informant interviews and focus groups conducted during the final phase of this assessment. Several barriers were identified for participation in WAGES[®] Tennessee:

- Rural areas lack or have limited internet service. The cost to operate a satellite phone is cost prohibitive for Family and Group Home providers who rely on that for their internet service.
- Cost for obtaining academic transcripts can be cost prohibitive.
- Lack of understanding of the benefits of the program and how to navigate the process to complete the necessary paperwork.
- Fatigue and lack of time to enroll in the necessary coursework.
- Lack of comfort with attending classes and participating in formal education courses.

Recommendations for reducing these barriers were also offered. Suggestions included how to improve marketing strategies, ideas for personal support to facilitate the application process, and exploring alternative methods for qualification.

- Send postcards and emails introducing the program and a short explanation followed by individual phone calls. Those calls might have to happen after hours or very early in the day.
- Supports would need to be individually tailored to the educator depending on their circumstances. These supports might include financial assistance for transcripts, meeting in

person, helping to fill out required paperwork, explaining required paperwork, and encouraging the educator to complete the paperwork.

- Explore different options for allowing program requirements to be met through other means than formal education. such as a weekly visit from CCR&R so they could award the certification.
- Offer a “pre” WAGE\$[®] Tennessee program to increase providers’ confidence in their ability to successfully complete academic coursework.
- Create a CDA track just for Family and Group Home providers to be completed at a community college.

Conclusion

In each phase of this study, Infant and Toddler educators expressed their concern for the environment in which they work to provide care and education for the children. Educators desire a reduction in work-related stress, the opportunity to work in an environment that promotes teamwork that includes co-workers and parents, safe and stimulating classrooms, well-equipped indoor and outdoor space, and provision for appropriate curriculum. There was widespread agreement that additional opportunities for learning and training are needed for Infant and Toddler educators.

A recurring theme that was raised in varying ways throughout the assessment was low wages and lack of benefits on every level for child care professionals. Overall, Infant and Toddler educators indicate general satisfaction with their work. Many expressed their love for children and education of children. However, in every discussion of the challenges of the profession, the topic of low wages and lack of benefits recurred. Some educators have taken advantage of the Tennessee Department of Human Services program, Child Care WAGE\$[®] Tennessee, that rewards Early Childhood Educators with financial incentives based on their education and continuity of employment. However, some individuals identified barriers to taking advantage of this supplement such as the cost and time necessary to pursue education, limited internet service, and a lack of understanding about how the benefits of the program works and how to navigate the system.

Overwhelmingly, this study found that child care professionals are passionate about the need for quality child care. They believe that early child care sets the foundation for future learning and impacts the children for the rest of their lives. These professionals understand that infants and toddlers need stable relationships to thrive fully and that the lack of consistency resulting from high staff turn-over may have a detrimental impact on their development.

Infant and Toddler educators recognize that 0 – 3 years is part of the educational continuum of learning that includes elementary, middle, and high school. Therefore, it is imperative that this group of children receive the same attention, support, and respect as older children to ensure that they reach their full potential. Most Infant and Toddler educators feel that if society does not make the

investment to provide the necessary support for childhood educators to be successful, the benefits of quality child care will be lost, while ensuring that this foundation is strong ultimately benefits our whole society.

The groups assessed in this study indicate that educators, parents, and public officials share the responsibility for elevating the status of Infant and Toddler education and its educators. Educators can begin by projecting a professional image and embracing opportunities to further their education and training. Directors and owners can begin by being more intentional in demonstrating their appreciation for the contribution educators are making to ensure infants and toddlers are safe and meeting developmental milestones. They can also begin by reviewing existing policies and procedures to determine if changes can be made to mitigate stressors experienced by educators. Parents can begin by recognizing educators as partners in their child’s journey. They should explore ways to collaborate with the educators so that learning is re-enforced at home. Finally, policy makers can begin by advocating for birth to three education and by reviewing existing rules and regulations to ensure that undue burdens are not being placed on educators.

APPENDIX A: PHASE 1 RESULTS

Phase 1 Focus Groups and Interviews

1. How would you describe a successful infant/toddler educator? In other words, how do you know when an infant and toddler educator is successful?

Successful infant and toddler educators are passionate about working with infants and toddlers. They know best practice, use developmentally appropriate practices (DAP), and are willing to learn and continue to grow professionally. They are willing to accept change. In the classroom, they provide individualized care, are responsive to the needs of each child, build relationships with children and their families, and partner with co-teachers, parents, and directors.



“We have to advocate for babies, because they can’t speak for themselves.”



2. What are the obstacles educators experience that affect their ability to be successful in an infant and toddler classroom?

There is a mindset among some educators and directors that infant and toddler education is no more than babysitting. Infant and Toddler educators do not feel valued or see a career path for themselves. Educators in infant and toddler classrooms are overworked and stressed because of the challenges of working with infants and toddlers. They do not have time to plan activities or take a break. Obstacles to success include the lack of knowledge of DAP, low pay, and few benefits. Directors do not encourage Infant and Toddler educators to access training or coaching. There is a need for required preservice training to prepare educators for the reality of Infant and Toddler education.

“

“[They] choose this profession because they don’t see other opportunities.”

“Educators must get in tune with the child since they can’t tell you what they need.”

“You’re not just a babysitter, you’re an educator.”

“They’re undervalued or seen as babysitters which makes it hard to work and hard to turn these jobs into careers.”

”

“If the ratio is met, an Infant and Toddler educator will be reassigned to another classroom; not enough quality time for the babies.”

3. What resources do Infant and Toddler educators need to be successful in their classroom?

To be successful, educators need preservice training and mentoring to help with the transition to an infant and toddler classroom. Each educator should have a training plan and have access to a resource person in each center. Ongoing intensive coaching with dedicated time in the classroom with a substitute available is needed to ensure success. Educators need to be aware of available resources and encouraged to use them. Directors need to understand the value of Infant and Toddler education so that the classrooms are better equipped with right-sized sinks, toilets, changing tables, and developmentally appropriate toys and materials. Educators need better pay and benefits.

“

“It is easy to overlook infants and toddlers because they aren’t talking.”

“We [CCR&R] can be there [in the classroom] before the violation.”

”

4. How would you describe a dream infant and toddler classroom? What does it sound like? What does it smell like? How does it feel for the educators and the children?

The dream infant and toddler classroom is a safe, secure, and peaceful environment that feels homey. It has cozy areas, space for large motor play, sensory experiences, dress up, imaginary play, art, and music. The classroom is a clean, spacious area with lots of natural light, floor to ceiling windows with a view of birds, flowers, and trees, fresh air, and space for playing on the floor. All equipment meets safety standards and is sized to fit infants and toddlers. There is meaningful art on the neutral-colored walls and on the floor. The room has easy access to dedicated outdoor space with a covered area for use during inclement weather. There is a variety of accessible materials that are developmentally appropriate. Educators spend time on the floor interacting with the children. Dream classrooms are where children talk and laugh, educators interact with children, and children interact with each other. Parents feel welcome. There is a feeling of calm because educators do not feel overwhelmed. The room smells clean and not of disinfectant and dirty diapers. It feels comfortable, safe, relaxing, and everyone is happy. Educators have appropriate preservice training and coaching before entering the classroom. Coaching and ongoing continuing education, which is low cost and convenient to access, is available. Classrooms have appropriate educator/child ratios so educators can be responsive to the needs of each child. Educators feel supported by their directors and other agency leadership.

“

“Smells like kids are learning, it smells ‘happy’.”

“Smells like Disneyland for infants and toddlers, the happiest place on earth.”

“Feels comfortable, safe, relaxing, everyone is happy.”

“Feels like I have walked into my playroom at home.”

“Looks like a big playhouse where teachers are engaging, and kids look joyful.”

“Calm and loving place where relationships are at the core.”

”

“A place where everyone is happy and a place where everyone wants to be.”

5. Why do educators leave infant and toddler classrooms?

Educators are leaving the infant and toddler classrooms because of the low pay, lack of benefits, long hours, and burnout. They lack support from their directors. They don't feel respected as professionals. Some have unrealistic expectations of the job. There is a lack of preservice training and educators are unprepared for the realities of the job.

“ *“This isn't a career. I'm just working here.”*

”

6. What would help Infant and Toddler educators stay in the classroom?

Educators need increased pay and benefits. They need to feel valued, respected and recognized for their contributions by directors, other staff, parents, and society. They need support from a knowledgeable director who is willing to “pitch in” when she/he is needed. Dedicated time for training and coaching needs to be available with substitutes brought into the classroom to cover for the educator. Resources and materials need to be tailored to the needs of each educator. Floaters are needed to assist with mealtime and to cover breaks.

“ *“Make it a real career path.”*

“It's a profession that isn't treated professionally.”

”

7. What is the most beneficial assistance the state and partners, like CCR&R, TECTA, Aim Hi, etc., can provide to help Infant and Toddler classroom educators be successful?

An established career path that includes accessible and low-cost training and coaching tailored to each educator’s experience, current education, and needs would be beneficial to Infant and Toddler educators. Suggestions included: preservice training, technical certificates, lesson plans, and higher education. Create a support network for educators so they can contact other educators who could model DAP and answer questions. Other suggestions included: increasing the certificate reimbursement amount, increasing awareness of TECTA services among educators, and reducing the duplication of services across partner agencies.

“

*“DAP should sit at the heart of the TDHS regulations.”**“We shouldn’t treat toddlers like first graders.”**“They aren’t just babysitters, they’re educators.”*

”

8. Why is it important that infant and toddler educators are successful? Who benefits from their success?

Children are being shaped physically, mentally, and emotionally by Infant and Toddler educators who also shape how the children see the world. Children grow and learn to navigate the world. They need to be prepared for school, complete high school, go on to higher education, and contribute positively to society. When families feel that their children are safe and learning, there are smooth transitions to school. Healthy children are vital to healthy families. Ultimately, the community benefits with a happy and productive workforce.

“

*“They’re shaping the future.”**“Infant and Toddler teachers are the core to growth and development.”*

“Every experience is shaping the rest of their lives.”

“The way that we treat the most vulnerable is a reflection on our society as a whole.”

“Success starts at birth.”

”

Other comments

- We want families to trust licensed child care.
- Everyone needs to understand the importance of the first 3 years.
- Directors are pressured by parents to ensure children are ready for kindergarten, so resources are concentrated in preschool classrooms. As a result, infant and toddler classrooms are neglected.
- It is important to show the significance of the field/careers in early childhood development.
- Coaches need smaller caseloads so they can spend more time with each educator (weekly visits for example) and so that they come into the classroom for other reasons than to respond to TDHS referrals.

“

“Educators have one foot out the door when the infant and toddler coaches are brought in.”

“It is really scary out there, lots of overworked and tired teachers.”

“Directors are having a hard time hiring and keeping staff so quality of teachers is questionable.”

“It will take a big change to see improvement.”

”

Findings from Phase 1 Key Informant Interviews

1. How would you describe a successful Infant/Toddler educator? In other words, how do you know when an Infant and Toddler educator is successful?

Successful Infant/Toddler educators are nurturing, knowledgeable, family oriented, and have all the needed skills including understanding learning and child development. They know human dynamics and have a well-rounded background. The culture of their classroom encourages children and parents to be happy and engaged. The classroom is active with staff on the floor engaging with children and ensuring that learning is going on, not just rocking babies.

The successful teacher has a goal in mind and plans accordingly. They are not caught off guard when circumstances change, because they anticipate/embrace change and plan for it. Children are aware that their teachers have high expectations and that they are cared for. The teacher loves them and tries to do the best for them. The teacher is student focused.

The educator has strong relationships with children, anticipates their needs, and seeks information about the rest of the child's day to integrate those things into their care. The evidence is observable; one can see interactions with little ones, document trainings, and recognize their level of education.

The educator truly understands the unique needs of infant/toddlers, the importance of relationships to developmental needs, and the relationships of families to the educator. An understanding of the importance of and enjoyment of being in relationship with the child is embedded in the curriculum. A skilled educator knows how to create an environment where the general mood and demeanor is pleasant. This doesn't mean that the classroom is always quiet and calm, but that the educator is and responds with thoughtful actions, demonstrating that they want to be there.

The successful educator is patient with children because they are prepared for their day, the room is set up and the teacher enters ready, with appropriate and ample materials. Children and teacher know the schedule that they will follow, and a substitute could come in and take over should the need arise. With lesson plans in place, music, story, and art units are prepared, so the activities are not interrupted to get things ready as the day goes on.

This educator is well trained and educated, prepared to help children learn and grow at their own

rate, self-disciplined, motivated to do their job, and ready for anything. This educator helps parents to be engaged, to support their children, and to prepare them for the future.



“You know you are successful when everyone is talking about you.”



2. What are the obstacles educators experience that affect their ability to be successful in an infant and toddler classroom?

Some of the obstacles faced by educators are low pay, lack of mentoring, high turnover, and lack of experienced teachers. Each of these factors can create stress that has an impact on the classroom environment. Inexperienced educators who don't understand human development become frustrated with child behavior. The stress and frustration lead to high turnover.

Teachers are often viewed as babysitters and that rubs off on them. Some agencies piece together staff, ignoring the fact that an efficient team is built with teachers who have worked together for some time. Some obstacles are lack of training, lack of accountability, and miscommunication between owner/director/teachers. Some goals don't consider what the teacher deals with every day. There can be a disconnect between directors and educators, especially if directors are not giving teacher feedback and if teachers do not know developmentally appropriate practices. Other obstacles are: inadequate support and backing, the teacher's own needs are not being met so they aren't fully involved, financial constraints, inadequate space, inadequate tools, inadequate funding, not feeling appreciated/supported, inadequate compensation, not having time to build relationships, juggling licensing rules, lack of knowledge of best practices and new techniques, the need to know what quality looks like, lack of understanding by the director, not enough materials, and poor room arrangement.

It is an obstacle to success when the director doesn't visit the classroom often enough and they don't have time to have others visit. Teachers need support especially when they don't understand basic development or what high quality care looks like. Educators must be willing to work for low pay, no benefits, no retirement, and no insurance. It is difficult for them to be committed and they don't have the patience needed for the job.

It is difficult to teach when there are not enough materials for everyone, not enough books, or blocks. Materials are sometimes kept from children because they may break them. Directors are not setting the teacher up for success when there are blind spots on the playground and in the classroom. When the teacher is not given time for planning and paperwork, success is difficult to achieve. Required paperwork reduces time to be with children. If there is a lack of time for planning, and no personal time, teachers are required to do paperwork after work hours, allowing no time for self-care and increasing burnout. Trying to find child care workers is difficult.

“

“Educators need to know what high quality child care can look like and be supported to make that happen.”

”

3. What resources do Infant and Toddler educators need to be successful in their classroom?

Educators need access to mentors who are skilled at building relationships and have deep experience; they need training and coaching in the classroom; they need to observe successful classrooms. We should use our best teachers as examples allowing other educators to access these master teachers to learn skills to apply in their own classrooms. We should be talking about standards of excellence not just policies and procedures. Educators need training on how to engage and partner with parents, learning how to appreciate parents, understand parents, and react positively when parents struggle. Teachers need to recognize that parents have greater influence on the child than the teacher does. Teachers can be resources to help parents understand child development to lower frustration.

Classroom resources that teachers need include a variety of culturally appropriate materials such as books and other materials to make the environment welcoming, lots of space, a pleasant playground where the outdoor is used as an extension of the classroom, with everything needed for health and safety, including appropriate changing tables, and plenty of supplies. At transition times, when children are arriving or leaving, “the handoff,” families and teachers need to engage in conversation. They need to build open communication and trusting relationships. This time provides opportunities for teachers to advocate for the child, to share, to provide extra diapers,

and to let parents know they can show up anytime they can, even to pay their bill.

Parent involvement is a resource when not intrusive. Other relevant resources include training and follow-up. It is a resource when the Director spends time in rooms and works one on one.

Other suggestions:

Help with paperwork	Financial support
Reflective practice supports	Access to training and education
Virtual training (convenient)	Relational learning
Time off, paid time off, or shorter work hours	Breaks and opportunities to take a breath
Hands on tools for how to respond relationally/social-emotionally such as cue cards	Peer to peer support
1 on1 coaching (observations from their own practice)	TTA from someone with experience
Mindful practice	Better wages or compensation
Recognition of the importance of 0-3 in child development	Lower ratios
Other adults in the classroom	Getting kids outside
An individual who steps in for diapering/feeding	Breaks/relief/substitutes
Attending conferences	Materials/equipment/supplies/toys/books
Climbing bars for standing	Large motor toys and equipment for grasping/gripping
Access to spaces and materials with different ways to explore things	In-service day
Laptop or iPad where all required paperwork could be kept	Ability to make copies

Educators need to be aware of CCR&R and what they offer. The subsidy rate should be doubled.

“

“High School education is all I can ask for; I don’t have the money to pay teachers higher salaries.”

“Have parents see us as more than babysitter. We are people, too. Families get annoyed if we have to take the day off.”

”

4. How would you describe a dream infant and toddler classroom? What does it sound like? What does it smell like? How does it feel for the educators and the children?

The room should be bright and colorful, inviting, and with happy, engaged children, on the floor. Classrooms should be parent-informed, and like a family, with educators understanding the child’s cry, someone responding to the child.

Families do listen to teachers, so good educators don’t “brush off” their concerns and are open to communication.

There should be loving energy in the care space. It smells fresh, clean but not sterile. The space should be home-like with soft lighting and with natural lighting flowing from the outside. Soft lighting makes napping easier.

The space should neither be cluttered nor empty and should include wall hangings such as mirrors and pictures. There should not be too many children in one space, and it should be a happy space filled with good noise where the children are busy and safe. The space should feel like a second home with cozy centers, animals [sic], pillows, books, instruments, CDs, food, pots, pans, rugs, pictures of children and families, and of course, the teachers and little people.

“The classroom feels like home, looks like home with bright colors, warm lighting, organized space that smells like home.”

”

5. Why do educators leave infant and toddler classrooms?

Educators are leaving the classroom because it is hard to be “on” all day and is tiring work. These positions do not pay well, and our culture does not support teachers. Educators are not happy with management, because there is not enough infrastructure to support teachers and allow for good supervision of teachers. The director is too busy to be a help or mentor. Educators feel burnout. They are overworked, underappreciated, and underpaid. With the low wages that they receive, teachers don’t want to go back to school. Teachers feel like don’t belong in the classroom anymore. They feel stressed, not supported well enough, and they can even dress better in another job. This kind of work offers no sick time and no vacation; the hours are long with many time constraints, and with the length of the average day, there is not even guaranteed lunch or breaks. Educators may find they are not suited for the work; they teach while their kids are little and then leave. Sometimes their heart wasn’t there in the first place. Educators are overwhelmed and not prepared. They come into the job thinking they are babysitters and find out the job is harder. They don’t know how to be a great teacher and don’t want to say they don’t know. Paperwork is overwhelming, they don’t like changes, or want to abide by the rules. Some have left because of Covid. Lack of staff is demoralizing.

“Being a babysitter and being a teacher are two different things.”

”

6. What would help Infant and Toddler educators stay in the classroom?

The biggest issue is pay: it is not financially feasible for teachers to work in child care and support their own family. Teachers would be encouraged to stay if there were opportunities to grow, advance, and they received support from the culture. There is a need to educate directors to be effective leaders.

People would be encouraged to stay if they received pay that reflects experience, feel like they belong, are celebrated in tangible ways, provided opportunities for breaks, and are respected like professionals. Educators have a desire for deeper training, acknowledgement, annual leave, insurance, nurturing, families knowing their importance, having a vision of what good quality looks like, and benefits. They want more and better training. They need resources to use in the classroom. They would like less paperwork, more time for self-care, and more staff.



“Educators need to be able to take time off and not feel guilty.”



7. What is the most beneficial assistance the state and partners, like CCR&R, TECTA, Aim Hi Etc., can provide to help infant and toddler classroom educators be successful?

The state could provide better wages and training, reimbursement for subs, training across the spectrum (beginning, intermediate, advanced), coaching in the classroom, funding for classroom supplies including purchasing all necessary materials, mentoring, leadership training for directors, and significantly increase (double) the subsidy rate. The state could create model classrooms. They could also support a network of star centers so others can learn from them. Also, they could provide curriculum to choose from. All state supports could be more visible and accessible. Educators could help administrators and the state know what quality takes. The state could provide more money and not tie it to going to college; that is asking too much. They should support CDA and accreditation. Teachers and directors should get more invitations to trainings so that teachers know what is available.

“

“Don’t tie money to going to college. That is asking too much.”

“Caregivers don’t know that we exist! We need to be more visible and accessible and more known. “

“TECTA and the CCR&R are best friends, people need to get connected to them, just call them and ask for help, get a relationship!”

”

8. Why is it important that Infant and Toddler educators are successful? Who benefits from their success?

The world, community, school system, and citizens, would all be better if brain development were enhanced early in life. The greatest predictor of lifelong success is early brain development, which benefits business. If the child is okay, the parents will work. Business should be concerned with what happens when children are not in child care. High quality child care improves the culture of the family, giving parents more confidence and the ability to learn. Early child care can set the foundation for all other education and impacts the child for the rest of their lives. If they succeed, we succeed.

“

“There isn’t anyone who doesn’t benefit.”

”

9. Other comments

- Consider a Covid bonus for those child care agencies that stayed open through the pandemic.
- Leaders need to meet with educators to review new rules before they are implemented. This may help keep educators on board.
- College is not necessary. The teacher can have college but if you don't like kids it doesn't help.
- How has the pandemic affected families and child care?

APPENDIX B: ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS

Online Survey Invitation:

The CCR&R Network is interested in learning about the needs of Infant and Toddler educators. Although the CCR&R network primarily provides training and coaching, we also want to hear about the needs beyond these areas. To accomplish this, we have contracted with the Ochs Center to conduct an independent Needs Assessment. The Ochs Center is an organization that provides evaluation studies for non-profit agencies.

As part of the Needs Assessment, they are conducting a web survey with current and former Infant and Toddler educators and with agency Directors. The survey will take no more than 10 minutes to complete and is anonymous. Please take a few minutes to complete the survey by clicking on the link below. Also, please share this link with other Infant and Toddler educators to make sure that everyone's voice is heard.

[CLICK HERE FOR THE LINK](#)

Thank you in advance for your participation and assistance with distributing the survey. It is only with your help that we can better understand the resources and supports needed to be successful as an Infant and Toddler educator.

Much appreciation,

Heather Hicks

Heather Hicks

Director
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What is your current role? (n = 272)	#	%
Infant/Toddler educator	160	58.8
Director of a center with an Infant/Toddler classroom	37	13.6
Family or Group provider who serves infants or toddlers	40	14.7
Educator in older classroom	35	12.9

Reason no longer employed as I/T educator (n = 11)	#	%
Being viewed as a babysitter and not as an educator	2	18.2
Lack of effective teamwork with other Infant/Toddler educators	1	9.1
Lack of support from director/owner	2	18.2
Low pay	3	27.3
Stress	2	18.2
Other	8	72.7

Other reasons provided:

- Business was sold. I got laid off. Not working at the moment.
- I needed benefits so I took a State of Tn job.
- Let go due to board
- Moved
- Opportunity to be an early interventionist again.
- Retired
- Time off to be with family.
- Was offered another job on salary and better flexibility for my family.

Overall, how satisfied are you with your job?	Infant/Toddler educator (n=158)	Director of a center (n=37)	Family or Group provider (n=40)	Educator in older classroom (n=32)
<i>Very dissatisfied</i>	0.6%	2.7%	0.0%	9.4%
<i>Somewhat dissatisfied</i>	11.4%	2.7%	2.5%	12.5%
<i>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</i>	5.7%	5.4%	5.0%	6.3%
<i>Somewhat satisfied</i>	51.3%	24.3%	27.5%	34.4%
<i>Very satisfied</i>	31.0%	64.9%	65.0%	37.5%

Overall, how satisfied are you with your current salary?	Infant/Toddler educator (n=158)	Director of a center (n=37)	Family or Group provider (n=39)	Educator in older classroom (n=32)
<i>Very dissatisfied</i>	24.7%	5.4%	12.8%	12.5%
<i>Somewhat dissatisfied</i>	31.6%	8.1%	10.3%	43.8%
<i>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</i>	11.4%	13.5%	7.7%	9.4%
<i>Somewhat satisfied</i>	24.7%	51.4%	51.3%	18.8%
<i>Very satisfied</i>	7.6%	21.6%	17.9%	15.6%

Overall, how satisfied are you with the benefits you receive?	Infant/Toddler educator (n=153)	Director of a center (n=36)	Family or Group provider (n=40)	Educator in older classroom (n=32)
<i>Very dissatisfied</i>	22.9%	8.3%	20.0%	15.6%
<i>Somewhat dissatisfied</i>	19.6%	19.4%	12.5%	37.5%
<i>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</i>	19.6%	19.4%	25.0%	9.4%
<i>Somewhat satisfied</i>	22.2%	25.0%	32.5%	21.9%
<i>Very satisfied</i>	15.7%	27.8%	10.0%	15.6%

Which of the following state or partner supports would have the biggest impact on improving job satisfaction for Infant and Toddler educators?	Infant/Toddler educator (n=143)	Director of a center (n=30)	Family or Group provider (n=35)	Educator in older classroom (n=30)
<i>Create a support system for Directors and Owners</i>	3.1%	10.8%	15.8%	0.0%
<i>Create a support system for Infant/Toddler educators so they can visit high quality programs</i>	23.1%	13.5%	18.4%	27.3%
<i>On the job coaching/modeling while a substitute or floater provides coverage in the classroom</i>	20.6%	24.3%	10.5%	30.3%
<i>Supplement hourly wage</i>	43.8%	45.9%	52.6%	30.3%
<i>Support for accreditation</i>	5.0%	2.7%	0.0%	12.1%
<i>Other</i>	4.4%	2.7%	2.6%	0.0%

- A collaboration of all the above would be great.
- Both wage and support system.
- Create a better support system for teachers and more staff to allow teachers a break.
- Create a support group for owners and directors. Also supplement wages for small business owners like childcare.
- Educated, dependable co-teachers and staff.
- For me, making sure there are enough teachers available to co-teach and enough admins available to run things well. It's "fine" when we're in ratio but it feels hectic without enough immediate support.
- Grants or money allotted to classrooms to purchase needed equipment.
- Making sure we have subs available to fill in when a teacher is absent, having three teachers in the infant room.
- More resources and more money.
- More support for teachers.
- Obtainable Incentives for employees to earn for attendance, etc.
- Reduce paperwork required by state. Certificate program is huge source of frustration-they don't answer phones or respond to messages. I don't have time for this!
- There is a need for grants or money allotments for classrooms; equipment, toys and needs; are sometimes not available for the classroom and comes at the teacher's expense.

<i>What challenges have you experienced as an Infant/Toddler educator?</i>	Infant/Toddler educator (n=160)	Director of a center (n=37)	Family or Group provider (n=40)	Educator in older classroom (n=35)
<i>Being viewed as a babysitter and not as an educator</i>	68.8%	67.6%	77.5%	60.0%
<i>Stress</i>	60.6%	45.9%	52.5%	37.1%
<i>Reconciling parents' expectations with needs of the child</i>	39.4%	40.5%	35.0%	17.1%
<i>Lack of effective teamwork with other Infant/Toddler educators</i>	35.0%	21.6%	7.5%	34.3%
<i>Long hours</i>	23.1%	27.0%	50.0%	22.9%
<i>Lack of support from director/owner</i>	25.0%	8.1%	5.0%	22.9%
<i>High child/educator ratio</i>	23.8%	2.7%	7.5%	17.1%
<i>Other</i>	13.1%	5.4%	2.5%	2.9%

Other Challenges:

- Balancing family and extracurricular responsibilities with classroom and curriculum preparation.
- Being asked to do extra things at work that are not in my job description.
- Children being moved around between two classrooms, and teachers, as a result of not having enough teachers.
- Educating parents on the importance of preparing their infant for group care.
- Finding qualified applicants.
- Inconsistent/ever-changing policies.
- Lack of supportive, dependable co-teachers.
- Lack of teamwork with other teachers beyond my own room.
- Needs for classroom/playground.
- Needs of the program, classroom, and playground equipment.
- Over worked.
- Pay.
- People do not recognize the position as a professional career. I spend my day ensuring the well-being, safety, and social-emotional development of the children in my care. With the amount of

training and years of experience I have helped many parents navigate through their first year of parenting and even helping them understand things about their own children that they did not realize. It would be fantastic to have our field (infant-PreK) to be recognized as true profession.

- Resources.
- Short staffed.
- Since covid lifted. Can't get DHS childcare to recertification for months.
- Supplies.
- The expectations the state holds for us as educators. But we are not "teachers" nor do we get any additional help from state other than having state kids and food program. There needs to be more money out there for the owners and the educator.
- We need Teamwork and need communication from Director.
- When a teacher is absent not having a substitute to fill in for the day. Not having subs is a stress.
- When it comes to going to school, I want to be viewed as a teacher and not just a babysitter.

<i>What is your plan for the future?</i>	Infant/Toddler educator (n=151)	Director of a center (n=34)	Family or Group provider (n=38)	Educator in older classroom (n=30)
<i>I plan to stay in my current position for the next 3 years</i>	53.6%	79.4%	68.4%	50.0%
<i>I am currently looking for a position as an educator in an older classroom</i>	9.3%	0.0%	5.3%	6.7%
<i>I am currently looking for work in another field or occupation</i>	11.3%	2.9%	0.0%	13.3%
<i>I plan to seek employment in another field or occupation in the next 1-3 years</i>	15.9%	8.8%	7.9%	16.7%
<i>I plan to retire in the next 1-3 years</i>	9.9%	8.8%	18.4%	13.3%

<i>Have you ever received a Child Care WAGE\$ Tennessee® supplement?</i>	Infant/Toddler educator (n=144)	Director of a center (n=30)	Family or Group provider (n=37)	Educator in older classroom (n=29)
No	53.5%	46.7%	64.9%	17.2%
Yes	46.5%	53.3%	35.1%	82.8%

<i>How important was the WAGE\$ supplement in your decision to remain employed as a child care educator?</i>	Infant/Toddler educator (n=67)	Director of a center (n=16)	Family or Group provider (n=13)	Educator in older classroom (n=24)
<i>Not at all important</i>	14.9%	18.8%	0.0%	8.3%
<i>Somewhat important</i>	23.9%	25.0%	38.5%	20.8%
<i>Very important</i>	52.2%	56.3%	61.5%	66.7%
<i>It is the only reason I continue as a child care educator</i>	9.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.2%

<i>What resources would help an Infant/Toddler educator be more successful?</i>	Infant/Toddler educator (n=160)	Director of a center (n=37)	Family or Group provider (n=40)	Educator in older classroom (n=35)
<i>Break time to step away from classroom responsibilities</i>	51.9%	43.2%	45.0%	37.1%
<i>Well-equipped classroom</i>	45.0%	45.9%	32.5%	37.1%
<i>More educational materials</i>	40.6%	24.3%	27.5%	25.7%
<i>Curriculum options</i>	38.8%	29.7%	25.0%	20.0%
<i>Training opportunities</i>	36.9%	27.0%	30.0%	34.3%
<i>One-on-one coaching and modeling in the classroom</i>	23.8%	24.3%	27.5%	28.6%
<i>Mentoring or job shadowing</i>	21.9%	21.6%	20.0%	31.4%
<i>Toddler-sized toilets and sinks</i>	15.0%	27.0%	20.0%	14.3%
<i>Additional sinks to wash bottles and hands after diapering</i>	13.8%	16.2%	20.0%	11.4%
<i>Other</i>	8.8%	2.7%	5.0%	8.6%

Other resources:

- Additional money for the classroom.
- Better pay and appreciation.
- Co-teachers and support staff who are educated and reliable.
- Equipment for playgrounds.
- Higher hourly pay to feel the stress is worth it.
- Less expectations from the state and local agencies to lower stress.
- Living wage of more than \$15/hr take home.
- More \$.

- More help in the classroom.
- More playground equipment for children.
- More teachers.
- My director has provided very well in many of these aspects..
- People who take their job seriously and who are dedicated to come and work their shifts.
- Sub-care 2x A WEEK.
- Substitute teachers.
- Summers off.
- Updated classroom materials and toys.

<i>What benefits do you receive?</i>	Infant/Toddler educator (n=160)	Director of a center (n=37)	Family or Group provider (n=40)	Educator in older classroom (n=35)
<i>Paid vacation</i>	56.9%	62.2%	25.0%	51.4%
<i>Paid sick days</i>	40.6%	32.4%	12.5%	40.0%
<i>Training or tuition reimbursement</i>	26.3%	29.7%	2.5%	28.6%
<i>Health insurance</i>	26.3%	13.5%	2.5%	34.3%
<i>Retirement / 401 k or 403b</i>	20.6%	16.2%	0.0%	31.4%
<i>Free or reduced tuition for children</i>	15.0%	40.5%	10.0%	5.7%
<i>Life insurance</i>	16.9%	8.1%	2.5%	14.3%
<i>Mental health/ behavioral health services (counseling)</i>	10.6%	8.1%	2.5%	11.4%
<i>Wellness benefits</i>	8.1%	5.4%	2.5%	20.0%
<i>No benefits are offered</i>	10.6%	13.5%	57.5%	11.4%

What is the highest level of education you have been able to achieve?	Infant/Toddler educator (n=139)	Director of a center (n=27)	Family or Group provider (n=34)	Educator in older classroom (n=29)
<i>High school diploma or equivalent (GED)</i>	12.2%	3.7%	17.6%	10.3%
<i>Vocational training</i>	1.4%	3.7%	0.0%	3.4%
<i>Some college courses but no degree</i>	23.7%	11.1%	26.5%	17.2%
<i>Associate degree</i>	12.9%	22.2%	14.7%	20.7%
<i>Child Development Associate (CDA)</i>	10.8%	14.8%	20.6%	3.4%
<i>Bachelor's Degree</i>	29.5%	37.0%	8.8%	37.9%
<i>Graduate degree</i>	8.6%	3.7%	8.8%	0.0%
<i>Other</i>	0.7%	3.7%	2.9%	6.9%

Averages	Infant/Toddler educator (n=140)	Director of a center with an Infant/Toddler classroom (n=27)	Family or Group provider who serves infants or toddlers (n=34)	Educator in older classroom (n=29)
<i>Age</i>	41.3	46.4	53.1	44.2
<i>Years employed as an I/T educator</i>	8.4	10.1	20.0	5.1
<i>Years employed as a child care educator</i>	10.8	18.3	22.7	14.4

Ethnicity	Infant/Toddler educator (n=140)	Director of a center with an Infant/Toddler classroom (n=27)	Family or Group provider who serves infants or toddlers (n=34)	Educator in older classroom (n=29)
<i>Hispanic</i>	7.3%	7.4%	6.1%	13.8%

Race (more than one category could be selected)	Infant/Toddler educator (n=140)	Director of a center with an Infant/Toddler classroom (n=27)	Family or Group provider who serves infants or toddlers (n=34)	Educator in older classroom (n=29)
<i>Black</i>	25.7%	33.3%	41.2%	17.2%
<i>White</i>	68.6%	66.7%	52.9%	75.9%
<i>Other</i>	4.3%	0.0%	2.9%	6.9%

What else could you share that would help us to better understand the needs of Infant and Toddler educators to be more successful? (These comments are direct responses from the online survey. They have not been edited for spelling or grammar.)

- A defined sick policy that requires a doctors note upon return; funds to hire a floater for each center to allow 15minute breaks/breathers for every teacher; sick pay would be beneficial; a trained CCR&R professional to attend mandatory parent meeting at start of each school year to discuss each age group's development and expectations for children during that year. I do understand I work for a church preschool and therefore, these wishes are simply that since our preschool can not afford to pay for floater/sick days and remain open. Appreciated the CCR&R bagged materials/activities during the pandemic to supplement classroom materials.
- A health care benefit plan
- A lot of programs do not recognize the importance of infant and toddler programs and solely focus on preschool.
- Again, less requirements for teachers as we already have too much on our plates and teachers quit because of this- too much for too little pay
- All parents should be able to receive childcare! Long as they have under age children and they work. This would allow their children to receive all the love, security, social and emotional skills and academic sill required to be thriving productive children. As we know, all parents cannot afford childcare. When denied, the child falls into disparity of not receiving quality childcare.
- Ask for more toys and cots
- Being able to visit high quality centers and see how their infant and toddler classrooms are run. Support from the state.
- Better in house training and wages
- Better pay for educators with education and degrees in the field and recognition for service.
- Better pay! Good pay=quality teachers
- Bring more educational materials.
- Child care needs to be closed for at least two weeks during the summer and winter so educators can take care of themselves and families without having to burden other teachers of short staff. Don't cater to parents too much!
- Don't think just because they are babies that they can't learn.
- Early childhood educators are under paid point blank. We are expected to run classrooms that are at Maximum capacity, with few bathroom breaks, little support from Directors and zero

tolerance for sick days. If you want to improve early childcare: improve salaries and start providing more support. These girls are underpaid, exhausted and stressed out.

- Educated, trained people have to be paid a living wage to continue to work
- Encourage them
- Ever Changing the environment as they grow, for much needed space.
- For those making the rules to understand what it is actually like in the classroom, what challenges we face, and what actually works/doesn't work, and the real life applications of those regulations/rules.
- Having more local training events would help, online training is great but there's still a disconnect.
- Having more teachers available so we can take turns with difficult children (and allowing children choices for who will help them when they're upset) and take short breaks as needed to keep up a good mood would be the most helpful. I think it will help to have shorter hours for everyone, and more opportunities for communication across shifts. Learning specifically how to best build relationships with our families would be helpful, especially considering the restrictions we still have from the pandemic. It will seriously hugely help to have more teachers than is required by ratio; in a room of 7 2yos, one teacher has to clean the tables/floors after meals and make sure everyone goes potty on time (and clean accidents) and no one gets hurt, it really doesn't allow enough time for direct interaction with the children, let alone with each individual child. More teachers is always much better.
- Having substitute teachers to fill in when teachers are absent.
- Having the training that it can be stressful when caring for infants
- Help us with language development training & possibly sign language training to ease the transition for nonverbal and ESL students
- Help with how to deal with difficult parents of infants and toddlers
- Higher wages and more professional training
- I am an interventionist now.
- I can't think of a thing this moment
- I love my job, but there are practically no extra benefits. We work long hours for not as much pay as we need - especially with food prices increasing. The children are the only thing that keeps me in this field. I love them.

- I think the key to success is training and adequate staffing. Infant and Toddler educators should be given short breaks throughout the day.
- I think we need more training and more involvement with our trainers
- I wish I was only surrounded by people who liked children.... & had a degree and cared as much as I do about the brains we are building.
- I work in Head Start and training about how to deal with challenging behavior will be great.
- I would like to be viewed as an educator not just a baby sitter. I want people to see that we help shape children as well.
- If as educators we had the resources for things that would be. Great I have had to go to the store and buy things like cleaning supplies for my room because my center didn't have them.
- Infant and Toddler educators need a great support system amongst themselves, parents and administrators. This helps to build communication to bridge the gap we see sometimes in our centers.
- Infant and Toddler educators need more support from management
- It's too structured. No swings, walkers , they are basically on the floor. I don't agree with tummy time at all to risky. It should be a discovery. and fun. Learning should be unpredictable just like they are. I don't agree with scheduling. Taking bottles and cups too early. Deciding what age diapering should be. All kids are different. And they get stressed too.
- Just a better understanding to teachers, how important it is to recognize we are professional educators just like the school system!!
- Just more pay and concerns for teachers as well as the child and parents
- Less paperwork required from the state. Between DHS, CCAFP, certificate program, survey requests, parent meetings, scrambling to collect enough training hours, the amount of paperwork is constantly growing and adds unnecessary stress to our jobs.
- Less time consuming way to document/share events than current way, Brightwheel. I'd rather not use my phone in the classroom.
- Lower student to teacher ratio
- More continual training.
- More curriculum training in science and math area. Higher pay and more benefits
- More educators in childcare!
- More Infant and Toddler Child Care Programs

- More money, more benefits, respect so the motivation comes with all of these
- More pay
- More pay and more in house training
- More pay would be nice so I could afford health insurance.
- More quality teachers need to be recruited
- More specialized infant/toddler specific training
- More support and better wages
- More support through curriculum, training, classroom necessities, trained directors
- More training and materials
- More useful training
- more workshops on toddler behaviors
- Most childcare educators and owners and directors feel we are at the bottom. Due to the lack of help and support offered to us as childcare providers. We are paid the bare minimum to where its hard to keep good workers because the business can't afford to pay them to survive. With more help on wages would be more helpful on the business and make people want to come to childcare more or less stay employed at the job they enjoy but just wasn't making a enough, we are required to do a lot of things public school offers without the extra help they receive. There needs to be more done in childcare. Wages, more resources, more one on ones with brand new businesses that have opened. Help them get on track and make sure they know everything they are supposed to be doing and not just thrown in the dark to defined for themself without the help. Then when state comes its one way with one consultant and different with another, no one is on the same path with the rules. Which can make it difficult as a owner/director. Childcare needs an entire change for this field.
- Need wages that attract qualified workers
- One of the question is how do we get our employee, on a program like the certificate so we can keep our ratio in tact with the requirement of licensing. You all have the wage program for employee who live in Tennessee I have a employee who live 15 min away in Ga, So the wage program does not benefit me. Are there any other program out there for me to use to help my employee get paid.
- Our center is critically understaffed. Wages and hours that attract people of childbearing age. We need enough staff to be able to use vacation and sick days. We don't have that so having benefits is useless

- Please listen to our thoughts and take them seriously. We aren't complaining, we are telling you what we actually need to continue in the career we love.
- Please teach all ages teachers or floaters about WASH YOU AND CHILDREN'S HAND ANYTIME ALL DAY LONG. Because I see most of teachers or floaters are not washing their hands. I'm tired of telling them about hand washing.
- Quality staffing is at an all time low, I have to stress daily, the importance and implementation of basic health and safety measures such as safe sleep, hand washing, and sanitizing surfaces. I also struggle to imprint the knowledge that infants can not be spoiled and must be comforted when upset and their individual needs are attended to and they are not forced to a schedule.
- Short timed activities that keep toddlers engaged.
- Show support to the Teacher and let the infants No that you care.
- Since I am the only teacher with multiple ages. How to limit their time being confined to 15 minutes
- Spending my money for classroom supplies , not getting reimbursed, but I don't mind it sometimes , it's for the children's benefit
- Staffing is always an issue. Concerns of employees should not only be heard but addressed as well.
- The 4:1 ratio can, at times, be too much when all 4 children are due for either feeding or diapering. The low wages also make things incredibly stressful.
- The director need to make all decisions not the board.
- The people who choose this profession need to have a passion for children and a desire to continue to learn new things.
- The ratio is too small. Would be better if it were 1:6, so that I could provide for more families.
- The right curriculum for the age group
- The salary I think is very important because we not just babysitting we teach our kids
- The state needs to supplement early childhood educators and daycares. There is a daycare crisis. No one wants to open nor work in daycare because there is no money in daycare and too much work. Something needs to be done. There are waiting lists everywhere. Parents can't find daycare because NO ONE Wants to open them. Building Codes are ridiculous and the building we built (which was an add on) 2 years ago cost over \$1,000,000 for only 99 children total. That's why. Please help solve this daycare crisis for parents and daycare owners.
- The supplement that you have all been able to gift teachers is making a huge impact.

- The teacher/child ratio for toddlers needs to be lower. At the current state ratio of 6:1 you cannot give quality care. It's more like quantity care. Instead of running a good program for infants/toddlers the Directors worry about filling every spot in a classroom. Again, quantity over quality. A 4:1 ratio would give a teacher so many more opportunities to spend more one on one time with each child and actually be able to teach.
- The Wages Program is not something I will ever qualify for. I will not be taking college courses, which take up valuable time, resources and finances for no higher hourly wage, because the funds are just not available with the program, we are not getting paid by the government, we are paid by parents. And the wages supplement is minimal compared to the work required to obtain the credentials mandated. It is a very unrealistic program. Very very disappointed.
- There is no reward based pay for education level. I could make more working at a fast food restaurant and have a master's degree! Early childhood education is so lacking in teacher support from pay to benefits to training support. It's so sad.
- This career is not a easy career. It is a lot of work and I feel that we as childcare providers, educators are always left on the back eye. As if we don't matter. As long as we keep providing service for the parents/guardians. We do not matter. A lot is sacrificed when you take on this role. And we are expected to do a lot that we can not enjoy what we signed up to do. And that is to enjoy the children and help them grow into confident humans. We have a lot to carry on our backs. It gets very frustrating cause there is so much to do. Our main focus is the children, but we don't get to actually focus on them they are they truly need us too because of all the paperwork and everything that is ask for us to do.
- To follow up on the first question, my position is now Program Coordinator, not Director. Director was as close as I could get to answering the question.
- Toddlers are hard. Having mental health resources where you can vent would be super helpful.
- Training
- Training for Directors to help educators feel valued and important (good leadership qualities to create effective teams).
- Training, breaks, good pay, and nice facilities with nice materials and toys
- We have a huge staffing issue due to low hourly pay. The staff we do have is overworked and stressed. We don't get bathroom breaks throughout the day. We have to work longer shifts and we don't get ample pay to make up for how much we actually do
- We have high staff turnover and it puts stress on top of an already stressful underpaid job. Not only does high staff turnover affect the staff, but it also affects the children. Having higher pay and requiring a contract of time might prevent that. Children make connections with the

teachers in their room, and it creates an unstable environment when they've had 4 or 5 teachers over the course of a school year.

- We need higher wages but those have to come from parents who are living in poverty in rural TN. We cannot compete with fast food wages.
- We need higher wages so we can get more teachers. We run so short on staff that the few people we have want to quit.
- We should not have to get everything we do in the classroom approved by upper management and rule should not change daily.
- Weekly massages, dependable staff, floater to maintain control during diaper time.
- We need more trainings in how to redirect behaviors. I have a 2 year old class and behavior issues is my main problems. I would love a class helping with this issue.