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Thursday @ 11:15 am ET

**The Early Childhood Workforce
Across Disciplines: Program-level
opportunities to build sustainable
workforces in health, child welfare,
and education**



**Desmond P. Kelly, MD Nurturing Developing Minds
Conference & Research and Implementation Symposium:**

Restoration, Resilience and Rebuilding
Greenville ONE Center | Feb. 23-24, 2023

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INSTITUTE for CHILD SUCCESS

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**UNIVERSITY OF
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School of Medicine

The Early Childhood Workforce Across Disciplines:

Program-level opportunities to
build sustainable workforces in health, child welfare, and
education

Megan Carolan, Vice President of Policy Research

2023 Desmond P. Kelly Nurturing Developing Minds
Conference & Research Symposium



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Session Goals

Goals

- Explore challenges faced in each of these sectors of the “early childhood workforce”
- Highlight commonalities experienced across these different sectors
- Provide **actionable program-level opportunities** using research-based strategies

Full paper on website

Printed one-pager

Forthcoming Zero to Three journal article

Who is a member of the “early childhood workforce?”

In our work: a broad range of professionals working with young children & families across education and care, health, child welfare, and more:



Main Areas of Concern

- ✓ Compensation
- ✓ Burnout
- ✓ Safety
- ✓ Retention

Compensation: more than a number

- Includes
 - Salary/pay rate
 - insurance/health benefits
 - quality time off for vacation
 - sick leave;
 - maternity/paternity leave

When compensation does not meet needs:

- High stress
- Low job satisfaction
- Non-existent work-life balance
- Lack of qualified professionals
- Lack of interest in that market of employment
- Staff shortages

Median Salaries for a Selection of Child and Non-Child Focused Careers

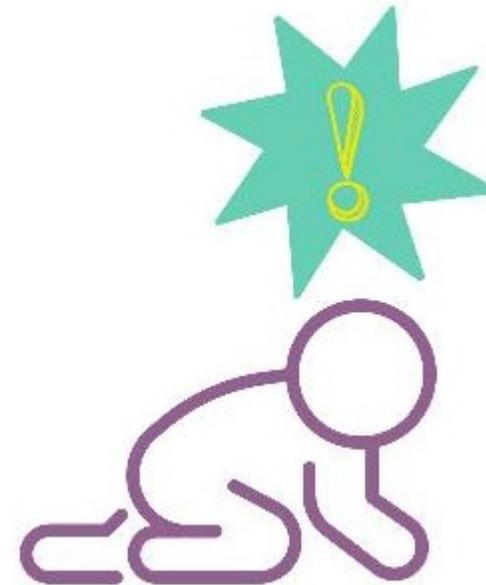
	Profession	Median Salary	Population
EUCATION PROFESSIONALS	Child care provider	\$25,460	Child
	Teaching Assistant	\$28,900	Child
	Preschool Teacher	\$31,930	Child
	Kindergarten & Elementary Teacher	\$60,660	Child
	Special Education Teacher	\$61,500	Child
	High School Teacher	\$62,870	Child
HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS	Child-life specialist*	\$49,000	Child
	In-School Nurse (RN)**	\$51,300	Child
	Certified Pediatric Nurses (CPNs)**	\$71,560	Child
	Registered Nurse	\$75,330	Adult/General
	Nurse Practitioner	\$117,670	Adult/General
	Pediatrician	\$177,130	Child
	Physicians and Surgeons	\$208,000	Adult/General
PSYCHOLOGY/ SOCIAL WORK PROFESSIONALS	Social Worker	\$51,760	General
	Guidance Counselor	\$58,120	Child
	School Psychologist***	\$74,000	Child
	Psychologist	\$82,180	Adult/General

Burnout

“A state of physical or emotional exhaustion that also involves a sense of reduced accomplishment and loss of personal identity.” (Mayo Clinic)

Negative Impacts:

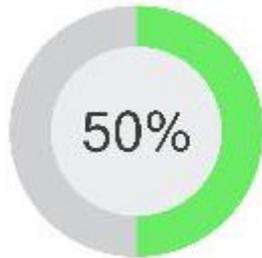
- Cardiovascular disease
- Depression
- Substance misuse
- High turnover rates
- increased expenses for training new hires
- Lower quality of care
- Can be “contagious” among staff



COVID's Impact on Well-Being



of health professionals had symptoms for **depressive disorder**



of child-life specialists at moderate risk of **burnout**

- **17%** were “high risk”



of child welfare professionals had mild/severe levels of **“peritraumatic distress”**

- 1 in 3 child care providers reported at least one **material hardship**
- Linked to higher levels of emotional distress

Safety Defined

Safety, within the context of the workforce, applies to the physical and emotional well-being of an employee.

Physical Safety & Emotional Safety

- Healthcare Benefits
- Safety Protocols
- Emergency Drills
- Access to Preventative Gear
- Stress Relieving Exercises*



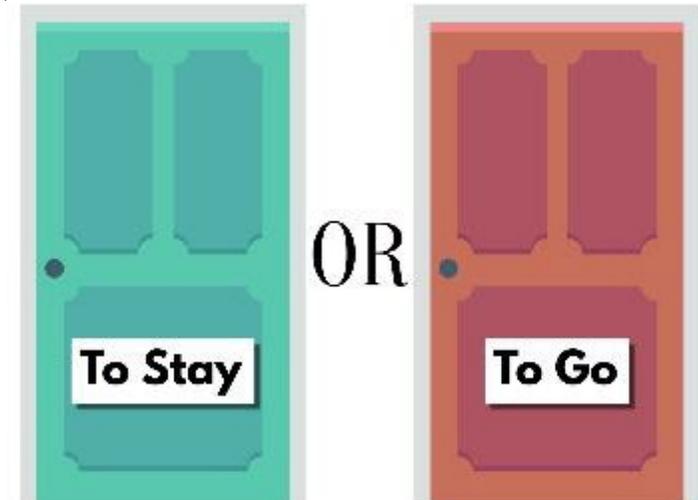
- Employer Provided Counseling
- Access to Mental Health Specialists
- Campaigns to Destigmatize Mental Health Concerns

Retention

Retention is crucial – children require consistent, high quality services in a safe and reliable approach; this is threatened with turnover

- **Common causes for leaving a position/profession:**

- Work hours and/or workload
- Work environment changes for the worse
- Requirement to learn new technologies
- Safety concerns
- Growing exhaustion
- Little job satisfaction
- Toll taken on personal life



Retention – By the Numbers

Program closures

- 1/3 of child care providers considered closing (spring 2020)
- 55% among minority-owned child care

Staff Leaving Organization

- 13% of Head Start staff left positions in previous year
- 14% of these report higher compensation elsewhere

Staff Leaving Field

- 2/3 of nurses report pandemic made them consider leaving field (all specialties)

Short Tenure

- 1.8 years: median length for child welfare caseworker
- 2 to 4 years: median length for home visitor (median)

Opportunities

Policy Level Changes

Increase Compensation

Prepare for Growth

Identify Pipeline Strategies

Make Data-Driven Decisions

Employer Level Changes

Create Conditions to Avoid Burnout

Peer Support

Embrace Virtual Opportunities

Professional Development

Safety Considerations

Policy-Level Changes

Compensation

- Child care supplementation programs have found that bonuses of around **\$1,500** support retention
- *Predictable and structured*
- Even when employees know it may not be annual

Prepare for Growth

- Growth in these fields exceed projections for overall U.S. economy (to 2030)
- US average: 8%
- Social work: 12%
- Early care & education: 18%

Pipeline Strategies

- Barriers to entry
- Historically underrepresented populations
- Higher education financing
- Internships, supervised hours, apprenticeships

Data-Driven Decisions

- Easy to feel “stuck” – is this just your program or a trend?
- Professional orgs are particularly helpful to help with this & field surveys

Employer Level Change: Creating Conditions to Avoid Burnout

Create Systems-Level Solutions

It's not just about self-care!

Self-care is an individual-level strategy.

We need more: an environment where self-care is important and supported.

Employers can:

- Create a culture where self-care is valued and respected.
- Employers must also create a culture where those efforts by employees are encouraged and respected—and not implicitly punished based on a “facetime” oriented culture.



The Cycle of Burnout



Employer Level Change: Peer Support

Benefits

- Shared familiarity with the challenges faced
- Sensitivity to the privacy of the children and families
- Comfort in community

Considerations

- Intentional cultivation on paid time
- Different needs: problem-solving vs. “venting”
- Truly create a safe space

Employer Level Change: Embracing Virtual Opportunities

Remote work was noted as one of the most supportive elements to EC workforce during pandemic – continue to use where feasible.

Child Welfare:

- Increased engagement
- Reduction of stress in transportation or travel time
- Reduced stress from home visitors
- Continued use for internal meetings can help

Room for Improvement (Telemedicine):

- Continued barriers to cost & coverage
- Opportunities for patients and providers to self-select
- Continued support of remote work, even a few days in the week



Employer Level Change: Professional Development

- High-quality, engaging PD can provide a “buffer” from burnout
- Opportunity for creating meaning and satisfaction within everyday experiences
- Improve “compassion satisfaction” - positive emotions experienced from helping someone
 - Esp if they have bureaucracy heavy daily roles



The logo for the Institute for Child Success, featuring the lowercase letters 'i(cs)' in a white, sans-serif font. The 'i' is lowercase and the 'cs' are in parentheses. The background of the slide is a purple-tinted photograph of children in a classroom.

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Thanks for joining!

**Early Childhood Workforce: Supporting the
Professionals Who Support Our Families**

Paper: <https://bit.ly/ICSworkforce>

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