RUTGERS CHILD CARE RESEARCH COLLABORATIVE

New Jersey's Child Care Workforce: Training Topics of Interest for Child Care Providers

Summary Brief

AUTHORED BY

Abigail Asante-Amoah based on research conducted by Liana Lin, Andrea Hetling, Ph.D., Lily McFarland, and Jessica Starace

Heldrich Center for Workforce Development

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NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

The John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development is part of the Rutgers Child Care Research Collaborative,[1] focused on examining the state of child care in New Jersey. Through this research initiative, the Heldrich Center is conducting a research study of the child care workforce using a mixed-methods research approach. Training emerged as a recurring theme across the center's research activities, and this brief aims to highlight workers' training topics of interest and the challenges they report encountering in accessing professional development.

KEY FINDINGS

The following are some key insights into training topics of interest for child care workers.

Question: When thinking about training, which topics are most relevant to you and your work?

- Across child care settings, providers were aligned in their top training priorities, but ranked their importance differently. Among registered family child care providers, **child development ranked highest (52%)**, followed by **working with children with special needs (45%)**, **managing behavioral issues (45%)**, and **planning learning activities (44%)**. Conversely, among lead and assistant teachers, **working with children with behavioral issues (76%) and special needs (61%)** were the most cited training priorities, followed by **child development (51%)** and **planning learning activities (43%)**.

1 The Rutgers Child Care Research Collaborative includes the Heldrich Center, the Center for Women and Work, and the National Institute for Early Education Research, with support and collaboration from the New Jersey Department of Children and Families.

Question: With specific regard to working with children with special needs, in what areas would you most like to receive additional training?

- The most frequently cited specialized training needs for working with children with special needs were **behavioral issues, supporting children with special needs,** and **communication with parents about special needs**. Behavioral issues ranked highest among lead **(76%)** and assistant teachers **(69%)**, while family child care providers selected **special needs broadly (63%)**, closely followed by **behavioral issues (58%)**, and **communication with parents about special needs (44%)**.
- Other areas of training topic interest across the child care setting included **specific disabilities, inclusion, performing routine special health procedures, and administering medications**. More **family child care providers (46%) expressed interest in the topic of inclusion** compared with **30% of lead teachers** and **25% of assistant teachers**.

Barriers to Participation

Question: What barriers prevent you from accessing training or learning opportunities on topics that would most interest and benefit you?

- **Inconvenient scheduling** was the most frequently reported barrier to participation among both **family child care providers (44%)** and **lead and assistant teachers (39%)**, with the **cost of training (31% and 33%, respectively)** and **limited availability of training opportunities (25% and 32%, respectively)** also noted as common barriers. Additionally, **23% of lead and assistant teachers** identified **a lack of classroom coverage or substitute teachers** as a barrier.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Based on these findings, New Jersey could consider the following:

- Mechanisms to **increase awareness of current training offerings and develop new training topics to address perceived gaps**, thereby offering targeted support to the child care workforce.
- **Collaborate with relevant stakeholders**, such as the Child Care Resource and Referral organizations and other key training providers, to address providers' interest in participating in training opportunities and reduce barriers to participation.

METHODS

The findings discussed in this brief were derived from six focus groups with child care workers across different roles and child care settings (N = 45), surveys of registered family child care providers (N = 208) and lead and assistant teachers working in licensed child care centers (N = 1,953),[2] and two distinct series of focus groups — one with registered family child care providers (N = 34) and another with assistant teachers working in licensed child care centers (N = 37).

All Heldrich Center reports on the child care workforce can be accessed here: https://heldrich.rutgers.edu/projects/rutgers-child-care-research-collaborative/

2 Findings from this survey are forthcoming and will be available at https://heldrich.rutgers.edu/projects/rutgers-child-care-research-collaborative/ once published.

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The Heldrich Center for Workforce Development is devoted to transforming the workforce development system at the local, state, and federal levels. The center provides an independent source of analysis for reform and innovation in policymaking and employs cutting-edge research and evaluation methods to identify best practices in workforce development, education, and employment policy. It is also engaged in significant partnerships with the private sector, workforce organizations, and educational institutions to design effective education and training programs. It is deeply committed to assisting job seekers and workers attain the information, education, and skills training they need to move up the economic ladder.