

High-quality early learning settings depend on a high-quality workforce: Low compensation undermines quality ^[1]

Author: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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Introduction

Today, in many families across the U.S., both parents are working, and more mothers are working now than a generation ago. This, combined with an increased understanding of the connection between high-quality early education, brain development, and school readiness, have contributed to increased demand for high-quality, affordable child care and other early education programs.

A high quality early education experience depends on a high-quality workforce of early educators. How we value and support those early educators as a nation – through access to higher education, professional development and commensurate compensation – has direct implications on their ability to do their difficult and important job well.

The research is clear on the benefits of high-quality early education for children from birth to age five. For many working families, access to affordable, reliable, and high-quality child care and early education is both a necessity to attain and maintain a job and to foster the learning and development of their young children. Many children, particularly low-income children, depend on high-quality early learning settings for school readiness.

Early learning settings include programs serving children from birth through age five (or the age at which states mandate school attendance).

High-quality early education for young children is a multi-purposed strategy to support:

- Young children in their social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development, to ensure they are prepared for success in school and beyond;
- Working parents with their need for safe, reliable child care so they can work, go to school, or attend training; and
- Employers and the local economy, which are dependent on working parents.

The quality of any early learning setting is directly related to the quality of their staff, their understanding of child development, and their ability to translate that understanding into positive interactions, securely attached relationships, and age-appropriate learning opportunities with children.

This report discusses the importance of supporting the early learning workforce – nearly a totality of whom are women – not only to improve the quality of early learning programs, but also to ensure fair pay so that they can support their own families.

Region: United States ^[3]

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