

Shedding new light on staff recruitment and retention challenges in child care ^[1]

Author: Doherty, G. & Forer, B.

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AVAILABILITY

Access online [PDF] ^[2]

Executive summary

This study undertook additional analyses of data originally collected for the 1998 *You bet I care! A Canada-wide study on wages, working conditions and practices in child care* report. The results of the analyses were used to identify factors that predict:

- An individual staff person expressing an intention to leave their child care centre for reasons associated with the centre or the child care field rather than normative life events such as an anticipated family move to another community.
- An individual expressing an intention to leave the child care field for reasons associated with the field.
- A centre with staff retention problems.
- A centre with a high staff turnover rate in the previous 12 months.
- A centre reporting a major problem recruiting qualified permanent teaching staff in the previous 12 months.

The strongest finding was that indicators of burnout predict an individual's intent to leave the centre, the proportion of staff in a centre intending to leave, and an individual who intends to leave the field altogether. Indicators of burnout in the director strongly predict a centre with staff retention problems, actual turnover rate, and difficulties recruiting new staff.

The strongest other predictors of one or more of the outcomes noted above are:

- Low wages and poor compensation-related benefits.
- Lack of benefits that improve daily working conditions, e.g. a coffee break or paid preparation time.
- Staff dissatisfaction with wages, benefits and promotion opportunities.
- Staff perception that their occupation is not respected by others.
- The average level of ECCE training of centre staff.
- Staff overall have worked at the centre for a relatively short time.
- Staff believe they have to leave the field in order to earn more or attain a higher status position.

Other factors that lead to one or more of the outcomes include: relatively little attention paid to staff needs, lack of clarity around staff responsibilities and centre requirements, and little social support in the workplace, e.g. from a supervisor and/or co-workers.

The final chapter, Chapter 5, discusses the predictors of the recruitment and retention challenges faced by child care centres. The chapter includes strategies that might be used to address this situation such as unionization, which predicts fewer staff recruitment difficulties. Chapter 5 also discusses issues around staff burnout and some ways to combat it.

The report concludes that the recruitment and retention challenges faced by child care centres result from a complex and dynamic interaction of several contributors. Addressing each contributor separately would help but is not sufficient to make child care an attractive and viable occupation. Solving recruitment and retention problems in child care requires a comprehensive, multi-pronged approach. This approach must take into account and simultaneously address: (1) the need to moderate the stress in the job; (2) compensation (wages, benefits and working conditions); (3) the accessibility of ECCE training; and (4) the current low level of public respect for the job.

Related link: *You bet I care! A Canada-wide study on wages, working conditions and practices in child care* ^[3]

Region: Canada ^[4]

Tags: recruitment and retention ^[5]

staff ^[6]

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