

Problem Statement:

The adults caring for and educating young children in child care settings are the single most important factor in the quality of that setting. Yet, state and federal funding have historically been insufficient to guarantee that those adults – henceforth referred to as the child care workforce – receive adequate **compensation, working conditions** that allow needs regarding economic, physical, and socioemotional well-being to be met, and **career pathways** that facilitate access to education, training, and supports necessary to increase knowledge, skills, and degrees or credentials. Addressing these issues, along with **recruitment and retention**, will be key to ensuring Oregon’s children and families have access to a child care system that meets their needs.

Each of these categories, including more specific problems that the work group believes must be solved and policy and financing recommendations follow below.

Compensation:

Problems to solve: The majority of the child care workforce makes minimum wage; very few members of the child care workforce have robust benefits; families cannot afford to pay higher tuition in order to increase wages or benefits and current subsidy (ERDC) rates are not targeted toward supporting robust pay or benefits

Policy recommendations:

- Strategic financing for the field needs to require or target increasing wages.
 - ERDC/child care subsidy payments based on the cost of providing care, not market rates, and including a robust wage/benefit structure;
 - Utilizing contracting/grants for child care that include wage requirements,
 - Expanding salary scales into all child care programs funded with public dollars
- In the short term, the use of contracts should be expanded to reach a living wage standards
- Explore shared services models to increase ability to offer benefits to employees (e.g., insurance/retirement pools)
- Ensure financing covers paid time off for professional learning

Working Conditions and Supports:

Problems to solve: Child care jobs need to be good jobs, including predictable hours and support for sick leave, as well as ensuring there are additional supports for child care workers in addressing needs of children and families

Policy recommendations:

- Address intermittent scheduling – fix payment policies in subsidy (enrollment vs attendance) so that staff can be guaranteed hours/wages/benefits
- Create a substitute pool – support paid leave, paid professional learning (pre-service and in-service)

- Establish a cadre of mental health consultation so child care providers can draw upon experts to support children and families who need support and referrals regarding mental and behavioral health issues

Career Pathways:

Problems to solve: Current career pathways are not supported with community-based training; current career pathways are unrealistic; little to no support for formal education attainment; higher education programs do not work for the current workforce; no articulated ways of advancing in one's career; Family, Friend, and Neighbor care providers have little access to PD

Policy recommendations:

- Redesign career pathways in partnership with child care workforce and ensure Oregon Registry Online adapts to new career pathways
- Work with higher education institutions to create programs that honor and count the experience of the current workforce, respect BIPOC child care workers and address bias and racism in higher education programs
- Create robust scholarships for new workers and those returning to school and ensure institutions provide access to programs that contain the supports that meet the physical, socioemotional, learning, and other practical needs of students (e.g., offer child care, funding for transportation)
- Use technology to increase access to training/degree/credential programs
 - Support the digital literacy, access to equipment for child care workers
- Increase the number, quality, and affordability of community-based trainings
- Ensure that Family, Friend, and Neighbor care providers have access to relevant professional development for their context

Recruitment & Retention:

Problems to solve: One-quarter of the workforce turns over annually, meaning that 25% of the workforce needs onboarding and new training annually; many programs cannot find staff that meet licensing requirements to hire into programs

Policy recommendations:

- Implement the above recommendations in compensation, working conditions, and career pathways in order to make the field a better place to work
- Include workers in a design of a campaign about respect for the profession and the opportunities available (funding is available in ELD current professional learning funding through SSA)
- Create pathways earlier in the education pipeline to attract new, diverse educators to the field