

# LEADERSHIP



## Leading Colorado's Early Care and Education Workforce

April 2016



THE WOMEN'S  
FOUNDATION  
OF COLORADO

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## Acknowledgments

Qualistar Colorado advances quality, access and equity in early care and education so that all children are valued, healthy and thriving.

Qualistar Colorado supports professionals who work with children every day in early care and education programs. Knowing that a child's earliest experiences set the path for later school and life success is the motivation behind Qualistar's mission. The Early Childhood Colorado Framework, a shared vision for Colorado's young children and families, is a foundational piece of Qualistar's mission-driven work.

One concept at the core of the Early Childhood Colorado Framework is a high quality early care and education system for all children. In this report, Qualistar set forth a research study to better understand those early care and education professionals in leadership and administrative positions responsible for directing professionals in reaching optimal child development outcomes for children statewide. These leadership professionals are a subset of the early care and education workforce that is less often studied and for which data are less available. Knowing that Colorado's current system is experiencing a tremendous shift in supports, resources and investments, the focus on leadership spotlights the significant importance of these professionals. The results capture a current picture of those professionals who identify as the owner, director and/or principal of a business and/or school serving young children. This report highlights major findings and offers field strategies and policy recommendations to support early care and education leaders.

Qualistar would like to thank The Women's Foundation of Colorado for their support, thoughtful feedback and partnership for this research. The Women's Foundation of Colorado builds resources and leads change so that every woman and girl in Colorado achieves her full potential.

We also wish to extend our appreciation to those organizations and agencies that assisted us with outreach to inform and encourage their constituents to participate in this study. Most importantly, we are indebted to the leaders and administrators who took the time to complete our survey. Your time is valued and the information you have provided will guide future policy discussions.

Qualistar Colorado thanks these key partners who share our commitment to ensuring that all children are valued, healthy and thriving.

#### Child Care Resource and Referral Statewide Partners

Mile High United Way  
Bright Futures for Early Childhood and Families  
Child Care Innovations  
Children First  
United Way of Weld County  
Boulder County Housing & Human Services Department  
Denver's Early Childhood Council  
Early Childhood Council of Larimer County  
Early Childhood Council of the San Luis Valley  
Early Childhood Network  
Early Childhood Options  
Family Development Center – Child Care Network  
Western Colorado 2-1-1/Hilltop Community Resources  
Morgan County Family Center  
Pikes Peak United Way  
Rural Communities Resource Center  
Early Childhood Council of La Plata County

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# SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION



## Executive Summary

Quality early care and education is an essential two-generation resource for national, state and local economies. Early care and education professionals allow families the opportunity to participate in the workforce and achieve self-sufficiency while also providing safe, learning-rich environments that lay the foundation for children's school and life success.

This report identifies primary characteristics of professionals who identify as leaders of early care and education centers and preschools and their working environments. Included with research results are recommendations that aim to support leaders as they manage change and lead improvements to the quality, access and affordability of their critical services for families, young children and their communities.

## Key Findings

**Early care and education leaders, administrators and teachers provide an invaluable service, but their compensation does not reflect their critical role in children's lives and in the community.**

For children to thrive, Colorado needs well-informed, capable leadership. In most cases, quality of early care and education starts with strong leadership, management and child development knowledge. Colorado's early care and education leaders are highly skilled and trained professionals. In fact, 82 percent have a college degree and 63 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher. When compared to other professionals with similar educational backgrounds and work responsibilities, we can see that early care and education leaders are grossly underpaid.

**Low teacher wages make it challenging for early care and education leaders and administrators to find, hire and retain qualified professionals.**

When a workforce is chronically underpaid, severe and negative repercussions exist. This includes challenges in recruiting qualified staff and high turnover of positions that are both costly to the business and, more importantly, to children, who thrive with secure, attached adult relationships. Nearly 70 percent of respondents reported experiencing some turnover of teaching staff in the past 12

months with a common reason for the turnover being the need for more money.

Results of the current study identified a severe lack of qualified professionals to fill vacancies. Not only is teacher pay low, but 60 percent of leaders reported that the lack of qualified professionals was the top challenge in hiring. Leaders are in a current struggle to not only find qualified professionals, but to also find ways to successfully retain the teams they have.

**Support is needed for early care and education leaders in the management and implementation of historic change.**

Recently, there have been historic federal and state investments in early care and education that have set forth significant change in a short period of time. Leaders and administrators bear great responsibility in implementing a wide array of new policies, regulations, expectations and standards in the short-term for positive impacts in the long-term. Those in decision-making positions are responsible for ensuring that their teams of teachers and staff members are equipped to execute changes in curriculum and safety and sanitation procedures, provide high quality

Average Leader's Annual Income Compared to Self-Sufficiency Standard for Colorado				
Geographic Designation	County Examples	Average Income per Geographic Designation	Required Income to Meet Basic Needs	Difference (+/-)
Urban	Denver	\$41,253	\$47,914	-\$6,661
	Jefferson		\$51,888	-\$10,635
	Larimer		\$46,552	-\$5,299
Rural	Archuleta	\$38,365	\$38,511	-\$146
	Morgan		\$31,606	+\$6,759
	Rio Blanco		\$40,817	-\$2,452
Rural Resort	Grand	\$47,814	\$43,617	+\$4,197
	Routt		\$58,808	-\$10,994
	Summit		\$59,595	-\$11,781
Self-Sufficiency Standard for Colorado (2015). Family is defined as one adult and one preschool aged child and basic needs include, but are not limited to, housing, child care and food.				

Average Hourly Teacher Wage Compared to Self-Sufficiency Standard for Colorado				
Geographic Designation	County Examples	Average Hourly Wage per Geographic Designation	Required Income to Meet Basic Needs	Difference (+/-)
Urban	Denver	\$13.70	\$22.69	-\$8.99
	Jefferson		\$24.54	-\$10.84
	Larimer		\$22.04	-\$8.34
Rural	Archuleta	\$14.04	\$18.23	-\$4.19
	Morgan		\$14.96	-\$0.92
	Rio Blanco		\$19.33	-\$5.29
Rural Resort	Grand	\$16.69	\$20.65	-\$3.96
	Routt		\$27.84	-\$11.15
	Summit		\$28.22	-\$11.53
Self-Sufficiency Standard for Colorado (2015). Family is defined as one adult and one preschool aged child and basic needs include, but are not limited to, housing, child care and food.				

care and instruction and participate in new state-level systems of support.

Strong leaders can manage changing expectations and lead their teams through the process, while also running a business and staying engaged with families. To ensure that more programs benefit from skilled leaders and administrators, access to resources in business management and professional development is critical.

The state's Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System factors in leadership, management and administration practices as one of five separate standard criteria for earning a quality rating designation along with workforce qualifications and professional development, family partnership, learning environment and child health promotion. A new focus is needed to ensure that each leader is equipped with business skills including building a healthy work environment, establishing effective policies and procedures, operating sound fiscal management practices, implementing

risk management strategies, engaging families, utilizing community resources and maximizing marketing and public relations strategies.

## Needed Action

A one-sized fits all solution is not easy to find given that the early care and education field is complex. Action for advancing the field is challenging and requires multi-faceted solutions, which may vary in every community.

- Adequate compensation for both leaders and teachers remains a hurdle that requires the time and attention of advocates, decision-makers, business leaders and community leaders. Serious explorations are needed to uncover innovative ways to compensate leaders and teachers at higher wages.
- Early care and education teacher wages are low and the type of work is mentally and emotionally

taxing. Compensation must increase and professionals must receive the professional support needed to stay in the field.

- Considerations can be made to successful models that are currently in place across the country aimed to improve access and affordability of quality care. For example, five states – Iowa, Kansas, Florida, New Mexico and North Carolina – participate in the Child Care WAGE\$@ Project. The WAGE\$@ Project has successfully lowered turnover and increased quality by using private funding to increase compensation based on increased levels of education. In addition, Louisiana uses School Readiness Tax Credits as a wage supplement for leaders and teachers based on the level of education and training.
- Both the Colorado Department of Human Services and the Colorado Department of Education should continue to empower local Child Care Resource and Referral agencies and Early Childhood Councils to conduct community outreach to generate buy in across the field and offer tools to support each unique team of professionals in diverse settings.

“Although their work with young, vulnerable and at-risk children is viewed as a way to ameliorate poverty, the profession is actually generating poverty for teachers and their own children.”

Whitebook, 2015



**“Good quality care requires an environment that values adults as well as children.”**  
**National Child Care Staffing Study, 1989**

**The Need for Strong Leaders in Early Care and Education**

A quote offered by national experts more than 25 years ago stands true today. Decades of research solidify the importance of learning environments in a child's earliest years. Environments where children grow, develop and learn are instrumental to their future school and life success. Often overlooked in a child's life is the large group of professionals responsible for their care and education while families work, go to school and pursue opportunities for self-sufficiency. Even further off the radar, at times, are those professionals in leadership positions responsible for making daily business and management decisions. They are the leaders and administrators of small and large child care centers, public school settings, family child care homes, and faith-based settings where thousands of Colorado's youngest children are dropped off and picked up every day.

Unlike the publicly funded kindergarten through the 12<sup>th</sup>-grade system, services for younger children, birth to kindergarten, are mostly privately offered services nestled in a market-based system of diverse business owners (e.g., for-profit, not-for-profit, community-based). This primarily private system is reliant on a mix of funding streams including state and/or federal subsidized reimbursements, grant funding, and most commonly, out of pocket payment by families.

Early care and education programs are often offered in business settings which provide services to children, families and communities. And, like all business, they need to be managed. The leaders and administrators have the immense task of dealing with a multitude of responsibilities including budgeting, management of personnel, hiring/firing, staff development, community and family outreach, planning, pedagogy, and direct services to children and families. The role of a leader in this type of setting is critical to daily activities and requires tremendous organizational and communication skills (Kagan & Hallmark, 2001).

Qualistar conducted a statewide survey of the early care and education leadership. At a time of significant change for Colorado's early care and education system, a focus on leadership is important in better understanding how Colorado's system is adapting and adjusting to change. The extent of this change is explained in detail later in the report and includes the launch of a new Quality Rating and Improvement System, a professional development information system, the reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), state child care assistance program reform, and new sanitation and licensing regulations. The better decision makers understand early care and education leaders, their backgrounds and education, and their passions and challenges, the stronger supports can be designed and implemented to empower leaders to become as effective as possible in leading improvements to the quality, accessibility and affordability of Colorado's early care and education system.

This report follows the release of a major national study that presents a comprehensive view on the status of those who work with our country's youngest children. In April 2015, a joint report was released by the Institute of Medicine and the National Research Council of the National Academies entitled, Transforming

the Workforce for Children Birth through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation. The Institute of Medicine (IOM) and National Research Council (NRC) were commissioned to explore the implications of the science of child development for the professionals who work with children birth through age 8. One of the 13 recommendations offered by the experts is one that sets the tone for the current research. The eighth recommendation highlights the critical role of leadership and the important role each leader plays in the success of a strong, reliable early care and education workforce.

**Recommendation 8:** Ensure that policies and standards that shape the professional learning of care and education leaders encompass the foundational knowledge and competencies needed to support high quality practices for child development and early learning in their organizations.

To review the committee's full list of recommendations within the Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth through Age 8: Unifying Foundation report, see appendices available online at [www.qualistar.org/workforce](http://www.qualistar.org/workforce).

## A Changing Landscape

Each day, thousands of children are being cared for and educated by someone other than a parent. Of Colorado's 5,355,000 residents, more than 410,000 are younger than age six (Cost of Care, 2014). With 62 percent of parents with children younger than age six in the workforce, the demand for child care is substantial (Kids Count Data Center, 2013). The phenomenon of working families requiring early care and education programs to maintain employment is not new. However, the extent to which the availability, cost and quality of care have shifted present new and significant challenges to families across income brackets. For those who offer these services in their communities and for children and families, a number

**“Leaders play an instrumental role in helping care and education professionals strengthen their core competencies and in creating a work environment in which they can fully use their knowledge and skills.”**

**Institute of Medicine and National Research Center, 2015**

of significant shifts in their daily work have taken place in a relatively short period of time.

Since 2012, Colorado's early care and education system has experienced change in several areas that impact any and all early care and education settings, both private and public. Changes include a significant infusion of grant dollars, the launch of new quality improvement efforts, substantial policy improvements and updates to child care licensing rules. Each of these taken separately requires a tremendous amount of time on the part of a leader who is responsible for ensuring that policies and procedures are aligned and stand up to any new changes issued at the state-level. For Colorado, all of these changes have happened simultaneously. Beginning in 2012, Colorado's early care and education system benefited from an unprecedented amount of dedicated dollars. During the summer of 2012, the Colorado Office of Early Childhood was created within the Colorado Department of Human Services. This was a joint effort

made by the Office of the Governor, the Department of Education, the Department of Higher Education and a wealth of advocate support. This effort blended departments and services from across a number of state government agencies. The mission of the Office of Early Childhood is to provide resources for families and early care professionals to best prepare Coloradans for future success, through access to collaborative, coordinated, quality early childhood programs and supports.

By summer 2013 and in less than one full year, Colorado's early care and education system was infused with nearly \$45 million. With these funds two major infrastructure components were launched in 2015 — the newly created statewide Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), named Colorado Shines, and the Professional Development Information System, referred to as PDIS.

**Colorado Shines:** The first system infrastructure component, Colorado

Shines, is a rating based on a complex matrix of quality indicators. Businesses and schools are rated as Levels one, two, three, four or five. According to the Office of Early Childhood, “Colorado Shines is a method to assess, enhance and communicate the level of quality in all licensed early care and education settings in Colorado and is comprised of five standard categories (Office of Early Childhood, 2015):

1. Workforce Qualifications and Professional Development
2. Family Partnership
3. Leadership, Management and Administration
4. Learning Environment
5. Child Health Promotion

**Professional Development Information**

**System:** The second major infrastructure component launched in April 2015 with support of the Early Learning Challenge grant funds was the Professional Development Information System (PDIS) led and implemented by the Colorado Department of Education. In 2010, a comprehensive Early Learning Professional Development System Plan was approved by the Early Childhood Leadership Commission. The PDIS is a critical component and is a web-based system supporting professional development for all of Colorado's early care and education workforce. The system was developed with Colorado's Competencies for Early Childhood Educators and Administrators as the foundation and all professional development offerings within the system align with these competencies. Knowing that on-going, current professional development learning opportunities are important across professional fields, the PDIS offers a wide range of opportunities





in a variety of formats for both individual and group use. The PDIS allows leaders and professionals to manage their own career and professional growth using an Individual Professional Development Plan which includes professional experience, education, and training as well as individually constructed growth plans. The PDIS also issues Early Childhood Professional Credentials at a level reflecting demonstrated competency achievement and supports all professional at all levels of experience and education (Colorado Department of Education, 2015). A major part of Colorado Shines Levels three, four and five is the Early Childhood Professional Credential. The revised Credential will recognize a broader range of ways that professionals gain competence. Individuals will be able to earn points in four different areas: experience, formal education, ongoing professional development and demonstrated competencies.

#### **Child Care and Development Block Grant**

**Reauthorization:** In November, President Barack Obama signed the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014 into law. This action reauthorized the law governing the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) for the first time since 1996 and represented a historic re-envisioning of the program nationally. The

new law made significant advances by defining health and safety requirements, outlining family-friendly eligibility policies, expanding quality improvement efforts and ensuring families and the public have transparent information about the child care choices available to them. The CCDF made \$5.3 billion available to states, territories and tribes in fiscal year 2014 (US Office of Child Care, 2014). Each state office responsible for the administration of CCDF dollars has been required to update policies and change rules to meet each of the new federal requirements that impact families and children enrolled in the program as well as early care and education providers who serve those enrolled.

#### **Colorado Child Care Assistance Program**

**Reform:** Colorado's Child Care Assistance Program or CCCAP is the program funded by CCDF and regulated by the new reauthorization. These subsidies are offered by the Colorado Department of Human Services' Office of Early Childhood through each county's local human services office. They are intended to enable a parent or caregiver to work providing a dual generation impact by enabling adults to become self-sufficient and providing children quality early learning experiences.

During the 2014 Colorado legislative session, a major reform to CCCAP was passed. House Bill 14-1317 was sponsored by Representative Crisanta Duran and Senators Jeanne Nicholson and John Kefalas and was based on a stakeholder process known as the CCCAP Collaborative that was convened by Clayton Early Learning, the Colorado Children's Campaign and Executives Partnering to Invest in Children (EPIC) and was supported by the Alliance for Early Success along with technical assistance from Gail Nourse at the Ounce of Prevention and Hannah Matthews at the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP).

This bill and two companion pieces of legislation all received bipartisan support and were signed by Governor John Hickenlooper on May 22, 2014. Most notably, HB 14-1317 advanced key priorities such as establishing a cap on family co-payments for those at 100 percent of the federal poverty level; the expansion of eligibility during sixty day job searches and for those in postsecondary education and workforce training; improving early care and education provider reimbursement rates; and instituting tiered reimbursement statewide. These changes came with a new \$10 million state investment. Moreover, HB 14-1022 and SB 14-003 addressed two



different components of CCCAP including 12 month minimum eligibility and a pilot program to help address what is termed the cliff effect where families who qualify for child care subsidy earn more during the year, but the pay increase disqualifies the family for the subsidy. The result is that families earn more without improving their financial stability (Alliance for Early Success, 2014).

**Sanitation and Licensing Regulations:** In the fall of 2015 and spring of 2016 two new sets of state licensing rules took effect. Both the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the Colorado Department of Human Services passed revisions to the rules and regulations governing licensed child care centers and marked a significant step forward in advancing children's health, nutrition, social-emotional development and safety. Together, the rules included improvements in areas such as sanitation practices, physical activity, limited screen time and nutrition. As with any change in licensing, each licensed facility is required to meet the new standards within certain time frames and some are easier to implement than others.

Each of these system improvements is intended to offer tools and strategies to support professionals in the early care and education workforce. However, those in leadership positions are at the helm of how this change is implemented in each classroom and for each child and family. The current report explores the leadership and administration of Colorado's early care and education programs from the very top. We know from Professor Peter Druker, deemed the man who invented management, that "management is doing

things right; leadership is doing the right things." Now in this time of change, a focus on those responsible for making change happen is more important than ever. For children to thrive, Colorado needs well-informed, capable leadership. Leaders and administrators are our change agents. They are stable, established and experienced; and it is important to prioritize any effort that is aimed to grow and develop this subset of Colorado's overall workforce.

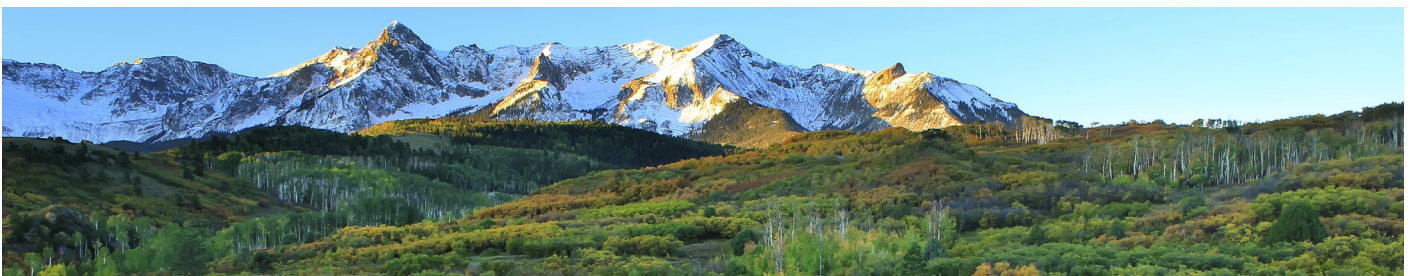
## Research Methodology

The goal of the research was to present a current, descriptive picture of those decision-makers, business owners and leaders responsible for both the business of early care and education and the program operations directly benefiting teachers, families and children. It is important to note that early care and education businesses are unlike many other businesses. The hours of operation must fit around working families' schedules by opening before most regular work days begin and staying open later to allow time for families to end their work days and commute to pick up children. Questions were designed to capture the uniqueness of early care and education settings by exploring different aspects of the work from license type and ages of children served to challenges leaders experience in the classroom.

Questions were organized in a survey and shared across the state. During the spring of 2015, Qualistar Colorado surveyed a portion of Colorado's early care and education workforce including those who identified as owner, director, owner/

director, and/or principal. Individuals were identified using data housed in Qualistar's Child Care Resource and Referral NACCRRAware data system, which is maintained by 16 of the state's local child care resource and referral (CCR&R) agencies. Local CCR&R agency staff collect and track data on all licensed facilities in their service areas. According to data pulled in the spring, there were 1,225 licensed child care centers and 797 licensed part-day preschool programs across Colorado (total= 2,022).

The survey was made available online, then was emailed to 1,293 licensed early care and education programs and public part-day preschool settings across the state. This number included those programs where valid email addresses existed and excluded numerous invalid email addresses where no other email address was on file. For counties where fewer than five licensed early care and education programs existed, hard copies were also mailed. A total of 471 surveys were completed; 457 were submitted online via SurveyGizmo and fourteen were completed by pencil and paper resulting in a 36 percent response rate. Surveys were not issued to unlicensed settings or to licensed family child care homes. Given the uniqueness of each type of setting, a separate research endeavor and survey would be needed to capture the uniqueness of these settings. Surveys were received from 54 of 64 counties. Counties not represented include: Baca, Cheyenne, Dolores, Elbert, Jackson, Kit Carson, Kiowa, Lake, Moffat and San Juan. There are 34 total licensed programs and schools in these listed counties.





# SECTION TWO: WHO ARE COLORADO'S EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION LEADERS?

Beyond understanding that most early care and education professionals are women and earn low wages, what do those who identify as leaders and administrators look like and what do they identify as challenges?

## Job Title

**Results:** The early care and education field is complex. This is reflected in the wide array of job titles the field's leaders reported. Unlike other industries where a common job title often explains an employee's responsibilities, the diversity of settings that offer early care and education services lends itself to the complexity of job titles, responsibilities and roles that each professional plays.

- Director - 70%
- Other - 12%
- Owner/Director - 8%
- Owner - 7%
- Principal - 2%

Examples of "Other" Responses:

- Administrator
- Assistant Director
- Center Manager
- Chief Operating Officer
- Community Liaison
- Coordinator
- Director/Teacher
- Early Care and Education Specialist
- Early Childhood Coordinator
- Education Coordinator
- Executive Director
- Licensing and Program Quality
- Office Manager

**Why This Matters:** The second largest response to the question of job title was "Other," which revealed a variety of titles. This result supports the notion that services for young children are fragmented and not standardized across the field.

## Gender, Ethnicity and Age

**Results:** The overwhelming majority of the national early care and education workforce is female; the results of this report show that 97 percent of leaders in Colorado are female. More than half of respondents reported being between the ages of 35 and 54 and the sample was overwhelmingly White.

### Gender

Results from this study align with national trends that show the workforce is between 95 and 98 percent female (US Bureau of Labor Statics, 2014). Historically, males have been underrepresented in early care and education settings in every role and position (Uba & Cleinman, 2013). Of the 11 males who completed and returned a survey, five identified as Director, one identified as Executive Director, three as Owner, and two as Owner/Director.

### Ethnicity

Reported Race/Ethnicity of Respondents Compared to Population Percentages				
Race/Ethnicity	Self-Report of Survey Respondents	Colorado Total Population	Colorado children ages 18 years and younger Population	National Total Population
White	86%	73%	57%	65%
Hispanic/Latino	6%	18%	31%	15%
Black/African American	3%	4%	4%	12%
Other	3%	2%	4%	1%
American Indian	2 respondents	1%	1%	1%
Asian	2 respondents	3%	3%	5%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	2 respondents	<1%	<1%	<1%

KIDS COUNT Data Center (2014).

### Age

A significant majority of respondents reported being between the ages of 35 and 54 (61 percent) with 25 percent reporting being 55 or older.

- Younger than 18 years - 0%
- 18 to 24 years - 1 respondent
- 25 to 34 years - 14%
- 35 to 44 years - 35%
- 45 to 54 years - 26%
- 55 to 64 years - 21%
- 65 years and older - 4%

**Why This Matters:** Results indicate that leaders in Colorado's early care and education field are typically White women between the ages of 35 and 54 years. Colorado is not alone in facing a severe lack of men represented in the field overall. Some of this is due to Western cultural notions that women are primary caregivers for children, both at home and in professional settings (Uba & Cleinman, 2013). Only recently have researchers begun to unravel the dynamics of a

female dominated early care and education system, one that typically also lacks diversity whereas most lead teachers and directors are monolingual English speakers and White (Whitebook, Kipnis, & Bellm, 2008). However, the diversity of children and families served by early care and education programs has changed dramatically over the last two decades, with a significant growth of immigrant and non-English speaking families. This trend is likely to continue and by 2050 about half of all children and adolescents younger than 17 in the U.S. are projected to be Hispanic (36 percent), Asian (six percent) or multi-racial (seven percent) (Whitebook, 2014).

An important aspect of a child's healthy growth is being exposed to the diversity of a community including age, ability, background and race and access to role models who look and speak like them. Reported race/ethnicity in the current sample closely mirrors the percentage breakdown of Colorado's overall adult population and overall child populations, but with some important differences. Colorado's population of children is more diverse than the self-reported data from respondents. Eighty-six percent of leaders identified as White compared to 73 percent of Colorado's total population being White, but only 57 percent of

children younger than 18 in the state are White. This is a significant difference that points to the need to diversify the entire field and all positions.

### Education and Qualifications

**Results:** The largest percent of respondents reported holding a bachelor's degree in Other Field (23 percent), while 17 percent reported holding a bachelor's degree in the early care and education field. Between 1986 and 2013, Colorado colleges and universities did not offer Bachelors of Education or Early Childhood Education degrees, which may explain the low percent of leaders with such a degree. In an attempt to ensure quality teacher preparation, the Colorado legislature removed all education degrees in 1986. Teachers-to-be were required to declare a major outside of education and then obtain teacher licensure in conjunction with that major. This policy was recently reversed and multiple Colorado institutes of higher education currently offer or are developing a bachelor's degree in early childhood education.

Given many respondents hold degrees outside of the early care and education field, following is a list of examples of the different types of degrees reported.

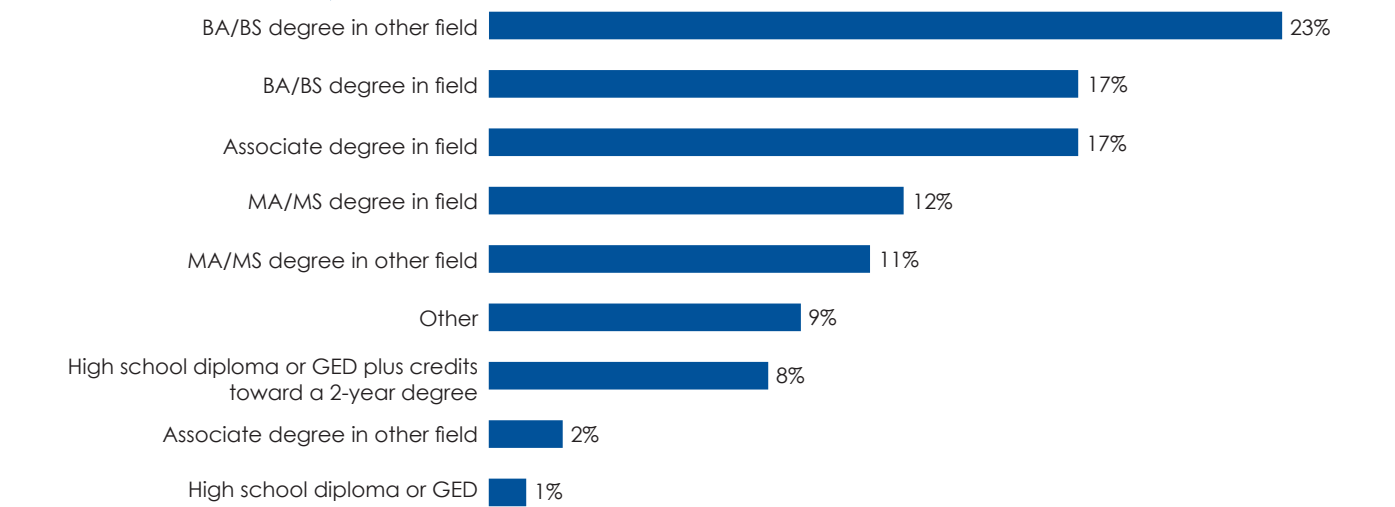
#### Associate Degrees in Other Field:

- Applied Science
- Arts
- Business
- Hospitality Management
- Psychology

#### Bachelor's Degrees in Other Field:

- Accounting
- Anthropology
- Business
- Communications
- Counseling
- Dance
- Elementary Education
- English Education
- Environmental Design
- Exercise Sports Medicine and Music and Recreation Administration
- Family and Consumer Science
- Family Studies
- French
- Health Education
- History
- Human Development
- Human Services
- Liberal Arts and Sciences
- Music Education
- Nursing
- Occupational Therapy
- Psychology
- Social Work
- Sociology
- Therapeutic Recreation

### Earned Education



#### Master's Degree in Other Field:

- Counseling
- Curriculum Development and Instruction
- Education
- Elementary Education
- Human Resource Management
- Leadership/Administration
- Organizational Management
- Psychology
- Social Work
- Sociology
- Special Education

The single PhD degree was in Educational Administration.

Combining those who reported having an associate degree, bachelor's or master's degree; 82 percent of the sampled leaders have earned college degrees. When compared to Colorado's population overall, 37 percent are ages 25 years and older hold a bachelor's degree or higher, in this sample, 63 percent of leaders hold a bachelor's degree or higher (US Census Bureau, 2014). Moreover, Colorado ranks second in the nation in the number of residents with a bachelor's degree (Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade, 2015).

## Qualifications

Colorado is among a handful of states that require early care and education

professionals to have some college level courses before becoming fully qualified. As of May 2010, all individuals seeking to become a qualified director of an early care and education center must complete a three-credit hour or equivalent quarter hour course from a regionally accredited college or university in specific areas of study. Beyond academic degrees, educational qualifications, certifications and experience are required to teach as well as lead programs. Colorado recognizes six early care and education qualifications and 25 respondents (seven percent) reported having earned all.

The majority (87 percent) reported they were not currently taking college courses. This is a likely result considering respondents are in leadership positions and 82 percent have already earned a college degree. Of the 13 percent of leaders currently pursuing a degree or credential, all were enrolled in a course of study related to early care and education demonstrating a commitment to improve skills and practice. Respondents reported taking coursework at various institutions of higher education including 10 community colleges, five universities and two respondents reported taking courses online.

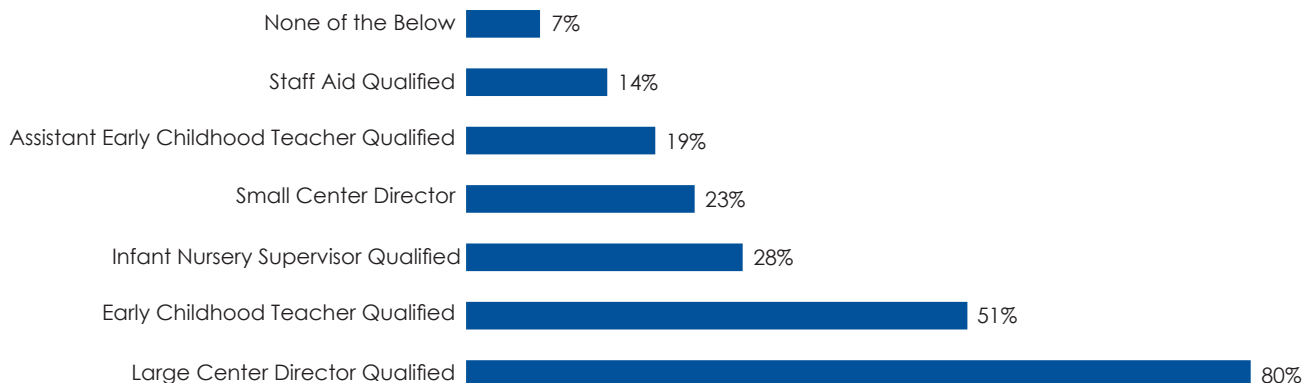
- Early Childhood Certificate - 2 respondents
- Early Childhood Director Certificate - 28%
- AS Degree in Early Childhood Education - 15%

- BS Degree in Early Childhood Education - 17%
- MS Degree in Early Childhood Education - 8%
- Other - 30%

Other: Additional Director Classes, Early Childhood Coaching Credential, Early Childhood Credential, Early Childhood Director Recertification, Early Childhood Leadership Certificate and Continuing Education, Early Childhood Teacher, Large Center Director and Pyramid Model Coach.

**Why This Matters:** Results indicate that Colorado's early care and education leaders are well educated with 82 percent of the sample holding a college degree. Although the majority did not hold college degrees in the field, the list of various areas of study reveal that the sample largely entered the field through a variety of fields of study, mostly social and human services degrees including family and consumer science, human development, psychology, counseling and education. Although early care and education leaders are highly educated and have obtained many of the state's early childhood education credentials.

### Type of Qualification





## Field Experience

**Results:** Approximately 80 percent of early care and education leaders have between zero and 15 years at their current place of employment. More specifically, the number of reported years at current employer that occurred most often in the sample, or mode, was one year. The overall average number of years at the current place of employment was 10 years. This is interesting because this means that respondents reported most often in the sample being at their current place of employment for only one year.

The total number of years in the field of early care and education was 19 years. Given most respondents are between the ages of 35 and 44 years, very few are new to the field and only six percent reported being in the field for five years or less.

Due to the intense nature of the work and other factors such as low pay and inflexible work schedules, often times professionals will take a break or turnover from their positions (Whitebook, 2014). Surprisingly, more than 70 percent of respondents reported that they had never taken a break from working in the early care and education field and indicates stability in the profession at the leadership level. Of those who answered yes (30 percent), the most common reason for taking a break was to raise their children (21 percent).

Years at Current Employer and Years in the Field		
Number of Years	At Current Employer	In Field
0 to 5 years	39%	6%
6 to 15 years	39%	37%
16 to 25 years	15%	34%
26 or more years	7%	23%

Other reasons for taking a break included:

- Pursued another Career - 13%
- Burned Out - 10%
- Continued Education - 9%
- Needed More Money - 9%

Of the leaders who reported taking a break from the field the majority were away for less than one year and only 20 percent took leave between one and two years. Given this study targeted leaders, directors, owners and administrators this is less surprising than the breaks typically seen at the teacher and assistant teacher levels. Some reasons for taking fewer and shorter breaks from the field may include a desire to become a director while working as a teacher, being paid more and having more decision-making authority. As for why leaders decide to stay working in the early care and education field, the following reasons were given in an open-ended response:

- Making a difference for children, families and the community - 41%
- Passion and commitment to my work - 28%
- Environment/Staff/Relationships - 10%

Respondents were also asked about reasons they would consider leaving the early care and education field, the following reasons were given in an open-ended response:

- Money - 27%
- Burned Out- 17%
- Retirement or Age - 13%

**Why This Matters:** Early care and education leaders are a dedicated group of professionals with nearly 60 percent staying in the field for more than 16 years and taking fewer and shorter breaks. They demonstrate their commitment, which frequently comes from a personal dedication to and passion for the work. This type of mission-driven leader is essential for every organization to succeed; however, systemic changes must be made to retain talented leaders. For example, nearly 40 percent of survey respondents reported that they had been at their current employer between zero and five years. So, although leaders are staying in the field, they are not necessarily working at the same facilities for long periods of time.

Additionally, income and the desire to earn more was the top reason given for potentially leaving the field. Later in the report, low pay is also reported by leaders as the top reason for teaching staff turnover.



## Marital Status and Income

**Results:** The vast majority of leaders reported being married (73 percent) followed by single (11 percent), divorced (11 percent), remarried (two percent), cohabitating (two percent), separated (one percent) and widowed (one percent). The percentage of those who reported being married is higher than the Colorado rate overall, which is 50 percent of all females ages 15 years and older and 51 percent of all males ages 15 and older (US Census Bureau, 2013). Respondents were also asked about their individual annual income as a leader. For those respondents who reported salaries by hour, week or month, the responses were annualized with a formula.

More than half of all respondents (53 percent) reported earning between \$30,000 and \$49,999 per year. The overall average income of the sample was \$41,195 with the highest earners, with incomes above \$60,000 (11 percent) self-reporting as Principals, Chief Operations Officers, and a few Owner/Directors.

Given that Colorado's landscape is diverse

Geographic Designation	County Examples	Average Income per Geographic Designation	Required Income to Meet Basic Needs	Difference (+/-)
Urban	Denver	\$41,253	\$47,914	-\$6,661
	Jefferson		\$51,888	-\$10,635
	Larimer		\$46,552	-\$5,299
Rural	Archuleta	\$38,365	\$38,511	-\$146
	Morgan		\$31,606	+\$6,759
	Rio Blanco		\$40,817	-\$2,452
Rural Resort	Grand	\$47,814	\$43,617	+\$4,197
	Routt		\$58,808	-\$10,994
	Summit		\$59,595	-\$11,781

*Self-Sufficiency Standard for Colorado (2015). Family is defined as one adult and one preschool aged child and basic needs include, but are not limited to, housing, child care and food.*

and the cost of living impacts communities differently, the following are the average annual incomes by three geographic designations:

- Overall - \$41,195
- Urban - \$41,253
- Rural - \$38,365
- Rural Resort - \$47,814

Those working in the 45 rural communities across Colorado earn, on average, \$2,830 less than the overall average and

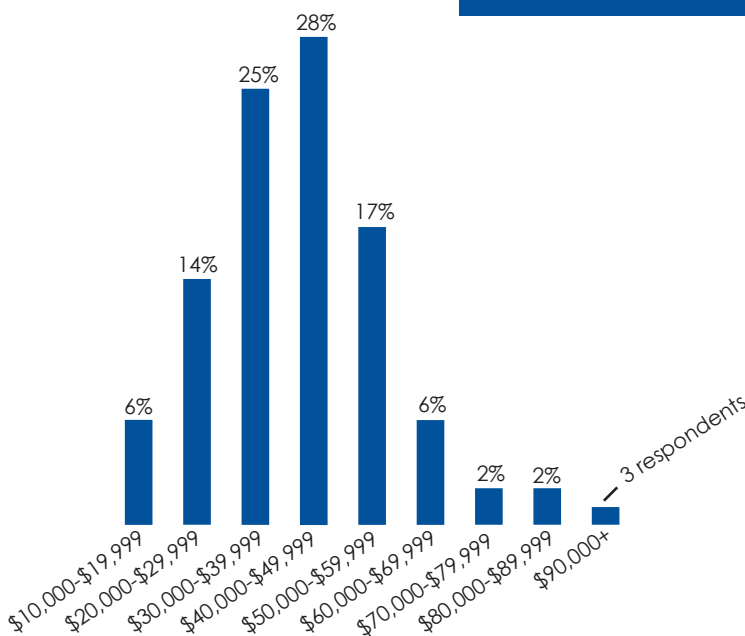
those working in the seven rural resort communities earn \$6,600 more than the overall average. Those working in the 12 urban communities, on average, earn only \$58 more per year than the overall sample average income.

The latest Self-Sufficiency Standard for Colorado report (2015), prepared for the Colorado Center on Law and Policy by the University of Washington's Center for Women's Welfare, presents powerful data on how much a family must earn to meet basic needs. The amount increased between 2001 and 2015 in all counties despite the financial crisis. When the average annual income of leaders is compared to the self-sufficiency standard, it becomes clear that earning a family-sustaining living in the early care and education field is challenging regardless of community.

The table above presents self-sufficiency standard information by geographic designation. The amount of income required to meet basic needs was based on a calculation defined as one adult and one preschool aged child to include, but not limited to, housing, child care and food costs.

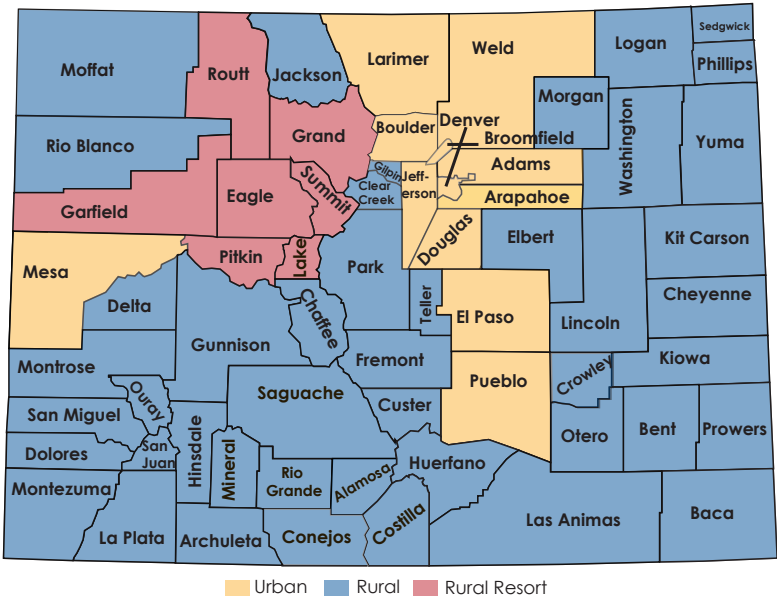
To offer additional context to the reported individual annual incomes, the table

## Annual Income



Early Care and Education Leaders v. Other Occupations				
Occupation Title	Responsibilities	Median Hourly Wage	Mean Hourly Wage	Annual Mean Wage
Education Field				
Education Administrators, Elementary and Secondary School	Plan, direct, or coordinate the academic, administrative, or auxiliary activities of public or private elementary or secondary level schools.			\$84,370
*Elementary School Teacher	Teach students basic academic, social, and other formative skills in public or private schools at the elementary level. Substitute teachers are included in "Teachers and Instructors, All Other" (25-3099). Excludes "Special Education Teachers" (25-2050).			\$50,108
Education Administrators, Preschool and Childcare Center/ Program	Plan, direct, or coordinate the academic and nonacademic activities of preschool and childcare centers or programs. Excludes "Preschool Teachers" (25-2011).	\$19.24	\$22.34	\$46,470
*Kindergarten Teachers	Teach elemental natural and social science, personal hygiene, music, art, and literature to kindergarten students. Promote physical, mental, and social development. May be required to hold State certification. Substitute teachers are included in "Teachers and Instructors, All Other" (25-3099). Excludes "Special Education Teachers" (25-2050).			\$45,500
*Preschool teacher	Instruct preschool-aged children in activities designed to promote social, physical, and intellectual growth needed for primary school in preschool, day care center, or other child development facility. Substitute teachers are included in "Teachers and Instructors, All Other" (25-3099). May be required to hold State certification. Excludes "Childcare Workers" (39-9011) and "Special Education Teachers" (25-2050).	\$13.82	\$15.22	\$31,650
Childcare Worker	Attend to children at schools, businesses, private households, and childcare institutions. Perform a variety of tasks, such as dressing, feeding, bathing, and overseeing play. Excludes "Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education" (25-2011) and "Teacher Assistants" (25-9041).	\$11.04	\$11.75	\$24,450
Other Industries				
Food Service Manager	Plan, direct, or coordinate activities of an organization or department that serves food and beverages. Excludes "Chefs and Head Cooks" (35-1011).	\$27.96	\$29.37	\$61,090
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	Care for ill, injured, or convalescing patients or persons with disabilities in hospitals, nursing homes, clinics, private homes, group homes, and similar institutions. May work under the supervision of a registered nurse. Licensing required.	\$22.04	\$22.49	\$46,780
First Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	Directly supervise and coordinate activities of retail sales workers in an establishment or department. Duties may include management functions, such as purchasing, budgeting, accounting, and personnel work, in addition to supervisory duties.	\$18.48	\$21.17	\$44,030
* Not special education and not applicable for those positions that are not full time, full year positions. United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014)				





on page 14 presents wage information for positions in education and in other industries for comparison. The following information is referenced from the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics for reported wages in Colorado (2014). Results indicate that early care and education leaders are under compensated for the scope of skills entailed in their daily work as compared to similar positions with similar requirements.

The average annual wage was also compared to the reported highest level of education per respondent. The lowest reported annual wage expectedly appeared in the High School Diploma/ GED or High School Diploma/GED plus credits towards a two-year degree at \$31,665 per year. The highest annual income belonged to those with a master's degree in early childhood education or child development (\$46,874). Overall, those college graduates with degrees in early childhood education or child development earned more than their counterparts with degrees in other fields. The smallest difference between those holding a degree in field and other field appeared in the bachelor's degree category with those with degrees in field earned \$360 more per year.

**Why This Matters:** Low compensation has

plagued the field for many decades. As research mounts on the importance of a child's earliest years including evidence that children are born to learn and when given stable, nurturing relationships and rich learning environments; children's long-term life outcomes are positively impacted including higher rates of high school graduation, monthly earnings, home ownership and levels of schooling completed by age 27 as compared to children not having such experiences (Schweinhart, et al., 1993).

The recognition and compensation for those who work with young children has significantly lagged behind the research evidence of the value of their work. In fact, some professionals receive public assistance given the lack of a living wage. Although leaders reported offering wage increase to teachers, the vast majority of teachers earn between \$10.00 and \$15.00 per hour. The overall statewide average income for leaders was \$41,195 and is not reflective of the work a professional in this role is responsible for including business administration, classroom management, marketing, fundraising and other activities required to operate. Moreover, as noted in self-sufficiency table, most leaders are not earning enough to meet their families' basic needs. This is not only a workforce issue at the individual level. It is a crisis across the field. When a workforce is chronically underpaid, severe and negative repercussions exist including challenges in recruiting qualified staff and high turnover of positions. This is costly to the business and, more importantly, to the children (Whitebook, 2014). Children thrive with secure, attached adult relationships and interruption in such relationships can negatively impact a child's social-emotional well-being.

Average Annual Wage by Highest Education Attained		
Type of Degree	Average Annual Wage	Difference Between Degrees (+/-)
Education Field		
High school diploma or GED or High school diploma or GED plus credits towards a two-year degree	\$31,665 (lowest)	N/A
Associate degree in early childhood education or child development	\$41,650	\$8,620 more per year
Associate degree in other field	\$33,030	
Bachelor's degree in early childhood education or child development	\$41,721	\$360 more per year
Bachelor's degree in other field	\$41,361	
Master's degree in early childhood education or child development	\$46,874 (highest)	\$2,081 more per year
Master's degree in other field	\$ 44,793	
PhD in other field	\$40,400	1 respondent (NA)

## SECTION THREE: WORK ENVIRONMENTS

Leaders and administrators work in an environment rich with activity as children and adults engage in learning, inside and outside play, books and literacy, rest and instruction. A child learns through each of his senses and experiences. High quality learning environments allow children the opportunity to explore and engage in a variety of activities. While materials and physical space are both important aspects of quality; the daily interactions between teachers and children are where children gain a solid foundation for their future school and life success. Consistent routines and stable relationships that both involve a balance between structure and scaffolding benefit children and allow children to thrive. For decades, researchers have demonstrated the long-term impacts of quality early care and education experiences when 90 percent of a child's brain development is complete by their first day of kindergarten. The outcomes are especially evident for our most at-risk children and include higher graduation rates, higher adult earning potential, increased home ownership and less dependence on social services across a lifespan (Shonkoff, Phillips, & NRC, 2000).

### Teaching Staff Compensation

Respondents were asked a few select questions about their teachers including questions about wages and benefits. Knowing that compensation and resulting turnover continue to plague the field overall, questions focused on the hourly wages of teaching staff and the experience of staff turnover in the past 12 months. The following are reported wages for full-time teachers, assistant teachers and substitutes.

The average starting hourly wage for full-time teachers was \$12.61. The starting wage that occurred most often in the sample was \$10.50 meaning more respondents listed this wage than any

Starting Hourly Wage for Full-Time Teacher By Region			
Geographic Designation	Average Starting Hourly Wage for Full-Time Teacher	Overall Average	Difference (+/-)
Urban	\$12.29	\$12.61	-\$0.32
Rural	\$12.51		-\$0.10
Rural Resort	\$15.02		+\$2.41

other which is only \$2.19 more per hour than Colorado's minimum wage of \$8.31 per hour as of January 1, 2016. Although 64 percent reported paying between \$10.01 and \$15.00, the majority paid at the lower end of that range. More specifically, the following are reported average starting hourly wages for full-time teachers in three geographic designations of Colorado.

For the starting wages of full-time teachers, those working in rural resort areas are the only teachers earning more than the overall state average. The average overall hourly wage of \$12.61 approximately translates to an annual income of \$26,230 which is significantly below the self-sufficiency standard across most communities as demonstrated in the following table.

The table on page 17 lists the hourly wage needed in each county to meet basic

needs of a family with one adult and one preschool aged child.

There is only one county listed where earning \$12.61 an hour would allow a single parent family and one preschool aged child to meet basic needs. In Adams County, the self-sufficiency hourly wage is \$12.23 per hour.

Current Hourly Wage for Full-Time Teacher:

- \$10.00 or less - 11%
- \$10.01-\$15.00 - 64%
- \$15.01-\$20.00 - 20%
- \$20.01-\$25.00 - 4%
- \$25.01 or more - 3 respondents

The average current hourly wage for full-time teachers was \$14.07. Again, 64 percent of the sample reported currently paying full-time teachers between \$10.01 and \$15.00 per hour further documenting that teachers often stay in the exact same

Average Hourly Teacher Wage Compared to Self-Sufficiency Standard for Colorado				
Geographic Designation	County Examples	Average Hourly Wage per Geographic Designation	Required Income to Meet Basic Needs	Difference (+/-)
Urban	Denver	\$13.70	\$22.69	-\$8.99
	Jefferson		\$24.54	-\$10.84
	Larimer		\$22.04	-\$8.34
Rural	Archuleta	\$14.04	\$18.23	-\$4.19
	Morgan		\$14.96	-\$0.92
	Rio Blanco		\$19.33	-\$5.29
Rural Resort	Grand	\$16.69	\$20.65	-\$3.96
	Routt		\$27.84	-\$11.15
	Summit		\$28.22	-\$11.53

*Self-Sufficiency Standard for Colorado (2015). Family is defined as one adult and one preschool aged child and basic needs include, but are not limited to, housing, child care and food.*

pay range with little movement within. At the overall average of \$14.07 per hour, full-time teachers are approximately earning \$29,270 per year. The table on page 16 presents the difference between what teachers earn currently in three different geographic designations of Colorado.

For the current wages of full-time teachers, rural resort teachers are again the only teachers making more than the overall state average of \$14.07. However, in order for a teacher living and working in the seven rural resort counties to meet basic needs, she would need to earn between \$21.00 and \$30.00 per hour according to the self-sufficiency standard.

Between starting hourly wage and current hourly wage, 81 percent of respondents reported an increase in pay for full-time teachers. The most often reported increase was \$2.00 meaning that teachers most often start in a teaching position at \$10.50 per hour and currently make \$12.50. The overall average at \$14.07 is higher given those teachers who are paid outside the \$10.01-\$15.00 range (approximately

Average Wage Increase Between Starting Hourly and Current Hourly Full-Time Teacher	
Starting	Average Increase
\$8.23 - \$10.00	\$1.46
\$10.01 - \$15.00	\$2.13
\$15.01 - \$20.00	\$2.65
\$20.01 - \$25.00	\$1.39
\$25.00 and higher	\$3.00

25 percent). Even with pay increases, teachers' hourly wages are staying within the \$10.01-\$15.00 range.

Assistant teachers play a critical role in those classrooms which benefit from having additional staff; but not all classrooms have assistant teaching positions. This is a decision for each leader that often depends on child-teacher ratio, group size and space limitations.

Current Hourly Wage for Assistant Teachers:

- \$10.00 or less - 61%
- \$10.01-\$15.00 - 38%
- \$15.01-\$20.00 - 3 respondents
- \$21.00 or more - 0%

The average starting hourly wage for an assistant teacher was \$9.52 while the average current hourly wage was \$10.58. More than half (63 percent) of respondents reported an increase in pay from the starting hourly wage for assistant teachers to current hourly wage. The most often reported wage increase was \$1.00 meaning that assistant teachers most often start at \$9.50 an hour and currently make \$10.50 per hour. Earning the average current hourly wage for assistant teachers (\$10.58) translates into approximately \$22,000 annual income, falling far short of any Colorado county's self-sufficiency hourly wage required to meet basic needs ranging from \$12.23 per hour to \$30.17 per hour.

Substitute teachers are often a mainstay for early care and education leaders who must manage schedules and strict child-teacher ratios. When full-time teachers and/or assistant teachers cannot be in the classroom, substitutes are an important part of keeping the business running. The average current hourly wage for a substitute teacher was \$9.39. The most

#### Self-Sufficiency Wages By County

County	Hourly Wage Required to Meet Basic Needs	County	Hourly Wage Required to Meet Basic Needs	County	Hourly Wage Required to Meet Basic Needs	County	Hourly Wage Required to Meet Basic Needs
Adams	\$12.23	Costilla	\$15.13	Montrose	\$18.59	Denver	\$22.69
Bent	\$13.02	Alamosa	\$15.25	Teller	\$18.60	Clear Creek	\$22.72
Baca	\$13.27	Custer	\$15.29	Chaffee	\$18.70	Elbert	\$23.49
Conejos	\$13.33	Dolores	\$15.36	Jackson	\$18.84	Garfield	\$23.54
Otero	\$13.76	Logan	\$15.40	Moffat	\$18.91	Gilpin	\$23.54
Kit Carson	\$13.91	Saguache	\$15.44	San Juan	\$19.06	Arapahoe	\$24.06
Crowley	\$14.09	Fremont	\$15.86	Rio Blanco	\$19.33	San Miguel	\$24.45
Lincoln	\$14.37	Montezuma	\$16.15	Weld	\$19.82	Eagle	\$24.45
Rio Grande	\$14.65	Cheyenne	\$16.28	El Paso	\$20.18	Jefferson	\$24.54
Sedgwick	\$14.79	Prowers	\$17.00	Grand	\$20.65	Park	\$26.18
Yuma	\$14.80	Las Animas	\$17.01	Hinsdale	\$20.80	Boulder	\$26.86
Phillips	\$14.85	Mineral	\$17.36	Ouray	\$21.03	Broomfield	\$27.40
Washington	\$14.87	Pueblo	\$17.38	Lake	\$21.46	Routt	\$27.84
Morgan	\$14.96	Mesa	\$17.41	La Plata	\$21.50	Douglas	\$28.07
Kiowa	\$15.02	Delta	\$17.54	Larimer	\$22.04	Summit	\$28.22
Huerfano	\$15.06	Archuleta	\$18.23	Gunnison	\$22.56	Pitkin	\$30.17

Self-Sufficiency Standard for Colorado (2015).



often reported hourly wage for a substitute was \$10.00 per hour which closely matches the most common current hourly wage of assistant teachers. Earning \$9.39 per hour as a substitute teacher translates into approximately \$19,531 annual income and again, dramatically falling short of all self-sufficiency standards across all counties.

- \$10.00 or less - 41%
- \$10.01-\$15.00 - 50%
- \$15.01-\$20.00 - 7%
- \$20.01-\$25.00 - 3 respondents
- \$25.00 and higher - 0%

From these analyses, it is clear why early care and education teachers and their families are more likely than all national workers to be enrolled in Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Medicaid/CHIP, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and/or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and cost of public supports to early care and education workers is approximately \$2.4 billion per year (Whitebook, Phillips & Howes, 2014). So although their work with young,

vulnerable and at-risk children is viewed as a way to ameliorate poverty, the profession is actually generating poverty for teachers and their own children (Whitebook, 2015).

Not only is teacher pay low, but 60 percent of respondents reported that the "lack of people who are qualified/educated/certified" to work in early care and education was the top challenge in hiring teachers. Another 25 percent reported "low money/salary/pay" as the top challenge and 12 percent reported "lack of people who are professional/dedicated/committed" indicating that they are not only looking for qualified professionals, but professionals who fit well on a team and have the skill sets to work with young children and families.

difference in the lives of the workforce. When asked about current benefit packages offered to teaching staff the following was reported.

Nearly 40 percent of early care and education leaders reported not offering health benefits to staff. The degree to which other leaders share the cost of health benefits varied:

- Unavailable Health Benefits - 39%
- Partially Paid for Employee and Dependents - 24%
- Partially Paid for Employee Only - 13%
- Fully Paid for Employee Only - 11%
- Available Through Employer but Paid Fully by Employee - 5%
- Fully Paid for Employee, Partially Paid for Dependents - 4%
- Fully Paid for Employee and Dependents - 2%

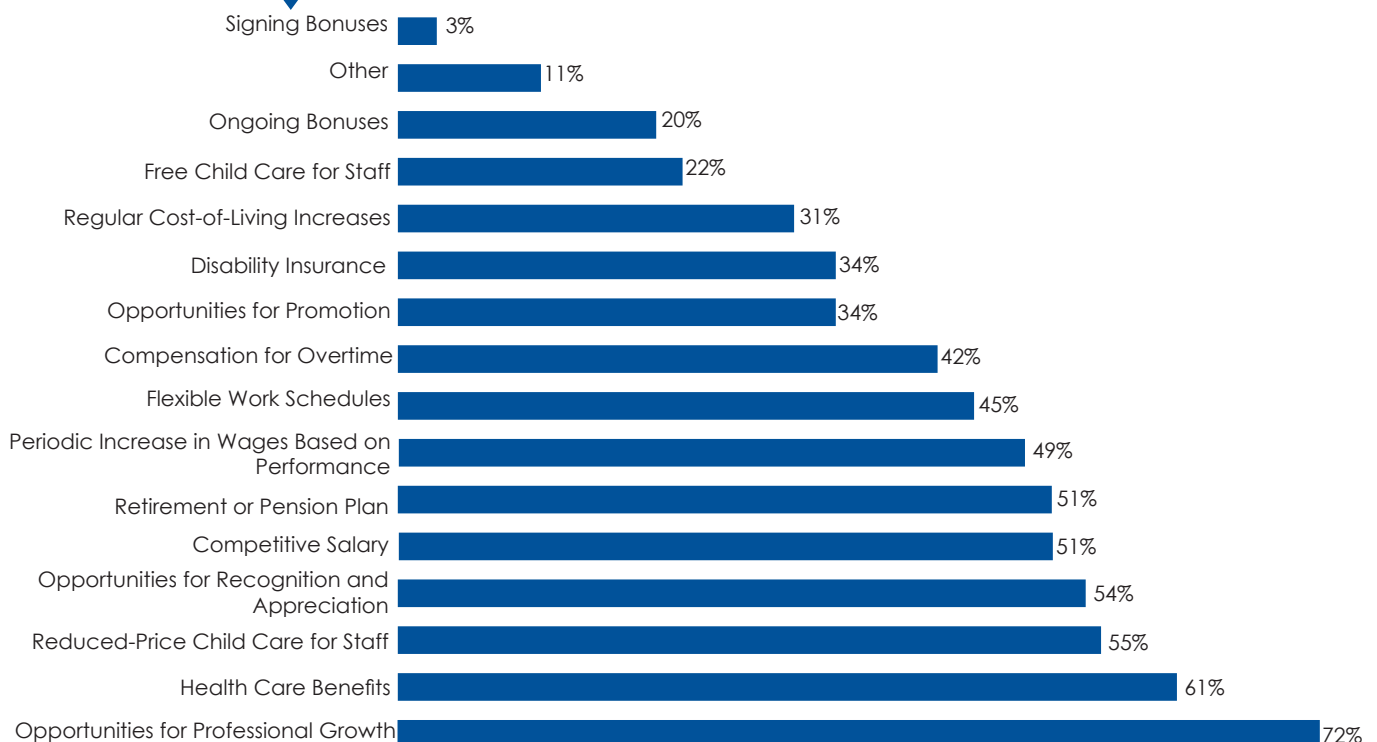
If given the opportunity, leaders reported that they would like to offer teaching staff the following that are currently not offered:

- Health Benefits - 29%

## Benefits

For what other jobs lack in pay, at times, offered benefits can make a real

## Staff Benefits



- Competitive Salary/More Pay/Higher Salary - 29%
- Additional Pay for Education/Training - 10%
- Maternity Leave/Paid Time Off - 8%
- 401K/Retirement - 6%
- Free/Reduced Price Child Care - 6%
- Cost of Living Increase/Bonuses - 5%
- Paid Planning - 2%
- Gym Membership - 2%
- Miscellaneous - 2%

Responses in the miscellaneous category included some benefits that most industries take for granted such as wanting to host monthly staff appreciation lunches and a yearly retreat. Sometimes benefits cannot be offered because of demanding work schedules within the early care and education programs. If those workers take time off, they might have to close their classroom or program, leaving the families they serve without care for the day. Moreover, others reported wanting to offer more flexibility in work schedules and to offer year-round work instead of only seasonal work. Finally, one respondent mentioned the challenge of supporting her staff with navigation of complicated family dynamics stating, "...additional support for social and emotional issues surrounding poverty and families in crisis, including those with children with special needs. Special needs support in preschool is lacking. We do not have the specialists that the K-8 system has."

## Teacher Turnover

Turnover is an especially challenging dynamic of the workplace. Turnover is the act of replacing an employee with a new employee and can be due to a number of reasons including resignations, termination, retirement or transfers. Replacing staff is time consuming and expensive, with a number of associated administrative steps and costs. When new teachers are hired and placed in classrooms, a new relationship with each child begins. When turnover occurs often in early care and education settings,

Full-Time Teacher Turnover in the Past 12 Months	
Number Who Left	Percent Who Reported Losing Staff
0	31%
1	24%
2	19%
3	7%
4	9%
5 or more	8%

Assistant Teacher Turnover in the Past 12 Months	
Number Who Left	Percent Who Reported Losing Staff
0	49%
1	23%
2	16%
3	4%
4	3%
5 or more	5%

inconsistency in teaching staff can be challenging for children experiencing too much change in relationships and routine. It is well established that relationships between young children and teachers are the cornerstone of learning. When a trusting and nurturing connection does not develop, or is disrupted, often due to the insufficient staffing and/or high levels of turnover, children suffer the emotional and educational consequences. Researchers have found that children who have difficulty forming positive relationships with teachers also have later academic and behavioral challenges in school (Hamre & Pianta, 2001).

Nearly 70 percent of respondents reported experiencing some turnover in the past 12 months ranging from one teacher to more than five teachers. Only 31 percent reported not experiencing turnover. Just more than half of the sample reported experiencing turnover at the assistant teacher level.

It is important to note that very few teachers are leaving due to termination (eight percent), meaning turnover is

largely due to other contributing factors. Income was the top reason teaching staff gave when leaving their positions. Top reasons included:

- Pay/Needed More Money - 30%
- Moved - 19%
- New Job - 17%
- Family Commitments - 10%
- Wrong Fit/Termination - 8%
- Retirement - 4%
- Went Back to School - 4%
- Personal - 3%
- Burned Out - 2%
- Benefits - 2%
- Other - 2%

\*Other: Commute, found cheaper child care, health reasons, only one-to-three-year work visas.

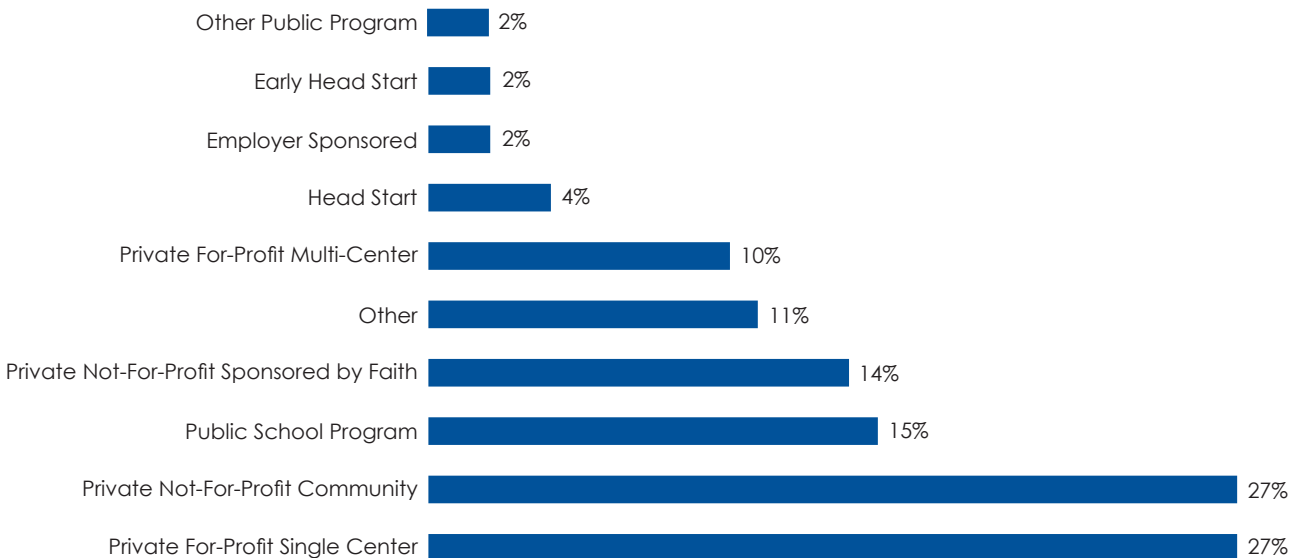
**Why this Matters:** The ability to find, hire, pay and retain qualified staff is a challenge for a significant number of early care and education leaders and administrators. There are several barriers for those who have the desire to work with our youngest children including lack of professional recognition. Moreover, compensation has long been a challenge with many experts speaking to the fact that low compensation is a major barrier to attracting professionals to the field (Pritzker, Bradach & Kaufmann, 2015).

Colorado's early care and education workforce is in the midst of a tremendously difficult struggle given the lack of stability marked by low compensation and a lack of qualified professionals. More than twenty-five years ago, the National Child Care Staffing Study first documented the critical importance of a stable workforce. The study found that early care and education settings that paid lower salaries were plagued by high turnover, while children suffered the consequences of inconsistent care and bonding. In contrast, settings paying higher salaries were able to attract and retain well-educated teachers and administrators who were specialized in early childhood development and education, and children were found more likely to thrive (Whitebook, Phillips,

& Howes, 1990). Numerous studies have replicated these findings across infant, toddler and preschool classrooms and subsequent research has demonstrated that high turnover prevents programs from improving, while stability among a team of well-trained teachers provides an essential ingredient for improving and sustaining better services for young children.

Turnover of staff is a challenge for all early care and education settings regardless of quality, location or cost. Given teacher wages are low and the type of work mentally and emotionally taxing, keeping qualified teachers has long been an upward battle for leaders and administrators. Keeping teachers is for the benefit of all children, not only our children who are most at-risk (Whitebook, 2015). Turnover deprives children of a critical element necessary for healthy development – ongoing relationships with a limited number of caring adults who know individual children well. As new teachers continually arrive in classrooms, both the children and the new teacher are left to start the process of relationship building all over again.

Program Business Type



Business Type and Children Served

Early care and education settings look very different and services can be offered under a variety of business models. Each type of license establishes specific rules for administration, services and health and safety and is issued by the Colorado Department of Human Services.

The majority of respondents were leaders of Large Child Care Centers (61 percent), which are facilities licensed to provide services to 16 or more children. Ten percent of respondents reported working in small child care centers, which are licensed to provide services for up to 15 children. Businesses can be licensed to serve infants, toddlers, preschoolers and/or school-age children. Preschools are part-day programs for five or more children between the ages of two and-a-half and seven years and are commonly administered in public school settings.

For those 29 respondents selecting “Other” to describe their license type, the following were reported examples:

- Catholic preschool program

- Colorado Preschool Program
- Early childhood education administration
- Head Start
- Military
- Preschool – two full days
- Private
- Teen parent center

Business Type

This question was a “check all that apply,” so some respondents are represented in multiple categories. There are a wide variety of business types in the early care and education field. For example, a Private For-Profit Single Center may accept several funding streams and provide several types of federal and state programming such as Early Head Start, Head Start, the Colorado Preschool Program and the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program. This example is not unique to the majority of settings given there is a limited, dedicated public funding stream and the majority of costs are covered by private family payments for services. For the current study, only those operating a center-based setting, faith-based setting or a school-base setting were surveyed. Again, family child care

\*Other: tuition based, publically funded preschool, teen parent child care center

home leaders were not surveyed given the unique nature of their business model and work environments.

## Children Served

Thousands of children are served each day in each type of setting. When analyzing the results of the question asking about typical enrollment, several trends appeared. Most notably, very few of the leaders surveyed reported offering services to the state's youngest children, those two years of age and younger.

Nearly 45 percent of respondents reported not serving children ages birth to 11 months with an additional 27 percent reporting not serving children up to age two. In comparison, zero percent of respondents reported not serving children ages three- and four-years. Infant and toddler care is considerably more expensive to provide in comparison to the care offered to older children. Infants and toddlers require more one-on-one attention for feeding, diapering and bonding.

**Why This Matters:** Families have children of all ages and early care and education programs are designed to serve our youngest. Results indicate that families who have a child or children younger than two years likely face an added challenge of access given so few actually serve this age group. There are many reasons not to offer infant and/or toddler care and a major consideration is the specialized training infant/toddler teachers are required to achieve.

Lead infant teachers are required to have specialized training including meeting the educational requirements of Infant Nursery Supervisor. The classroom dynamics for teachers of infants and toddlers are unique and require more space, additional health and safety requirements such as safe sleep knowledge.

## Business Hours

When asked about work hours, 85 percent of respondents reported working more than 40 hours per week. Moreover, of those working more than 40 hours a week, 40 percent reported working between six and 10 additional hours followed by one to five hours (29 percent), 11-15 hours (15 percent), 16-20 hours (16 percent), and one respondent reported more than 20 additional hours per week. The vast majority reported "Not Applicable" when asked about how they are compensated for the additional hours (77 percent), because they are in salaried positions. The remaining 23 percent reported being compensated by:

- Paid for additional hours at regular rate - 3%
- Paid for additional hours at time and a half for overtime - 6%
- Receive hours off equaling the number of overtime hours worked - 14%

This information aligns with what we know about early care and education businesses, which operate extended hours to accommodate parents and families' 40 plus work week. Most children are in care for more than eight hours given parents and families work eight hours or more, not including commute time. Therefore, many early care and education programs open between 6:00 am and 7:00 am and close between 6:00 pm and 7:00 pm. Maintaining these business hours increases the likelihood for 10-12 hour work days for leaders and administrators. Leaders are often left with few quiet times during the day to address paperwork, to return phone calls, to pay vendors, to bookkeep and to complete other administrative responsibilities of operating a business.

Ages of Children Not Being Served		
Ages of Children	Percent of Early Care and Education Settings Not Serving each age group	Percent Serving between 1 and 10 children by each age group
Infants (Birth-11 months)	44%	40%
Toddlers (12-23 months)	27%	42%
Twos (24-35 months)	12%	38%
Preschool (3-5 years)	0%	7%

## Financial Assistance for Families

Unlike the K-12 system where all children can receive a free public education, only a small fraction of the children in early care and education programs are supported with public funds. In 2014, more than 30,000 children utilized the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) at least one time in the 2014 calendar year (Office of Early Childhood Data Request, 2015). This is about seven percent of the state's population of children younger than six years. Moreover, children younger than age six are more likely to live in poverty than any other age group (Kids Count in Colorado, 2015). This is a startling statistic knowing that early development sets the stage for later social, academic and health outcomes. In 2014, 15 percent of Colorado children, nearly 200,000, lived in poverty while African American/Black children and Hispanic/Latino children were more than three times as likely to live in poverty as non-Hispanic White children (Kids Count in Colorado, 2016).

Colorado is among the least affordable states for early care and education ranking seventh in the nation for the least-affordable center-based four-year-old care and landing in the top five in the nation for the least-affordable center-based infant care (Child Care Aware of America, 2015). For most families, early care and education programs are not obtainable when paired with the high cost of rent and mortgage payments, groceries



and other daily necessities. Crucial programs that address affordability, such as CCCAP, are offered by the federal Child Care Development Fund in partnership with states. The Colorado Department of Human Services allocates CCCAP funding to local county human services departments that work directly with families.

Colorado's Child Care Assistance Program is the largest financial assistance program in the state to assist families with the cost of care serving about seven percent of young children across the state in 2014. The program provides child care assistance to families that are working, searching for employment or who are in training, and families that are enrolled in the Colorado Works Program and need child care services to support their efforts toward self-sufficiency. Respondents were asked about their participation in the CCCAP as well as three other major federal and state offered financial assistance programs. Respondents reported participating in and serving children enrolled in the following:

- Colorado's Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) - 55%
- Colorado's Preschool Program (CPP) - 33%

- Not serving children enrolled in financial assistance programs - 30%
- Head Start - 7%
- Early Head Start - 5%

Fortunately, there are other types of financial assistance programs available to families at the community level where communities have come together and created and/or voted for initiatives that help to make up the difference between low reimbursement rates of state/federal programs and private pay. Following are the responses to the open ended question of "other" financial assistance program participation:

- Other - 12%
- Denver Preschool Program (DPP) - 9%
- Boulder/Longmont County Gap Subsidy Program - 3%
- Boulder County Cliff Subsidy Program - 2%
- Pitkin County Kids First Program - 1%
- Summit County Child Care Assistance - 1%

Leaders who indicated that they accept "Other" sources of funding, reported 15 different local private and public financial assistance options for local families.

Accepting a variety of private and public funding streams can be challenging for those responsible for budgets given the large number of funding sources that typically fund early care and education businesses and schools. Each funding stream has unique reporting requirements, standards, processes and deliverables that can be vastly different from the next funding source. Not only does juggling different funding streams add administrative burden, it also complicates business models should one source increase or decrease or disappear. Leaders must be financially savvy and understand where and how

fund streams can be blended, braided and/or leveraged to make ends meet.

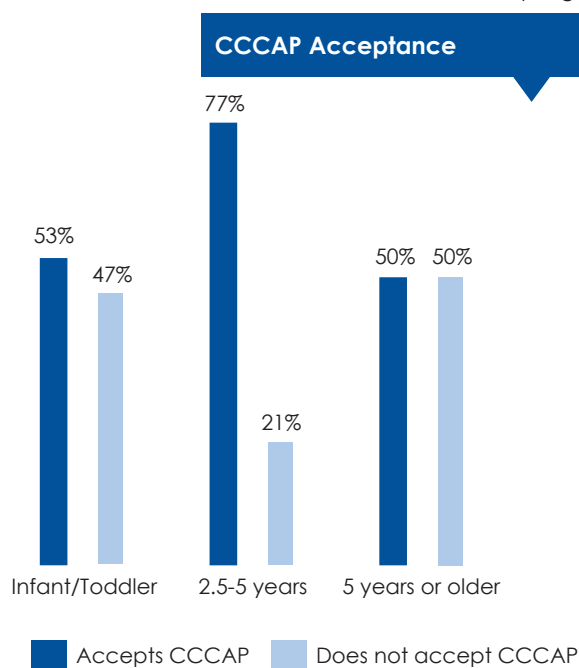
The scenario of families who receive financial assistance to cover the cost of care is stark. The two largest categories of responses to the question about the percentage of children served who receive financial assistance was either zero percent or in the lowest range between one and 25 percent of total children served.

These percentages reveal that 81 percent of all respondents for the infant category either reported not serving infants enrolled in CCCAP or serve a small percentage; for preschool children nearly 65 percent either do not serve preschool children enrolled in CCCAP or serve a small percentage.

Percent of Enrolled Children in the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP)		
Infants	0 Infants	43%
	1-25% of infants	38%
Preschoolers	0 preschoolers	21%
	1-25% of preschoolers	43%

Data taken from the most recent Colorado Child Care Market Rate Study offer insight from the early care and education community why so few choose to offer CCCAP services or limit enrollment. Included in reasons for not offering CCCAP and/or limiting enrollment: full enrollment without having to accept CCCAP reimbursements, seek diversity in funding streams, administrative difficulties, changing family eligibility and low reimbursement rates (Moldow, E., Velez, C., O'Brien, T., & Walters, B., 2015).

**Why This Matters:** Research clearly demonstrates that all children benefit from high quality early care and education experiences. We also know that our vulnerable children benefit the most. For example, a startling graph from the Brookings Institute presents school readiness at age five by a child's



socioeconomic status at birth. Children who are born to low-income households are only 48 percent ready for school success by age five compared to their moderate to high income peers who are 75 percent ready (Isaacs, 2012; adapted from Colorado Children's Campaign, 2015).

For many families, having access to financial assistance is the only way for them to afford quality early care and education programs for their children, especially in landscape where Colorado ranks in the top 10 in the nation for least-affordable early care and education costs across all family types and backgrounds. Statewide programs like CCCAP are also a great opportunity to bring high

quality standards to more children by connecting those businesses that do serve children receiving CCCAP to resources like Colorado Shines, PDIS, access to quality improvement dollars and on-going technical supports that address the everyday challenges of leading the operation of an early care and education program.





## SECTION FOUR: CONCLUSIONS

In order for all of Colorado's children to be ready for school and life success, well-informed, capable leadership is critical. Leaders, owners, directors and administrators are change agents and our state needs dedicated resources to support their success. Today, early care and education leaders in all roles have many pressures to understand changes being made in state law requirements, rules and standards as well as the introduction of new system improvements including a new Quality Rating and Improvement System, data systems and a web-based professional development information system. In order to best support and empower leaders, we put forth four strategies.

### **Wages for Early Care and Education Professionals Must Increase.**

Even as they work to support self-sufficiency for families today and children tomorrow, most early care and education professionals do not earn enough to meet the basic needs for their own families. Leaders and teachers are the heart of any early care and education program. They are the engines that drive success. Results of the current research reveal that 82 percent of respondents are college educated. One of the major barriers to career entry is the low pay scale. Most of the respondents of the current study reported turnover of teachers and assistant teachers where the average full-time teacher current wage was found to be less than \$15 per hour; translating to approximately \$29,270 per year. The biggest challenge respondents reported

in hiring teachers was a lack of qualified applicants which confirms what advocates have voiced for years; Colorado has an early care and education workforce crisis whereas businesses are challenged in recruiting qualified teachers while also struggling with ways to retain teachers once hired.

Results reveal that although leaders are paid more than their teaching staff, they still only earn an average of \$41,195 per year. This annual income is not commensurate with the level of responsibility leaders have and the diverse set of skills required to operate a business, work directly with families and meet the individual needs of young children. The self-sufficiency standard comparisons reveal that leaders are not earning enough, in most cases, to cover basic needs such as housing, child care and food costs. As expectations and standards continue to increase at the state level for leaders, teachers and the programs offered to children; adequate compensation must continue to be a major part of the conversation. Serious explorations are needed to uncover innovative ways to compensate leaders and teachers at higher wages; which has both short- and long-term positive impacts such as stabilizing the workforce, creating livable wages and professionalizing a field that is responsible for the care and education of the majority of Colorado children younger than age five.

There are successful models that are currently in place across the country aimed at increasing compensation. For



example, five states – Iowa, Kansas, Florida, New Mexico and North Carolina – participate in the Child Care WAGE\$@ Project. The WAGE\$@ Project has successfully lowered turnover and increased quality by using private funding to increase compensation based on increased levels of education. When paired with teacher scholarship programs such as T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood®, the WAGE\$ Project is effective in increasing income without creating a financial burden for a low-paid workforce.

In 2007, the Louisiana Legislature passed a unique package of tax credits known as the School Readiness Tax Credits (SRTC). These tax credits are a wage supplement for leaders and teachers and are not dependent on whether the recipient owes taxes. These refundable credits

**“Early care and education leaders contribute to an industry that generates \$1.4 billion to Colorado’s economy each year and is a major contributor in the consumables markets given young children require products in everyday care and education.”**

**Committee for Economic Development, 2015**

are provided directly to the leader or teacher based on the amount of attained education and training. The wage supplements are linked to the Louisiana early care and education career ladder and the amount varies, with higher credits for increased education and training.

Adequate compensation for both leaders and teachers remains a hurdle that requires the time and attention of advocates, decision makers, business leaders and community leaders alike. Given the already high cost of care, totaling more than a public college year of tuition, families cannot bear an increase in tuition to ensure higher compensation for early care and education professionals.

**Early Care and Education Professionals Must Have Access to Training and Technical Assistance to Improve Quality and Funding Should Be Shared Across Public and Private Sources.**

Staying current on child development research, adult learning practices, family engagement, business administration, curricula fidelity and other aspects of working with children, families and teachers is a continuous cycle that is aimed to improve services and the quality of care. In a time of tremendous change where learning curves are extremely high, targeted outreach is important in effectively training the field including leaders, on an array of topics that matter most during the work day.

A major shift has been from the long-standing Qualistar Rating™ to Colorado Shines; which requires a rating for every licensed facility. Colorado Shines offers two new standard criteria that differed from the previous rating: Leadership, Management and Administration and Child Health Promotion. Therefore, a new focus is needed on ensuring that each leader of an early care and education setting is equipped with business skills including building a healthy work environment, effective policies and procedures, sound fiscal management, risk

management strategies, family engagement, community resources and networking, and marketing and public relations.

In Colorado, there already exists an incentive for taxpayers to invest in early care and education through the Child Care Contribution Tax Credit (CCCTC). This funding mechanism can be further used including launching a WAGE\$@ Project in Colorado. According to the CCCTC, any taxpayer who makes a monetary contribution to promote child care in Colorado is eligible for a 50 percent tax credit when filing a Colorado income tax return, thereby encouraging contributions from the public. According to a study by the Development Research Partners (2011) prepared for Executives Partnering to Invest in Children (EPIC); for every dollar that states invest in the early care and education industry through the CCCTC; \$4.65 is added to the Colorado economy through private contributions, federal matching dollars and the multiplier effects on spending.

**Early Care and Education Leaders Must Be Supported in Management of Historic Change.**

Change is the only constant and this stands to be true for Colorado's early care and education system. Currently, the system is under an immense amount of change aimed to elevate both the services and outcomes for all involved: professionals, families, children, communities and society. Each change impacts leaders of early care and education programs in different ways. For example, Colorado Shines impacts



all licensed facilities, where previously becoming a star rated program was a voluntary activity. As a result, there are more than 4,400 licensed facilities that are in the state-driven rating system ranging from a Level one to Level five program. Moreover, reform of the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) impacts every facility that serves enrolled children and families changing aspects of business such as payment reimbursement rates and introducing tiered reduced co-payment for families based on levels of quality. There is also a very short time period for leaders to learn about all of the new sanitation and licensing regulations issued by two separate state departments also impacting daily practice and business operations.

Both the Colorado Department of Human Services and the Colorado Department of Education should continue to empower local Child Care Resource and Referral agencies and Early Childhood Councils to conduct community outreach to generate



buy-in across the field and offer tools to support each unique team of professionals in diverse settings in their journeys through new systems, requirements, supports and resources. The role of the leader is multi-faceted and often influenced by competing priorities. Appropriate and consistent communication and supports will be integral to the success of this transition to Colorado Shines, PDIS and the sweeping CCCAP reform rules.

### **Policies Which Support Successful Early Care and Education Businesses Must Be Recognized For Their Important Economic and Social Contributions and Impacts.**

As an industry generating \$1.4 billion each year, early care and education services are pivotal to a vibrant economy. This is the first time in decades that early care and education is the single focus of dedicated federal and state funds aimed exclusively on lifting the system up and improving the overall experience of more of the state's youngest children. The time is now to leverage this short-term investment into long-term outcomes for businesses and families alike.

Knowing that supporting businesses is not only good for the local economies, but our collective state economy. In a recent study, researchers noted that over the

years there has been "greater recognition among policymakers of the importance of early care and education and the quality of services for at-risk children and their families has increased focus on the professional status of the early childhood workforce" (Whitebook, Phillips & Howes, 2014). However, the researchers also note that this recognition of importance has yet to be fully translated into state and federal policy, including appropriate funding levels.

Colorado has a tremendous amount of synergy around our state's youngest children including efforts in building awareness, implementing effective policy and making financial investments in programs that serve a diverse population of families and children. With this synergy comes the on-going opportunity to maintain the momentum. Rather than orchestrating legislation that addresses one issue at a time, policies aimed to comprehensively address several connected issues are necessary.

Individual constituents, as well as advocates, must call upon their representatives to enact policies that promote a highly trained, fairly compensated early care and education workforce as well as access to affordable high quality early care and education.

Although several Colorado lawmakers have a demonstrated a long-term commitment to early investments in children, support from lawmakers in all cities and counties is required to make systemic changes. In order for Colorado to be successful in improving and elevating our early care and education system, decision-makers and stakeholders must be brought in, bought in and supported as the intensity of system changes continue to occur.

The results of this study bring insight to those professionals, in large part, responsible for children's growth, development and learning. We know from research conducted by Nobel Laureate Dr. James Heckman that focusing on each child's optimal development is the investment that keeps giving. With a \$9 return on every \$1 invested in services for our youngest, we all stand to benefit from the social, academic and economic gains to be had from prioritizing the experiences that occur earliest in each child's life and the leaders and teachers who make this possible. The Women's Foundation of Colorado and Qualistar Colorado encourage all of those who have a commitment to children to continue to advocate, educate and inform.



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