

Policy Brief SCHOOL READINESS

EARLY CHILDHOOD DIRECTOR QUALIFICATIONS AND TEACHER TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

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A wealth of research supports that when children's needs are met during the critical years of development, the benefits are lifelong. Nearly 80% of the physical growth of the brain occurs in the first 5 years of life. We know that providing children with the right start will lead to less intervention and remediation in later grades – ultimately resulting in increased rates of graduation and success in adulthood. There are nearly 236,000 children ages 0-5 in the State of Nevada – more than half (about 61%) of these children have all parents in the labor force. A recent study commissioned by the Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council, *Assessment of Center-Based Quality 2011-12*, found that only one quarter of the infant-toddler classrooms assessed across the state were rated as having reached minimal quality. Only 4.69% of all licensed child care programs (9% of centers and 1% of family child care) in Nevada are accredited by a national accrediting organization. Nevada also has very low director/teacher qualification requirements. For directors, the minimal requirement is a CDA credential (which may be waived)¹, while most other states require a CDA credential and up to 4,000 hours of experience or a bachelor's degree.

“Only 10.63% of the licensed child care workforce[in Nevada] has an associate's degree in ECE or higher. The vast majority of child care providers have a high school diploma (67.11%) and less than 30% of the workforce has an associate's degree or higher, regardless of the field of study.”

The Children's Cabinet, Inc.

Enhance Policies for Professional Development & Certification of Early Childhood Professionals

A high quality system of early childhood care and education relies on a highly qualified workforce. Nevada has some of the lowest standards and qualifications for early childhood professionals in the country. Enhancing qualifications and training requirements, beginning with Directors, will assist in improving the quality of programs. Nevada currently has a Registry for early childhood providers which links providers with appropriate training and provides a gauge for professional development. Additionally, the T.E.A.C.H. program provides scholarships for Home Care Providers, Center Teachers and Aides, Center Directors, and early childhood facility owners working in a licensed facility at least 30* hours a week. The newly implemented Silver State Stars Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) also provides star ratings to centers based on a matrix of quality indicators, including teacher and director qualifications and training. Now that resources are in place to support enhanced director qualifications and training for teachers, it is time that State law and regulations enhance minimum requirements for both directors and teachers to assist in building the foundation for high quality early learning programs in Nevada.

¹ NAC 432A.300 - <http://www.leg.state.nv.us/NAC/NAC-432A.html#NAC432ASec300>

Recommendations:

Director Qualifications:

Add a provision in NRS which outlines the mandatory minimum qualifications of a Director of a child care facility to include a minimum age of 21, a minimum of 1,000 verifiable hours in an administrative position or a course/training in business administration, an application to the Nevada Registry, updated annually, and:

1. An Associate's Degree or higher in early childhood education, plus 1,000 hours of experience in an early childhood learning center;
2. An Associate's Degree or higher in any field with 15 or more credits in early childhood education or related courses, plus 2,000 hours of experience in an early childhood learning center;
3. High School Diploma, or GED (with administrator approval), with 15 or more credits in early childhood education or related courses, plus 3,000 hours of experience in an early childhood learning center;
4. CDA with preschool or infant/toddler endorsement (as appropriate), with 12 or more credits in early childhood education or related courses, plus 4,000 hours of experience in an early childhood learning center; OR
5. A combination of education and experience which, in the judgment of the Administrator of the Health Division, is equivalent to that required by section 1, 2, 3 or 4 above.

Implementation:

All current Directors would have until December 2015 to meet current minimum qualifications or request a waiver, with appropriate documentation, to the Administrator of the Health Division.

All new Directors would be required to meet minimum qualifications upon enactment.

Teacher Training Requirements:

Increase training hours for teachers in child care facilities according to the following schedule:

- At least 15 hours each year through December 2013 (current requirement);
- At least 18 hours each year through December 2014;
- At least 21 hours each year through December 2015; and
- At least 24 hours each year beginning January 2016 and thereafter.



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