

In Nevada, 63.6% of children have all available parents in the workforce.¹ This, combined with an improved understanding of the positive impacts of high-quality early learning, have caused an increased demand for high-quality, affordable child care and early education programs. Children are rapidly developing and learning in their first five years of life, laying the foundation for later success. During this time, it is crucial that children be exposed to high quality early learning experiences to increase their achievement in school and beyond. Research indicates that the most critical component of child care quality is the teacher-child relationship.² As Nevada builds the necessary infrastructure to increase early education services, it is important that a comprehensive plan is created to help support and train teachers.

Currently, most professionals within the early learning workforce earn low wages, often, regardless of their training or level of education. Some individuals within the early childhood education (ECE) community are making at or near the Federal poverty line and qualify for welfare programs. These low wages make it difficult for individuals in this work to take care of their own families. Additionally, “low wages-particularly those that keep early educators and providers at or near poverty levels-also undermine wellness.” Studies demonstrate that certain mental health issues, that can be associated with low wages and lack of support, can impact the quality of care individuals are able to provide.³

Wages for Early Childhood Care and Education Professionals in Nevada⁴

| Licensed Center Wages ⁵ | Average Starting | Average | Median Reported to NV Registry |
|------------------------------------|------------------|---------|--------------------------------|
| Aids | \$8.20 | \$8.65 | \$9.50 |
| Teachers | \$9.96 | \$10.75 | \$11.00 |
| Directors | \$15.53 | \$17.53 | \$14.00 |

Overall, such low pay limits the ability of this growing field of education to entice and retain staff-especially those with higher levels of education. The limited supports to provide livable wages and development programs lead to an increased turnover which is costly to programs. In 2014 in Nevada, the turnover rate for center based staff was 16%.⁶ This turnover can have an impact on children’s learning. Research illustrates that

¹ The Children’s Cabinet (2015). *2014 Early Education and Care & Out-of-School Program Demographics*

² Shonkoff, J. & Phillips, D., eds. (2000). *From neurons to neighborhoods. The science of early childhood development.* Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

³ Department of Education & Department of Health and Human Services (2016). *High-quality early learning settings depend on a high quality workforce. Low compensation undermines quality.* Washington, DC

⁴ The Children’s Cabinet (2015). *2014 Early Education and Care & Out-of-School Program Demographics*

⁵ Excludes Head Start & Pre-K Wages

⁶ The Children’s Cabinet (2015). *2014 Early Education and Care & Out-of-School Program Demographics*

children benefit from being enrolled in centers with lower turnover.⁷ This stability allows for children to engage in increased positive interaction and activities with their teachers. On the opposite end, a child enrolled in a center with high staff turnover can see negative effects with their social-emotional and behavioral development. High staff turnover can influence the overall program culture and have an impact on the quality of services.

There is a national and local push to increase the quality of care and education being provided in early learning centers. With this push, there have been calls for higher educated teachers in ECE classrooms. In Nevada, the Nevada Ready! Preschool Development Grant requires a minimum of a bachelor’s degree in ECE to qualify to teach in a grant funded classroom.

Unfortunately, there is a very limited quantity of early learning professionals with higher levels of education and this is unlikely to change unless the annual earnings for these teachers increase. Child care and early learning programs, unlike K-12 education programs, rely on fees and tuition from families to operate their early learning centers. The average center generates 87% of its revenue from

parent tuition, while the average institution of higher education generates only 35% from tuition and fees.⁸ Unless centers increase their fees and tuition, limiting access to the most at-risk children and families, there is no way for these centers to increase the wages of their employees or provide incentives for obtaining higher levels of education. To assist with higher wages, the state needs to increase financial support for child care and early learning professionals. Without the state’s intervention, early learning professional will remain at or close to the poverty line and have no incentive to increase their educational attainment, unless it is to leave the ECE workforce.

| Licensed Child Care-Highest Educational Attainment | |
|--|-----|
| Less than a High School Diploma | 42% |
| High School Diploma | 19% |
| Some College | 19% |
| Associate’s Degree-ECE | 3% |
| Associate’s Degree-Other | 3% |
| Bachelor’s Degree-ECE | 3% |
| Bachelor’s Degree-Other | 8% |
| Postgraduate Degree-ECE | 1% |
| Postgraduate Degree-Other | 2% |

Recommendations:

Nevada needs to increase financial support for child care and early learning professionals. The state should subsidize teachers’ monthly wages to help lift the early learning professionals out of poverty and attract new talent to the career path. To help encourage educational attainment, the state can tier the wage subsidies based on level of education or professional development.



Children’s Advocacy
ALLIANCE

702-228-1869

5258 South Eastern Ave, Suite 151, Las Vegas, NV 89119

3500 Lakeside Ct, #209, Reno, NV 89509

www.caanv.org

⁷ Department of Education & Department of Health and Human Services (2016). *High-quality early learning settings depend on a high quality workforce. Low compensation undermines quality.* Washington, DC

⁸ Mitchell, Stoney & Dihter: Can we use tax strategies to help finance early care and education?