



New Jersey's Child Care Workforce: A Special Needs-Focused Issue Brief

AUTHORED BY

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Heldrich Center for Workforce Development

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ABOUT THE
RUTGERS CHILD CARE
RESEARCH COLLABORATIVE

With funding and support from the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, the Center for Women and Work, the Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, and the National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey have joined together to form the Rutgers Child Care Research Collaborative for the purpose of conducting research and facilitating community conversations that develop a broad and comprehensive understanding of New Jersey's child care landscape. Our research aims to increase understanding about the needs and interests of parents in New Jersey, the supply and motivations of the child care workforce, and the capacity of the child care sector to meet demand for child care today and into the future within our diverse state.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Background	5
Methods	5
Special Needs-Focused Findings Around Child Care Settings	6
Experience	7
Challenges	9
Training	11
Discussion and Expert Interview Insights	13
Areas for Continued Research	15
Conclusion	15
References.....	15
Appendix A: Relevant Questions from the Heldrich Center’s Family Child Care Provider Survey	16
Appendix B: Relevant Questions from the Heldrich Center’s Licensed Center Staff Survey	19

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INTRODUCTION

The John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, is part of a multi-center collaborative project focused on child care in New Jersey and is working with 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. Through this work, the Heldrich Center is conducting an evaluation of the child care workforce through a mixed-methods research approach.

This issue brief highlights the child care workforce's needs and sentiments regarding caring for and educating children who may need additional supports or services, including workers' opinions on related training needs. Child care professionals are not in a position to identify or diagnose special needs. However, they do work with children with additional needs and must navigate this landscape, which spans a broad spectrum of possible needs and diagnoses. This research brief does not rely on a specific or clinical definition of special needs. Instead, findings are grounded in the perceptions and voices of early educators themselves, recognizing that the quality of child care is based on the ability to care for and educate children with diverse needs, including developmental and learning delays, physical disabilities, and other issues. This brief aims to add context to the challenges and considerations for accommodations that inform the working experiences of the child care workforce. The theme of diverse or special needs among children emerged across the Heldrich Center's various data collection efforts, including two statewide workforce surveys and multiple series of focus groups with registered family child care (FCC) providers and lead and assistant teachers in licensed child care centers. The goal of this brief is to give voice to child care workers' insights and perspectives on this key issue that may impact resource and training offerings from the state and other relevant child care stakeholders.

BACKGROUND

This brief aims to elevate and document the lived experiences and perspectives of the child care workforce across diverse settings in New Jersey to inform an understanding of the realities of working with children diagnosed with or thought to have special needs. The data collected through this research study provides a glimpse, rather than a comprehensive look, into the nature of providing child care for children with special needs or those who may have them. The current child care ecosystem, particularly in regard to accommodating children with special needs, is complex. While each of the diverse approaches to child care service delivery, like home-based child care and licensed child care centers, might present unique challenges and considerations when providing care for this population, appropriately accommodating children with special needs remains a concern across all child care settings (Whitmore et al., 2023). Staff burnout due to high job demand and limited support (Jeon et al., 2021), challenges with classroom inclusion (Whitmore et al., 2023; Hasson et al., 2022), and limited training quality and availability (Stayton et al., 2023) are all examples of potential barriers to providing high-quality care and accommodations for children with special needs.

Furthermore, challenges related to caring for and educating children with special needs are often compounding and do not exist in isolation. For example, a recent study of child care professionals reported that those with low levels of teaching self-efficacy and limited access to support or resources, such as high-quality training materials, were more likely to report psychological stress and job burnout (Jeon et al., 2021). Findings from another study included reports of misalignment between provider training and the provision of care for students with autism spectrum disorder, which impacted early educators' ability and motivation to include children with special needs in all classroom activities (Hasson et al., 2021). Relatedly, the successful implementation of early intervention services in early child care contexts and the impact it has on those children identified as needing additional support is often dependent on the quality and frequency of provider training and education (Stayton et al., 2023).

This literature sheds light on the complexity and nuance associated with the broad child care ecosystem. In New Jersey, the child care landscape is similarly complex with various regulatory bodies, training providers, and Child Care Resource and Referral agencies, among others. While this brief acknowledges the broader ecosystem, it primarily centers on the experiences and challenges expressed by those working directly with children across child care settings in New Jersey.

METHODS

In March 2023, the Heldrich Center embarked on a research agenda focused on the New Jersey child care workforce, examining registered FCC providers and licensed child care center staff with the research goal of highlighting key personal and professional perceptions, identifying needed resources and supports, and assessing workplace dynamics that may influence workers' recruitment,

retention, and job satisfaction. Through this research, the Heldrich Center conducted four primary data collections with the child care workforce. In late 2023, the Heldrich Center conducted **six focus groups** with child care workers across different roles and child care settings (N = 45). In spring 2024, the Heldrich Center fielded a **survey of registered FCC providers** (N = 208). In November 2024, the Heldrich Center fielded a **survey of lead and assistant teachers working in licensed child care centers** (N = 1,953). Lastly, in 2025, the Heldrich Center conducted **two distinct series of focus groups** — one with registered FCC providers (N = 34) and another with assistant teachers working in licensed child care centers (N = 37).

Through these varied touchpoints with the child care workforce, a recurring theme surfaced regarding workers' experiences and perceptions of working with children they perceive to have additional needs, as well as the types of supports they identified as essential for enhancing their knowledge, confidence, and the overall quality of care they could provide for the children in their care. The research team systematically reviewed data from all four data collection efforts to document and code insights related to caring for children with additional needs, and using constant comparison, integrated codes into three categories of findings: experience, challenges, and training. Preliminary findings were then discussed with members of the Rutgers Child Care Research Collaborative and eight community stakeholders from the New Jersey Department of Children and Families' Office of Licensing, the Professional Formation Center for the Early Relational Health Workforce at Montclair State University, and the SPAN Parent Advocacy Network to validate and further contextualize the research findings.

SPECIAL NEEDS-FOCUSED FINDINGS ACROSS CHILD CARE SETTINGS

The following findings capture the lived experiences and identify challenges of caring for and educating children with diagnosed or perceived additional care needs, a prevalent theme across child care settings and job roles, while amplifying the voices of the child care workforce on strategies to address these challenges. This research did not apply a specific definition of special needs; rather, it used the term to encompass early educators' experiences serving children with diverse needs in their care. Special needs can encompass physical, developmental, and behavioral or emotional conditions, but for the purposes of this research, which does not explore any disabilities or diagnoses in depth, special needs are referenced broadly.

The research team acknowledges that early educators' experiences with and perceptions of children with special needs, or those thought to have additional care needs, are shaped by their unique perspectives formed through consistent and sustained caregiving and educating. While early educators may not have formal diagnostic training, they often spend many hours each week with children with diverse needs and observe them across activities, routines, settings, and developmental stages. This vantage point enables early educators to notice patterns, behaviors, or needs that may inform their perceptions of a child's abilities and needs and how to provide quality support and care to meet that child where they are in their development. This is the framework through which the child

care workforce offers insights into their lived experience caring for children who may have special needs. The findings presented in this section reflect the perceptions and recommendations of early educators in both registered FCC and licensed child care center settings.

Experience

When early educators across varied child care settings were asked if they had cared for a child that they felt had special needs but did not have a diagnosis, or a diagnosis was not disclosed by a parent, over three quarters of both lead and assistant teachers and nearly two thirds of registered FCC providers indicated they had, as seen in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Experience Working with Children with Special Needs

Do you currently, or have you in the past, served any children who you felt had special needs but did not have a diagnosis? ¹	Lead teachers	Assistant teachers	Registered FCC providers
Yes	87%	78%	64%
No	9%	14%	28%
Don't know ²	4%	8%	7%

Data sources: Heldrich Center Registered FCC Survey (2024) and Heldrich Center Licensed Child Care Center Workforce Survey (2024).

When examined by job roles in licensed child care centers, most lead teachers (87%) and assistant teachers (78%) indicated having an experience of serving a child or children thought to have additional care needs.

Early educators spoke extensively about their critical role in supporting children early in life, particularly those who may need additional support due to a disability. In focus groups with the research team, participants shared the following sentiments.

“Many of us, for example, have the capacity, I can say almost all of us, because we have these children from a very young age until they grow up and go to school. We have the ability to know it, to know, to discover if any problems develop with them, if they have any delays” (translated from Spanish).

- 1 The research team acknowledges that early educators are not diagnosticians, and their perceptions are informed by their lived experiences with caring for children. Early educators’ perceptions of special needs may reflect a range of concerns, from developmental delays to behavioral challenges, and that these may or may not constitute a diagnosable condition.
- 2 One limitation of the survey design, particularly about the “don’t know” response category, is that respondents were not prompted to further elaborate on their answers to this question in the survey instrument. Respondents might have selected these options for a variety of reasons and researchers are not able to draw conclusions about respondent intention or motivation.

“Since I started working in this, I have worked with special (ed) children and it really is needed. I have given a lot of myself. I had never worked with them. I feel that I can contribute a grain of sand to help these children integrate and be able to really socialize. I love it. I have one that I love. They are not in my classroom, but I still put them to sleep. I love it. I really like it because I am contributing to his progress.”

Early educators spoke of their dedication to understanding and supporting the children in their care; however, they acknowledged that it is difficult to provide the care best suited to children who may have additional needs.

“Working with special (ed) children at the same time as with other children. You don’t know how this child is doing, how he might react, how you have to work twice as hard. That’s why I, in particular, arrive home every day physically and mentally exhausted, because I try to give, not 200 but 300% of me to understand each of the children.”

“Yes, ma’am, I’m sorry, I have worked with special needs children and they are very lovely, but it is very frustrating that one does not have the knowledge, therefore, the proper tools to provide them with the necessary support.”

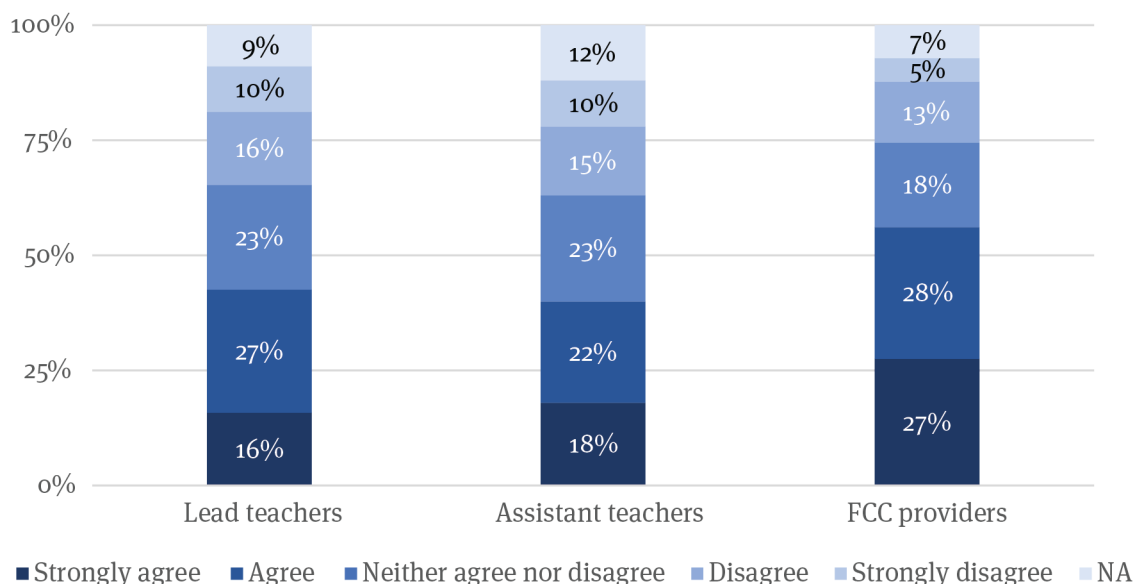
As seen in **Figure 1** on page 9, despite these difficulties and apprehensions in properly caring for children who may have more needs, respondents across all provider populations felt that parents were responsive to their concerns about children who may have additional needs, with 43% of lead teachers, 40% of assistant teachers, and 55% of registered FCC providers expressing agreement. More notably, only one quarter of lead and assistant teachers in child care centers disagreed with the statement, and less than 20% of registered FCC providers disagreed.

While the survey shows mostly positive or neutral sentiments about engaging with parents, focus group participants more often spoke about the difficulties of interfacing with parents on this topic. In conversations with early educators, some spoke of “frustrations” and “resistance” from parents, and the differences between what can be accomplished with the “support of the administrators and the parents,” or depending on “parents’ willingness to work with us.”

While these focus group perspectives reflect individual experiences rather than the broader workforce, they provide important context for understanding the day-to-day difficulties and constraints early educators may encounter. Collectively, these dynamics point to a workforce deeply committed to supporting children with diverse needs, but also report mixed experiences with their daily work, particularly where parent engagement and broader structural factors intersect. Understanding and further exploring the relationship between parent engagement and system supports is critical, particularly during early childhood, as it may serve as an important pathway to identifying and accessing the structured services and resources that children who may have additional needs may require for positive developmental outcomes. Early educators are uniquely positioned at the forefront of these interactions and can offer valuable insights into how families may engage with available supports and services.

Figure 1: Parent Receptivity to Concerns

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statement: “In general, when I have a child in my care who I suspect may have a disability or special need, parents have been receptive to my concerns.”



Data sources: Heldrich Center Registered FCC Survey (2024) and Heldrich Center Licensed Child Care Center Workforce Survey (2024).

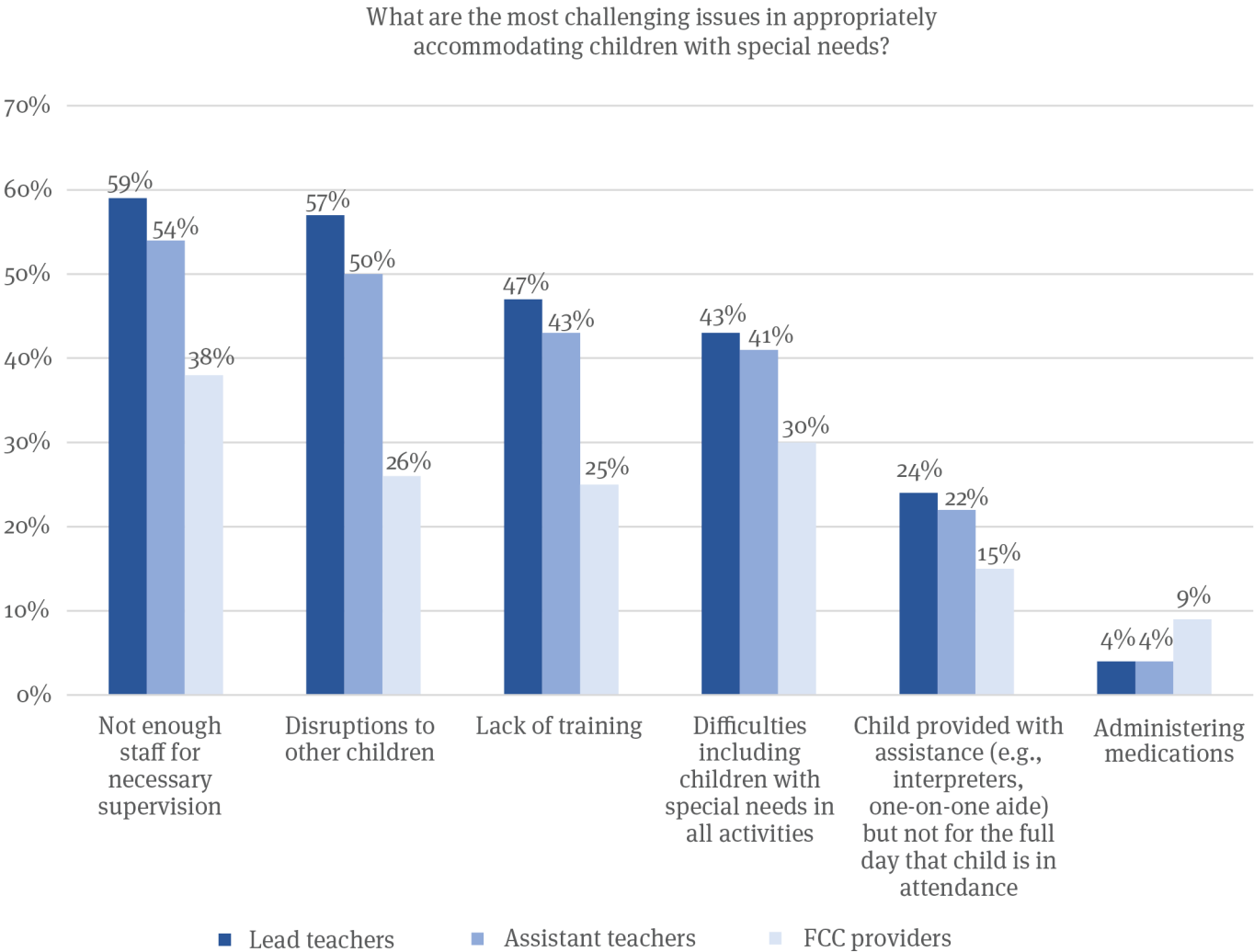
Challenges

Throughout the Heldrich Center’s data collection, early educators shared a diversity of considerations and challenges associated with responsibly caring for and thoughtfully accommodating children diagnosed with or thought to have special needs.

When asked broadly about the top three biggest challenges they face as early educators, a relatively small proportion across these varied settings listed working with children with special needs as their single top-ranked challenge. For registered FCC providers, only 12% of respondents ranked working with children with special needs as their top-ranked, biggest challenge. However, when looking at the cumulative top three ranked work challenges, 34% of registered FCC providers ranked it among their top three, as did 56% of lead teachers and 57% of assistant teachers. These findings indicate that, although working with children with special needs is not the primary challenge identified by early educators, it remains a notable factor shaping their experiences.

Figure 2 provides more detail on the types of challenges early educators face when caring for children with additional needs, as identified in their respective workforce surveys.

Figure 2: Challenges with Accommodations



Data sources: Heldrich Center Registered FCC Survey (2024) and Heldrich Center Licensed Child Care Center Workforce Survey (2024).

Note: Respondents were asked to indicate all that apply.

Across child care settings, the most frequently cited challenge in accommodating children with additional needs was insufficient staffing to provide adequate supervision. As noted in **Figure 2**, more than half of lead (59%) and assistant teachers (54%) cited this as a challenge, while a smaller number (38%) of registered FCC providers did so. Disruptions to other children and a lack of training were also frequently cited as challenges for all early educators. Although difficulties including children with additional needs in all activities also emerged as a prominent concern across populations, this was the second most commonly cited challenge for registered FCC providers. The only challenge that

was selected more frequently by registered FCC providers (9%) than both lead (4%) and assistant teachers (4%) was administering medications. These challenges are closely interconnected and likely compound one another. Limited staffing can hinder early educators' ability to offer individualized attention or manage complex and diverse needs, which may contribute to increased disruptions and make it more challenging to facilitate inclusive participation in group settings. Similarly, providers' perceptions of insufficient training to support the diverse needs of the children in their care may limit their abilities to implement effective strategies for inclusion and manage disruptions. Together, these challenges can create compounding obstacles that may shape early educators' experiences, comfort, and capacity to deliver high-quality, inclusive care.

Discussions during the focus groups add nuance and insights to the survey results. Focus group participants discussed how multiple, interrelated challenges shaped their experiences caring for children.

“Like, what do we do if, like I said before, we don’t have the training, we don’t have the people to help us, you know, work with that. Like, what are you doing in a situation like that?”

“And, you know, it’s very frustrating with the families and in the school settings, the other children being affected by, and that not being taken any further, like investigated any further to possibly get any extra help and they want to continue sending them to the school. But we don’t have the resources or enough teachers in the classroom to properly care for those students. It’s very frustrating, but it is more so heartbreaking because you’re trying to help these students.”

As illustrated by focus group participants, the importance of resources and training for working with these children is a prominent factor woven into the day-to-day challenges of caring for and accommodating children with diverse needs. These identified challenges underscore the importance of equipping early educators with the knowledge and skills needed to support children with diverse needs. Doing so can help ensure that children receive appropriate support, remain in their child care settings, benefit from collaborative solutions, and avoid the compounding of potential developmental challenges.

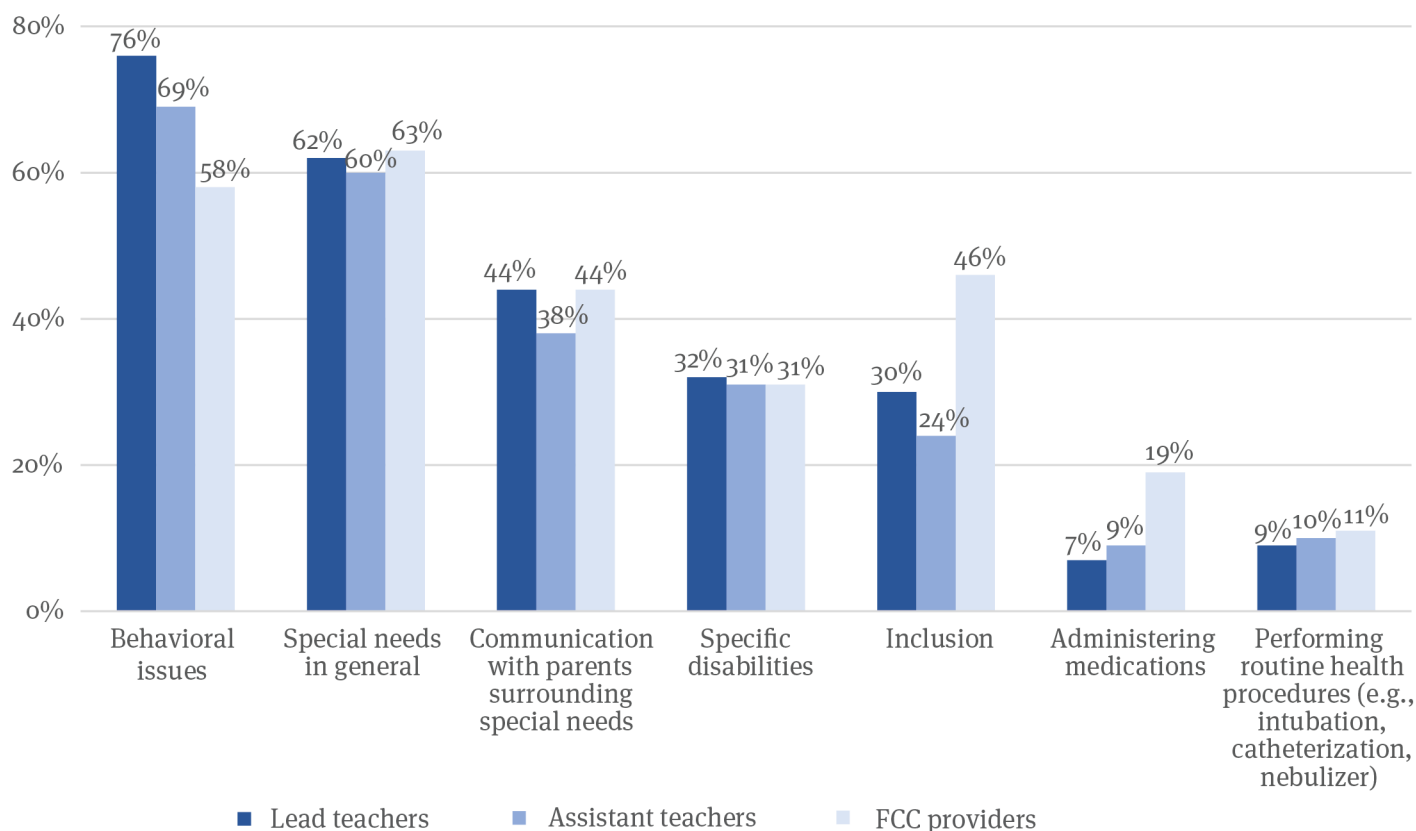
Training

When asked about the training topics most relevant to their work, 26% of registered FCC providers ranked working with children with special needs as their top training interest, as did 60% of lead teachers and 63% of assistant teachers.

As seen in **Figure 3**, the research team probed further to identify specific training needs and topics of interest, generating practical, actionable insights and directly elevating early educator voices regarding the resources and supports they may need in their day-to-day work.

Figure 3: Specialized Training Topics

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



Data sources: Heldrich Center Registered FCC Survey (2024) and Heldrich Center Licensed Child Care Center Workforce Survey (2024).

Note: Respondents were asked to indicate all that apply.

There was alignment among all respondents on the topics of greatest interest for specialized training, highlighting a desire for more dedicated resources and supports focused on behavioral issues, general special needs, and communication with parents. The topic of inclusion was of interest to 46% of registered FCC providers, compared with 30% of lead teachers and 24% of assistant teachers, which may reflect the smaller, more intimate nature of registered FCC provider care arrangements. Additionally, when examined by job role, lead and assistant teachers aligned in their desired training topics, suggesting that classroom needs and a desire for targeted, supportive learning opportunities are common.

The licensed child care centers survey included a question about reducing turnover. One response option was training focused on children with special needs. As seen in **Table 2**, three out of every five lead teachers (63%) and assistant teachers (65%) thought that such training would reduce turnover by “a lot.”

Table 2: Training and Turnover in Licensed Child Care Centers

In your opinion, to what extent would the following factors help to reduce turnover at your organization? (N = 1,882)	A lot	Somewhat	A little	Not at all
Better training on how to work with children with special needs.				
Lead teachers	63%	21%	10%	7%
Assistant teachers	65%	19%	10%	6%

Data source: Heldrich Center Licensed Child Care Center Workforce Survey (2024).

These findings suggest that lead and assistant teachers place significant weight on the impact of training availability for working with children with additional needs as it relates to teacher turnover.

Similar sentiments about the importance and power of training were voiced in the focus groups, with one participant explicitly linking access to training with garnering greater respect.

“I would also like them to train us more, especially to be able to give better care to special ed. children, because perhaps because one does it on instinct, let’s say, like a special ed. child that is disabled, but to really take care of that child as well as others.”

“Well, I wish we were able to, like, maybe have more training and more knowledge, where we could talk to the parents and more. Then just I’m a daycare teacher. I’m an assistant rather, you know, like, maybe if they knew we had more knowledge that they would be more respectful of what we’re saying, that that’s the only thing I really wish that we had the training as well.”

DISCUSSION AND EXPERT INTERVIEW INSIGHTS

While the research team acknowledges that early educators are not diagnosticians, they may form insights and perceptions about the children in their care due to the close nature of the child–educator relationship. With that perspective in mind, early educators may perceive children as needing additional support, and this brief highlights how they both experience challenges and seek support to remedy those challenges in an effort to provide robust, high-quality, and appropriate care for children with diverse needs.

Early educators, inclusive of registered FCC providers and lead and assistant teachers in licensed child care centers, were aligned in their identified experiences, day-to-day challenges, and requests for resources and training to better support children with additional needs in their care. Across the project’s data collection efforts, study participants expressed interest in strengthening their knowledge, confidence, and capacity to effectively support children with diverse needs, citing a variety of challenges and limitations for which they seek more targeted support. Building upon early

educators' reported experiences and challenges, survey findings highlight their interest in training that would strengthen their capacity to support children with diverse needs, particularly in the areas of managing behavioral challenges, addressing special needs broadly, and communicating with parents about these needs. These expressed needs underscore the importance of the linkage between supports, resources, and training, and early educators feeling equipped with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to support and provide quality care for children with diverse needs in their care.

Expert interviews with key stakeholders validated and reinforced these findings. Feedback from state officials, education and training professionals, and parents closely aligned with the perspectives of early educators, highlighting a shared commitment at both the local and state levels to providing high-quality care for children with diverse and special needs. At the same time, interviewees also expressed the need for greater coordination among relevant entities and existing resources to deliver comprehensive training and professional development supports for early educators across all child care settings. Stakeholders underscored the range of resources currently available through state agencies and partner organizations, while also indicating that limitations in awareness, accessibility, and utilization may be more significant barriers than resource availability itself and, therefore, warrant further consideration and attention, particularly based on the survey findings presented in this brief. Some resources referenced in the validation interviews include Montclair State University's professional development workshops (Keeping Babies and Children in Mind, Creciendo Juntos, Early Childhood Inclusion, Pyramid Model, etc.), SPAN's programs (New Jersey Inclusive Child Care Project, New Jersey Family Engagement Hub, etc.), and offerings made available through the New Jersey Child Care Information System/New Jersey Workforce Registry. While this listing is a limited selection of available resources, it illustrates the broader point that a variety of entities offer professional development and training across the state.

Combining the perspectives of the child care workforce and key child care stakeholders suggests an awareness and information gap regarding available supports and training. Early educators expressed an unmet need for more targeted supports to build knowledge and confidence, while New Jersey's child care ecosystem offers pathways to skill development through a variety of state and local organizations. At the policy level, these findings suggest opportunities for state agencies and relevant partners, such as the Child Care Resource and Referral organizations and training providers, to strengthen coordinated guidance and technical assistance; expand access to targeted resources; and consider the financial sustainability of additional, accessible professional development opportunities for the child care workforce. Given the suggestion of an information and awareness gap, the research findings also point to the importance of reassessing existing resources and delivery mechanisms, and of examining or transforming how they are communicated to ensure broader awareness and uptake.

AREAS FOR CONTINUED RESEARCH

While these findings illustrate early educators' experiences working with children who may have additional needs and their sentiments on the supports and resources that would be beneficial to them, more research is needed to assess the current supportive service ecosystem, understand nuances in frontline workforce practices, evaluate the accessibility of existing supports, and examine the financial implications of implementing additional or expanded professional development opportunities and services. This need for additional research reflects the complexity and nuances of the child care ecosystem in New Jersey, with varying oversight authorities, training entities, and funding agencies.

CONCLUSION

Through the Heldrich Center's multimodal examination of the child care workforce in New Jersey, the intertwined topics of caring for children with special needs and the need for additional supports to feel prepared to do so emerged as prevalent and recurring themes. This research brief offers insights into the lived experiences and voiced challenges and requests for support from early educators across varied settings, including registered FCC providers and lead and assistant teachers in licensed child care centers, and validated by interviews with a diverse group of stakeholders. In short, the research team sees this as a clear workforce need that warrants further exploration and research.

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APPENDIX A: RELEVANT QUESTIONS FROM THE HELDRICH CENTER'S FAMILY CHILD CARE PROVIDER SURVEY

25. Do you currently, or have you in the past, served any children who you felt had special needs but did not have a diagnosis?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Not sure

26. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statement.

“In general, when I have a child in my care who I suspect may have a disability or special need, parents have been receptive to my concerns.”

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither agree nor disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree
- f. NA

27. What are the most challenging issues in appropriately accommodating children with special needs? (please check all that apply)

- a. Not enough staff for necessary supervision
- b. Difficulties including children with special needs in all activities
- c. Disruptions to other children
- d. Administering medications
- e. Lack of training
- f. Child provided with assistance (e.g., interpreter, one-on-one aide) but not for full day that child is in my care
- g. Other (please specify)
- h. I'm not sure
- i. Does not apply

28. Please identify and rank the three biggest challenges you face in your work. Please choose and rank three of them by dragging and dropping them into the box.

- a. Working with kids with special needs
- b. Working with parents
- c. Child to caregiver ratios
- d. A lack of resources to support my family child care business
- e. Fear of making a mistake or a decision that others may view as a mistake
- f. Developing children's activities

- g. Lesson planning/curricula development
- h. Dedicated time in the workday to plan curriculum and do paperwork
- i. Dedicated space for me to be able to plan my workday
- j. Feeling underappreciated and undervalued
- k. Being able to take time off

30. In an average month, how often, if ever, do the following things happen to you?

- a. Parents came late to pick up their children
- b. Parents blamed their child's bad behavior on the program
- c. There were children with behavioral problems that were hard to deal with
- d. I worked with children whom I did not feel I had the training for
- e. I knew the children were happy with me
- f. There were major sources of stress in the children's lives that I couldn't do anything about
- g. Parents spoke with me about challenges unrelated to child care
- h. I knew that I was appreciated by the parents
 - i. Never
 - ii. Once
 - iii. More than once
 - iv. Weekly
 - v. Very often

39. Are you currently enrolled in a degree program at a college or university?

- a. Yes, associate degree
- b. Yes, bachelor's degree
- c. Yes, graduate degree
- d. Yes, other
- e. No

41. (If yes to Q39) Are you majoring or specializing in any of the following areas? Check all that apply.

- a. Elementary education
- b. Special education
- c. Child development, psychology, or family studies
- d. Early childhood education
- e. Other (please specify)

43. When thinking about training, which topics are most relevant to you and your work? Please choose and rank three by dragging and dropping them into the box.

- a. Working with children with special needs
- b. Working with children with behavioral issues
- c. Culturally responsive practices
- d. Child development
- e. Working with multilingual learners
- f. Planning learning activities
- g. Running a small business
- h. Other (please specify)

44. When working with children with special needs, in what areas would you most like to receive additional specialized training? Check all that apply.

- a. Administering medications
- b. Special needs in general
- c. Specific disabilities
- d. Behavioral issues
- e. Performing routine special health procedures (e.g., intubation, catheterization, nebulizer)
- f. Inclusion
- g. Communication with parents surrounding special needs
- h. Other (please specify)
- i. None of the above

APPENDIX B: RELEVANT QUESTIONS FROM THE HELDRICH CENTER'S LICENSED CENTER STAFF SURVEY

31. In your opinion, to what extent would the following factors help to reduce turnover at your organization?

- a. Increasing pay, as needed, to ensure teachers make a living wage
- b. Offering more benefits, such as health insurance
- c. Offering more paid time off (i.e., paid vacation or sick days)
- d. Offering more flexibility when it comes to hours or days worked
- e. Decreasing the staff to child ratio (i.e., more teachers)
- f. Increasing the amount of time teachers have for planning
- g. Increasing the number of breaks a teacher can take during the day
- h. Increasing the opportunities for free or low-cost continuing education
- i. Providing more career advancement opportunities
- j. Better training on how to work with children with special needs
- k. Greater parental involvement and/or cooperation
- l. Greater respect for the teaching profession by parents
 - i. A lot
 - ii. Somewhat
 - iii. A little
 - iv. Not at all

33. Do you currently, or have you in the past, served any children who you felt had special needs but did not have a diagnosis?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Not sure

34. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statement.

“In general, when I have a child in my care who I suspect may have a disability or special need, parents have been receptive to my concerns.”

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither agree nor disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree
- f. NA

- 35.** In an average month, how often, if ever, do the following things happen to you?
- a. Parents came late to pick up their children
 - b. Parents blamed their child's bad behavior on the program
 - c. There were children with behavioral problems that were hard to deal with
 - d. I worked with children that I did not feel I had the training for
 - e. Some colleagues did not show up to work and I had to cover for them
 - f. I knew the children were happy with me
 - g. There were major sources of stress in the children's lives that I couldn't do anything about
 - h. Parents spoke with me about challenges unrelated to child care
 - i. I knew that I was appreciated by the parents
 - j. In the last month, I was moved from my normal classroom(s) or group(s) of children to one I do not normally work with
 - i. Very often
 - ii. Weekly
 - iii. More than once
 - iv. Once
 - v. Never
- 39.** What are the biggest challenges you face at work? Please choose and rank three by dragging and dropping them into the box.
- a. Working with kids with special needs
 - b. Working with parents
 - c. Classroom ratios
 - d. A lack of support from supervisors/directors/bosses
 - e. A lack of support from co-workers
 - f. Fear of making a mistake or a decision that others may view as a mistake
 - g. Developing classroom activities
 - h. Lesson planning/curricula development
 - i. Dedicated time in the workday to plan curriculum and do paperwork
 - j. Dedicated space for me to be able to plan and meet with colleagues
 - k. Feeling underappreciated and undervalued
 - l. Being able to take paid time off
- 40.** What are the most challenging issues in appropriately accommodating children with special needs? Check all that apply.
- a. Not enough staff for necessary supervision
 - b. Difficulties including children with special needs in all activities
 - c. Disruptions to other children
 - d. Administering medications
 - e. Lack of training

- f. Child provided with assistance (e.g., interpreter, one-on-one aide) but not for full day that child is in attendance
- g. Does not apply
- h. Other, please specify:

44. When thinking about training, which topics are most relevant to you and your work? Please choose and rank three by dragging and dropping them into the box.

- a. Working with children with special needs
- b. Working with children with behavioral issues
- c. Culturally responsive practices
- d. Child development
- e. Working with multilingual learners
- f. Planning learning activities
- g. Other, please specify:

53. Are you majoring or specializing in any of the following areas? Check all that apply.

- a. Elementary education
- b. Special education
- c. Child development, psychology, or family studies
- d. Early childhood education
- e. Other, please specify:

54. With specific regard to working with children with special needs, in what areas would you most like to receive additional specialized training? Check all that apply.

- a. Administering medications
- b. Special needs in general
- c. Specific disabilities
- d. Behavioral issues
- e. Performing routine special health procedures (e.g., intubation, catheterization, nebulizer)
- f. Inclusion
- g. Communication with parents surrounding special needs
- h. Other, please specify:
- i. None of the above (exclusive)



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.