

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

DRAFT POLICY STATEMENT ON

EARLY CHILDHOOD CAREER PATHWAYS

PURPOSE

A strong body of research ties the competencies and stability of teachers and program directors directly to the quality of children’s development and learning in out-of-home programs. The purpose of this policy statement is to support states and early childhood programs by providing recommendations from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for developing and implementing career pathways to support the professional learning and practice of early childhood educators and program directors.

Four recent developments underscore the importance of focusing on the early childhood workforce: the latest National Survey of Early Care and Education data on the early learning workforce; the 2014 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act definition of career pathways; consensus recommendations from the expert panel convened by the Institute of Medicine to study the early childhood workforce; and new provisions to transform the workforce included in the 2014 reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant. Building on these new developments and opportunities, this policy statement provides a framework for state and local programs to strengthen and support the early childhood workforce.

The National Survey of Early Care and Education provides nationally representative data on the characteristics of the early childhood workforce, including education, turnover, and compensation. The most recent data shows that:

- Just over half (53%) of center-based and almost a third (30%) of home-based teachers and caregivers reported having college degrees (Associate degree and Bachelor degree or higher).¹
- Both center-based and home-based providers had on average more than a dozen years’ experience in the field, showing that investments in quality professional development can have an effect for several years.

¹ The term “home-based” is used in the National Survey of Early Care and Education, defined as “individuals who care for other people’s children, age five and under, in home based settings.” This includes paid family child care providers. For purposes of presenting the NSECE data, we use the term “home-based” in this section of the statement.

- While wages for the workforce in child care and Head Start remain very low, the survey found that wages were higher when teachers and caregivers had more education themselves although wages remain lower than that of teachers in public schools with equivalent educational attainment.
- Infant toddler teachers tend to have lower levels of education and have lower wages than teachers serving children three years and older.

States and territories have been designing and implementing cross-sector early childhood workforce systems. These systems include professional standards and competencies, governance and advisory structures for professional development, articulation agreements to create seamless transitions and efficiently consider coursework and degrees, information about the changing workforce, and financing of the system's supports and of early childhood educators individually. One element of a state framework for an integrated professional development system is a career advancement pathway.

The 2015 Institute of Medicine's (IOM) expert consensus report, *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation*, addresses the science of child development and how the knowledge and skills of individuals working with children from birth through age eight needs to reflect that science. One of its significant recommendations is a minimum standard of a Bachelor degree in early childhood by 2025 for all lead teachers across all settings and sectors with children from birth through age eight. To support efforts to reach this ambitious goal, the panel calls on states to "Develop and implement comprehensive pathways and multiyear timelines at the individual, institutional, and policy levels for transitioning to a minimum bachelor's degree qualification requirement, with specialized knowledge and competencies, for all lead educators working with children from birth through age 8."

The 2014 reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) requires States and Territories to establish preservice or orientation training requirements in health and safety topics. In addition, CCDBG requires States and Territories to ongoing professional development that focuses on a range of child developmental domains and best teaching practices. States and territories also must support the quality and stability of the workforce and "provide for a progression of professional development which may include encouraging the pursuit of postsecondary education." The CCDBG health and safety training requirements establish the minimum foundation for what

family child care educators, teachers, and program directors should know and be able to do. The framework for state professional development systems should include career pathways as one of its components,² helping early childhood educator's advance from foundational training through more complex knowledge and practices and the possibility of different roles in the profession.

While there are many examples of state and local initiatives to support individual opportunities for professional development, too many early childhood educators are not able to advance their education or to receive the commensurate increased compensation when they attain more advanced education and credentials. More needs to be done to attract and retain the excellent teachers, caregivers and program leaders that every child, in every setting, deserves.

This HHS policy statement aims to:

- Raise awareness about the need for career pathways that support and develop the specialized competencies and skills of early childhood educators and early childhood program directors;
- Highlight the importance of building a progression of professional development and educational opportunities for the early childhood workforce, making it understandable to all stakeholders as a key strategy to expanding high-quality early childhood education for all children from birth;
- Provide recommendations for state agencies to create the policies and resources to provide a career advancement pathway with the meaningful supports needed for individuals in the early care and education field;
- Provide recommendations for early childhood program leaders to support staff and take advantage of professional advancement opportunities; and
- Identify related resources to support states and local programs.

This policy statement is one of several ways that HHS provides states, localities, early childhood programs, and parents with policy guidance, technical assistance, and free resources to support high quality in all early childhood programs settings. We want to work toward a goal of ensuring that all children from birth to kindergarten, across all settings and sectors, have highly effective teachers and program leaders.

² Many states are using *Workforce Designs: A Policy Blueprint for State Early Childhood Professional Development Systems* (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2008) to guide the development of their state's professional development system, including career pathways as one of the six policy components. www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/policy/ecwsi/Workforce_Designs.pdf

OVERVIEW

Neuroscientists and child development experts have shown that the first five years, and in particular the first three years, have the greatest potential for setting a strong foundation for lifelong learning and health.³ Approximately 25.5 million U.S. children younger than age 6 spend time in out-of-home care each week.⁴ The degree to which they are exposed to environments and experiences that develop their cognitive skills support their social-emotional development, and are safe and healthy in early childhood programs is foundational to their readiness for success in school and life. The seminal National Research Council report, *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development*, concluded that “The time is long overdue for society to recognize the significance of out-of-home relationships for young children, to esteem those who care for them when their parents are not available, and to compensate them adequately as a means of supporting stability, and quality in these relationships for all children, regardless of their families’ income and irrespective of their developmental needs”.⁵

Studies show that there is a strong association between high-quality programs and credentialed personnel.⁶ The Institute of Medicine panel calls for a common standard of a “bachelor’s or equivalent, with qualifications based on core competencies, could contribute to improving the quality of professional practice, stabilizing the workforce, and achieving greater consistency in learning experiences and optimal outcomes for children.”⁷ To meet this goal, higher education institutions will need to ramp up their capacity to become accredited to meet national early childhood professional preparation standards and deliver coursework that provides educators with the competencies outlined in the IOM report.⁸ As noted by the IOM and state early childhood

³ National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2000) *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development*. Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development. Jack P. Shonkoff and Deborah A. Phillips, eds. Board on Children, Youth, and Families, Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.

⁴ Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. 2011. *America’s children: Key national indicators of well-being, 2011*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

⁵ NRC and IOM (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine). 2000. *From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

⁶ Hyson, M., Tomlinson, H.B., & Morris, C. (2008) Does the quality of early childhood teacher preparation moderate the relationship between teacher education and children’s outcomes? Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York City; Bredekamp, S. & Goffin, S.G. (2012) Making the case: Why credentialing and certification matter. In R.C. Pianta (Ed), *Handbook of early childhood education* (pp 584-604) New York: Guilford Press; Burchinal, M.R., Cryer, D., Clifford, R.M., & Howes, C. (2002). Caregiver training and classroom quality in child care centers. *Applied Developmental Science*, (61)(1), 2-11. .

⁷ Institute of Medicine (IOM) and National Research Council (NRC). 2015. *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

⁸ Not all four-year degree programs prepare individuals for the teacher licensure requirements. To optimize job mobility across settings and as more states require teacher licensure in state-funded prekindergarten programs, it is important that institutions expand their capacity in licensure track degree programs and that career advisors can help individuals make the appropriate coursework selections.

workforce studies find that teachers with higher educational attainment are more likely to earn better wages. .⁹

Ideally, carefully planned professional development leads to an increase in degree-based and other competency-based credentials linked to career advancement.¹⁰ Career pathways include a series of credentials that build on each other with increasing knowledge and skills, and recognize that individuals will enter at different points in the sequence. When credentials build upon each other in this way, they are known as “stackable.” Credentials also need to be portable, that is, accepted across states and across early childhood sectors (child care, Head Start, public schools). This provides employers with a shared understanding of the skills and knowledge educators should bring to the job and for educators, more job mobility and opportunity to develop the expertise and advancement that can sustain life-long careers.

The Federal Head Start program and the Department of Defense military child care program share some common elements that have led to successful improvements in their early childhood workforce. These include: health and safety as a key foundational requirement; building from simple preservice and orientation training goals to requirements for ongoing professional development tied to job security; increased educational attainment requirements; career advancement that is rewarded with better compensation; and an investment in the business and instructional leadership skills for program directors.

- In each Head Start reauthorization since 1984, Congress has raised the qualifications for teachers in Head Start and Early Head Start programs. In 1990, the law required at least one teacher per classroom to have a Child Development Associate credential or appropriate early childhood degree or credential; in 1998 at least half of teachers nationally were required to have an Associate’s degree by 2003; and with the latest revision in 2007, at least half of teachers nationally were required to have a Bachelor degree in early childhood education or

⁹ T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood © and Child Care WAGES(R) Annual National Program Report, 2014-2015 at http://teachecnationalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/TEACH_Annual_eReport_2015.pdf. Examples of state early childhood workforce studies include Florida www.flgov.com/wp-content/uploads/childadvocacy/wf_study_executive_summary.pdf; Indiana <http://secure.iaeyc.org/programs-research/research-evaluation/indiana-early-childhood-workforce-studies/>; and Ohio www.earlychildhoodohio.org/files/resources/2013%20Workforce%20Study-A%20Profession%20Divided.pdf

¹⁰ For purposes of this paper, “credential” is used to include entry-level, nationally recognized certificates and credentials in the early childhood education field and postsecondary education degrees. Whenever possible, the paper uses the term “degrees” to distinguish postsecondary education from other training or professional development that does not award a degree upon completion. For purposes of this paper, a Bachelor degree in early childhood education includes any major with substantive early childhood development content. Some Bachelor programs are not intended to lead to a state teacher license. See the glossary at Appendix A of this paper.

related field and all remaining teachers must have at least an Associate's degree. Each time, the Head Start community has exceeded the Congressional mandate. Today, 73 percent of Head Start teachers have a Bachelor degree. At the federal level, there was an infusion of resources to expand the capacity of Tribal, Historically Black, and Historically Hispanic serving colleges and universities to provide degree programs in early childhood education. Local programs used their Head Start Technical Assistance dollars and other resources to support their teachers to go back to school and to provide release time and substitutes. The 2007 Act also raised the minimum requirements for Early Head Start teachers. The statute requires a child development associate credential with a focus on infant and toddler development. Currently 56 percent of infant/toddler teachers in Early Head Start have an Associate degree or higher and 95 percent have a national child development associate credential or equivalent.¹¹

- Because of the improvements made in the Military Child Care Act, staffs are required to undergo a rigorous set of orientation trainings and ongoing professional development in order to maintain their employment. The Department of Defense child development centers have their staffs' salaries tied to a wage scale that makes the jobs more desirable than civilian employment with similar qualifications. Failure to complete the training leads to dismissal. The "carrot and stick" approach has led to a transformation of the quality of the Department of Defense programs within a few short years.

Recent federal legislative developments have embraced career pathways strategies. In 2012, the U.S. Secretaries of Education, Health and Human Services, and Labor issued a joint letter promoting career pathways, which they broadly define as a "series of connected education and training strategies and support services that enable individuals to secure industry relevant certification and obtain employment within an occupational area and to advance to higher levels of future education and employment in that area."¹² Since the issuance of that letter, two federal policy developments have required/encouraged states to implement career pathways strategies.

- The Child Care and Development Block Grant of 2014 requires States and Territories to have plans that include orientation or pre-service training, a "progression of professional

¹¹ Internal analysis by the Office of Head Start.

¹² Joint Policy Letter Promoting the Use of Career Pathways. U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and Labor. April 4, 2012 at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ofa/doe_hhs_and_dol_issue_joint_letter_promoting_the_use_of_career_pathways.pdf

development” that may include postsecondary education attainment, and ongoing professional development. The new law requires states and territories to set requirements for pre-service or orientation training in basic health and safety topics for providers who receive subsidies. The statute mandates that states set aside a portion of grant funds for quality initiatives, which can include access to education and retention incentives.

- The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 defines a career pathway system¹³ as taking into account both system and individual level needs. The Department of Labor’s Toolkit on Career Pathways summarizes career pathways as “systems [that] provide participants with multiple entry points to accommodate academic readiness and multiple exit points to permit on ramp and off ramp when necessary. The intent for career pathways is to lead to industry-recognized credentials, at family supporting wages with occupational advancement opportunities”.¹⁴

In addition to new legislation, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has made the workforce a focus of its efforts:

- Early Educator Central is a new effort jointly administered by the Offices of Child Care and Office of Head Start within ACF. The project promotes free and low-cost courses for infant-toddler educators using federally funded resources that lead to continuing education units or college credit. It also provides tools for states to cost out their professional development system goals as well as resources on articulation agreements and compensation.
<https://earlyeducatorcentral.acf.hhs.gov/>¹⁵
- EarlyEdU, initiated and created with investments by the Office of Head Start, is a series of 15 online competency-based courses (with more in development) that, taken together, make up a BA completion degree. Recognizing that many colleges and universities may face challenges

¹³ Section 3(7) of the Workforce Improvement Opportunity Act “The term “career pathway” means a combination of rigorous and high-quality education, training, and other services that— (A) aligns with the skill needs of industries in the economy of the State or regional economy involved; (B) prepares an individual to be successful in any of a full range of secondary or postsecondary education options, including apprenticeships registered under the Act of August 16, 1937 (commonly known as the “National Apprenticeship Act”; 50 Stat. 664, chapter 663; 29 U.S.C. 50 et seq.) (referred to individually in this Act as an “apprenticeship”, except in section 171); (C) includes counseling to support an individual in achieving the individual’s education and career goals; (D) includes, as appropriate, education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster; (E) organizes education, training, and other services to meet the particular needs of an individual in a manner that accelerates the educational and career advancement of the individual to the extent practicable; (F) enables an individual to attain a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and at least 1 recognized postsecondary credential; and (G) helps an individual enter or advance within a specific occupation or occupational cluster

¹⁴ U.S. Department of Labor, Career Pathways Toolkit: a guide for system development (2015) at https://www.doleta.gov/usworkforce/pdf/career_pathways_toolkit.pdf at page 41

¹⁵ The site only contains coursework that is free or low-cost and whose development was funded with federal resources. Individuals should check with the relevant state agencies, boards, commissions, and higher education institutions to determine if the coursework on this site meets any state or local training, professional development, or licensing requirements or if continuing education units or credit will be awarded.

in offering early childhood courses that are relevant, accessible, and affordable, EarlyEdU provides institutions of higher education an opportunity to be part of an alliance and to utilize online and in-person courses to prepare teachers of young children for classroom success.

- As part of the new Technical Assistance efforts that cross the Office of Head Start and the Office of Child Care, the National Center for Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning, advances best practices in child development, teaching, and learning that are culturally and linguistically responsive and lead to positive child outcomes across early childhood programs. Their work includes professional development for educators working with children from birth to kindergarten. <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ohs-tta/ncecdtl.html>

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

All young children, regardless of the funding stream of their early childhood program, should have well-qualified teachers and program leaders. Research on child learning and effective practices points toward a need for more sophisticated understanding of child development and the practices that help diverse populations of children be equally ready for kindergarten.

Although the call to action issued in the IOM report sets an important goal that cuts across the early childhood field, there are real challenges in creating a high-quality early childhood workforce with the same or equivalent expectations for knowledge, credentials, and compensation for the same role, regardless of setting.¹⁶ As mentioned above, Head Start sets qualifications on a national basis for educators and directors as well. For child care and prekindergarten programs, each state sets regulatory and professional standards, including the minimum qualifications, which may not be consistent with each other or federal Head Start requirements. Resources for professional development are also inconsistent across funding streams. A little more than half of center based teachers have college degrees whereas not quite a third of family child care teachers and caregivers have a Bachelor degree or higher.¹⁷ Even when teachers in Head Start or child care centers or family

¹⁶ Whitebook, M., Phillips, D., & Howes, C. (2014). Worthy work, STILL unlivable wages: The early childhood workforce 25 years after the National Child Care Staffing Study, Executive Summary. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley.

¹⁷ The most recent report reflects a 2012 survey. Number and Characteristics of Early Care and Education (ECE) Teachers and Caregivers: Initial Findings from the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE). OPRE Report #2013-38, Washington DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

child care educators have a Bachelor degree, they are unlikely to earn salaries and benefits comparable to public school teachers.¹⁸

It is also important to recognize where there has been progress in the early childhood workforce, despite these challenges. According to the National Survey of Early Childhood Education (NSECE)¹⁹, there has been consistent improvement nationally in the percentage of center-based and family child providers with degrees or some college education. According to the 2012 NSECE survey,

- Eleven percent of center-based teachers had an Associate degree as their highest degree;
- Forty-five percent of center-based teachers serving children age three through five years had a four-year degree compared to only 19 percent of center-based teachers with children younger than three years. .
- Sixteen percent of listed/formal family child care providers and 19% of paid unlisted/informal paid family child providers have a four-year degree, with 16 percent and 11 percent respectively with an Associate degree.²⁰

Taking into account the landscape of the early childhood workforce today and the goal set by the IOM for the near future, creating a strong career pathways presents an opportunity for progress and shared vision among the various system stakeholders. A career pathway includes:

- Establishing clearly defined roles (such as teacher assistant, lead teacher, assistant director, director) and common terminology across settings and sectors;
- Setting qualification targets for degrees for early childhood educators, with reasonable timeframes to meet requirements;
- Establishing an agreed-upon sequence of the credentials that reflects increasing levels of knowledge and competence, grounded in the science of child development and in effective, developmentally appropriate teaching practices and program leadership;

¹⁸ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Outlook Handbook Median Annual Wages May 2015: Childcare Workers at www.bls.gov/ooh/personal-care-and-service/childcare-workers.htm#tab-5 and Kindergarten and Elementary School Teachers at www.bls.gov/ooh/education-training-and-library/childcare-workers.htm#tab-5

¹⁹ The most recent report reflects a 2012 survey. Number and Characteristics of Early Care and Education (ECE) Teachers and Caregivers: Initial Findings from the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE). OPRE Report #2013-38, Washington DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

²⁰ The NSECE defines “home based listed” as individuals appear on state or national lists of early care and education services, such as licensed, regulated, license-exempt, or registered home-based providers. ‘Unlisted, paid’ individuals do not appear on state or national lists, but were identified in households. Individuals in this category receive payment for the care of at least one child. ‘Unlisted, unpaid’ individuals do not appear on state or national lists, but were identified in households.

- Aligning financial and other resources with the policy targets across relevant initiatives and agencies both for individuals to have the resources to progress forward on the pathway and become better compensated and for the professional development system to operate efficiently and effectively;
- Creating clarity about different career choices and how to achieve them, regardless of the point at which the individual enters the pathway;
- Reducing barriers to training and education by providing coursework in the native language of the providers, courses and training available during nonstandard hours, and support for technology to take advantage of online trainings; and
- Tracking the progress of individuals as they enter and at each step in the pathway, with attention to diversity of the workforce at each step of the pathway.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STATE ACTION

Create a Shared Terminology for Different Roles and Credentials that Cross Sectors, Settings and Auspices

There are many different credentials in the field, some sharing the same terminology but not representing the same demonstrated competencies. For example, “certificate” can indicate completion of a training workshop, a noncredit training program, a college diploma that leads to an associate degree, or it can mean a state teaching license. While colleges and universities must use federal National Center for Education Statistics Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)²¹ reporting definitions for both credit and noncredit certificates, early childhood professional development system leaders may not be aware of or use these definitions.²² Lack of clarity and coherence can lead to unnecessary repetition of professional development and duplication of costs. By having an agreed upon nomenclature, and creating terms that clearly distinguish the types of credentials, there can be more effective planning for professional development and credential-based hiring by employers.

²¹ IPEDS is the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. It is a system of interrelated surveys conducted annually by the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). IPEDS gathers information from every college, university, and technical and vocational institution that participates in the federal student financial aid programs. The Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, requires that institutions that participate in federal student aid programs report data on enrollments, program completions, graduation rates, faculty and staff, finances, institutional prices, and student financial aid.

²² To review these definitions, refer to <https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/Visinstructions.aspx?survey=10&id=30080&show=all> and <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2012/2012835.pdf>

Similarly, at the federal level, there is an effort underway to update the Bureau of Labor Bureau of Labor Standards Occupational Classifications, a mainstay of information about the American workforce, including early childhood. The current classifications were developed when there was a greater difference between the type of teaching in child care compared to school-based or Head Start settings. These classifications assume that teachers in child care are doing less sophisticated work with children than teachers in school and Head Start settings. Recognizing that the field is changing and professionalizing, the Administration for Children and Families has submitted recommendations for the next iteration of the classifications for early childhood educators and program leaders that will be updated in 2018.²³ A shared terminology will generate data that are more consistent within and across states.

Create a Coherent Sequence of Credentials that Represent Increasing Educational Attainment and Demonstrated Competency

In building a pathway, it is important to have clear markers for meeting deeper levels of knowledge and skill, usually in the form of industry-specific credentials and degrees. The pathway presents a sequence of credentials that represent these sequenced levels, also known as “stackable” credentials.²⁴ States can build early childhood career pathways that begin with entry-level coursework in health, safety and child development that serve as the first stepping-stone toward a degree in early childhood education. At each step, the individual should demonstrate higher-level or more specialized skills and knowledge through a credential that includes an assessment of competency.

The different steps in the pathways should align with or lead to different job opportunities and specializations. What ties these steps together is a set of recognized professional preparation standards for early childhood educators. From that common agreement on what early childhood educators should know and be able to do, the pathway can show advancing sophistication and specializations, such as those for infants, toddlers, preschool age children and children with disabilities. The pathway should include credentials and degrees for directors and assistant directors with the common foundation of health, safety and child development, but also professional knowledge to be good instructional and business leaders and managers. The credential terminology

²³ The White Paper is available at https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/occ/soc_acf_submittal.pdf

²⁴ "Stackable Credentials": Implications for Implementation and Policy, Ganzglass, E. Center for Law and Social Policy, Washington, DC. March 2014. <http://www.clasp.org/resources-and-publications/files/2014-03-21-Stackable-Credentials-Paper-FINAL.pdf>

used in career pathways should be aligned with the federal and state terminology required in higher education wherever possible, to support transparency and understanding for educators, employers, professional development providers, and the public.

Promote Credentials that are Recognized across Early Childhood Sectors and Auspices

Professions are defined by their scope of work and specialized training and credentials. In every profession, undergraduate credentials prepare the individual for employment across a variety of roles and settings and set the foundation for future advancement or specialization within the profession. Similarly, early childhood educators and program leaders are likely to work more than one setting and perhaps seek employment in another state. For this reason, and to streamline training requirements, it is important that the credentials be recognized across child care, Head Start, and school-based early learning settings and optimally across state borders²⁵. Just as credentials should move vertically on a pathway, they should also be recognized horizontally - following the person as he or she moves from one job setting to another or moves across state borders.

One way to make recognition easier is to base the credential and the aligned competencies with national standards, such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children Initial and Advanced Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation,²⁶ the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards for Early Childhood Generalists working with students ages 3-8²⁷, or Division of Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children Recommended Practices in Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education²⁸. Aligning credentials with national professional standards makes it easier for sectors and states to accept the credential because there is a common understanding of the knowledge base and demonstration of that knowledge. States should crosswalk credentials with these standards and different levels of competencies to ensure that the stacking of credentials scaffolds professional knowledge from foundation skills to highest levels.

Many states have established their own entry-level early childhood staff requirements. States should set a timeline for creating consistency of required entry-level qualifications across all settings and

²⁵ Portable Credentials and Degrees for the Early Childhood and School-Age Workforce, National Center on Professional Development and Workforce Systems Initiatives, October 17, 2012. Powerpoint. http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/occ/20121017_pdwcenter_credentialportabilityfinal.pdf

²⁶ National Association for the Education of Young Children (2009) NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation at www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/files/2009%20Professional%20Prep%20stdsRevised%204_12.pdf

²⁷ National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, Early Childhood Generalist Standards <http://boardcertifiedteachers.org/sites/default/files/EC-GEN.pdf>

²⁸ Division for Early Childhood (2014). DEC recommended practices in early intervention/early childhood special education 2014. www.dec-sp.org/recommendedpractices

sectors. This will help bridge the distance from entry-level credential to higher-level credentials. In addition to teacher credentials, States and Territories should create or adopt credentials for the role of child care director (in public school systems, the parallel role is school principal). The role of program leader combines management leadership and instructional leadership. In addition to knowledge of child development and best practices, directors need professional support and credential recognition for supporting their staff in their ongoing professional development, their work with community services, and business management.

Strengthen Professional Preparation and Ongoing Development to be Competency Based

As shown by the National Academies of Sciences and other reports, there is a strong body of research on the science of child development and the related knowledge and skills adults need to promote each child's development and learning from birth. Whether it is orientation training, ongoing professional development and coaching, or higher education degree programs, the outcome should be teachers and directors who can demonstrate mastery of research-based competencies to support children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. Every level of credential should include a demonstration of competency, such as observational assessments and portfolios. States need to work with their institutions of higher education to ensure that all early childhood courses leading to credentials and degrees are built on a solid foundation of competencies with increasing expectations of proficiency.

Provide Career and Academic Advising and Coaching

Many early childhood staff will enter the career pathway with limited understanding of the variety of roles in the profession and the credentials needed to have those jobs. The roles in early childhood education are not limited to teaching and program leadership. The pathway needs to indicate the range of roles, and the education requirements and typical compensation connected to each of them.²⁹ They need help to navigate college entry, financial assistance, academic success and degree completion, especially if they are the first in their family to enroll in college. Many early childhood educators have been away from school for extended periods and require remedial education in

²⁹ T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® National Center and Child Care Services Association (CCSA) produces a directory that shows the range of careers in early childhood education. www.childcareservices.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/CCSA-Careers-in-Early-Childhood-National-Directory-2015.pdf Iowa is one of several states to use this director and to tailor it to include a directory of early childhood education degree programs offered in the state. www.iowaacyc.org/UPDATED_Iowa_Careers_in_Early_Childhood_Directory_2015.pdf

college-level literacy and math skills.³⁰ In addition, the Migration Policy Institute found that roughly one quarter of early childhood educators are immigrants who may not be familiar with the process of entering the profession or how to transfer their credentials and education in their home countries to the American college system.³¹ Like many nontraditional students (students who do not proceed directly to college upon high school graduation), they need guidance to help make informed choices about their career goals and coaching to successfully complete college. A study of coaching nontraditional students found that students who had a coach were more likely to pursue their college studies even when the coaching period ended.³² States need to use the array of professional development opportunities – orientation, induction, academic advising, ongoing coaching and mentoring – to inform individuals about the pathway and to make connections to career and academic advisors.

Increase Access to Professional Development and Higher Education

Whether it is scholarships specific for early childhood providers or more coursework in languages other than English, there should be efforts to improve access to higher education and professional development for the diverse early childhood workforce. As states raise requirements for staff, whether it is an entry-level credential or higher education degrees, they need to consider investing concurrently and robustly in scholarships, financial aid loan cancellation and forgiveness, and tax credit strategies. These supports not only help individuals meet higher qualification requirements, they also help retain them after graduation in early childhood education programs.

In addition to financial considerations, professional development providers and higher education degree programs need to respond to the growing language and cultural diversity, geographic distances, and the full-time work schedules of early childhood teachers and directors. As online coursework expands, whether it is in early childhood development and pedagogy for teachers or supportive business and instructional leadership for directors, states need to create quality assurances not only of the quality of the content of the professional development but also that the coursework meets standards that allow students to access financial aid. Providing coursework in other languages, including remedial education, will remove barriers to educators who are concurrently

³⁰ Whitebook, M., Schaack, D., Kipnis, F., Austin, L., & Sakai, L. (2013). *From aspiration to attainment: Practices that support educational success, Los Angeles Universal Preschool's Child Development Workforce Initiative*. Executive Summary. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley.

³¹ Park, Maki, Margie McHugh, Jie Zong, and Jeanne Batalova. 2015. *Immigrant and Refugee Workers in the Early Childhood Field: Taking a Closer Look*. Washington, DC: Migrant Policy Institute

³² The Effects of Student Coaching: An Evaluation of a Randomized Experiment in Student Advising, Bettinger, Eric P. and Baker, Rachel . Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis March 2014, Vol. 36, No. 1, pp. 3–19 at <http://epa.sagepub.com/content/36/1/3.full.pdf+html>

learning English as they learn child development and pedagogy.

The availability of these programs may be jeopardized with low enrollment, high percentages of students who attend part-time, who are low wage and require financial aid for their education, or who need remedial or other special supports. States also need to invest in building and sustaining early childhood degree programs and workforce initiatives.

Encourage Articulation Agreements and Credit for Prior Learning

Articulation agreements and the transfer of credit for high school to associate degree, and two- year to four- year degree programs, allow students to move to another institution and up the pathway in a more effective and cost-efficient manner. It is easier to create articulation agreements when the institutions rely on national early childhood professional preparation standards, such as those of the National Association for the Education of Young Children³³ and the Division of Early Childhood of the Council of Exceptional Children³⁴, as their unifying framework for their early childhood education degree programs. States can invest in their institutions of higher education that provide such degrees to seek program recognition and accreditation, which will smooth in part the intricacies of articulation agreements. The Early Educator Central website provides more information on articulation and transfer agreements, including templates for agreements.³⁵

Some state higher education systems are experimenting with credit for prior learning.³⁶ With credit for prior learning, early childhood educators can demonstrate their competencies and earn credit toward a degree without having to repeat costly coursework at the college. Some states and institutions of higher education are providing credit for assessed prior learning for early childhood educators, recognizing that these educators often have received professional development but are not able to transfer that learning to credit in the traditional way.³⁷ At the federal level, the U.S. Department of Education has given flexibility to selected colleges to allow a student's Title IV cost

³³ NAEYC Standards for Initial and Advanced Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs (Washington, DC) 2010 at www.naeyc.org/caep/files/caep/NAEYC%20Initial%20and%20Advanced%20Standards%2010_2012.pdf

³⁴ Council for Exceptional Children Special Education Early Childhood Specialty Sets www.cec.sped.org/Standards/Special-Educator-Professional-Preparation/CEC-Initial-and-Advanced-Specialty-Sets

³⁵ Early Educator Central <https://earlyeducatorcentral.acf.hhs.gov/articulation-agreements>

³⁶ For more information on credit for prior learning, go to American Council on Education dedicated web page on Best Practice: Credit for Prior Learning at <http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/Best-Practices-Credit-for-Prior-Learning.aspx>. Wisconsin is an example of a states using credit for prior learning in early childhood education include Wisconsin <http://wisconsinearlychildhood.org/programs/teach/CPL/>

³⁷ For example, Wisconsin early childhood educators are working with community colleges to award credit for prior learning. <http://wisconsinearlychildhood.org/assets/Documents/CPL-Course-Description.pdf> Another example is Northampton Community College in Pennsylvania that provides credit for prior learning based on a portfolio assessment. <https://www.northampton.edu/early-childhood-education/program-options/child-development-associate/credit-for-prior-learning.htm>

of attendance to include the costs incurred by the student for assessments of prior learning and that a student's Federal Pell Grant enrollment status may, with limitations, take into account a student's efforts to prepare materials for a prior learning assessment.³⁸

Link Attainment of Higher Credentials to Improved Financial Incentives for Retention

The cost of college can be financially daunting. Program directors, particularly those whose programs enroll high percentages of low-income children, have fragile budgets that may not leave room to help pay for their staffs' professional development and education or to raise their compensation without higher reimbursement rates or other financing increases. In addition to advisors who can help educators identify federal, state and private financial aid, many states have initiatives that fund college scholarships for early child care and Head Start educators that are linked to retention in the same setting for some period after they complete their degree.³⁹ These initiatives, however, are limited in scope and should be expanded to ensure that teachers in each setting and of each age group of children have access to the resources that will help them meet higher qualifications and make it financial possible for them to remain in the same sector of early childhood education.

Align the Quality Rating and Improvement System with the Career Pathways

A majority of states have tiered quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS) of which one focus is to help early childhood program providers understand and meet higher standards of program quality. These QRIS include professional qualifications at each rating level. States are working to ensure that the sequence of higher levels of program quality match the career pathway's sequence of credentials and provide higher reimbursement rates with funds dedicated to providing parity of compensation when the family child care provider or staff member reaches another level on the pathway. QRIS administrators should engage with career advisors and academic advisors (inside and outside of higher education institutions) to collaborate on providing career development supports to early childhood program staff and family child care providers along with coaching and mentoring to improve program quality.

³⁸ Experimental Sites Initiative. <https://experimentalsites.ed.gov/exp/approved.html>

³⁹ The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Project in twenty-four states and similar state-sponsored initiatives. States should expand these initiatives, as well as other dedicated financial assistance, not only for college attendance but other entry leveled early childhood credentials. Other states have created similar projects modeled on T.E.A.C.H.

Coordinate Data Systems to Track Workforce Progress and Direct Resources

A workforce data system refers to a system, such as a workforce registry,⁴⁰ that tracks the size and characteristics of the workforce, including longitudinal data to monitor changes over time. Most states have developed voluntary early childhood workforce registries where individuals can document their professional learning and the credentials, certificates, and degrees they have earned. Comprehensive workforce data systems provide a vehicle for answering key questions about the workforce: trends and distribution across settings and ages of children served; training and levels of education; workplace conditions and compensation; and diversity and longevity of the workforce. The data system also produces records to validate and verify qualifications or ongoing professional development for licensing, program accreditation, QRIS, wage incentives, and credentials. To have a comprehensive view of the workforce, early childhood data systems should link to other related workforce data, such as career-technical programs in early childhood education, early childhood degree graduation rates, and early childhood teacher licenses and endorsements

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL PROGRAMS

Create Individualized Career and Professional Development Plans

All educators who work in early childhood centers and family child care homes need attention to their ongoing professional learning and to individualized plans and aspirations. These plans should consider specializations for working with different populations of children, such as infants, toddlers, children with special needs, and dual language learners. Each plan should be based on the individual's professional goals (short and long term), set timelines for meeting those goals, and provide appropriate resources so that the plan can be meaningful and implemented with shared accountability for its success. The Head Start Act requires program directors to create individualized professional development plans for staff. In these plans, staff can set timelines and be connected to career and academic advisors. Professional development plans should take into account induction support for staff new to the field, ongoing professional learning in the form of coaching and mentoring embedded in the workplace as well as planning for the next step in the pathway.

⁴⁰ A majority states have an early childhood workforce registry and others are in the process of developing one. The National Workforce Registry Alliance at www.registryalliance.org

Select Ongoing Professional Development that is Credit Bearing

Ongoing and individualized professional development is important to any job. There should always be a commitment as a professional to the continuous improvement of knowledge and skills. Some professional development offerings may be required by licensing systems or to keep a certificate up to date. Other professional development may be recognized for credit toward the next level of credential or degree. To the extent practicable, resources should be spent in ways that link to the pathway and to the individual's individual career plan. By selecting professional development that can renew a certificate or promote the next credential level at a college, scarce resources are used more effectively and time is managed more meaningfully.

Participate in Scholarship-Compensation Initiatives and Registered Apprenticeships.

More than half of the states and territories have an initiative linking college scholarships with compensation rewards for early childhood educators. Many of these also support attaining entry-level national credentials outside of higher education institutions as well.⁴¹

Registered Apprenticeship (RA) is a partnership between an apprentice, an employer, and a training employer. In a RA, the early childhood staff member receives on the job and classroom-based training in the practical and theoretical aspects of the profession, leading to a recognized early childhood education credential. Many RA partnerships include a community college that delivers instruction and awards credit toward an Associate degree, thus promoting a seamless pathway from high school to entry into the profession with specialized credentials and credits in hand. Some RA programs in early childhood begin with high school career and technical schools where students in the RA can graduate with the training to earn a national child development entry credential.⁴²

Connecting with these types of RA programs can be useful in recruiting new staff that already have a foundation of child development knowledge and competency.

Strengthen Business and Instructional Leadership

Early childhood program directors and family child care providers have two roles: organizational leadership and instructional leadership.⁴³ Twenty-one states and territories have licensing regulations requiring a minimum of pre-service training administration or business management for

⁴¹ Quick Look: Scholarship Initiatives, National Center on Child Care Professional Development Systems and Workforce Initiatives,

⁴² For example, Kansas has two early childhood Registered Apprenticeship programs, one of which is School-to-Registered Apprenticeship that puts high school career technical students on an early childhood pathway, earning a national credential whose fees are reimbursed by the apprenticeship program and that pays first-year courses at a community college. <http://www.kansasecaap.org/129/School-to-Registered-Apprenticeship>

⁴³ In larger centers, there may be more than one operational or educational leader, such as financial managers, curricula managers, and assistant directors. Ultimately, the program director is accountable for a well-run program and for a positive climate for families, children, and staff.

center directors and family child care providers.⁴⁴ Directors and family child care providers should consider director credentials that carry credit at local colleges and universities.⁴⁵ Staffed family child care networks, QRIS coaches with specialization in business practices, resource and referral agencies, and early childhood professional associations can deliver training and consultation on effective organizational and instructional leadership practices.

Implement Workplace Conditions That Support Professional Learning.

In addition to compensation improvements, other workforce conditions can foster a professional work atmosphere. Teacher work satisfaction is associated with time for individual and joint reflection, peer-to-peer learning, meaningful feedback, and financial support for professional development, release time, planning time, and ongoing professional development.⁴⁶ These positive conditions lead to greater job satisfaction, a respect for professional growth, in turn reducing staff turnover.⁴⁷ Program directors need to be intentional in creating these conditions and climates for continuous professional learning support. One tool, SEQUAL - Supportive Environmental Quality Underlying Adult Learning – helps programs assess the conditions of the center-based workplace from the viewpoint of the teaching staff.⁴⁸ SEQUAL generates data that helps to illuminate the interplay between teacher education, the work environment and efforts to improve program quality and can be used to help inform practices and provide teachers with the needed resources to help children succeed.

Encourage Teachers Who Enter From Other Fields to Earn Early Childhood Education Credentials

Regardless of the level of previous education or credential with which an individual enters the early childhood career pathway, anyone working with young children should demonstrate knowledge of child development and best practices in working with young children. Having a Bachelor degree in early childhood education is different from coming into teaching for young children with a Bachelor degree in other fields. Teachers who come into the pathway with a Bachelor degree in elementary education or a non-related field should be required to take coursework specific to child development

⁴⁴ State Policies That Support Business Practices of Child Care Providers. National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance. November 12, 2015. https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/policies_support_business_practices.pdf

⁴⁵ For example, the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership has arrangements with several higher education institutions to offer its Aim4Excellence modules for undergraduate and graduate level credit.

⁴⁶ See literature review at www2.ed.gov/rschtat/eval/professional-development/literature-review.pdf and find other citations – Hyson, Zaslow, Bierman.

⁴⁷ Phillips, D., Howes, C., Whitebook, M., Child Care as an Adult Work Environment. Journal of Social Issues, Vol. 47, No. 2, 1991, pp-49-70. April 2010.

⁴⁸ Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) at the University of California at Berkeley at <http://www.irl.berkeley.edu/cscce/2014/assessing-what-teachers-need-to-help-children-succeed/>

and learning for the ages of children they will work with. Optimally, anyone entering the field with a Bachelor degree in a field other than early childhood education placed on a pathway to a teaching certificate or an endorsement if already certified as a teacher, in early childhood education.⁴⁹To reflect the specialized knowledge of early childhood development and learning, States could adopt a single early childhood education certificate, spanning teaching children from birth through age eight that incorporates the competencies and skills necessary to effectively and appropriately teach young children. This would ensure educators have specialized professional development in early childhood education.

CONCLUSION

Today, there is a recognition that access to high quality early childhood care and education is essential to giving all children a strong beginning. The science of child development makes clear the complexity of working with children. Health, social and emotional development, and learning in the early years is rapid and cumulative – and is the foundation for all learning. At every level, there is a need to professionalize the workforce and develop a cohesive plan for all segments (from family child care providers to Pre K teachers). Well-designed and financed early childhood career pathways, along with other elements of a comprehensive professional development system, benefit not only early childhood educators as professionals but also importantly, children’s learning and development needed for success in school and later in life.

[The final Policy Statement will include an appendix with resources in the Departments of Health and Human Services, Education, and Labor.]

⁴⁹ For example, Teach for America places Bachelor degree graduates in preschool programs but they may not have graduated with a degree in education or child development. They are given training and professional development, but importantly also have to pass the state assessment – usually Praxis II – to attain certification for early childhood education.