



New York  
Early Childhood  
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Institute



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# PARITY COMPENSATION

## FOR NEW YORK'S EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

### RECOGNITION AND RESPECT FOR A VITAL PROFESSION

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# Introduction

Educators who work with children birth to five years old build the foundation of our state’s future. Babies and young children experience their most significant period of brain growth from birth to age five, with more than one million neural connections forming every second in a child’s first years of life.<sup>1</sup>

Consistent, responsive relationships with caring adults promote healthy brain development and build resilience that counteracts toxic stress responses.<sup>2</sup> Early care and education (ECE) professionals play an important role in providing responsive relationships for young children, as the majority of families with children under six require child care to maintain employment.<sup>3</sup> <sup>4</sup> Despite this, ECE professionals are underpaid and often lack access to necessary benefits like health insurance, paid leave, and retirement. Too often, talented educators are forced to choose another career path to sustain themselves and their families.

New York families deserve to know that their children are safe, happy, and well-cared for by knowledgeable, dedicated, well-compensated educators. Even with the widely acknowledged developmental importance and economic necessity of quality ECE, and despite recent investment efforts, New York’s licensed child care system meets only half the estimated demand.<sup>5</sup> There is a growing crisis as families struggle to find care and child care providers experience high staff turnover, with many professionals leaving the field altogether.



**Early childhood educator compensation is, at its heart, an equity issue.**

**94%**

**of New York's early childhood educators are women.**

**57%**

**identify as a race other than white.**

This turnover is fueled in part by poor compensation. According to the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, the poverty rate for early educators in New York is 19.3%, more than twice as high as for New York workers in general (8.6%).<sup>6</sup> Beyond low wages, many ECE professionals also lack access to benefits that contribute to overall wellness and stability, such as health insurance, paid leave, and retirement. Meanwhile, profit margins for child care providers are extremely low, often less than 1%, making it impossible for those who employ ECE professionals to increase their pay.<sup>7</sup>

ECE compensation is, at its heart, an equity issue. Ninety-four percent of early educators in New York are women, and 57% identify as a race other than white.<sup>8</sup> As the data in this report shows, New York State early educator pay is low across geographic location and setting, and does not necessarily increase with education or experience within job titles. A recent survey, detailed later in this report, reveals that a lack of comprehensive benefits threatens to drive even more people out of the field and damages the well-being of the women who do this crucial work each day. The historically persistent undervaluing of ECE professionals' expertise and the neglect of their welfare reveals an entrenched racial inequity that New York now has the opportunity to address and correct.<sup>9</sup>

Providing high-quality, responsive care and education requires a skilled workforce of qualified educators. Sustained efforts to increase compensation and benefits are needed to attract and retain diverse, prepared ECE professionals. Low salaries for entry-level positions discourage prospective educators from choosing a career in early childhood. ECE leaders face increasing difficulty recruiting qualified candidates and, in turn, being able to offer high-quality care to young children and their families.

Not only is it challenging to attract new educators, but also to retain experienced educators. Lack of adequate compensation for expertise and experience risks highly skilled educators leaving the field in search of higher salaries and better prospects for advancement.

Both the broader public and policymakers in New York State and across the country recognize the urgency of investing in the ECE system. The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 included an unprecedented \$24 billion investment in child care stabilization nationwide.<sup>10</sup> New York State received \$1.1 billion, which supported 6,100 child care centers and 9,365 child care homes across the state.<sup>11</sup> Governor Hochul’s FY2024 budget included \$500 million for the Workforce Retention Grant program, which aimed to support child care professionals with bonus payments ranging from \$2,300 to \$3,000 in addition to supporting funding for recruitment efforts.<sup>12</sup>

These investments were made to attract and retain educators, but they were short-term efforts. As stabilization dollars ran out, 27% of child care center directors and 29% of family child care providers said their program would have to cut wages or be unable to sustain wage and salary increases made possible by that funding.<sup>13</sup> In a recent report, the Governor’s Child Care Availability Task Force recommended implementing a permanent line of funding to support workforce recruitment and retention, including salaries and benefits such as retirement plans.<sup>14</sup>

New York State can ensure that all families are able to benefit from affordable, high-quality early care and education – but only if early childhood educators have access to the support and infrastructure that exists for teachers in higher grades.

Achieving this goal will require nuanced, comprehensive reforms that address the pay disparities and systemic inequities that have persisted for years. This is a prerequisite for the goal of universal child care.

## Voices FROM THE FIELD

“

*It is a very low-paying field but the children need a strong and positive beginning to become successful in life. They need a strong foundation and I hope I have accomplished that goal even with sacrifices...that is what is important.*

”

*Note: Quotes shared in the Voices from the Field sections throughout this report were gathered from a survey of the New York early childhood workforce conducted May–June 2023.*

# Recommendations for Pay and Benefit Parity

**Instituting equitable compensation has the potential to stimulate increased recruitment and retention of educators, supporting access to high-quality ECE across New York.**

In the midst of the child care crisis, many states and cities are making strides toward higher compensation for the ECE workforce, including New Mexico, Vermont, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C.

At the federal level, the Administration of Children and Families has issued guidance on using funding from the Child Care Development Fund and American Rescue Plan Act to improve early educator compensation and released a guide to creating salary scales for the early childhood workforce.<sup>15 16</sup> The Office of Head Start recently revised Head Start Program Performance Standards, which will significantly increase wages by requiring programs to pay Head Start staff at parity with local kindergarten to third grade teachers by August 2031.<sup>17</sup>

Drawing on the work of others in the field, what follows are considerations for the state of New York to sustainably increase compensation for ECE professionals by investing in a “compensation-first” approach to stabilize a workforce in crisis.<sup>18</sup>



# Defining Parity Compensation

Small increases in wages will not sustainably create and maintain a pipeline of highly qualified educators.

A recognition of the skills and knowledge of the ECE workforce demands parity compensation with professionals with similar education and responsibilities. New York stakeholders, including the early childhood workforce, government agencies, and policymakers, must come together to agree on a clear definition of parity compensation.

A number of experts in the ECE field have explored this issue. The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment defines compensation parity as “parity with K-3 teachers for salary and benefits for equivalent levels of education and experience, prorated to reflect differences in hours of work in private settings where applicable, and including payment for non-child contact hours (such as paid time for planning).”<sup>19</sup>

The District of Columbia used the D.C. Public Schools teacher pay scale as a benchmark for their compensation scale, including credential and steps for years of experience.<sup>20</sup> Colorado focused on parity with similar roles in K-12 (e.g., the center director of a large center would receive a salary similar to that of a school principal).<sup>21</sup>

For the purposes of this report, we will define parity compensation for the early care and education workforce as compensation and benefits commensurate with similarly-credentialed K-12 educators in the same geographic area.

## Voices

FROM THE  
FIELD

“

*My compensation is significantly less than my equal teachers teaching directly for the Department of Education in NYC public schools. I am required to have the same New York state certification, same responsibilities and work the same hours as an educator working directly in a NYC DOE public school, but since I teach in a NYC Early Education Center that partners with the NYC DOE, I am paid significantly less by New York City for the same exact position. I'm also not compensated for my years of experience like teachers in DOE schools and am not entitled to their benefits either.*

”

- Parity compensation will mirror the average pay of K-12 teachers in the same county and reflect educators’ credentials, experience, and responsibilities.
- Salaries will be annualized for most child care positions, ensuring that compensation accounts for the 12 months that most early educators work rather than the 10-month school year for K-12 educators.
- Parity compensation will recognize years of experience through a progressive pay scale, honoring the value of experience and encouraging retention in the field.
- Salaries will not vary based on the age of children served (e.g., an infant/toddler educator will earn the same compensation as a prekindergarten teacher with the same credential or degree).
- Parity compensation must encompass benefits, including comprehensive health insurance, paid sick leave, paid annual leave, and retirement, on par with that which an elementary school teacher receives.
- Special considerations must be made for family child care providers, whose role includes that of an educator, program administrator, and small business owner.

## Proposed Compensation Scale: Center-Based Teachers

For the purposes of outlining an example parity compensation scale and associated costs, we include a proposed sample for teachers in a center-based setting in Figure 1. The salary scale aligns with a draft, revised career ladder created in 2022 (Figure 2).

- An educator with a bachelor’s degree and B-2 certification (equivalent to a district prekindergarten teacher, Career Ladder Level ECE IIIA) would earn a starting salary equal to the 5th percentile salary of K-12 educators in their county.<sup>22</sup>
- Pre-Level represents an educator who holds a high school diploma or GED. This salary was determined as 65% of what a lead teacher with a B-2 certification would earn. Progressive salary bumps from 7% to 8% percent are earned between ECE I to ECE III. Salary increases of 3% are earned from ECE IIIB to ECE VI.
- ECE I, ECE II, and ECE IIA represent educators with progressively increasing credentials, ranging from a CDA or ECE certificate with 12 college credits (ECE I) to an associate degree in early childhood education with 30 credit hours (ECE IIA). This is meant to recognize professionals on the path to a bachelor’s degree.



The sample below represents the average base salary for each career ladder level in the city and the rest of the state, though compensation scales would vary based on average county K-12 salaries (see Appendix A for example). Salaries at each level would increase with experience in the field. Additional scales will need to be developed for assistant teachers, center directors, and family child care providers, taking into account the different roles and responsibilities of each position.

**Figure 1. Sample Proposed Compensation Scale for Center-Based Teachers (Average Base Salary)<sup>23</sup>**

New York State Career Ladder Level	NYC Salary	NYS Salary Outside NYC
Pre-Level	\$49,637	\$37,592
ECE I	\$53,456	\$40,483
ECE II	\$61,398	\$46,498
ECE II A	\$65,696	\$49,753
ECE III	\$70,294	\$53,236
ECE III A	\$76,365	\$57,833
ECE III B	\$78,656	\$59,568
ECE IV	\$81,016	\$61,355
ECE IV A	\$83,446	\$63,196
ECE V	\$85,950	\$65,092
ECE VI	\$88,528	\$67,045

**Figure 2. Draft Revision to New York State Early Childhood Career Ladder (2022)**

New York State Career Ladder Level	Credential
Pre-Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High school diploma or equivalency</li> </ul>
ECE I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High school diploma with a Career and Technical Education (CTE) Child Development Associate (CDA) <i>or</i> CDA with 12 credits in early childhood education (ECE), <i>or</i></li> <li>NYS Infant Toddler Credential, <i>or</i></li> <li>Early childhood certificate issued by institution of higher education (IHE) with 12 credits in ECE</li> </ul>
ECE II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Associate degree in ECE</li> </ul>
ECE II A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Associate degree in ECE + 30 credits <i>(verified academic study plan in the Aspire Registry)</i></li> </ul>
ECE III	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bachelor’s degree in ECE</li> </ul>
ECE III A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bachelor’s degree in ECE + NYS ECE certification</li> </ul>
ECE III B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bachelor’s degree in ECE + NYS ECE certification + some graduate coursework in ECE <i>(verified academic study plan in the Aspire Registry)</i></li> </ul>
ECE IV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Master’s degree in ECE</li> </ul>
ECE IV A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Master’s degree in ECE + NYS initial teacher certification in ECE</li> </ul>
ECE V	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Master’s degree in ECE + NYS professional teacher certification in ECE</li> </ul>
ECE VI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ph.D. or Ed.D. in ECE</li> </ul>

# Cost Estimation

There are several existing reports that thoroughly estimate the cost of quality universal child care, including increased compensation for the workforce. Making such estimates is complex, in part because it is difficult to know the exact credentials and current compensation of the workforce. Estimates also range depending on the target compensation (e.g., living wage versus compensation parity), but each report emphasizes the importance of increased compensation for a sustainable system.

According to a cost study conducted by Prenatal to 5 Fiscal Strategies and published by the Education Trust NY, it would cost around \$20.3 billion to provide universal child care and pay a living wage to all educators, including employer contribution to health insurance and paid leave.<sup>24</sup> The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment report entitled “Financing Early Educator Quality: A Values-Based Study for Every State” estimated that it would cost \$25.7 billion to \$26.1 billion to ensure a high-quality ECE system with a well-qualified and fairly compensated workforce once entirely phased in (between 1.6% to 2.1% of New York’s GDP).<sup>25</sup>

For this report, we estimate that the **total** cost of parity compensation for the ECE workforce, at the level of K-12 public school teachers and including benefits, would cost approximately \$3.3 billion. This is based on estimated workforce size and an estimated average parity salary for each position type, and includes an additional 25% of each professional’s salary to cover comprehensive benefits. Given the average salaries across the profession currently, and assuming no uniform benefits across the field, this represents a **new investment of \$1.5 billion**.

In sum, a defined career ladder of progressing credentials and degrees, aligned with an equitable compensation scale that recognizes the responsibilities, skills and knowledge of ECE professionals, will be the beginning steps to move the state towards a child care system that works for all New Yorkers.

# NEW YORK'S EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION WORKFORCE

## CURRENT FINDINGS



The need for this report and parity compensation analysis was driven by data about the current workforce gathered from the Aspire Registry, as well as a survey on compensation and benefits conducted from May to June 2023. Across the state, the data reveals low compensation that does not meaningfully increase with experience or credentials and a consistent lack of access to paid leave, health insurance, and retirement benefits. This contributes to turnover and difficulty recruiting to the field — problems that threaten New York’s ability to build an ECE system that serves all families in the state. This section shares an overview of the current status of the early care and education workforce, highlighting both challenges and opportunities.

## Demographic Overview

As in many other states, New York’s ECE workforce is predominantly female, but diverse in many other respects. Members of the workforce represent a wide range of ages, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and levels of educational attainment. As this report will show in detail, one attribute that many share, however, is a low socioeconomic status. Due to the differences between staff qualification requirements, minimum wage laws, and cost of living, this report disaggregates data between New York City and the rest of the state.

The demographic and compensation data in this section are taken from the Aspire Registry, New York’s workforce registry for early childhood and school age professionals. The Aspire Registry collects and maintains profiles for both individuals and programs and provides its members with valuable resources to assist them in planning and tracking their career development. Participation in the Aspire Registry is not required, though programs that participate in New York’s Quality Rating and Improvement System, QUALITYstarsNY, must complete and maintain profiles.

**Across the state, the data reveals low compensation that does not meaningfully increase with experience or credentials and a consistent lack of access to paid leave, health insurance, and retirement benefits:**

**Annual compensation for classroom positions hovers around the local minimum wage.**

**Fewer than half of center-based educators reported retirement benefits.**

**A significant number of respondents reported relying on Medicaid or Medicare for health insurance.**

**Table 1. Demographics of ECE Workforce in New York State**

**Gender**

	New York City	Rest of State	Total
<b>Female</b>	94%	94%	94%
<b>Male</b>	6%	5%	5%
<b>Non-Binary / Prefer Not to Answer / Unspecified</b>	1%	1%	1%

Note: Column subtotals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

**Race and Ethnicity**

	New York City	Rest of State	Total
<b>Asian</b>	11%	3%	7%
<b>Black or African American</b>	21%	11%	16%
<b>Hispanic or Latino</b>	32%	17%	25%
<b>Other</b>	9%	7%	8%
<b>White or Caucasian</b>	28%	62%	43%

For the purposes of this table, the racial category of "Other" includes the categories American Indian or Alaskan Native, Multi-racial, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and Unspecified.



For the purposes of this table, “Associate Degree” includes individuals with CDA certificates or who reported their highest level of education as “Some College.” “Bachelor’s Degree” includes individuals who reported “Some Graduate Coursework” as their highest level of education. “Master’s Degree of Higher” includes individuals with doctorates or who reported “Some Post-Graduate Coursework” as their highest level of education.

## Age

	New York City	Rest of State	Total
18–24	9%	13%	11%
25–34	30%	26%	28%
35–44	23%	22%	23%
45–54	17%	18%	18%
55–64	14%	15%	14%
65 and older	7%	7%	7%

## Educational Attainment

High school diploma	30%	28%	29%
Associate degree	19%	30%	24%
Bachelor’s degree	24%	21%	23%
Master’s degree or higher	27%	21%	24%

Although the Aspire Registry is designed to be a resource for all early childhood professionals in New York, this report focuses on five broad categories of roles: assistant teachers, lead teachers, assistant directors, directors, and family child care providers (these categories include individuals in various positions whose roles are equivalent to these five titles). Data on family child care providers can be found in Table 7. As seen below in Table 2, assistant teachers make up the largest group within the Registry, followed by lead teachers. Those in classroom positions were also the most likely to provide their compensation when completing their profile. The reluctance of many members of the workforce, especially those in managerial positions, to disclose financial information, may reflect the general taboo that exists around sharing information on pay, or a more specific uncertainty regarding the utility of providing personal data.<sup>26</sup>

**Table 2. Membership in the Aspire Registry, by Job Category<sup>27</sup>**

	New York City	Rest of NYS	Total	% with Wage or Salary Data
<b>Assistant Teachers</b>	10,349	6,457	16,806	46%
<b>Lead Teachers</b>	8,590	6,846	15,436	39%
<b>Assistant Directors</b>	859	897	1,756	27%
<b>Directors</b>	2,561	2,479	5,040	18%
<b>Family Child Care Providers (and Assistants)</b>	1,242	1,606	2,848	29%

The data drawn from the Aspire Registry is consistent with compensation figures and trends reported elsewhere. For example, the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment reports that, in 2019, the median hourly wage for a child care educator in New York was \$13.58 and that the same figure for a center director was \$31.83.<sup>28</sup> Annualized, these would represent salaries of approximately \$28,000 and \$66,000 respectively, both of which are comparable to the setting-specific averages detailed in Table 6.



The median annual compensation for an early childhood teacher in New York State is **\$35,450.**

School-based child care programs offer the highest salaries in the ECE workforce, while center-based and school-age child care offer far lower rates.

## Variation of Early Childhood Workforce Compensation

Across all categories of professionals in the early childhood field, compensation is low, especially in relation to comparable positions in K-12 education. As seen in the table below, annual compensation for classroom positions hovers around the local minimum wage (which was \$15/hour in New York City and surrounding counties and \$14.20 in the rest of the state in 2023, prior to a 2024 increase).<sup>29</sup> These annualized averages also conceal the fact that teachers' hours are often inconsistent, dependent on attendance and licensing requirements that mandate the number of teachers present per child.

**Table 3. Median Compensation for Early Childhood Educators, by Job Category**

Job Title	Median Annual Compensation
Assistant Teacher	\$30,200
Lead Teacher	\$35,450
Assistant Director	\$43,700
Director	\$61,000

*Note: Data is from 2023, prior to the most recent increase in the minimum wage.*

The most obvious source of variation in early childhood compensation in New York State is the stark divide between New York City and the rest of the state. These two regions are defined by significantly different regulatory frameworks, pay structures, and even different minimum wages. As set by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the rules governing early childhood educators within NYC child care centers have different (often higher) minimum educational requirements for members of the workforce. NYC also already has in place agreements to raise pay for publicly funded pre-K teachers in community-based organizations to approach parity with public school teachers. Although these agreements affect a small percentage of the early childhood workforce in the city, providers must also abide by a higher minimum wage in NYC and surrounding counties: \$16 per hour (effective January 1, 2024), compared to \$15 elsewhere in the state. It is therefore no surprise that, as seen below in Table 4, there are significant differences in ECE compensation depending on where a provider lives and works.

**Table 4. Median Compensation by Region**

<b>Job Title</b>	<b>New York City</b>	<b>Rest of State</b>
<b>Assistant Teacher</b>	\$31,200	\$27,300
<b>Lead Teacher</b>	\$43,330	\$31,200
<b>Assistant Director</b>	\$52,000	\$40,000
<b>Director</b>	\$74,000	\$51,094

An equally important factor to consider when assessing the overall landscape of ECE compensation in New York is the impact of race and ethnicity. Research has shown that significant racial disparities persist nationwide in how ECE professionals are paid for their work, and that this inequality has deep historical roots in both policy choices and attitudes that govern the field.<sup>30</sup>

As seen in Table 5, this pattern is still evident in New York, particularly above the level of assistant teachers. For example, lead teachers in New York City who identified as White or Caucasian reported a median annualized salary 32% higher than their Black or African American counterparts, and 25% higher than teachers who identified as Hispanic or Latino.

**Table 5. Median Compensation by Self-Reported Race and Region**

**Assistant Teachers**

	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic or Latino	Multiracial	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Not Specified or Other	White or Caucasian	Total
<b>NYC</b>	—	\$31,200	\$31,200	\$31,200	\$32,325	—	\$30,000	\$32,000	\$31,200
<b>Rest of State</b>	\$27,500	\$28,220	\$27,300	\$27,600	\$28,200	—	\$26,900	\$27,070	\$27,300
<b>Total</b>	\$29,600	\$31,200	\$31,200	\$30,940	\$30,500	—	\$29,100	\$28,405	\$30,200

**Lead Teachers**

<b>NYC</b>	—	\$50,000	\$39,250	\$41,600	\$42,705	—	\$41,600	\$52,000	\$43,330
<b>Rest of State</b>	\$30,100	\$37,420	\$31,430	\$33,300	\$29,220	—	\$30,585	\$31,200	\$31,200
<b>Total</b>	\$29,620	\$47,800	\$36,400	\$38,500	\$34,600	—	\$35,570	\$33,280	\$35,400

**Assistant Directors**

<b>NYC</b>	N/A	\$50,995	\$51,500	\$45,250	—	N/A	—	\$60,000	\$51,500
<b>Rest of State</b>	—	—	\$35,700	\$41,600	—	—	—	\$40,700	\$40,000
<b>Total</b>	—	\$46,495	\$49,950	\$44,990	\$52,900	—	—	\$41,600	\$43,000

**Directors**

<b>NYC</b>	—	\$71,517	\$70,000	\$70,000	—	N/A	\$74,500	\$80,000	\$74,000
<b>Rest of State</b>	N/A	—	\$53,000	\$47,800	—	N/A	—	\$50,660	\$51,094
<b>Total</b>	—	\$73,886	\$63,000	\$65,000	\$68,652	N/A	\$71,000	\$54,000	\$61,000

Note: Shaded cells denote groupings of fewer than 10 individuals. "N/A" indicates there was no data available.

Although Table 5 shows several instances of white professionals earning at or below the statewide average, it is important to place this data in the context of two previously shown tables. Firstly, there are significant differences in the racial demographics between the ECE workforces in New York City and the rest of New York State, with the former being more diverse while the latter group is more likely to be white. Secondly, and regardless of race, ECE professionals earn less outside New York City. Combining these two economically and demographically different groups into a statewide average can therefore be somewhat misleading and masks relevant inequalities seen when the data is examined in greater detail.

In addition to geography and race, one of the biggest determinants of compensation in ECE is the type of program at which an individual is employed. As a field, ECE encompasses programs in center-, home-, and school-based settings, each with their own unique licensing requirements and funding structure. Table 6 below shows that, with some exceptions, school-based child care programs (usually including pre-K) offer the highest salaries within the ECE workforce, while center-based and school-age child care offer far lower rates. Family child care programs, which often have unique job roles and compensation systems, are detailed later. A fundamental reason for this disparity is the difference in how these programs are funded. Whereas school-based programs are paid for directly by state and local governments, other providers must rely on a subsidy system that pays them based on child attendance.

**Table 6. Median Compensation by Program Type<sup>31</sup>**

	Child Care Center	NYC School-Based Child Care	School-Age Child Care	State-Administered Pre-K
Assistant Teacher	\$30,400	\$30,500	\$31,200	\$27,075
Lead Teacher	\$35,360	\$68,000	\$36,890	\$55,651
Assistant Director	\$42,570	—	\$45,250	\$48,100
Directors	\$63,000	—	\$58,500	\$80,000

*Note: Cells with — denote groupings of fewer than 10 individuals.*

Although the comparison of teacher salaries is useful for assessing the gap between center- and school-based programs, it hides the still lower compensation that exists for professionals in home-based programs. Table 7 below shows the average salaries for professionals in family child care and group family child care. In addition to the lower rates of pay, professionals in these settings may lack the standardized staffing structures, working conditions, and other forms of support found in center- and school-based programs.

**Table 7. Median Compensation in Family and Group Family Child Care Programs<sup>32</sup>**

Job Title	New York City	Rest of State
Assistant family child care provider	\$31,200	\$30,200
Family child care provider	\$35,600	\$37,900

A clear career ladder and salary scale that incorporates job responsibilities in addition to years of experience and educational attainment would help to provide clarity around levels of compensation. Early care and education has a wide range of educational levels within the field, and a muddled correlation between an ECE professional’s educational attainment and their level of compensation. As seen in Table 8, one visible effect is an undervaluing of individuals who have earned associate degrees, Child Development Associate (CDA) credentials, or some college credits. Although the attainment of either a bachelor’s or master’s degree translates to a modest increase in compensation at all career levels, the data analyzed for this report shows that members of the ECE workforce with CDAs, some college, or associate degrees actually earn slightly less than their counterparts without any higher education.

**Table 8. Median Compensation by Highest Level of Education**

	High School Diploma	Associate Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree or Higher
Assistant Teacher	\$30,000	\$29,000	\$31,600	\$33,300
Lead Teacher	\$32,655	\$31,400	\$37,960	\$52,910
Assistant Director	\$40,500	\$38,450	\$45,000	\$49,995
Director	\$50,000	\$41,860	\$52,000	\$75,000

*Note: Educational categories are taken from the Aspire Registry and have been condensed. "Associate Degree" includes "CDA" and "Some College." "Bachelor's Degree" includes "Some Graduate Coursework." "Master's Degree or higher" includes "Some Post-Graduate Coursework" and "Doctorate."*

Beyond education and training, educators gain practical skills and knowledge through years of experience. However, the amount of time an ECE professional has spent in the field does not necessarily translate into greater earnings. As seen in Table 9, the highest-compensated members of the workforce are often those with the least amount of time at their current job, with flat salary growth for longer-tenured members of the workforce.

**Table 9. Median Compensation by Years of Experience at Current Job**

	Fewer than 5 years	5-10 years	10-15 years	15-20 years	20+ years
Assistant Teacher	\$31,200	\$27,040	\$26,000	\$26,730	\$28,860
Lead Teacher	\$39,000	\$32,240	\$31,050	\$33,770	\$36,400
Assistant Director	\$43,350	\$45,000	\$40,445	\$50,050	\$45,500
Director	\$63,000	\$52,000	\$52,500	\$59,200	\$61,000

# Current Status of Early Childhood Workforce Benefits



In order to understand a full picture of the compensation the workforce receives, including benefits, New York Works For Children conducted a survey, offered in English and Spanish, of the New York early childhood workforce in May and June 2023.<sup>33</sup> The survey included questions about an individual's role (including ages of children served), work location, and the compensation and benefits they receive, including health insurance, sick leave, paid annual leave, and retirement. It included opportunities to share more details through open-ended responses, which are included throughout this report.

## New York Works for Children Benefits Survey

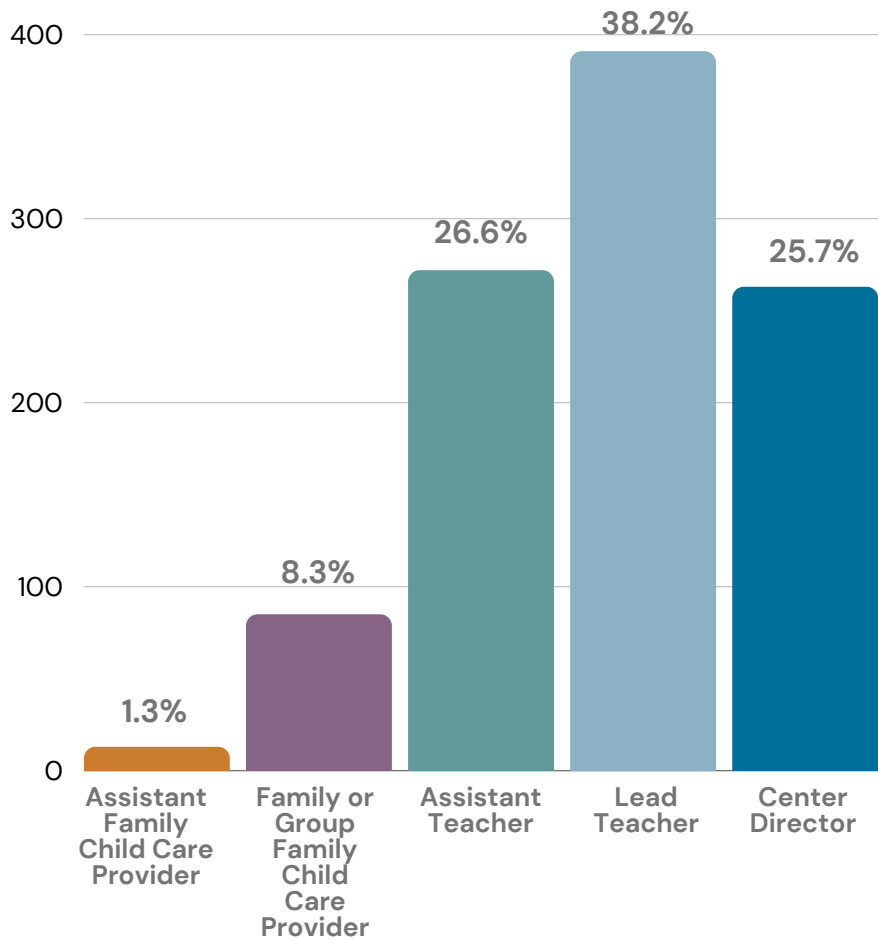
**1,024**  
respondents

The survey was distributed via email to all users with profiles in the Aspire Registry, New York's early childhood and school-age workforce registry, and promoted by partners such as the New York Association for the Education of Young Children, child care resource and referral agencies, QUALITYstarsNY, and family child care unions. The New York Early Childhood Professional Development Institute also advertised the survey on social media and in its newsletter. A total of 1,024 individuals responded (57% from New York City, and 43% from the rest of the state). Ninety percent of respondents held center-based positions (assistant teachers, lead teachers, or center directors). While not a fully representative sample, the results of this survey give us new insight into the benefits the workforce receives — and those they do not.



**1 in 4**  
 respondents  
 reported using  
 Medicaid or  
 Medicare.

**Figure 3. Positions of Survey Respondents**



**Health insurance: widely available but expensive**

Most respondents reported having health insurance – only 5% stated they did not have health insurance. In all, about 25% reported receiving support from their employer to obtain it, either through a plan partially paid for by their employer or through a stipend. However, pay in the field is so low that an equal amount (25%) reported using Medicaid or Medicare. To qualify for Medicaid, individuals must make no more than 138% of the federal poverty limit. Assistant teachers were the most likely to report receiving Medicaid (almost half at 43%).



Twenty-six percent reported having health insurance through a parent or spouse's plan. Those 26 years old or younger are likely on their parents' plans, as young adults are eligible to stay on their parents' plans until age 26. These young adults will be ineligible for this insurance at age 27 and need to obtain insurance through the marketplace or their employer. The child care field risks losing these young educators to other industries with more robust health insurance options.

Health care plans vary in their coverage, and even respondents who reported receiving health care through their employer noted the prohibitive cost of care (see Voices from the Field section below). Some reported turning down health insurance coverage because of the cost.

New York unions for family child care providers defray some health insurance costs for their members. The Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA), a union for family child care providers outside New York City, provides a rebate of up to \$3,000 for members to use towards health insurance costs.<sup>34</sup> Through its Provider Wellness Program, the United Federation for Teachers (UFT) provides dental and vision benefits, premium reimbursement, mental health services, and lifestyle coaching for home-based providers in NYC.<sup>35</sup>



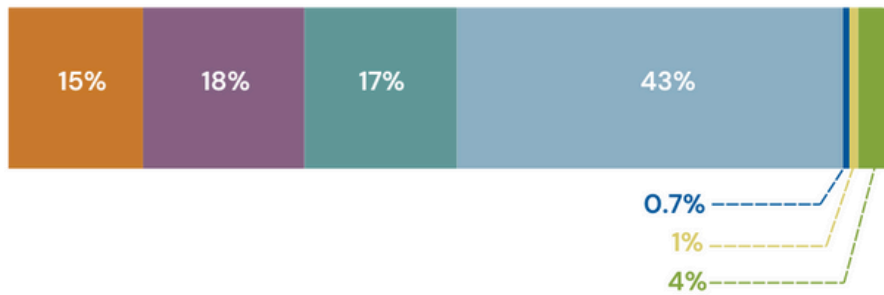
“ My health insurance is so expensive that I don't visit the doctor all the time. Medicaid [recipients] have better benefits than me and I am working. My contribution to my insurance is \$323 every month. I need help. ”

“ I wish I had better and more affordable health insurance. This is my biggest concern. ”

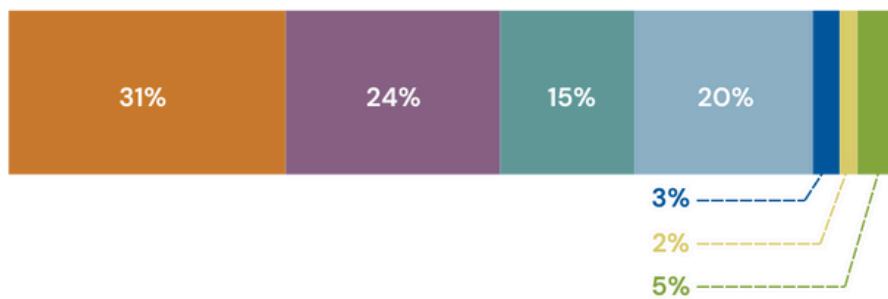
“ I have two young children and because my salary is too high I have to pay for their health insurance out of pocket each month at full price, no discounts. I cannot afford health insurance for myself because of the sacrifice to maintain their insurance and pay for my education as I finish my master's degree. I was diagnosed [with an illness] in 2021 and have not been able to see a doctor. My fear is that I will work, get sick and not be able to work anymore and it will leave my family and myself stranded. I feel hopeless although I am doing what I love. There are just so many sacrifices to be made. ”

**Figure 4. Health Insurance, by Position**

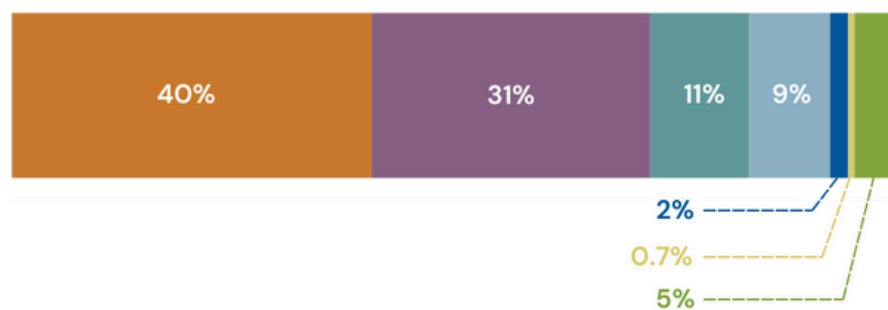
**Assistant Teacher**



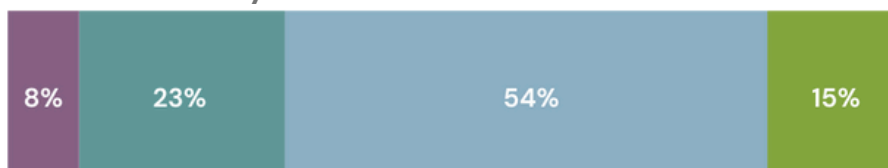
**Lead Teacher**



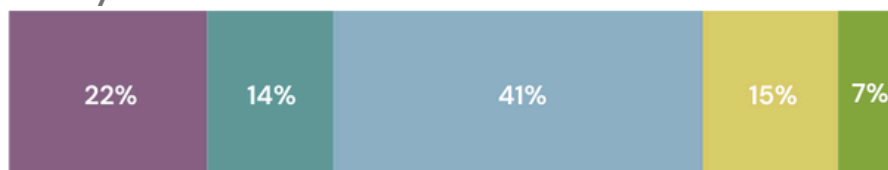
**Center Director**



**Assistant Family Child Care Provider**



**Family Child Care Provider**



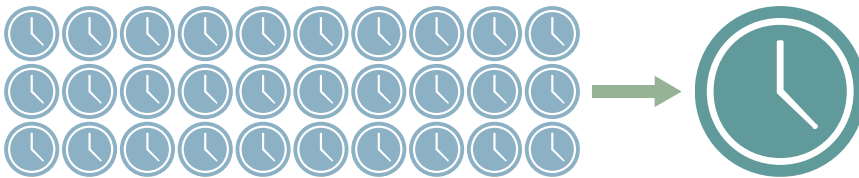
- Partially or fully paid by Employer
- Spouse or Parent Health Insurance
- Self-purchased Health Insurance
- Medicaid or Medicare
- Stipend from Employer
- Stipend from Union
- No Health Insurance

## Paid sick leave: challenging to use

Paid sick leave and the ability to use it as needed is particularly crucial for child care educators as they are exposed to a variety of infectious and contagious diseases.<sup>36</sup> In New York State, as of September 2020, employers with more than five employees must provide one hour of paid leave per 30 hours worked. Employers with fewer than five employees must provide unpaid sick leave.<sup>37</sup> Overall, 78% of respondents stated that they receive paid sick leave and 22% stated they do not. It may be the case that family child care providers or some centers have five or fewer employees; however, based on the composition of respondents to this survey, some employees may not be receiving the paid sick leave they are entitled to or may be unaware that they have access to it.

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**New York State employers with more than five employees must provide one hour of paid sick leave per 30 hours worked.**



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Of the educators who reported having access to sick leave, survey respondents reported that low staffing made sick leave difficult to use. Substitute pools could support educators to use paid sick leave when they are ill. Across positions, about 30% of staff with available paid leave reported not taking any in the last 12 months. For family child care providers, this number grew to 60%. Given the smaller staff sizes and lack of substitutes for many family child care providers, it is likely that either a provider continues to work while sick, or the provider may be forced to close their doors for the day.

## Voices

### FROM THE FIELD

“

*My two young children have been sick so much and I've had to take more than the allotted five sick days. No working mother should have to feel bad for needing to take time off to take care of sick children. And to save those sick days for my children, I have neglected my health to show up to work [while sick].*

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Figure 5. Paid Sick Leave, by Position

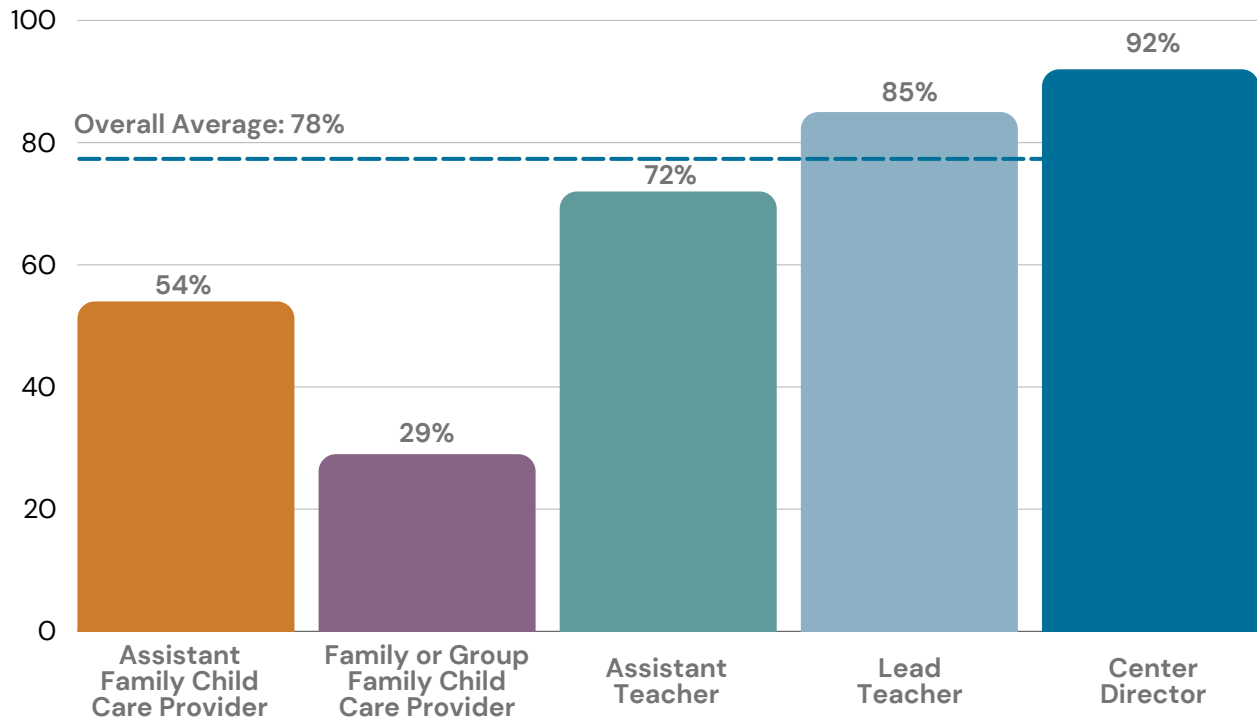
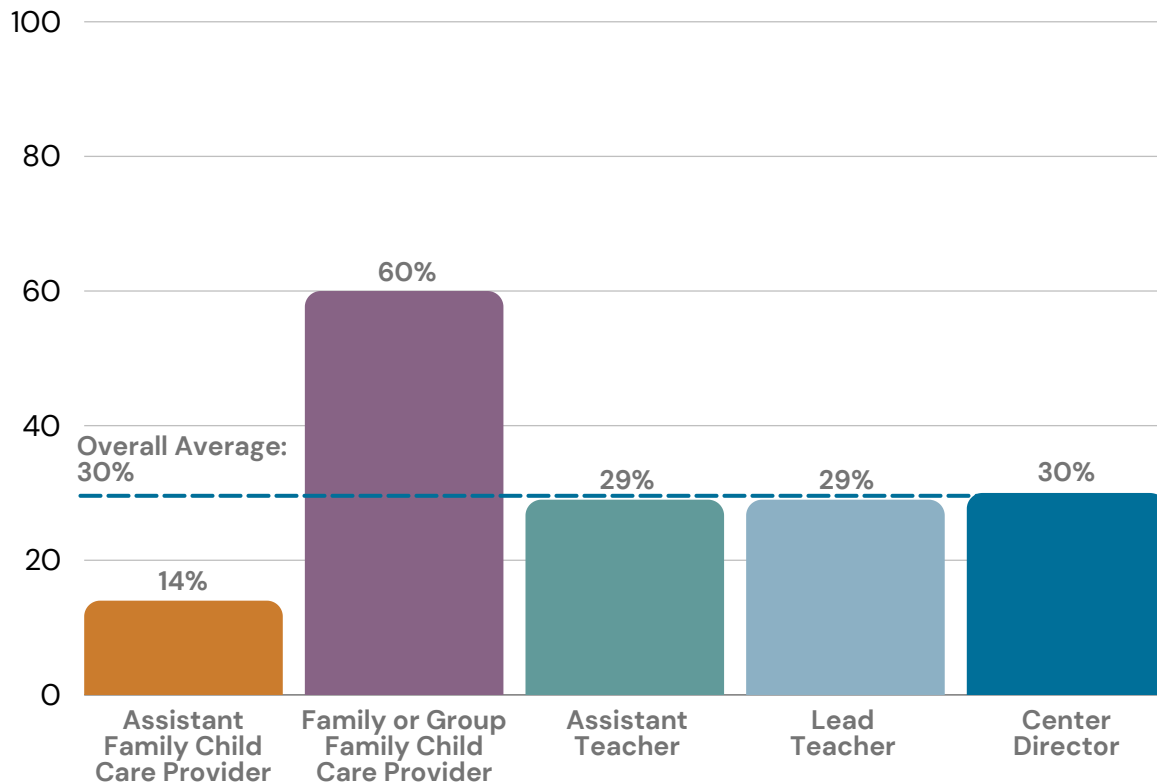


Figure 6. Paid Sick Leave Not Taken in Past 12 Months, by Position

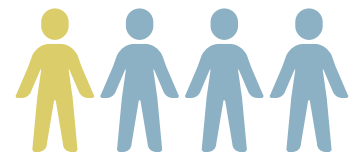


## Paid annual leave: assistant teachers and family child care providers are left out



A smaller majority of child care providers, an average of 63%, reported receiving paid annual leave. Of those who received paid annual leave, almost 25% did not take it in the last 12 months. Center directors were most likely to receive paid annual leave and the most likely to take it, while family child care providers were the least likely to receive paid annual leave and the least likely to take it. Similarly to paid sick leave, the structure of family care likely makes it more difficult for these professionals to take leave even if they have access to it. Of center-based positions, assistant teachers were least likely to receive paid annual leave and the least likely to take it.

Studies have demonstrated that paid leave is crucial for well-being — it can lead to improved health outcomes including decreased depression, decreased risk of heart disease, and less stress.<sup>38</sup> Promoting access to paid leave can reduce burnout and retain professionals in the field.



**Almost 25% of child care providers with access to paid annual leave have not taken any in the past 12 months.**

**Promoting access to paid leave can reduce burnout and retain professionals in the field.**

Figure 7. Paid Annual Leave, by Position

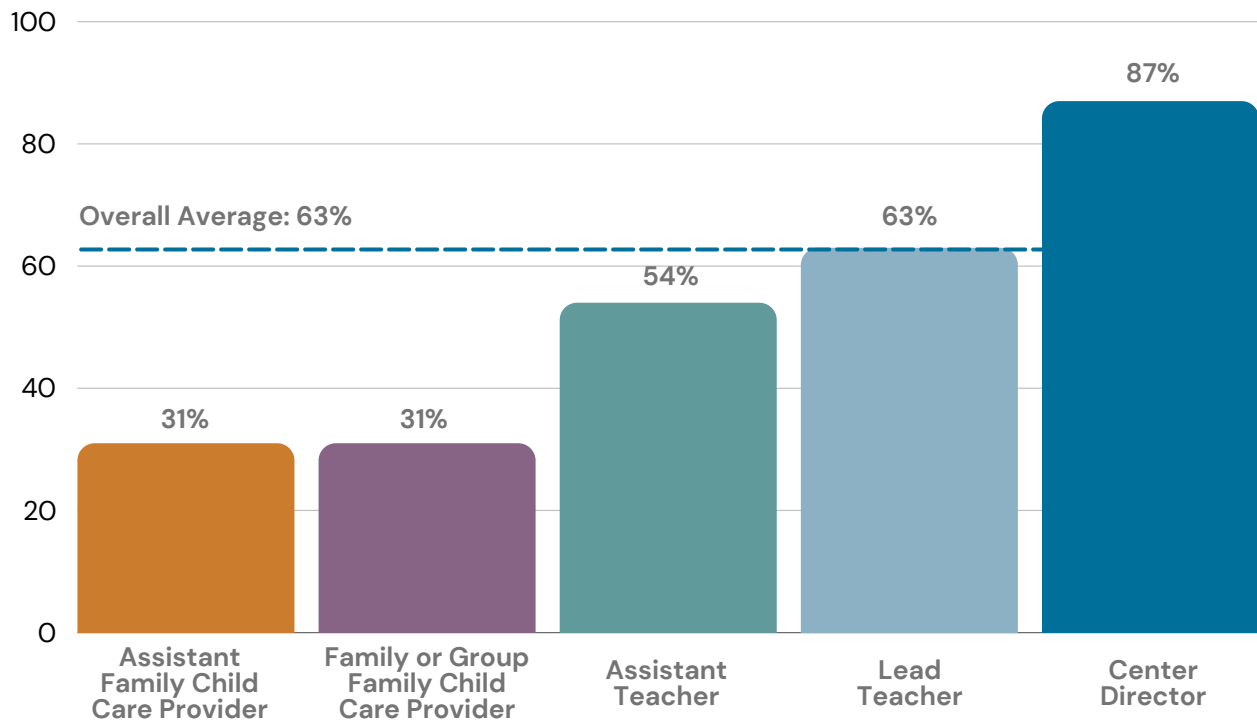
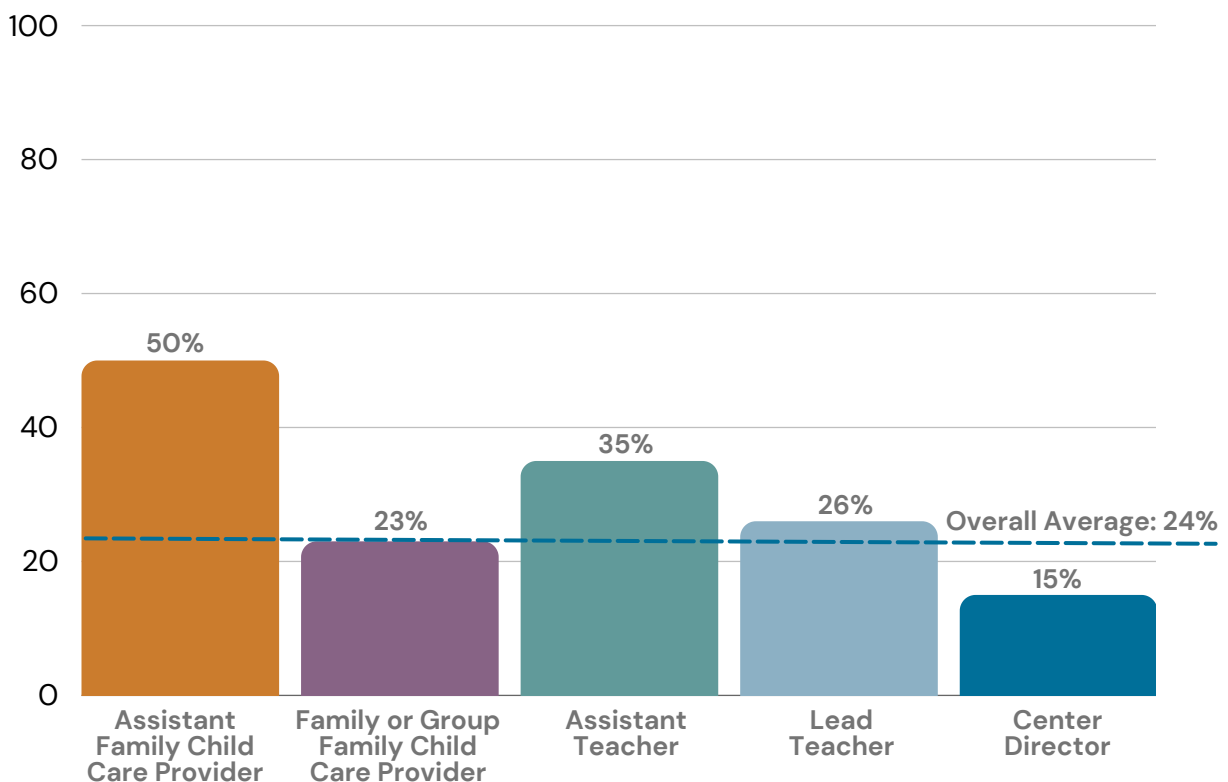


Figure 8. Paid Annual Leave Not Taken Within Past 12 Months, by Position



## Retirement benefits: available to less than half the workforce

Of all the benefits included in the survey, respondents were least likely to receive retirement benefits from their employer, with fewer than half of center-based respondents reporting employer retirement contributions. Some unionized family child care providers may receive retirement benefits from their union; however fewer than 10% reported utilizing this. Despite little employer support, a small majority (58% overall) reported saving for retirement. In a repeating pattern, family child care providers and assistant teachers were least likely to report saving for retirement.

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# 36%

of respondents between 45 and 55 years old had less than \$10,000 saved for retirement.

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According to national data, approximately 25% of the early childhood workforce is age 50 or older.<sup>39</sup> For these educators, retirement savings are an urgent need. In our survey, 26% of respondents over 55 stated they were “not sure” how much they had saved for retirement. Thirty-six percent of respondents between ages 45 and 55 had less than \$10,000 saved for retirement, while 23% of those 55 or older had less than \$10,000 saved for retirement. This is a staggering portion of the experienced workforce who are approaching retirement and do not know how much they have saved or have under \$10,000 saved. Many comments revealed that educators live paycheck to paycheck without the capacity to save for the future, and this drives some to consider permanently leaving the field.

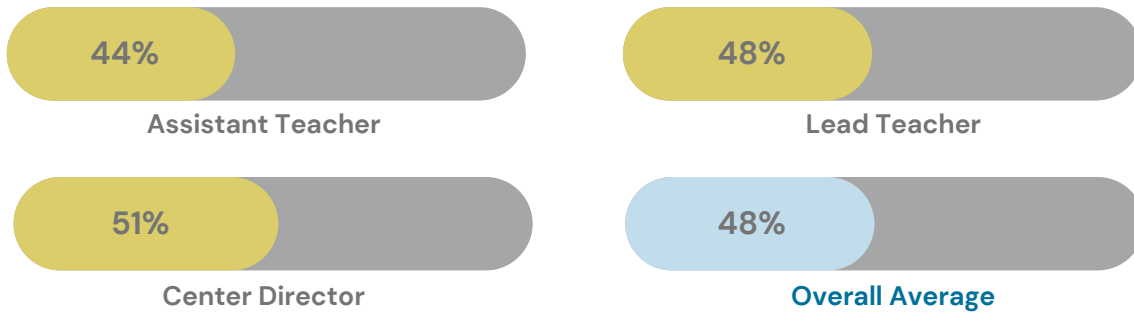
## Voices

### FROM THE FIELD

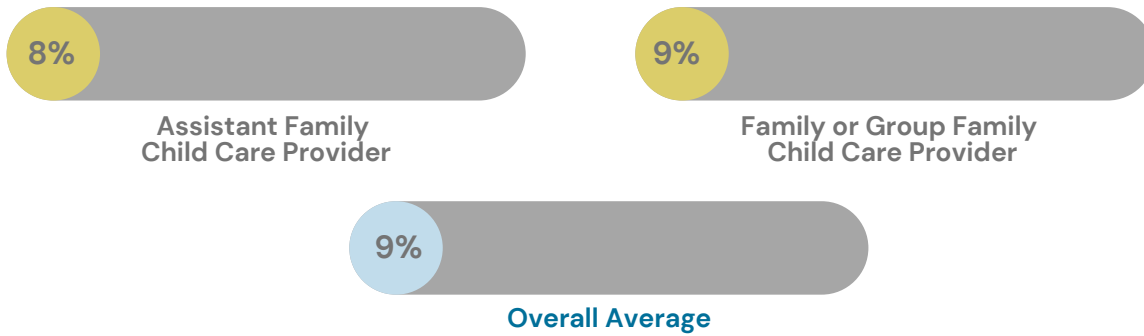
“It’s a struggle balancing work and business expenses and benefits. I incorporate vacation/sick leave into my contracts, but it is difficult to get/keep families, since many cannot afford child care, let alone pay for when their children are not in attendance. I am concerned that I am middle-aged and have worked in this field for over 20 years and have nothing put away for retirement.”

“[I] wish I had participated earlier in my company’s retirement benefit plan, but my salary was too small and I didn’t have anything remaining after providing for myself and three children.”

**Figure 9. Employees Receiving Employer Contribution to Retirement, by Position**



**Figure 10. Employees Receiving Retirement Benefits from Union, by Position**



**Figure 11. Percent With Retirement Savings, by Position**

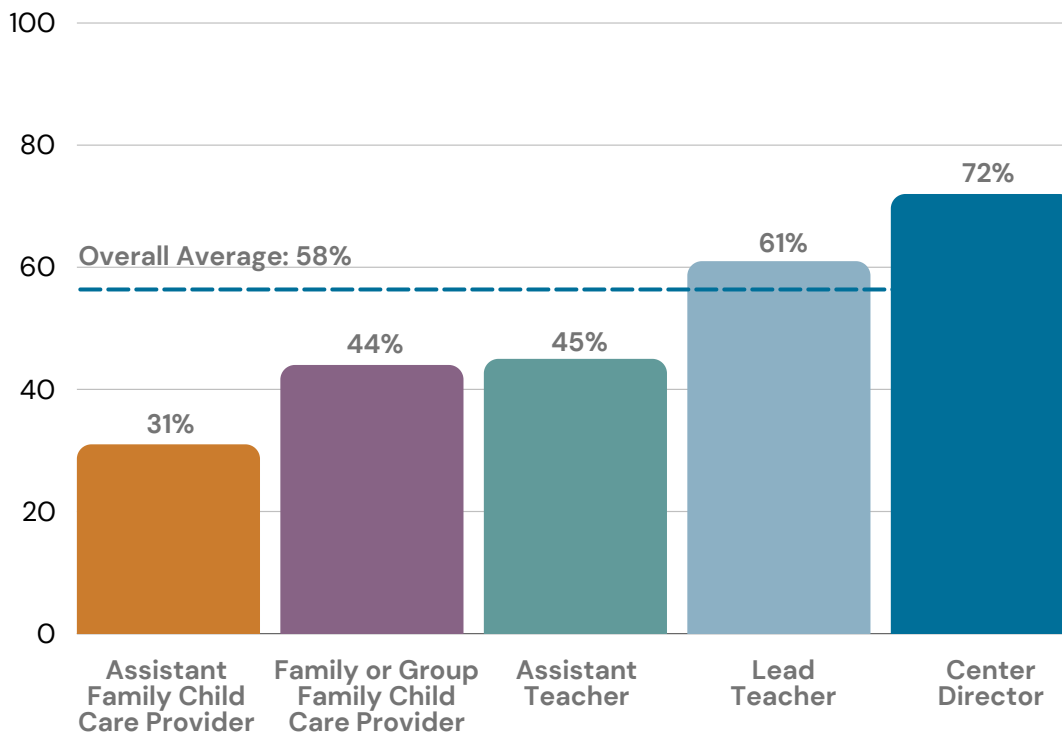
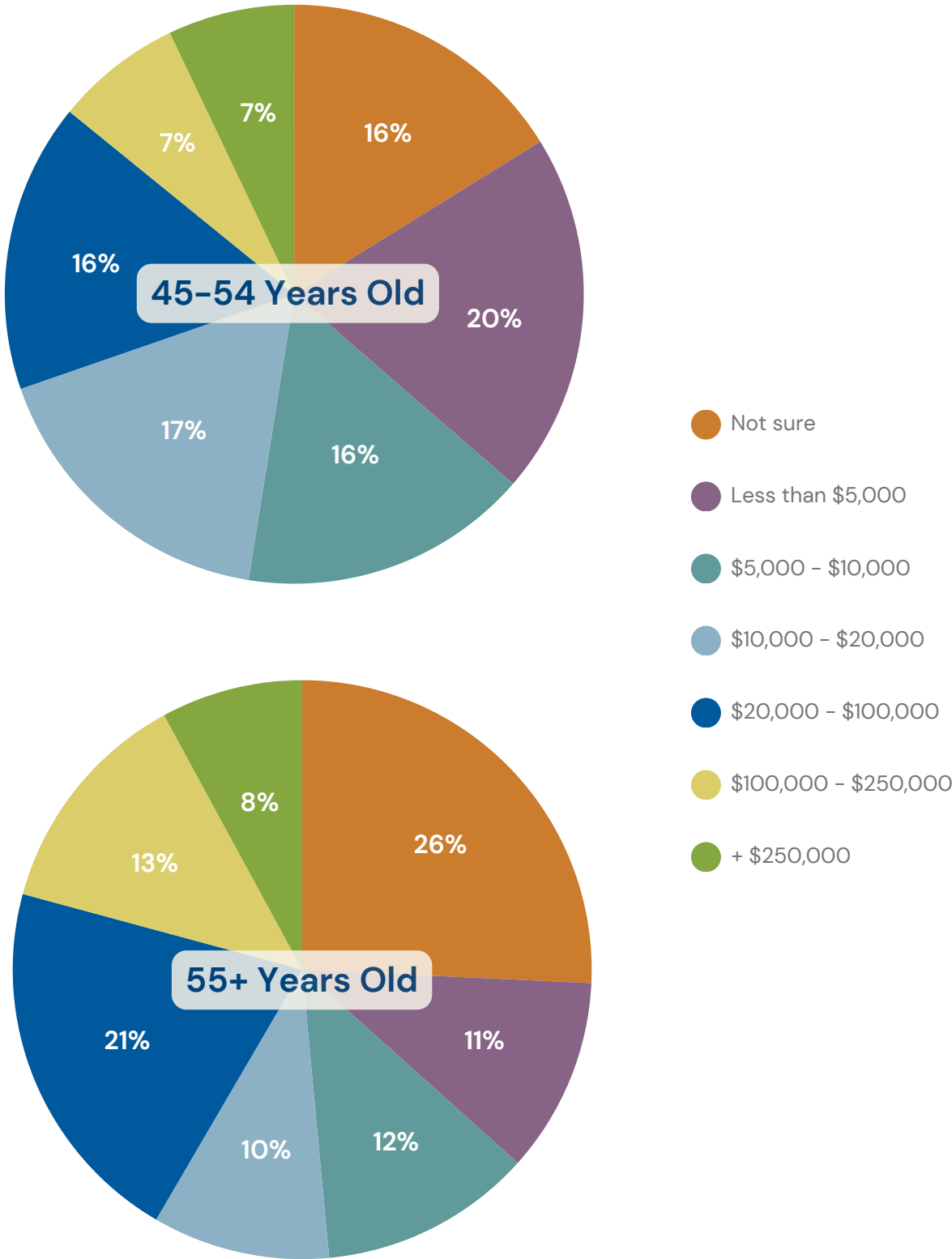




Figure 12. Retirement Savings, by Age

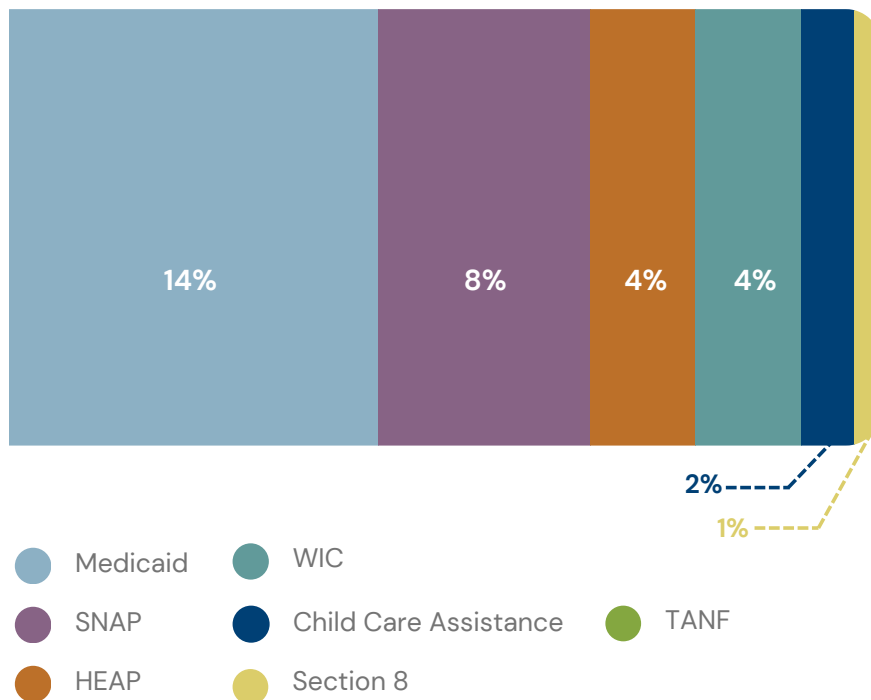


## Public assistance: the field benefits from Medicaid and Medicare

A significant number of respondents reported receiving Medicaid or Medicare (25% total, 14% Medicaid). This demonstrates the severity of the compensation problem in early childhood education. Educators who have experience and expertise in caring for young children earn low enough wages that they qualify for public assistance.

Survey results also suggest that educators who qualify for Medicaid (for which the eligibility limit is 138% of federal poverty line or lower) may be missing out on other benefits for which they are eligible. Far fewer reported accessing other government assistance such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP). SNAP eligibility limits range from 130% to 200% of the federal poverty line, depending on household composition, while HEAP eligibility limits are at or below 130% of the federal poverty line.<sup>40 41</sup>

Figure 13. Percent Receiving Public Assistance



“  
I receive Social Security Disability and if it were not for this, I would not be able to afford to work in my current position.”

# Implementation Considerations

Effectively implementing compensation parity will require communication with the field, bold investment, and structures for ensuring educators are paid according to the compensation scale.

## Take bold measures toward revenue generation

Any parity compensation and benefits initiative will require significant revenue generation from the state and would ideally be accompanied by additional federal investment, though the urgency of the issue requires the state to act now. There are precedents for significant investments in care programs in New York. For example, a similar push accompanied the passage of New York's Paid Family Leave Act, which is funded by employee contributions via payroll deductions.<sup>42</sup>

The Empire State Campaign for Child Care, a coalition of concerned stakeholders from across the state, has pushed for a permanent, substantial workforce compensation supplement with the aim of recruiting and retaining educators to make child care accessible to all families (particularly low-income, immigrant, Black, and brown New Yorkers, who have been disproportionately impacted by the child care crisis).<sup>43</sup>

In FY2024, Governor Hochul allotted \$500 million for retention grants which funded bonuses of up to \$3,000 for child care providers throughout the state.<sup>44</sup> While a vital lifeline for educators and providers, this only provided time-limited relief. As American Rescue Plan Act funds are spent down and retention grant funds end, the state will have to find new ways to meet the needs of the field. Several cities and states have invested in ECE compensation by creating new revenue streams:

## Voices

FROM THE FIELD

“

*I have a family of six to take care of. My whole income goes to pay rent and buy groceries for my family. I wanted to complete my master's in childhood education from birth to 2nd grade.*

”

Several cities and states have invested in ECE compensation by creating new revenue streams:



Payroll Tax



Commercial Rent Tax



Wealth Tax

- In Vermont, a recently passed **payroll tax** will fund a \$125 million investment into the child care system there, known as Act 76.<sup>45</sup> The act increases subsidy rates for providers and will contribute to increased compensation for early educators.
- San Francisco issued a **commercial rent tax** to raise funds for its compensation increases, which was a voter-approved initiative.<sup>46</sup> Voter-approved funds have the added benefit of offering reliable, sustained funding which cannot be cut or reassigned to another use.<sup>47</sup>
- In Washington, D.C, a **wealth tax** passed by the city council funded the establishment of the Pay Equity Fund, part of Birth-to-Three For All DC.<sup>48</sup> D.C. offers a cautionary tale of a legislature vote alone, as the mayor recently proposed reallocating Pay Equity funding to other initiatives.<sup>49</sup>

## Establish a means to distribute funds

New mechanisms to provide increased pay to educators will need to be put into place, whether that is increasing the subsidy rate paid to providers with stipulations around pay or the State distributing funds directly to educators themselves. The State will also need to consider appropriate mechanisms to use public money to pay providers working in private businesses that do not accept child care subsidy. Limiting compensation parity to providers accepting subsidy is a place to start, but risks further bifurcating the field.

If increased compensation is not distributed directly to educators by the state government, New York will need to create other enforcement mechanisms and incentives to ensure employers pay ECE professionals according to the parity compensation pay scale.

Some states, such as South Carolina, use their state's workforce registry to provide compensation bonuses directly to educators.<sup>50</sup> Lessons can be learned from New York City, which negotiated with unions to bring educators in prekindergarten programs administered by community-based organizations to pay parity with NYC Department of Education teachers.<sup>51</sup>

## Engage the workforce to understand their priorities

Prior to planning and implementing parity compensation, systems leaders should create opportunities for robust engagement with a diverse cross-sector of the workforce. This work should flow from the priorities of people closest to the problem to avoid any unintended consequences. For example, Child Care Aware of Washington used a liberatory design framework to engage a group of educators and established a taskforce to finalize parity compensation scale and implementation plan.<sup>52</sup> In Washington, D.C., a smaller task force that included center directors, educators, and family child care providers alongside city leaders helped craft the pay scale and implementation plan.<sup>53</sup> WeVision EarlyEd, a project of the Bainum Family Foundation, offers an example of how to engage families, educators, and administrators in designing solutions for an ideal child care system.<sup>54</sup>

## Act with urgency now while phasing in parity

As demonstrated by data in this report, the early childhood workforce is in immediate need of higher wages and benefits. While the final parity compensation scale and implementation plan is being determined, the state should provide an immediate wage increase for all child care providers and allow time to phase in parity.

**If increased compensation is not paid directly to educators by the state government, New York will need to create other enforcement mechanisms and incentives to ensure employers pay professionals according to the parity compensation pay scale.**



**A benefit cliff can occur when an increase in income from a salary bonus results in an individual earning “too much” to be eligible for public assistance, causing them to lose access to crucial benefits.**

This could be modeled off the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) retention bonuses issued to child care providers. This baseline increase should ensure that all educators earn a living wage, accounting for local cost of living and the fact that many educators are single heads of households. Tools such as MIT’s Living Wage Calculator or ALICE can help inform this initial increase to living wage.<sup>55 56</sup> Examples of this approach include D.C.’s direct bonuses of up to \$14,000 as a parity compensation scale was established and New Mexico’s use of ARPA funds to raise wages by \$3/hour.<sup>57 58</sup>

The urgency of the need faced by the workforce must be balanced with ensuring implementation goes smoothly. For example, leaders must avoid creating unintentional benefit cliffs.<sup>59</sup> Smaller bonuses or wage supplements could cause more harm than good by making providers suddenly ineligible for government assistance. As in the distribution of recovery funds, the state could ensure that smaller initial pay bumps do not count as income.

## **Account for employee roles across settings**

As parity compensation for educators is established, leaders must also attend to wage compression — ensuring roles across child care settings are included. Wage compression occurs when employees with different skills, qualifications, responsibilities, and experience are paid similarly. For example, center directors in New York City community-based organizations found themselves paid the same or less than their employees when under contract to deliver Pre-K for All with the Department of Education and sued for fair pay.<sup>60</sup>

This can be avoided by creating a salary scale that takes into account different responsibility levels and includes support roles, such as cooks, janitors, and administrative staff.

## Create a data and evaluation plan

At the outset of any implementation, a data and evaluation plan should be in place to measure impacts and potential challenges. An evaluation plan should periodically review the impact of higher pay on educator well-being, staff turnover, and educational attainment. The Aspire Registry is one tool that could be used in this evaluation, as the Registry already collects compensation data across roles, employment type, and demographic data such as race and primary language. A data collection plan could require educators to update compensation information regularly in Aspire, along with brief survey questions about well-being and tracking of retention and credential attainment. Survey questions could ask about the impact of financial awards to programs, including retention, impact on families, and attitudes towards quality improvement. This information could be compiled annually into a workforce report, such as that required by recent legislation in Delaware, and could be used to inform improvements and changes to implementation.<sup>61</sup>

## Recognize and address the unique needs of family child care providers

Family child care providers are small business owners, rather than employees. The income they receive from tuition or subsidy is used for business operation costs and their own salaries, and may fluctuate based on enrollment or material needs. Increased subsidy rates or compensation stipends may be one way to ensure higher compensation. Support around operations and business planning can help family child care providers ensure they are paid a consistent, equitable salary each month. Existing family child care unions, staffed networks, or professional membership organizations could facilitate pooled access to benefits.



**An evaluation plan should periodically review the impact of higher pay on educator well-being, staff turnover, and educational attainment.**

# Systems Considerations for Compensation Parity

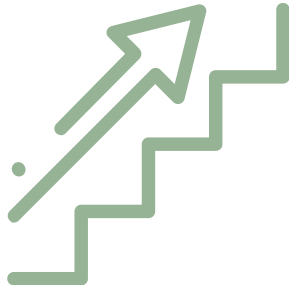
In order to realize the full potential of compensation parity, the broader child care system must effectively support ECE professionals. The initial recommendations below provide examples of how to support ECE professionals to grow in their career, as well as ideas to sustainably offer benefits to the field.

## Establish a career ladder and compensation scale aligned with credentials and experience

Unlike K-12 education, ECE lacks uniform educational requirements for providers, with prerequisites varying by the modality of the setting or even the individual provider. For example, lead teachers at sites licensed by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene must earn a master's degree, whereas lead teachers in sites licensed by the Office of Child and Family Services need to possess an associate degree, a Child Development Associate credential, or a credential specific to the developmental period of the children they serve. While this flexibility enables a greater number of people to begin a career in ECE, the absence of standardized minimum credentials poses a challenge for both recruitment and teacher preparation. When there is an unclear correlation between increased professional development and higher earnings, potential educators struggle to map a long-term career path in ECE and current members of the workforce cannot be confident in improved compensation in the future, even as they pursue higher education.

**The absence of standardized minimum credentials poses a challenge for both recruitment and teacher preparation.**





**Without an improved compensation structure that rewards individuals for advancing up a career ladder, there is little incentive for individuals to continue investing time into a field that does not adequately recognize advanced education and professional development.**

Career ladders support the alignment of compensation to educators' credentials, experience, and responsibilities. Career ladders are common in K-12 education, often in the context of salary schedules, and provide professionals with guaranteed minimum compensation based on their credentials and experience. A well-defined career ladder, attached to a salary scale with "rungs" of salary ranges based on an individual's position as well as their education and experience, would provide beneficial clarity to both the early childhood workforce and their employers.

Along with education and training, the funds of knowledge an educator gains through years of experience are incredibly valuable to the children in their care. In recent years, research has begun to produce evidence not only of the positive effect that prepared and experienced teachers can have for children's educational outcomes, but of the effectiveness of sharing experience and practical insights through coaching.<sup>62</sup> Career ladders and compensation scales can recognize experienced educators who serve as coaches or mentors to new educators, further building the field.

In addition to low entry-level wages, there is low potential for salary growth as members of the workforce progress to higher levels of management and leadership within the field.<sup>63</sup> This trend represents a significant threat to the sustainability of New York's ECE model. Without an improved compensation structure that rewards individuals for advancing up a career ladder, there is little incentive for individuals to continue investing time into a field that does not adequately recognize advanced education and professional development. This threatens high-quality care by failing to retain experienced and well-qualified educators.

The introduction of a career ladder that links compensation to an educator’s level of education, experience, and competencies, when coupled with a more robust infrastructure to support teachers as they pursue professional development, would serve the interests of both the ECE workforce and children simultaneously. In addition to the financial security of salary tiers, access to a coherent career pathway enables members of the workforce to plan their future professional development. Child care would likely see a reduction in turnover as more teachers stay in their positions, and as a corollary see an improvement in quality as these teachers gain experience. Stability in wages would also enable providers to plan budgets more effectively, with the costs of different types of personnel pre-established.

Children have better educational outcomes when they learn from teachers who have received high levels of preparation in early childhood education.<sup>64</sup> Consistent, responsive relationships are key for child development – and teacher turnover damages this needed stability.<sup>65 66</sup> A career ladder can encourage educators to persist in the field, providing a pathway for enhanced expertise and increased compensation that ultimately improves outcomes for children.

## Provide support for educators seeking higher education and credentials

Given the historically low wages of the early care and education field, financial support for tuition and fees are necessary to enable the workforce to grow in their career without incurring debt.

In addition to helping the workforce access existing state and federal financial aid, an increased investment and expansion of existing initiatives such as the NYS Early Childhood Workforce Scholarship and the Educational Incentive Program is required to serve more educators.



“

*I have provided care for young children for the past 30 or 31 years. It has been quite a journey of sacrifice and frustration. The struggle to keep workers has been very difficult. While I have had some dedicated workers who were very helpful in caring and diligently working to set the necessary foundation in the lives of the young children for whom we cared for, they finally moved on to other opportunities for better wages and benefits that we were unable to provide.*

”

Support and guidance, like that available through Early Childhood Career Development Centers, can help educators identify quality education programs, access available scholarships, and understand options that enable them to reach their career goals.<sup>67</sup> For a state as diverse as New York, it is crucial that these supports are both culturally and linguistically responsive, and that education programs themselves address the strengths and needs of a diverse workforce with a range of experience. This can include dual language learning supports, programs in different languages (currently limited by New York’s requirement that college degree programs are in English), and classes that fit the busy schedules of child care providers. Paid apprenticeship and residency programs that integrate coursework with work in the field allow educators to connect their daily practice with their academic experience.

## Value educator experience and funds of knowledge

Many educators have been in the field for decades. Nationwide, 25% of child care providers are 50 years or older.<sup>68</sup> Higher education programs must be accessible for educators who have significant experience in the field, taking into account existing funds of knowledge and potential needs such as computer literacy skills. For example, Bank Street College of Education has an Advanced Standing Program for experienced educators which recognizes their years of experience in the field and enables students to complete a master’s degree in 16 months.<sup>69</sup> Anyone who wishes to pursue a degree or credential should receive support to attain one.

Salary steps should reflect the value of experience and traditional professional development opportunities (such as training and coaching) to ensure that experienced educators are not excluded from compensation increases.



**25%**  
of child care  
providers in the  
United States  
are age 50 or  
older.

## Invest in high-quality professional development

Beyond credentials and degrees, a system of specialized professional development can deepen educator expertise across domains, which leads to more responsive, developmentally meaningful care and education for young children and promotes teacher growth outside of longer-term academic programs. Current licensing regulations in New York require educators to earn a certain number of training hours in different topic areas (Figure 14); however, teachers are often limited to selecting whatever professional development offerings fit their busy schedules and fulfill licensing requirements.

Designated professional development days throughout the year or other paid time to take professional development can allow educators to access more in-depth, connected professional development experiences that build upon each other and deepen expertise in specific areas. The Pyramid Model is an example of a New York State program that offers sustained professional development alongside individualized coaching, supporting educators in nurturing the social emotional development of children in their care.<sup>70</sup> Additional specialized pathways that focus on different topic areas would further support the case for higher compensation, while giving educators tools and knowledge to better serve children and families.



**Figure 14. Current Professional Development Requirements in New York State**

**New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH)  
Article 47 Professional Development Requirements for Employees in Licensed Child Care Centers<sup>71</sup>**

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At least 15 hours of training every 24 months in the following areas:

- Child abuse, maltreatment, and neglect (*2 hours every 24 months; within 3 months of hire*)
- Infection control, administration of medication, protection from hazards, and additional safety topics (*within 3 months of hire*)
- Allergic reactions
- Emergency procedures (*within 3 months of hire*)
- SIDS, safe sleep practices, and abusive head trauma (*before beginning to provide services*)
- Additional topics:
  - Cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development
  - Family engagement
  - Mental health first aid for children

**Office of Children and Family (OCFS) Services Professional Development Requirements for All Other Licensed or Registered Settings<sup>72</sup>**

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At least 15 hours within the first 6 months of employment; 30 hours every 2 years in the 10 required training topic areas; a minimum of five hours obtained each year:

- Child abuse and maltreatment identification and prevention
- Statutes and regulations pertaining to child abuse and maltreatment
- Nutrition and health needs of infants and children
- Safety and security procedures
- Education and information on the identification, diagnosis, and prevention of shaken baby syndrome
- Principles of early childhood development, focusing on the developmental stages of the age groups for which the program provides care
- Adverse childhood experiences, focused on understanding trauma and nurturing resiliency
- Statutes and regulations pertaining to child day care
- Child day care program development
- Business record maintenance and management

**Access to substitute educators for ECE programs is necessary so educators can access higher education and professional development and programs can reliably provide paid sick and annual leave.**

## **Create an accessible, robust substitute pool**

Access to substitute educators for ECE programs is necessary so educators can access higher education and professional development and programs can reliably provide paid sick and annual leave. The substitute pool must include individuals eligible for the range of positions that exist in ECE, including lead teachers and assistant teachers equipped to educate across the birth-to-five age range, as well as family child care providers and assistant family child care providers. As just one example, existing infrastructure such as the Aspire Registry, New York’s workforce registry, could host a search tool for local substitutes, which could be organized by local CCR&Rs or unions.

- In Washington State, a nonprofit organization runs a Shared Services hub in collaboration with the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families.<sup>73</sup> This organization administers the state’s substitute pool, which is open to all providers (including those who only accept private pay tuition, for a fee). The pool uses the MERIT workforce registry to identify qualified substitutes and match them with centers or family child care providers in need of the service.<sup>74</sup>

## **Use a shared services model to defray retirement costs**

In addition to supporting a substitute pool, a shared services model may be used to help defray the costs of retirement benefits, which are currently challenging to provide given the low profit margins with which many providers operate.<sup>75</sup> Even without employer contributions, educators need access to information about retirement account options and support finding a vendor. Early retirement contributions result in compounding savings over time, and a clear understanding of this can further motivate individuals and child care providers to pursue these services and set aside funds in a retirement account.

Shared service alliances can make this system more accessible through both cost-sharing and providing reliable information and connections.<sup>76</sup>

## Expand access to health insurance through specialized pathways

In order to expand access to health insurance for the early childhood field, New York could consider creating specialized entry for ECE educators into New York State of Health, the state’s health insurance marketplace. The United Federation of Teachers is supporting this for family child care union members in New York City. Targeted education around existing tax credits for small business owners and sole proprietors could further support employer participation in the marketplace.<sup>77</sup> Some states have created specific programs to help ECE professionals enroll in health insurance through the state marketplace, while also subsidizing premium costs for educators:

- In Washington, D.C., a program called HealthCare4ChildCare provides free or lower premiums for ECE educators working in licensed child care programs through the city’s health insurance marketplace.<sup>78</sup> Eligibility is determined by full-time or part-time employment status, without consideration of income or citizenship status.<sup>79</sup> This expands access to health care and helps avoid benefit cliffs which educators may have faced given the salary bonuses offered through D.C.’s parity compensation efforts.
- In Washington State, licensed family child care providers are eligible for health and dental insurance with a \$30 monthly premium through a collective bargaining agreement between the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and the state.<sup>80</sup> A temporary health care premium assistance program was administered by the Washington Health Care Benefit Exchange and supported a broad range of ECE educators, offering a reduced rate or \$0 health insurance premiums. The program ended in December 2023; however, 90% of participants were anticipated to qualify for state or federal premium assistance.<sup>81</sup>



“

*My program is working toward matching retirement contributions and we are very interested in offering ‘affordable’ health insurance to employees if we can figure out a way to join/create a larger network in order to reduce costs. The more people in a network or organization, the lower the costs for health insurance. What would be great is if there was a network of all licensed child care employees who are able to receive affordable health insurance.*

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# Moving Forward

New York has made incredible strides over the last three years to make early childhood care and education more affordable and accessible for families. Stable child care is crucial for employers, working families, and young children, yet ECE professionals struggle to stay in the field and many seek higher paying opportunities elsewhere. ECE professionals across settings and roles build the foundation for all later learning — they deserve to be able to support their families and their own well-being. Building an equitable, accessible, and high-quality universal child care system in New York State requires a well-prepared, valued ECE workforce, which starts with equitable compensation and benefits that allow educators to grow and remain in the field. New York State’s leadership has shown a strong commitment to New York’s children and families — the workforce has earned that same commitment.





# Authors' Statement

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—Annie Schaeffing, Senior Policy Advisor

—Joe Kannegaard, Data Analyst



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Development  
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27. In addition to missing the salaries of many members, the data in this section has certain limitations to be aware of. Because participation in Aspire is not mandatory for all ECE professionals in the state, the tables shown here are a sample of the workforce, not a complete census. Secondly, although care has been taken to annualize members' hourly wages as accurately as possible to facilitate comparison to those with yearly salaries, the unpredictable schedules of early childhood professionals means that there is a degree of uncertainty in these estimates. Finally, the Registry does not require that members ensure that their wage or salary data is up to date, meaning that members may have received raises that are not reflected in the data.
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**NYC School-based Child Care:** School-based child care provides care to six or more children who are 3–5 years old. These programs are located in an NYC Public School or are otherwise affiliated with a school.  
**State-Administered Pre-K (Pre-K for All):** Funded by New York State through the New York City Department of Education, these programs provide free part-day services targeted primarily to 4-year-olds. They are provided in public schools & early childhood programs in the community. Some programs offer extended day services to families.
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