

Workforce Development

A summary of the scientific literature on workforce development in early childhood education settings.



How This Impacts Children's Development

Early educators in homes and childcare centers have faced worsening levels of food and financial insecurity, stress, and depression during the pandemic. This has hindered their ability to provide responsive and

supportive care to children. Despite the essential role of childcare programs, they experienced severe disruptions due to the pandemic without the same support and infrastructure available to other sectors. Ensuring adequate training, fair compensation, and robust institutional support for early educators is crucial for fostering the development and well-being of the children in their care.

[READ THE BRIEF: Child care and Covid-19: Support children by investing in early educators and program sustainability, 2021](#)

[READ THE BRIEF: Strengthening the early childhood care and education workforce would benefit young children, 2012](#)

Talking Points from the SRCD Briefs

- Prior to March 2020, over 7.75 million children under six were cared for in regulated childcare programs by one million early educators in center-based settings, and one million paid home-based early educators.
- Childcare costs are high for parents but wages for staff are low. In 2018, the annual cost for two children in northeastern U.S. childcare centers was \$26,102, or 41% of the median household income. Meanwhile, child care workers earn a median wage of just \$11.65 per hour, near the federal poverty level.
- Individuals working in early childhood care and education have low wages, few benefits, and limited opportunities for advancement. This leads to turnover and job dissatisfaction, which in turn have been linked with stress, burnout, and lowered interest in professional development.
- Early education and childcare programs vary widely, from those that are carefully planned and executed to those with no specific requirements. The quality of children's early experiences is crucial for their long-term intellectual development, socioemotional well-being, and overall health.
- Financial and health-related stressors disproportionately affect Black and Hispanic women, who make up 40% of the childcare workforce and earn lower wages when than their white peers.

Policy Considerations in the Briefs

1. Additional funding to stabilize childcare programs and cover increased costs should be part of a coordinated approach that addresses a range of financial challenges. This includes tackling high costs

for parents, low wages and limited benefits for early educators, and the unstable financing within the early care and education system.

2. Policies are needed to address early educators' expressed needs for additional training and support in implementing new safety guidelines. These policies should also address their concerns about exposure and/or the potential spread of COVID-19 while caring for children. Additionally, they must provide the necessary knowledge, skills, and tools to meet the developmental needs of young children effectively.
3. Increased access to mental health services to address the growth in early educators' stress, depression, and anxiety. In addition to understanding the critical need of strategies that promote children's behavioral and emotional development.
4. Placing equity as a central goal will be important when developing and implementing initiatives to ensure that early educators and children of color are not further and disproportionately harmed.

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