Maryland State Department of Education
Division of Early Childhood Development

Professional Qualification and Retention Survey (2006) – Child Care Centers

Report of Findings

Purpose

In support of its goal to improve the quality of licensed child care in Maryland, the Maryland State Department of Education's Division of Early Childhood contracted with the Maryland Committee for Children, Inc., in 2006 to develop and conduct a statewide survey of professional qualification levels among licensed child care center staff. The survey had two main objectives.

The first objective was to determine the extent to which qualification levels exceed the minimum requirements established by child care licensing regulations. The second objective was to gather information on how child care center staff view their work in the child care field in order to help the Division develop strategies to improve retention of qualified staff.

The scope of the survey was limited to gathering data statistically sufficient and representative for a statewide analysis. The Division considers the survey to be only a baseline study and plans to conduct similar but more extensive surveys in the future that will reach the level of detail required for jurisdictional analysis.

Background

Child care research has repeatedly shown that a well-qualified, professional child care workforce and a low level of turnover among child care facility staff are two of the most important determinants of a high quality child care system. Researchers are also in agreement that quality child care is a key factor in helping children to develop the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical skills they will need to succeed in school and beyond.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Outlook, revised for 2006-07, the number of children under 5 years of age is projected to rise over the next 10 years. Because more women of child-bearing age are entering the workforce, the number of children able to be cared for during the workday by parents or other relatives has declined and is expected to continue doing so. This will increase the need for child care services for young children. Because the reduced availability of daily parental supervision and instruction affects school-aged children as well as preschool children, the demand for before- and after-school programs will also grow.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics expects the recent trend toward early care and education programs to help meet these increasing needs. Early care and education programs, which include targeted or universal preschool programs and which have been implemented in only a few states so far, are designed to help children develop school readiness and achievement skills. This calls for using sound early childhood pedagogy that requires staff with a higher professional qualification level than has typically been found among traditional child care workers.

But to attract and retain better qualified staff, child care and early education programs will need to provide correspondingly better compensation and professional growth opportunities. Historically, child care program staff wages and benefits in the United States have ranked near the bottom for skilled and professional occupations.

Survey Characteristics and Methodology

The Maryland Committee for Children (MCC) administered the survey during October and November, 2006. The survey instrument used was a specially constructed questionnaire, developed in collaboration between MCC and the Division. It was designed to elicit information from licensed child care center directors, senior staff (usually called "teachers" under the child care licensing regulations of other states), group leaders, and aides relating to professional qualifications and staff retention issues across four areas. For each area, the survey asked a cluster of questions about related items. The following is a list of the survey areas and their item clusters:

- General participant information:
  - Number of participants by jurisdictional location of the child care centers where they are employed
  - Job classification (director, senior staff, group leader, aide)
  - Participants' annual income
  - Participants' demographic data (gender, age, ethnicity, and household size)
- Level of participants' professional development:
  - Educational background
  - Training course completion history
  - involvement with professional growth and development activities
- Participants' perspectives on their work in child care:
  - Reason for entering the child care field
  - Rating the importance of child care to the development of children's social and learning skills
  - Length of child care work experience
  - Length of time in current job position
  - Rating the importance of the work they do in their current positions
  - Length of time in service with current employer
  - Plans to remain in or leave the child care profession
  - Job/career plans 5 years from now
- Child care costs and size of participant's child care centers:
  - Monthly cost of care
  - Approved maximum capacity
  - Enrollment
  - Average daily attendance
  - Participation in Maryland's child care subsidy ("POC") program

The survey was administered by MCC personnel to a random sample of child care center staff employed at full-time child care centers listed in MCC's statewide LOCATE database as of October 2005. This database contained a total of 1,455 full-time child care centers that employed an estimated total of approximately 25,314 center directors, senior staff, group leaders, and aides. These centers comprised programs serving infants, toddlers, preschoolers, school-age children, and any combination of these age groupings. Under Maryland child care center licensing regulations, "senior staff" are the center employees who are specifically authorized to supervise child activities in programs serving infants, toddlers, and other children under the age of 5 years old; "group leaders" are their counterparts in programs for school-age children.

In order to achieve a survey analysis confidence level of at least 95% with a margin of error no greater than 4%, the survey participant goal was set at 600 center staff. To achieve this goal, a randomized list of 700 centers was developed from the pool of 1,455 centers. Randomization was performed through use of a random number generator that assigned numbers to the 1,455 centers. The resulting list was then ordered according to the assigned random numbers, and the first 700 numbers were selected to serve as the source of survey participants.

Administration of the survey instrument to center staff began in early October 2006 and continued until mid-November. During this period of time, MCC personnel contacted each of the 700 selected centers in sequence by telephone to attempt survey interviews with staff. When this list was initially exhausted

without completing 600 survey contacts, callbacks and survey mailings to non-surveyed centers were made, again in sequence according to the randomized selection list. Telephone and mail contact attempts continued until the participant goal was reached. Telephone attempts yielded 371 successful survey contacts. To achieve the balance of the participant goal, the survey instrument was mailed to the remaining 232 centers included in the selection list.

The final total of all responses was 603. Survey participants were employed at a total of 154 centers located in 22 of Maryland's 24 local jurisdictions. From those centers, a total of 154 directors, 300 senior staff, 29 group leaders, and 120 aides were surveyed.

Findings

The complete set of survey results is presented on the following pages in a series of tables that correspond to survey questions and the answers received to those questions. For the purpose of this report, most of the questions have been reformatted as statements.

In each table, findings have been aggregated to show the total set of answers received from all respondents to the question involved. Sub-aggregation of response data according to the four staff categories (center directors, senior staff, group leaders, and aides) participating in the survey is not presented. Under some of the tables, information obtained from sources outside of the survey has been included to clarify table data or to provide a basis of comparison with other states.

It should be noted that not all survey participants responded to each question. Therefore, response percentages displayed in a given table are calculated only in reference to the number of participants who answered that particular question and not to the total number of survey participants. Underneath each table is the number (n) of respondents to that survey item.

Tables 1-8 below present survey data related to respondent income and professional qualifications. Findings related to respondent perspectives on working in child care are presented in Tables A-J of the Appendix. Other survey findings related to the locations of participating child care centers, respondent demographics, and participating centers' service profiles including care costs are found in Tables K-Q of the Appendix.

Conclusions

Main conclusions to be drawn from the present survey are:

- Maryland's child care center workforce is poorly educated for the early care and education profession. The average child care center staff member is experienced, completes significantly more continued training than is required by child care licensing regulations, and is professionally motivated by a love for children and commitment to their well-being. However, nearly one third of staff members have completed only a high school education, and nearly two thirds lack the educational background necessary to ensure consistently high quality child care services.

- Compensation of child care center staff must improve if centers are to attract and retain qualified staff. Most survey participants said they plan to keep working in the early care and education profession. However, approximately 40% of the participants who plan to leave said that better compensation could persuade them to stay. And even for those who wish to continue in the profession, low compensation levels hinder pursuit of pertinent academic credentials because of the high cost of college tuition and fees. Not only is low compensation an obstacle to improving the quality of services through employment of better-educated staff, it denies participation in many professional growth opportunities to experienced and motivated child care personnel.

Income of Child Care Center Staff

Table 1 – Respondent* income levels:

Child Care Center Staff Income	
$0 - 9,000	7.9%
$10,000 - 19,000	37.4%
$20,000 - 29,000	31.4%
$30,000 - 39,000	13.4%
$40,000 - 49,000	4.7%
$50,000 - 59,000	2.3%
$60,000 - 69,000	1.9%
$70,000 - 79,000	0.6%
$80,000 - 89,000	0.4%
Average income:	$22,808

* n=471

The figures shown in Table 1 reflect aggregate income data from responding center directors, senior staff, group leaders, and aides.

In its occupational employment data for 2005, the last year for which national figures are available, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics lists Maryland as ranking 19th in the nation in the estimated annual mean wage for preschool teachers (excluding special education), with a figure of $24,340. New York is ranked first with an estimated annual mean wage for preschool teachers of $36, 960, while Tennessee is ranked last with an estimated annual mean wage of $18,310.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics defines “preschool teacher” as someone who “instructs 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.” Under current Maryland child care center licensing regulations, the equivalent nomenclature for preschool teacher is “senior staff.” Persons in this category are authorized to plan and lead child care program activities. When the average income figure in Table 1 is disaggregated to show the average annual income for responding senior staff (n=224, from a total of 237 senior staff participating in the present survey), the resulting figure is $20,205.

“Child care worker” is defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics as a person who “attends to children at schools, businesses, private households, and child care institutions [and] performs a variety of tasks, such as dressing, feeding, bathing, and overseeing play.” In Maryland, the closest equivalent to a child care worker in a licensed child care center is “aide.” Persons in this category serve as adjuncts to senior staff (or child care teachers in other states) and are not authorized to plan or lead program activities. Maryland ranked 9th in the Bureau’s estimated annual mean wage for child care workers, with a figure of $19,870. Connecticut is ranked first with an annual mean wage of $21,970, while Arkansas is ranked last with an annual mean wage of $14,050. When the average income figure in Table 1 is disaggregated to show the average annual income for responding aides (n=89, from a total of 120 aides participating in the present survey), the resulting figure is $12,652.

Information concerning the specific data sources and methodology used to develop the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ wage estimates is not available, so the reason for the differences between the Bureau’s figures and the figures developed through the present survey cannot be determined. Child care staff compensation is generally higher in publicly funded programs such as Head Start than it is in comparable privately operated child care facilities. It may be that the Bureau estimates include a significant proportion of data from publicly funded programs, while the child care center sample used for the present survey is overwhelmingly representative of privately run programs. Nevertheless, some perspective on relative

wage levels in Maryland (and perhaps their perceived relative value in the marketplace) may be gained from the following chart, which compares annual mean wages across ten selected occupations, as reported by the Bureau in its 2005 Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates for Maryland:

2005 Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates for Maryland (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics)	
Occupation	Estimated Annual Mean Wage
Fast Food Cooks	$17,540
Cashiers	$18,320
Janitors and Cleaners	$19,760
Child Care Workers	**$19,870**
Crossing Guards	$19,890
Home Health Aide	$21,110
Stock Clerks and Order Fillers	$22,840
Laboratory Animal Caretakers	$23,580
Preschool Teachers (except Special Education)	**$24,340**
File Clerks	$25,260

Professional Qualifications

Table 2 - Highest education level completed by respondent*:

Highest Education Level	
Some High School	5.1%
High School Diploma/GED	26.7%
Some College	30.1%
Associate Degree	12.9%
Bachelor's Degree	15.8%
Some Graduate School	2.8%
Master's Degree	6.1%
Ph.D.	0.4%

* n=505

Many other industrialized countries, particularly in Europe, have more stringent standards for child care teachers than are found in the United States. For example, France requires preschool teachers to have at least a master's degree or its equivalent. In contrast, most American preschool teachers and even child care center directors do not have a bachelor's degree.

According to an October 2006 survey by the National Child Care Information Center of licensing requirements across all 50 states for entry-level child care teachers, only 12 states have minimum preservice requirements involving training or college course work in early childhood education (ECE). No state requires a bachelor's degree. Even for master (i.e., lead or supervising) teachers, only 14 states have minimum preservice ECE requirements. Of these, only three states (New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Vermont) require a bachelor's degree, and only Vermont requires that the degree be in an ECE-related discipline.

Table 3 - Academic degree pertinent to early care and education completed or being pursued by respondent*:

Academic Degree Completed or Pursued	
Early childhood education (ECE)	55.9%
Elementary education	18.9%
Other, related to children/ECE	13.4%
Child development	7.1%
Family studies	3.4%
Special education	1.3%

* n=238

Table 4 – Child care courses completed by respondent*:

Child Care Courses Completed	
90 clock-hour course	41.2%
School age 45 clock-hours	16.5%
Infant/toddler 45 clock-hours	16.1%
Other	14.0%
64 clock-hour course	7.0%
CDA Credential	5.1%

* n=505

Table 5 - Number of training clock hours completed by respondent* in the past 12 months:

Training Clock Hours Completed in Past Year	
0 - 49	91.6%
50 - 99	6.8%
100 - 149	0.9%
150 - 199	0.5%
200+	0.2%
Average # clock hours:	16.4

* n=560

Under Maryland's child care licensing regulations, senior staff must complete at least 3 clock hours of child care-related training every year. Child care center directors must complete at least 6 clock hours of training annually.

According to the National Child Care Information Center's October 2006 comparison of state child care licensing regulations:

- Forty-six other states require entry-level child care teachers annually to complete a minimum number of clock hours training in ECE-related topics. All of these states but Louisiana require more clock hours of continued training per year than Maryland. The average annual requirement is 12.5 clock hours, with eight states (Alaska, Maine, Massachusetts, New Mexico, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Utah, and Wisconsin) requiring at least 20 clock hours per year.
- Forty-three other states require child care center directors annually to complete a minimum number of clock hours training in ECE-related topics. All but four of these states (Kansas, Louisiana, New Hampshire, and Pennsylvania) require more clock hours of continued training per year than

Maryland. The average annual requirement is 13.0 clock hours, with eleven states (Alabama, Alaska, Maine, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, and Wisconsin) requiring at least 20 clock hours per year.

Table 6 – Is respondent* participating in the Maryland Child Care Credential Program (MCCCP)?

Participating in Child Care Credential Program?	
Yes	14.2%
No	85.8%

* n=598

The MCCCP, which is housed in the Division's Office of Child Care, is a voluntary professional development program for child care providers and staff. The program issues a professional credential to providers and staff in accordance with their achievement of academic degrees, completion of ECE-related coursework and training, and involvement in professional activities that exceed the minimum requirements of Maryland child care licensing requirements.

According to the National Child Care Information Center's October 2006 comparison of state child care licensing regulations:

- Five other states (Hawaii, Illinois, Minnesota, New Jersey, and Vermont) require entry-level child care teachers to hold a national or state professional child care credential or equivalent certification.
- Ten other states (Alaska, California, Connecticut, Florida, Indiana, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Oklahoma, and Oregon) require master child care teachers to hold a national or state professional child care credential or equivalent certification.

Table 7 - If respondent* is participating in the MCCCP, his/her current Credential level:

Current Child Care Credential Level	
Level 1	9.8%
Level 2	14.6%
Level 3	19.5%
Level 4	22.0%
Level 4+	0%
Level 5	15.9%
Level 6	18.3%

* n=82

The following is a list of MCCCP Credential levels and their respective requirements:

- Level 1 Credential. The only requirement is that a person be either a licensed family child care provider or a child care worker (director, senior staff, or group leader) in a licensed child care center.
- Level 2 Credential requires:
  - 45 clock hours of child care-related training that includes 20 clock hours in child development
  - One professional activity unit within the previous 12 months (see Table 8 below for an explanation of "professional activity unit")
- Level 3 Credential requires:
  - 90 clock hours of child care-related training that includes 20 clock hours in child development and 20 hours in curriculum development
  - Two professional activity units within the previous 12 months
  - One year of child care experience or one year of college

- Level 4 Credential requires:
  - 135 clock hours of child care-related training that consists of:
    - 45 clock hours in child development
    - 30 clock hours in curriculum development
    - 20 clock hours in health, safety, and nutrition
    - 15 clock hours in special needs
    - 15 clock hours in professionalism
    - 10 clock hours in community issues
  - Three professional activity units within the previous 12 months
  - Two years of child care experience
- Level 4+ Credential requires:
  - 135 clock hours of child care-related training that consists of the same components shown above for Credential level 4
  - Current accreditation by the National Association for Family Child Care, or 30 semester hours of college coursework in early childhood
  - Four professional activity units within the previous 12 months
  - Two years of child care experience
- Level 5 Credential requires:
  - An associate degree that includes:
    - 15 semester hours of coursework in early childhood education or elementary education
    - One course each in child development and curriculum development
  - Four professional activity units within the previous 12 months
  - Two years of child care experience
- Level 6 Credential requires:
  - A bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree in early childhood education, elementary education, special education, family studies, child development, or a related discipline
  - One course each in child development and curriculum development
  - Five professional activity units within the previous 12 months
  - Two years of child care experience

Table 8 - Has respondent* participated in any professional activities in the past 12 months?

Professional Activities in Past Year?	
Yes	31.5%
No	68.5%

* n=594

The Child Care Credential Program defines “professional activity” as involvement in child care-related pursuits outside of the workplace. Examples of such pursuits include membership in national, state, or local professional child care associations, serving as a mentor to other child care providers or staff, and serving as a child care conference panel member or presenter.

Appendix – Additional Queries and Response Data

Table A – Respondent's* original reason for working in child care (top 3 responses):

Reason for Working in Child Care	
Love of children	56.0%
Convenience (e.g., has child in care)	11.5%
Needed a job	6.7%

* n=600

Table B – Respondent's* rating of the impact of child care on children's development of social and learning skills:

Impactfulness of Child Care (5 = highest importance, 1 = lowest importance)	
Rating 5	85.1%
Rating 4	12.3%
Rating 3	2.2%
Rating 2	0.3%
Rating 1	0.2%

* n=603

Table C – Number of respondent's* years of experience in child care:

Length of Child Care Experience	
0 – 9 years	51.2%
10 – 19 years	28.8%
20 – 29 years	13.5%
30 – 39 years	5.6%
40 – 49 years	0.8%
50+ years	0.2%
Average # Years:	11.6

* n=594

Table D – Number of respondent's* years in current position:

Length of Time in Current Position	
0 – 4 years	58.3%
5 – 9 years	21.4%
10 – 14 years	8.8%
15 – 19 years	5.4%
20 – 24 years	3.4%
25 – 29 years	1.5%
30 – 34 years	0.7%
35+ years	0.3%
Average # Years:	7.0

* n=588

Table E – Respondent's* rating of the importance of the work done in his/her current position:

Importance of Work in Current Position (5 = highest importance, 1 = lowest importance)	
Rating 5	83.4%
Rating 4	14.5%
Rating 3	2.0%
Rating 2	0.2%
Rating 1	none

* n=601

Table F – Number of respondent's* years with current employer:

Length of Time with Current Employer	
0 – 4 years	59.4%
5 – 9 years	21.5%
10 – 14 years	9.6%
15 – 19 years	3.4%
20 – 24 years	4.0%
25 – 29 years	1.0%
30 – 34 years	0.9%
35+ years	0.2%
Average # Years:	6.9

* n=581

Table G – Respondent's* job/career plans 5 years from now (top 3 responses):

Job/Career Plans in 5 Years	
Same as current position	29.4%
Elementary school teacher	12.5%
Center director	10.0%

* n=550

Table H – Does respondent* plan to stay in the child care profession?

Plan to Stay in Child Care?	
Yes	90.2%
No	9.8%

* n=601

Table I – If respondent* plans to leave the child care profession, why? (top 3 responses)

If Leaving Child Care, Reason	
Different professional goal	41.4%
Needs better-paying job	25.9%
Too stressful/demanding	12.1%

* n=58

Table J – If respondent* plans to leave the profession, what would persuade him/her to stay? (top 3 responses)

Possible Reason to Stay in Child Care	
Nothing/has other goals	44.3%
Better pay/benefits	41.0%
Higher position	3.3%

* n=61

Table K – Number of respondents by location (jurisdiction) of their child care programs:

Location of Participating Centers	
Jurisdiction	# Centers
Anne Arundel County	49
Allegany County	3
Baltimore City	38
Baltimore County	53
Caroline County	0
Carroll County	16
Cecil County	3
Charles County	21
Calvert County	24
Dorchester County	7
Frederick County	39
Garrett County	2
Harford County	36
Howard County	54
Kent County	2
Montgomery County	105
Prince George's County	89
Queen Anne's County	0
St. Mary's County	15
Somerset County	1
Talbot County	4
Washington County	23
Wicomico County	11
Worcester County	8
Total respondents:	603

Table L – Respondent's* household size:

Household Size	
1 person	10.1%
2 persons	29.5%
3 persons	22.9%
4 persons	22.4%
5 persons	10.8%
6 persons	3.2%
7 persons	0.7%
8 persons	0%
9 persons	0%
10 persons	0.2%
11 persons	0%
12 persons	0.3%
Average household size:	3.1

* n=594

Table M – Respondent's* gender:

Gender	
Female	97.2%
Male	2.8%

* n=598

Table N – Respondent's* age:

Age	
16 - 18	5.7%
19 - 30	30.4%
31 - 40	20.0%
41 - 50	18.4%
51 - 60	18.7%
61+	6.8%

* n=599

Table O – Respondent's* ethnic background:

Ethnicity	
White/Caucasian	58.9%
Black/African-American	28.5%
Asian-American	5.4%
Latino/Hispanic	3.2%
Bi-Racial/Multi-racial	2.3%
Native American	0.7%

* n=596

Table P – Responding child care centers (Director responses*): Average Capacity, Average Enrollment, Average Attendance, and Acceptance of Child Care Subsidy (POC):

Child Service Profiles of Participating Centers					
Authorized Maximum Child Capacity	Number of Responding Centers	Average Capacity	Average Enrollment	Average Daily Attendance	Percentage Accepting POC
Up to 20	28	15	12	11	96.4%
21 - 50	37	37	32	29	89.2%
51 - 100	57	70	64	54	91.2%
101 - 150	10	119	88	71	100.0%
151 - 200	4	174	151	134	100.0%
200+	2	262	262	245	100.0%

* n=138

Table Q – Responding child care centers (Director responses*): Average Monthly Cost of Care, by child age group:

Average Monthly Cost of Care, by Capacity and Age Group, at Participating Centers						
Approved Maximum Child Capacity	0 - 23 months old	2 years old	3 years old	4 years old	5 years old	6+ years old
Up to 20	$858	$636	$583	$573	$545	$351
21 - 50	$721	$531	$514	$511	$430	$310
51 - 100	$998	$717	$654	$639	$514	$357
101 - 150	$994	$719	$649	$646	$614	$451
151 - 200	$1,036	$764	$736	$736	$695	$467
200+	$1,096	$861	$704	$704	$704	$374

* n=138