

Caring for Our Children:

Findings from the Fairfax County Child Care Workforce Study

Presented by the Fairfax County Child Care Advisory Council
and the Fairfax County Office for Children

January 2007

Key Findings

Limited Education Beyond High School

The majority of persons teaching and caring for children in child care have not completed their education beyond high school. 48% of child care center teachers; 76% of child care center teacher assistants; 90% of teacher aides; 60% of family child care providers have levels of education lower than an Associate's degree. See page 4.

Among family child care providers and child care center teachers who have a college degree, less than 35% have degrees in early childhood education or a related field. 13% of family child care providers; 30% of child care center teachers have a degree in early childhood education or related field. See page 5.

Minimal Training Requirements

Annual training requirements for licensure are minimal - 6 hours for family child care providers after the first year and 16 hours for child care center teachers. By comparison, 1500 hours of training are required to obtain a beautician's license in Virginia. See page 7.

Close to three-quarters of family child care providers and more than half of child care centers from the survey are not professionally accredited. 73% of family child care providers; 68% of child care centers were not professionally accredited. See page 9.

Commitment to Professional Growth

Child care providers often complete more training per year than required by licensing. On average, family child care providers completed more than twice the number of training hours required. 70% of teachers in child care centers completed more training than required. See page 7.

Low Salaries and High Turnover Rates

The annual salaries of child care center teachers and family child care providers are well below the amounts needed to be self-sufficient in Fairfax County. Average entry level salary for: teachers, \$25,409; teacher assistants, \$18,204; median annual gross income for: family child care providers, \$24,000. See page 8.

Turnover rates for child care center staff are close to 50%, jeopardizing the stability of care for children. The average turnover rates for teacher assistants and aides were 43% and 48%. See page 9.

Half of the staff leaving child care centers are doing so for a better-paying job in another field. Other common reasons for turnover include moving to another area, going back to school, and getting a job with better pay within the child care field. See page 9.

At Stake: The Quality of Child Care in Fairfax County

In its first child care report to the Board of Supervisors in March 2003, “Coping with the Cost of Child Care in Fairfax County”, the Child Care Advisory Council pointed out that Fairfax County has worked hard to offer its residents excellent employment opportunities, outstanding schools, and varied recreational and cultural programs. It stated that the county has strived to be an equitable workplace, a good place to raise a family, and that this vibrant economy is dependent on a workforce of families with young children. The report characterized quality affordable child care as the glue holding the county’s way of life together and called on the county to address how affordable child care can be made available to more low income working families.

This second report, “Caring for our Children: Findings from The Fairfax County Child Care Workforce Study”, provides updated information on those professionals who provide the care and education for the over 85,000 children in child care in Fairfax County. It looks at the key factors related to quality care and education that our children receive as evidenced by the education, training, compensation, and turnover of the child care teacher or family child care provider.

These findings help us gain a better understanding of the strengths and opportunities for improving the early childhood workforce in Fairfax County. This comes at an opportune time. In December 2006, the Governor offered a blueprint for expanding access to quality preschool education for young children, including a quality rating system (QRS) which will, among other things, develop benchmarks for the professional education and training of teachers. It will develop a set of professional competencies that will include the knowledge areas, skills and abilities early childhood educators need to effectively support a child’s optimal development.

Fairfax County can play a leadership role in developing a qualified early childhood workforce by supporting initiatives that prepare teachers to support the early learning of our young children.

Fairfax County is known for its world-class K-12 educational system. Knowing that children’s early learning experiences are the building blocks for school achievement, we must all recommit ourselves to assure that their early childhood education prepares them well for school success.



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Background of the Fairfax County Child Care Workforce Study

In recent years, researchers have uncovered clear evidence that high-quality early childhood education offers many benefits to families and society as a whole. New understanding of the developing brain points to early childhood as a crucial starting point for successful learning. A 1994 study by the Carnegie Corporation noted that “how individuals function from the preschool years all the way through adolescence and even adulthood hinges, to a significant extent, on the experiences children have in their first three years.” Babies raised by caring, attentive adults in safe, predictable environments are better learners than those raised with less attention in less secure settings.¹

Economists with the Brookings Institution recently reported on the extraordinary impact of early childhood education on economic growth. Education is tied directly to economic growth because it promotes labor productivity – more educated workers add more to the economy than those less educated.² A better-educated society is more productive and less prone to crime, welfare dependency, disease, and other social ills.

Public support for K-12 and higher education in the United States reflects taxpayers’ understanding that education benefits society as a whole, not just students themselves and their immediate families. Yet the public is only now becoming aware of the broad social benefits of **early** childhood education. As Arthur Rolnick and Robert Gruenewald of the Minnesota Federal Reserve Board have said: “Early childhood development programs are rarely portrayed as economic development initiatives. They should be at the top of economic development investment lists for state and local government.”³

One of the most consistent findings in recent research links the quality of child care that children receive to virtually every measure of development, and it is the quality of the daily transactions between child care providers and children that influence the children’s development.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) states that all early childhood professionals should understand child development and be able to apply their knowledge in practice. NAEYC’s standards for professional development also state that teachers should be capable of planning and implementing developmentally appropriate curricula that advance all areas of children’s learning and development, including social, emotional, intellectual, and physical competence. Additional standards include the ability to establish supportive relationships with children and to implement developmentally appropriate techniques of guidance and group management.

“Good programs must meet children’s needs as well as families’ needs,” states NAEYC’s Governing Board. “Moreover, it is increasingly clear that the teachers and caregivers who bring specialized knowledge and skills to their work are the best prepared to provide high-quality services to young children and their families.”

This specialized knowledge of how young children develop and learn is also the key predictor of how well early childhood professionals can help young children to be prepared for kindergarten and the later grades.

Unfortunately, too many child care settings throughout the country fail to provide a rich and engaging environment. A 1995 study found that 40% of infants and toddlers in child care centers nationwide were in rooms of less-than-minimal quality, and only 14% of centers were providing developmentally appropriate care.⁴

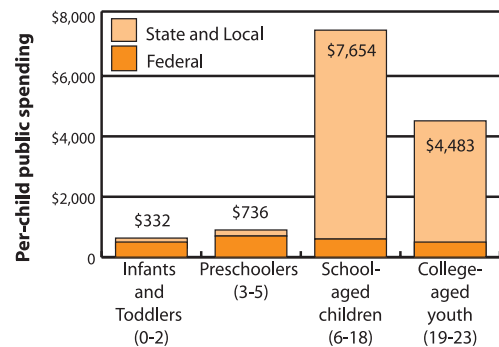
In Fairfax County, as elsewhere in the country, child care programs are regulated through a system of licenses and permits. For example, family child care providers who care for one to five children must apply for a county permit that requires home health, safety, and fire checks. Family child care providers who care for five or more children, as well as child care centers, must apply for a license from the Virginia Department of Social Services. However, licensing regulations for child care in Virginia do not address many of the components that are related to quality.

In Fairfax County, child care providers are not required to meet standards of quality at all comparable to those applicable to teachers in the public school system. Public school teachers must have at least a bachelor's degree, complete an approved teacher-education program with a prescribed number of subject and education credits as well as supervised practice teaching, and be licensed. Almost all states require applicants for teacher's licenses to be tested for competency in teaching and in basic skills such as reading and writing. Almost all also require the teacher to exhibit proficiency in his or her subject. Continuing education is usually needed to renew the teaching license.

In Virginia only 6 hours of training are required to obtain a license as a family child care provider (6 hours annually thereafter). Teachers in child care centers are required to complete only 16 hours of training each year.

Public investment in early childhood education falls far below investment in schooling for other age groups, despite the well-documented importance of pre-K education.

In Virginia, for every dollar spent on education and development for school aged children, only 4.3 cents is spent on infants and toddlers (age 0-2) and only 9.6 cents on preschoolers. Per-child public spending (federal, state, and local governments combined) in Virginia in 2003 broke down as shown in Figure 1.⁵



Recognizing that educated child care providers are the key to quality early childhood education, in the spring of 2005 the Fairfax County Office for Children (OFC) commissioned a study to gather the data needed to better understand the child care workforce. This report details the results of that study.

Methodology

The Office for Children (OFC) contracted with Mills Consulting Group, Inc. (MCG) to develop and conduct the child care workforce survey for Fairfax County. MCG is a nationally recognized firm known for its depth of knowledge and experience in child care and early education. The firm provides research and consultation services in a wide range of areas related to the field, such as state child care delivery system studies, child care workforce and market rate studies, needs assessments, program quality evaluations, training initiatives, school readiness, and recruitment and retention.

MCG has completed child care labor force studies for the states of Maine, Massachusetts, Vermont, Utah and a five-county area in Colorado.

MCG collaborates on a number of research projects with Goodman Research Group, Inc. (GRG), a research firm with expertise in policy research related to early care and education issues, and did so on this project. Data for the Fairfax County Child Care Workforce Study were collected through a written survey of the provider population and through focus groups with child care providers during the spring of 2005.

1 Survey development

Two versions of the written survey - one for family child care providers and one for child care centers - were designed in consultation with GRG and OFC. The surveys were pilot-tested in focus groups, then finalized.

2 Survey distribution

The survey was mailed to all private regulated child care providers in Fairfax County. A total of 275 surveys were sent to child care centers and preschools; 2,112 surveys were mailed to family child care providers.

To ensure a representative response from the provider population, a postcard was included in the mailing giving providers the opportunity to request a survey translated into Spanish, Hindi, Urdu, Arabic, or Farsi. Providers were also given the option to complete the survey in either English or Spanish over the telephone.

3 Survey response

Family child care providers

A total of 1,372 family child care providers responded to the survey, resulting in a response rate of **66%**. Eighty-nine percent of respondents (n=1,203) were providing family child care at the time. The survey report is based only on the responses of those who were providing care at the time of the survey.

Child care centers and part-day preschools

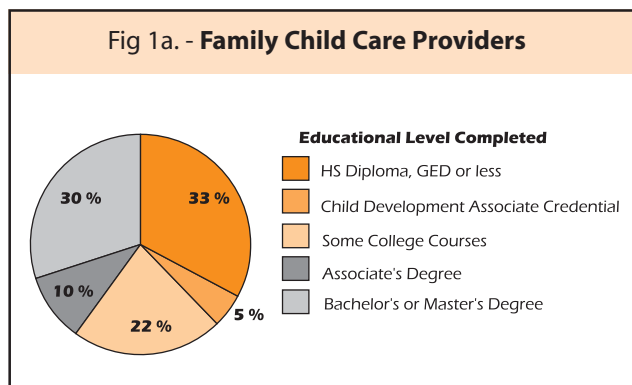
A total of 194 centers responded to the survey, yielding a response rate of **72%**. This report presents the survey results for child care centers (n=120) only, because part-day programs are different in nature from other programs.

Summary of Findings

Education

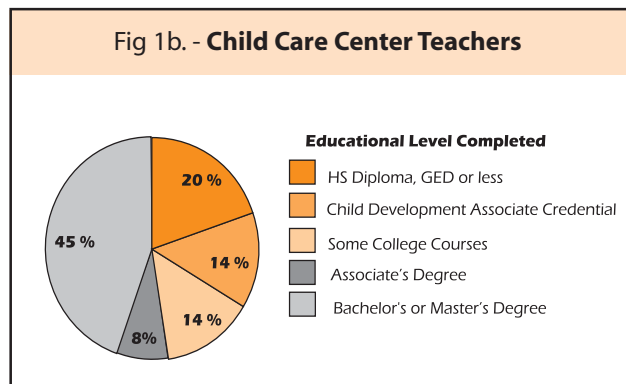
A growing body of research shows that teacher education and training relate to quality of care. Child care staff with more formal education, particularly college-level education and specialized training pertaining to children, provide better quality care.⁶ Classrooms where teachers have at least a Bachelor's degree are more likely to have richer learning environments, richer literacy environments and better teacher-child interactions.⁷

The majority of family child care providers and teaching staff at child care centers have not completed their education beyond high school.

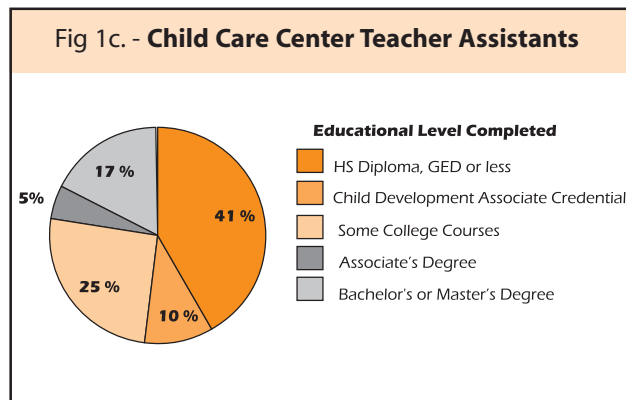


Note: Percentages may not sum to 100% because of rounding.

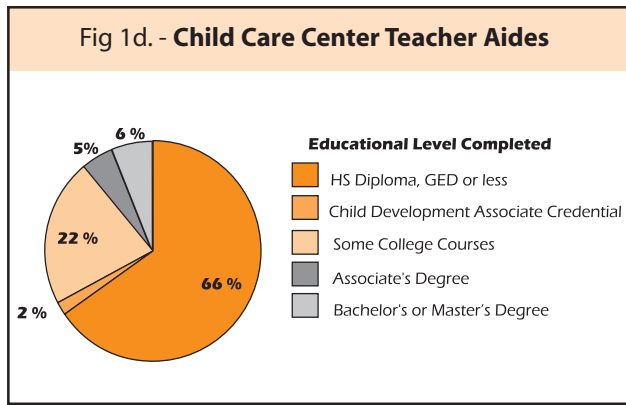
- Of the respondents, 30% have either a Bachelor's or Master's degree and 10% have an Associate's degree.
- The remaining 60% have levels of education lower than an Associate's degree, with 5% having a Child Development Associate credential; 22% having some college courses; and 33% a high school diploma, GED, or less than a high school diploma.



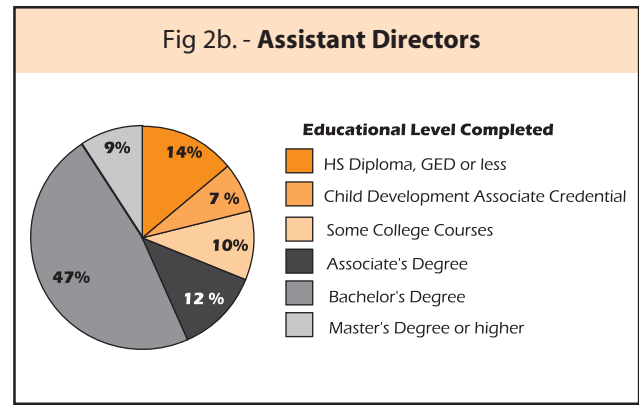
- Of the respondents, 45% have either a Bachelor's or Master's degree and 8% have an Associate's degree.
- The remaining 48% have levels of education lower than an Associate's degree, with 14% having a Child Development Associate credential; 14% having some college courses; and 20% a high school diploma, GED, or less than a high school diploma.



- Of the respondents, 17% have either a Bachelor's or Master's degree and 5% have an Associate's degree.
- The remaining 76% have levels of education lower than an Associate's degree, with 10% having a Child Development Associate credential; 25% having some college courses; and 41% a high school diploma, GED, or less than a high school diploma.

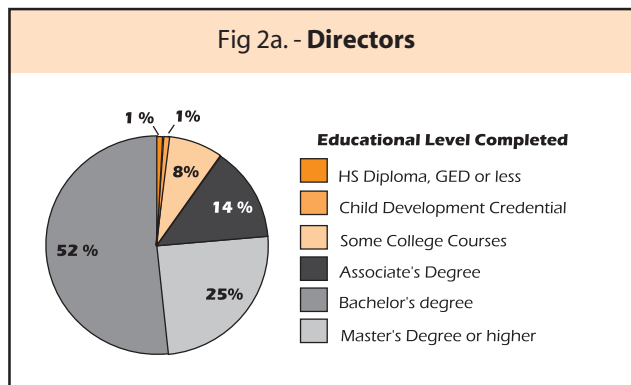


- Of the respondents, 6% have either a Bachelor's or Master's degree and 5% have an Associate's degree.
- The remaining 90% have levels of education lower than an Associate's degree, with 2% having a Child Development Associate credential; 22% having some college courses; and 66% a high school diploma, GED, or less than a high school diploma.



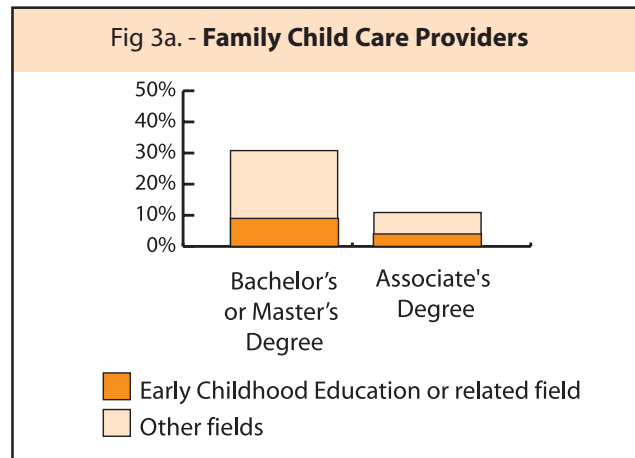
- Of the respondents, 9% have a Master's degree or higher, 47% have a Bachelor's degree and 12% have an Associate's degree.
- The remaining 31% have levels of education lower than an Associate's degree, with 7% having a Child Development Associate credential; 10% having some college courses; and 14% a high school diploma, GED, or less than a high school diploma.

Most child care center Directors have a college degree.

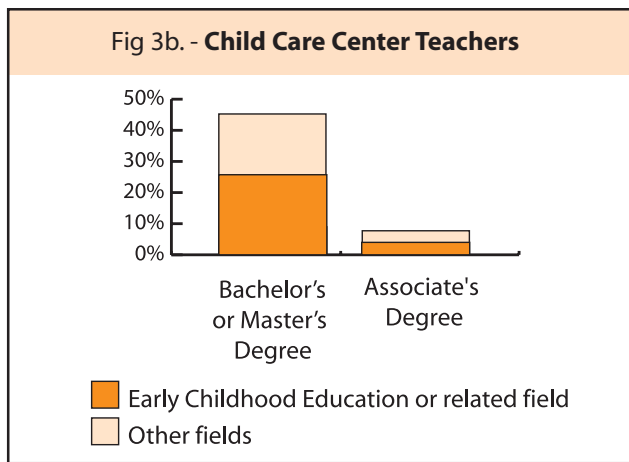


- Of the respondents, 25% have a Master's degree or higher; 52% have a Bachelor's degree and 14% have an Associate's degree.
- The remaining 10% have levels of education lower than an Associate's degree, with 1% having a Child Development Associate credential; 8% having some college courses; and 1% a high school diploma, GED, or less than a high school diploma.

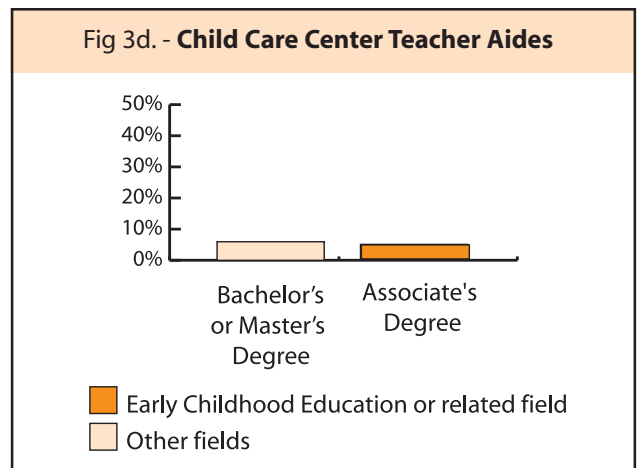
Among child care providers who have a college degree, few have degrees in early childhood education or a related field.



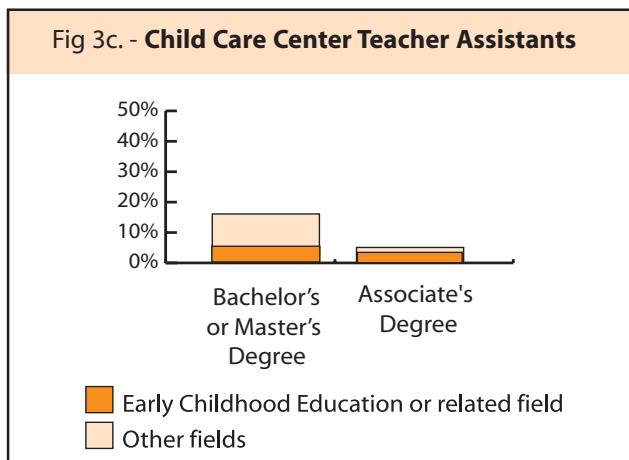
- Of the respondents, 30% have a Bachelor's or Master's degree and 9% have a degree in early childhood education or related field.
- Of the 10% who have an Associate's degree, 4% have a degree in early childhood education or related field.



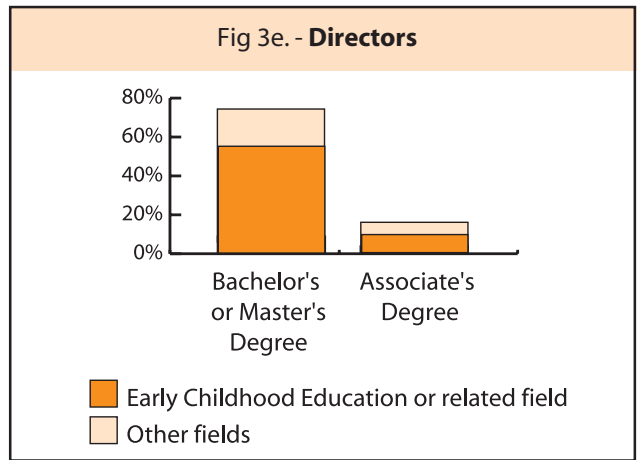
- Of the respondents, 45% have a Bachelor's or Master's degree and 25% have a degree in early childhood education or related field.
- Of the 8% who have an Associate's degree, 5% have a degree in early childhood education or related field.



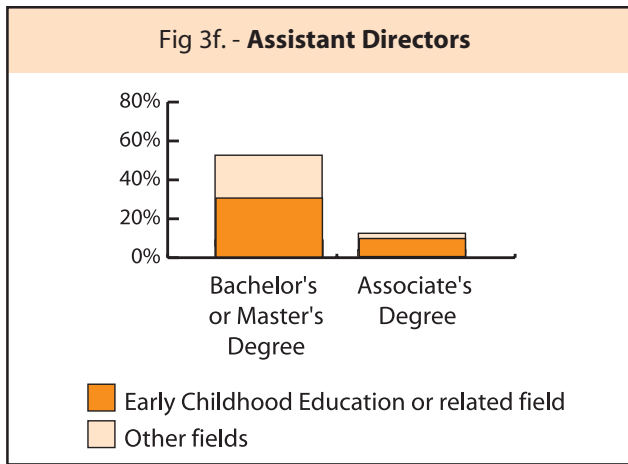
- Of the respondents, 6% have a Bachelor's or Master's degree and 0% have a degree in early childhood education or related field.
- Of the 5% who have an Associate's degree, 5% have a degree in early childhood education or related field.



- Of the respondents, 17% have a Bachelor's or Master's degree and 6% have a degree in early childhood education or related field.
- Of the 5% who have an Associate's degree, 4% have a degree in early childhood education or related field.



- Of the respondents, 77% have a Bachelor's or Master's degree and 57% have a degree in early childhood education or related field.
- Of the 14% who have an Associate's degree, 11% have a degree in early childhood education or related field.



- Of the respondents, 56% have a Bachelor’s or Master’s degree and 29% have a degree in early childhood education or related field.
- Of the 14% who have an Associate’s degree, 11% have an Associates degree in early childhood education or related field.

Training Requirements

Child care centers are licensed by the Virginia Department of Social Services, as are family child care providers who care for more than five children. Family child care providers who care for five or fewer children are permitted by the Fairfax County Office for Children.

Annual training requirements for licensure are minimal.

Family child care providers who are licensed by the state are required to complete 6 hours of training annually. Family child care providers permitted by Fairfax County are required to complete 12 hours of training their first year, and 6 hours annually thereafter. Teachers in licensed child care centers are required to complete 16 hours of training annually.

By comparison, 1500 hours of training are required to obtain a beautician’s license in Virginia.

Commitment to Professional Growth

Child care providers in Fairfax County demonstrate a commitment to professional growth through their interest in receiving greater professional training than required by licensing standards. They respond enthusiastically to training opportunities, as evidenced by long waiting lists for professional development workshops provided by the *Institute for Early Learning*, operated by the Fairfax County Office for Children. In survey focus groups, center directors revealed that one strategy they used to retain staff was to pay for training or offer tuition assistance.

Family Child Care Providers

On average, in 2004, respondents completed 15 hours of training in child development, early childhood or child care (not including CPR and First Aid). This is more than twice the number of hours required (6 hours).

Child Care Center Staff

More than three-quarters of directors and assistant directors had continued beyond the hours of training required by licensing each year. Seven in ten teachers, more than half of teacher assistants, and four in ten teacher aides also had additional training.

Percentage of Staff among Responding Child Care Centers that Continued beyond Required Training
(at the time of the survey, 8 hours annually)

	Number of centers reporting	Percentage of respondents
Director	98	79%
Assistant Director	68	76%
Teachers	100	70%
Teacher Assistants	83	56%
Teacher Aides	44	42%

Compensation

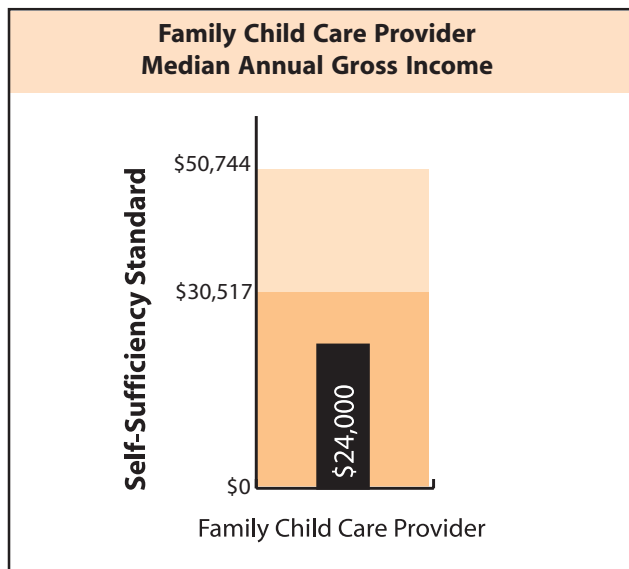
Low pay makes it difficult for the child care field to recruit and retain qualified staff. Research on the relationship of teacher compensation to program quality makes a strong case that inadequate compensation harms the quality of early childhood education. “Studies that link compensation to teacher qualifications, teacher behaviors, morale and turnover explain the association. These teacher characteristics and behaviors, in turn, are linked to education quality.”⁸

The annual salaries of child care center teachers and family child care providers are well below the amount needed to be self sufficient in Fairfax County.

The “self-sufficiency standard” for Metropolitan Washington, calculated by the organization Wider Opportunities for Women, provides a context in which to consider the salaries of the child care workforce. In 2005, the income adequate to meet basic needs for a single adult in Fairfax County was \$30,517. The self-sufficiency standard for an adult with an infant was \$50,744.⁹

Family Child Care Providers

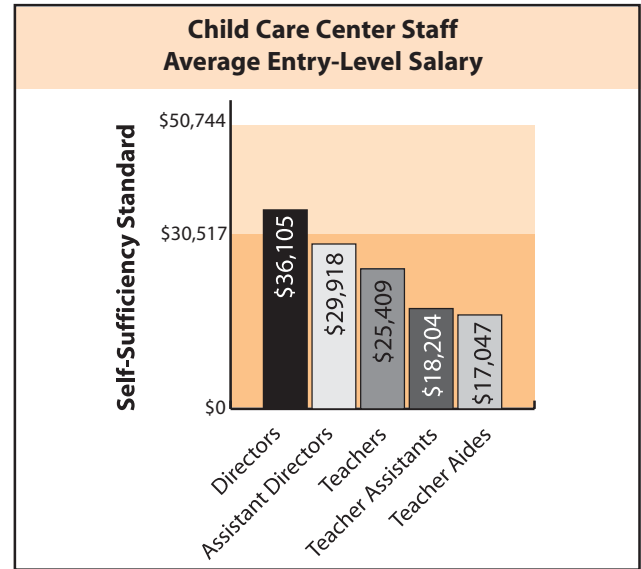
Average annual gross income before taxes and expenses is \$27,000, \$16,000 after expenses. The median annual gross income is \$24,000.



Child Care Center Staff

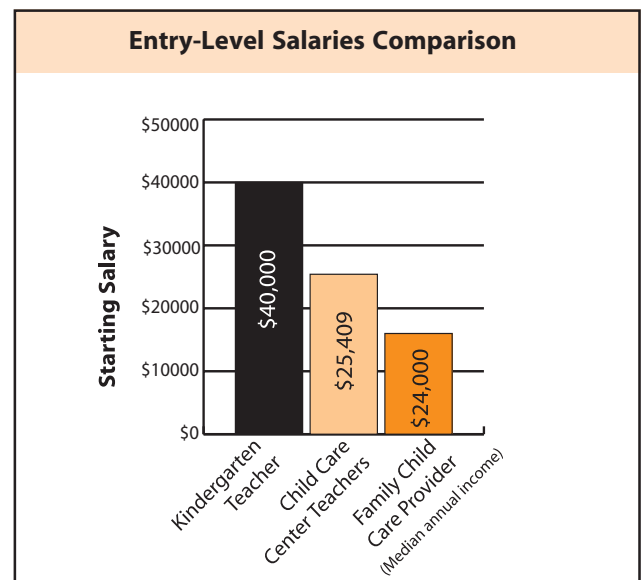
Average entry-level salary:

Directors	\$36,105
Assistant Directors	\$29,918
Teachers	\$25,409
Teacher Assistants	\$18,204
Teacher Aides	\$17,047



Early childhood education pays far less than teaching in public schools.

The average entry-level salary for a teacher in a child care center is nearly 40% less than the entry-level salary of a Fairfax County Public School (FCPS) kindergarten teacher (at the time of the survey).



Turnover

All industries face the issue of employee turnover. However, in the field of child care, the impact of staff turnover is particularly problematic because of its direct impact on young children.¹⁰ Consistency of care is important for young children, who need time to develop secure relationships with their caregivers. When children feel safe and secure they are better able to learn from their environment and interactions. High turnover can make it difficult for children and child care workers to maintain the strong relationships which are so important for children’s cognitive, social, and emotional development.

Child care centers experience high turnover, especially among teacher assistants and aides.

The average turnover rates for assistants and aides were close to 50%.

Directors	21%
Assistant Directors	18%
Teachers	24%
Teacher Assistants	43%
Teacher Aides	48%

By comparison, the turnover rate for FCPS teachers is under 5%. The national turnover rate for child care teachers in 2001 was 30%.

Half of responding centers indicate staff chose to leave to get a job with better pay in another field.

Other common reasons for turnover include:

- moving to another area - 50%
- going back to school - 46%
- getting a job with better pay within the child care field - 41%

Nearly one-third of family child care providers intend to stop providing care within five years.

About one-third of respondents were not sure how much longer they intended to provide child care. Common reasons for stopping child care include:

- being ready to retire - 28%
- getting a job with benefits within the child care field - 20%
- getting a job with benefits outside the child care field - 15%
- going back to school - 14%
- getting a job with better pay outside of the child care field - 14%
- getting a job with better pay within the child care field - 13%

Accreditation

Accreditation is a voluntary process designed to improve the quality of early care and education programs. Achieving accreditation involves extensive self-study and validation by professionals outside the program to verify that quality standards are met. Research has demonstrated that accreditation improves early care and education program quality, benefiting children, staff, and families.¹¹

Most child care centers and family child care providers are not professionally accredited.

Family Child Care Providers

About three-quarters (73%) of respondents were not accredited; 6% reported that they were National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC) accredited; 13% were working on NAFCC Accreditation; and 8% were members of NAFCC but not accredited.

Child Care Centers

More than half (68%) of responding centers were not accredited; 19% of them are working on accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Experience

Family Child Care Providers

Nearly all (97%) of family child care providers had experience working with children before starting their family child care business, with 82% identifying their experience as a mother.

Benefits

In addition to compensation, the availability of benefits impacts the recruitment and retention of qualified child care staff.

One-third of family child care providers have no health insurance.

Of the respondents, 35% have no health insurance and 43% do not have dental insurance. Those who do have health insurance usually obtained it through another family member's job.

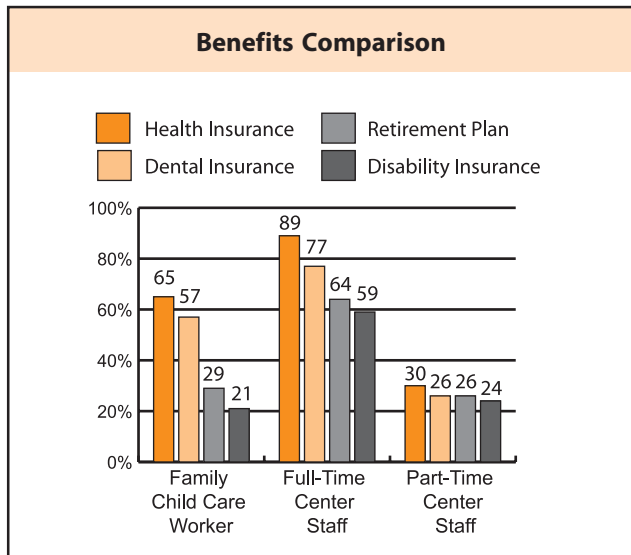
Health and dental insurance are widely available for full-time child care center staff, but not for part-time teachers, assistants, and aides.

Of the respondents, 25% had experience as a teacher or an assistant in a child care center or preschool, and 18% had experience as a nanny.

Child Care Experience Prior to Family Child Care

	(n=1,194)	Percentage
Mother		82%
Teacher or assistant in child care center or preschool		25%
Nanny		18%
Teacher or assistant in elementary school		13%
Parent educator		9%
Social worker		20%

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100% because respondents could check all that applied.



The majority of providers (88%) had been caring for children in their homes for at least one year.

These providers had provided care in their homes for an average of 10 years. Approximately one-quarter of respondents had one to five years of experience and one-fifth had five to nine years of experience.

Child Care Center Staff

About eight in ten teachers in child care centers had previous experience in the child care field. Six in ten teacher assistants and about four in ten teacher aides had previous experience.

Average Percentage of Center Teaching Staff with Previous Experience in the Child Care Field

	Average % with experience	Average % without experience
Teachers	87%	13%
Teacher Assistants	58%	42%
Teacher Aides	43%	57%

Despite relatively low pay and poor benefits, the child care workforce in Fairfax County has notable strengths. Most impressive is how devoted child care workers are to their field once they have gained even a little experience and seniority. Among family child care providers, 61% have at least five years of experience. Among child care center teachers, 89% have been in the field at least three years.

Workforce Study Citations

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10. M. Whitebook and L. Sakai, "Turnover Begets Turnover: An Examination of Job and Occupational Instability among Child Care Center Staff," *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 18:3 (2003), 273-293.
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Dedication



This report is dedicated to the memory of Barnett E. Williams, 1944-2006. Barnett Williams worked for the Fairfax County Office for Children School Age Child Care (SACC) Program as a full time Artist-in-Residence from 1997-2006. He also designed and supervised the SACC Teacher Resource Center Woodworking Shop. Barnett loved researching and creating new projects to teach.

As a talented percussionist, musician, and craftsman, Barnett provided training workshops for teachers in music and rhythm, drum making, instrument making, wood working, textile design, basket weaving, silk screening, and many other skills. Barnett also performed and offered workshops for children throughout Fairfax County, the District of Columbia, and other areas of the country. He taught children to explore the arts, sciences, literacy, and recreation through hands-on experiences that sparked their imaginations and encouraged them to develop their interests and talents. Barnett also drew on his experiences as a professional musician to provide technical assistance for theatrical productions and program orientations. His passion for music and talents touched the lives of hundreds of teachers and children. Barnett's death on March 4, 2006 is a great loss to the child care community of Fairfax County.

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Fairfax County
Department of Family Services
Office for Children
12011 Government Center Parkway, Suite 920
Fairfax, Virginia 22035
Telephone: (703) 324-8100 Fax: (703) 803-0116