Tennessee Child Care Resource & Referral Network Needs Assessment

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Authored by

OchsCenter

SIGNAL CENTERS

TN CCR&R

Tennessee Child Care Resource & Referral Network (CCR&R) Needs Assessment

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Table of Contents

Tennessee Child Care Resource & Referral Network (CCR&R) Needs Assessment 1
- Executive Summary 5
- Purpose and Methodology 5
- Results and Findings 6
  - Profile of Respondents 6
  - Training Topics 8
    - Differences by primary role 9
    - Differences by years of experience 9
    - Preferred mode and time of delivery 10
    - Conferences 10
    - Specialty training programs 11
    - CCR&R coaching 11
    - Suggestions for improvement 14
- Conclusion 14
- Appendix 16

Table of Figures and Table

Figure 1: Child Care Professional's Current role 6

Figure 2: Completed Surveys by Region (Copyright © Free Vector Maps.com) 7

Figure 3: Quality of Coaching 12

Table 1: Respondent Demographic Information 7

Table 2: Interest in Training Topics 16

Table 3: Training Format/Locations 17

Table 4: Preferred Time for Training 18

Table 5: Preferred Time for One-on-One Coaching 18

Executive Summary

The Ochs Center conducted a Needs Assessment for Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) to explore the training and coaching needs of child care professionals in Tennessee. The Needs Assessment was completed using a web survey that was distributed in an email invitation from CCR&R. The survey included questions about the child care professional's current role, years of experience in child care, and level of education. The survey also included questions – open-ended and constructed response – about topics of interest for training, preference for training delivery, and preference for types and timing of conferences.

Building positive relationships with parents that will enable child care professionals to have a partnered role in children's development was the desired training topic most frequently mentioned. Establishing a trusted relationship with parents was reported to be foundational for effective communication with parents about their child's development. Respondents also voiced a desire for training that would provide them with skills to better manage difficult behaviors exhibited by children in the classroom. There was also considerable interest expressed for participating in CCR&R's Specialty Training Programs.

In-person coaching delivered by CCR&R was reported to be highly valued by survey respondents. In-person coaching establishes rapport between the coach and child care professional which enables the professional to feel comfortable asking questions and sharing what additional information is needed. Delivering the coaching in person also allows the coach to observe activities in the classroom and to provide recommendations for addressing problems in real-time. Additionally, coaching reinforces lessons learned in training sessions. CCR&R coaching is reported to be a valuable resource for child care professionals with no substantive changes desired.

Purpose and Methodology

The Tennessee CCR&R Network staff is committed to meeting the needs of child care professionals in Tennessee. To meet those needs, it is essential to seek input from the professionals to explore the types of training and support that are needed to help them to be more successful. CCR&R contracted with the Ochs Center to conduct a needs assessment to explore the professional development needs and the best delivery methods for training and coaching.

The needs assessment was conducted through the development of a web survey to be completed by child care professionals. They were invited to participate in the needs assessment with an email invitation sent by CCR&R. The invitation included information about the purpose of the assessment and assurances that the results were confidential. Child care professionals were also given a chance to win one of ten $100 gift cards if they completed the survey.

Results and Findings

The survey was fully completed by 421 child care professionals. An additional 69 professionals provided answers to enough questions for their responses to be included in the analysis. Results and findings from 490 surveys are discussed below.

Profile of Respondents

Survey respondents were asked to select their current primary role in child care. Most of the respondents indicated that they were Directors (48.6%), followed by Educator (33.3%), and Family or Group Providers (18.2%).

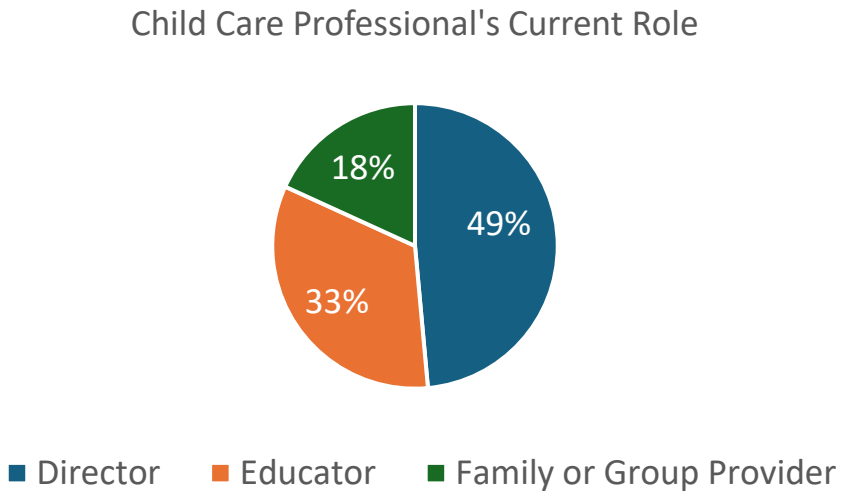


Figure 1: Child Care Professional's Current role

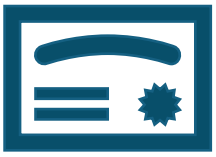
Child care professionals were also asked to provide information about their age, how long they have been employed in child care, and their highest level of education. The average age of those who responded to the survey is 52 and the average length of time employed in child care is 22 years. Most (86.9%) had completed training or a degree program beyond high school. [Table 1]

Respondent Demographic Information

Table 1: Respondent Demographic Information

- Average age: 52

- Average number of years employed in child care: 22
- Average number of years employed in current position: 14



- High school diploma: 13.1%
- Some college: 19.7%
- Associate degree: 13.0%
- CDA: 16.0%
- Bachelor's degree: 22.5%
- Graduate degree: 13.7%
- Other: 2.0%

Responses were received from all CCR&R regions in the state. Shelby had the highest number of completed surveys (80) and Mid Cumberland had the lowest number (26). [Figure 2]

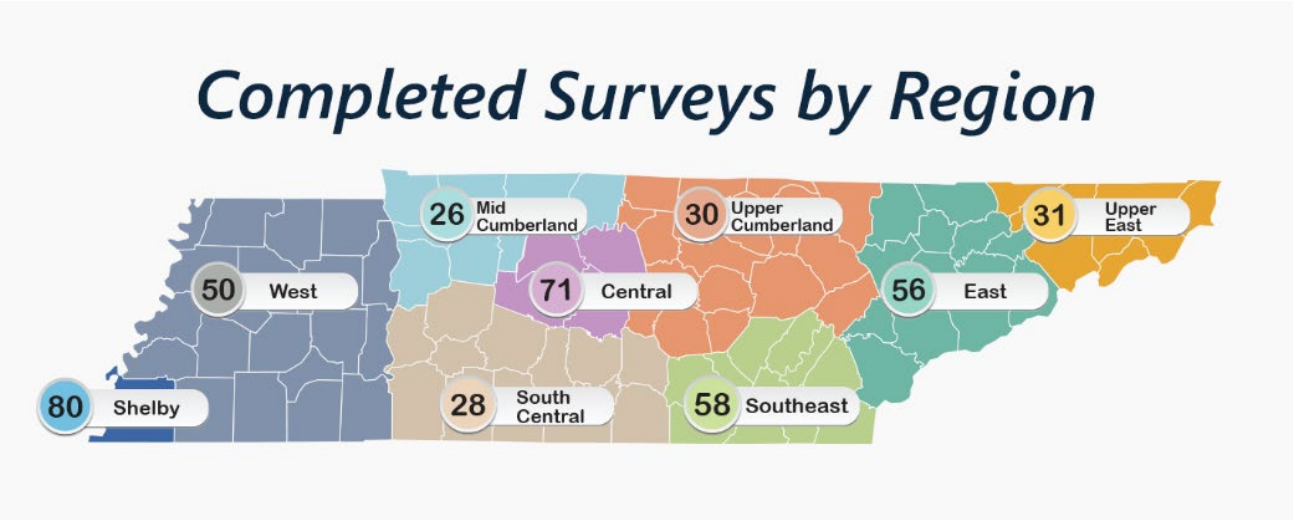


Figure 2: Completed Surveys by Region (Copyright © Free Vector Maps.com)

Training Topics

Respondents were provided with a list of 14 training topics and asked to choose which they would be interested in participating in. Interest in training was extremely high - only 5 people indicated that they were not interested. Half of the respondents indicated interest in at least 4 or more training topics. The level of interest in training clustered into three tiers of popularity.

Overall, about half of the respondents reported they were interested in attending training on the following topics:

- How to discuss children's needs with parents (54.1%)
- Children's mental health (51.6%)
- Self-care / how to deal with burnout (49.8%)
- Children's language and literacy development (44.5%)
- Children learning during free play (42.2%)

Interest in the second tier was expressed by roughly one out three respondents. These topics included:

- How to build strong relationships with families/family engagement (37.8%)
- How to use technology for your business (36.3%)
- Developmentally appropriate practices (35.3%)
- Inclusion of children with disabilities (34.7%)
- Small business practices (30.0%)
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (28.2%)
- Brain development (28.0%)

The third tier only included two topics:

- CDA certification courses (20.4%)
- Children's nutrition and meal prep (18.8%)

Respondents were also given the opportunity to offer training topics of interest before they were presented with the constructed list. The topics provided without prompting were consistent with those topics selected from the constructed list. Topics most often mentioned were **behavior management** and **family engagement**. Those who completed the survey reported they need training in how to appropriately handle children exhibiting difficult behavior and how to better engage and communicate with parents. They expressed interest in learning how to build stronger relationships with parents so that the child care professional can be viewed as a partner in the child's development and education.

Additionally, survey respondents expressed interest in learning how to better reach children with special physical or educational needs - autism, speech delay, or hearing impairments.

Related to reaching children with special needs, they expressed interest in training on how to have conversations with parents who may not recognize their child's special needs.

Other training topics suggested were:

- Time management and organizational skills
- Grant writing and how to identify alternative funding sources
- How to incorporate STEAM in the classroom
- Kindergarten readiness

Differences by primary role

Responses from survey participants who serve in various primary roles in child care service reflected different interests in desired training content. A full reporting of the differences that emerged can be found in the Appendix to this report. Family/Group Home providers expressed the highest interest in training that focuses on children's language and literacy development and how to incorporate technology into their business practices. The most frequently chosen training topics for family/group home providers were:

- Children's language and literacy development (51.7%)
- How to use technology for your business (50.6%)
- Children's mental health (46.1%)

Directors were most likely to report that they need training on how to discuss children's needs with parents and how to promote self-care to avoid burnout (55.5%). This group's top three topics from the constructed list were:

- How to discuss children's needs with parents (60.1%)
- Self-care/ how to deal with burnout (55.5%)
- Children's mental health (51.3%)

In addition to the training listed, directors Indicated that they would benefit from Director's training that includes business management, staff recruitment and retention, leadership skills, how to better motivate staff, how to effectively manage staff, and team building.

Educators were most interested in training topics about children's mental health (55.2%) and how to discuss children's needs with parents (54.0%). Educators also identified an interest in training on how to include special needs children in the classroom, lesson planning, and how best to arrange a classroom to facilitate learning and inclusion.

Differences by years of experience

Most respondents had many years of experience as a child care professional. While there were few respondents with 5 years or less of experience (5.7%), those with the least amount of

experience expressed more interest in four training topics than their colleagues with more experience:

- Language and literacy development
- Small business practices
- How to build strong relationships with families/family engagement
- CDA certification courses

Preferred mode and time of delivery

Respondents were asked to select their preferred mode of delivery for training topics they were interested in. Consistently, more than half of the respondents reported that they prefer on-line training. A full description of the preferred mode of delivery for each training topic can be found in the Appendix to this report.

Online training can be offered in a variety of methods. One option is for the training to be recorded so that the person completing the training can complete the training at their own pace. The second option is to have synchronous training with a live instructor and other participants. The third option is a hybrid mode – online training with in-person discussion sessions. More than half of the respondents (57.4%) indicated they preferred to complete the on-line training at their own pace. About one out of three (30.2%) preferred to participate in on-line training with a live instructor and other participants. Online training with in-person discussion sessions was the least popular option chosen (12.4%).

Respondents were also asked about their preference for in-person training. The most popular times reported for in-person training were weekday evenings (42.2%) and Saturday mornings (41.6%).

Conferences

Conferences are another venue to offer training opportunities for child care professionals. Historically, statewide conferences have been held but suggestions have been made to hold regional conferences. Respondents were asked to voice their preference for the location of the conferences. Almost half (43.9%) indicated that they do not have a preference about the location. For those who did voice a preference, about one out of three (30.1%) preferred to have both a statewide and regional conference. About one out of five respondents (20.1%) preferred regional conferences while only 5.1% preferred only a statewide conference. Respondents working in the South Central (39.3%) and Upper East (40.0%) regions were most likely to prefer a regional conference. Those in the Central (45.7%) and Shelby (42.3%) regions were most likely to prefer both a statewide and regional conference.

The time of the year most preferred for holding the conferences was spring (42.8%) and summer (31.8%).

Specialty training programs

CCR&R offers specialty training programs that fuse online training and follow-up coaching sessions to help training participants apply the content from the training. Currently, specialty training for Infant/Toddler, Preschool, and Family/Group Homes is available for child care professionals. About one out ten respondents (11.3%) had already completed the training. For those that have not completed these training programs, there was overwhelming interest expressed. Two out of three (66.5%) of those who had not completed the training indicated they would be interested in attending. Interest in the training was particularly high for those with 5 years or less of experience - 85.7% compared to 65.2% of those who have more years of employment in child care. Those who reported they were not interested in this type of training cited lack of time and other commitments as the primary reasons for their lack of interest.

CCR&R coaching

In addition to training, CCR&R offers coaching for child care professionals in centers and family group homes. Coaches are highly trained and educated to provide training and coaching for all who are engaged in providing child care in Tennessee. Two out of three respondents (67.4%) indicated that they were currently receiving or have received CCR&R coaching in the past three years. When asked about the quality of coaching, more than nine out of ten (91.3%) rated their coaching as good or excellent [Figure 3].

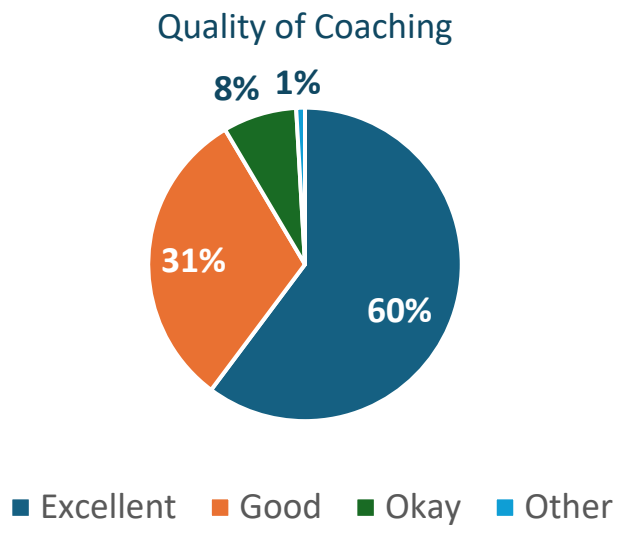


Figure 3: Quality of Coaching

Respondents highly value CCR&R coaching for a variety of reasons. Several themes emerged from the comments expressed when participants were asked what they value most about the coaching. Being able to receive in-person coaching that allowed the coach to personalize the information shared and meet the specific needs of the child care professional was most often mentioned. The ability to observe interactions with children in "real-time" allows the coach to personalize the information for each unique learning environment. Being on-site allows the coach to provide hands-on demonstrations and model techniques while providing a better opportunity to discuss questions about specific topics.

"It's so much easier to internalize new concepts when you see them working on site." *—Director*

"That the support is targeted to what I need at that moment, with my current set of children." *—Educator*

"Recommendations are specific to our learning environments." *—Director*

"The in-person hands on gives them a chance to see us and our specific needs. We learn so much better how to fix things." *—Director*

"The one on one [sic] attention to detail. I could ask my questions and had time to reflect on the topics with someone who had experience in the areas I was asking about." *—Director*

"The teachers are able to receive coaching while they are being observed in the classroom setting and offered guidance that is useful to them." *—Director*

Child care professionals also appreciated the depth of knowledge and experience possessed by CCR&R coaches. Respondents particularly appreciated that the coach's knowledge and experience allowed them to think outside of the box and offer alternative and unique solutions for challenges being experienced in the classroom. The knowledge and experience of the

coaches also enabled them to explain concepts and solutions in a manner that matched the experience and understanding of the professionals.

> ***"Coaches gave me out of the box ideas and resources to help me."*** *—Educator*
>
> ***"Wisdom with how to set up classrooms, how to do deal with children with needs, licensing questions etc."*** *—Director*
>
> ***"What I value the most is that they really break everything down to you if you don't understand."*** *—Educator*

Not only is the knowledge and experience of the coaches valued, but the way they approach the training is also recognized as a strength. Coaches were reported to be non-judgmental and understanding of the challenges faced by the educators. Their training is delivered in a caring manner that promotes relationship building between the coach and professionals and creates a sense of partnership.

> ***"Relationships are formed. I love that coaches come in with a non-judgmental approach meeting me where I'm at and taking me where I want to go. I like how they work together and offer assistance where I need it and then putting me in contact with the right coach for the next occasion."*** *—Family Group Home Provider*

Finally, the sense of partnership is further strengthened by the flexibility and availability of the coaches. The coach's ability to schedule training around the needs of the provider is invaluable.

Flexibility conveys that they care about the professionals and the children and reinforces the idea that they are just a phone call or email away.

> ***"The flexibility from the coaches. They are always willing to come when needed. I also value the feedback from the coaches. This help me to know if the center is making progress and the next steps that I should take as a Director."*** *—Director*
>
> ***"That they really care about helping and making sure that we are good and always letting us know that they are just a call away."*** *—Director*
>
> ***"They are willing to come out as much as you need them to. They are willing to answer all questions you may have."*** *—Director*

When asked about their preferred times for one-one-one coaching, respondents indicated the best times were weekday afternoons (66.9%) and weekday mornings (37.1%).

Suggestions for improvement

Respondents were also offered the opportunity to make recommendations for how coaching can be improved. Few suggestions were offered for improvement, which reinforces the high marks given for the quality of coaching.

- One suggestion was for CCR&R to offer a full day of in-person coaching at a center to better meet the needs of each classroom educator.
- A second suggestion was for coaches to meet with family group home providers in the region to inform them of upcoming changes in rules and regulations before the changes go into effect.

Conclusion

CCR&R offers training and coaching to help meet the needs of child care professionals in Tennessee. The Ochs Center conducted a survey with these professionals to gain a better understanding of their training and coaching needs. Those who responded to the survey were

most interested in participating in training to learn more about how to effectively build positive relationships with parents so that child care professionals are viewed as partners to help guide their child's development. Having a positive relationship with parents would also help to build trust so that difficult conversations about the child's development could be productive. Respondents also expressed an interest in gaining knowledge about how to manage difficult behaviors in the classroom.

CCR&R also offers Specialty Training Programs that include online training sessions followed by coaching on the training topic. There was considerable interest expressed by respondents in taking part in this type of training. For other training, the favored mode of delivery was the online format. Other venues for learning include an annual conference. Many respondents did not have a preference about the location of a conference but for those who did, hosting statewide and regional conferences were preferred.

In-person coaching delivered by CCR&R received high ratings and was valued by participants. In-person coaching reportedly allows coaches to demonstrate and apply techniques that have been shared in previous training. Delivering the coaching in person allowed child care professionals to build a relationship with the coach that creates a safe environment to ask questions and express what they need to increase their knowledge and improve their skillset to better to care for children. The positive relationship also created a safe environment for coaches to provide suggestions and recommendations for strategies to better meet the needs of the children.

The findings from the needs assessment can be used to inform decisions about future training topics. However, high ratings of the current coaching efforts suggest that few changes are needed. Comments provided illustrate that positive relationships between coaches and educators have been formed. Furthermore, coaches will continue to be seen as sources of needed information and resources for meeting the needs of child care professionals.

Appendix

Table 2: Interest in Training Topics

TRAINING TOPICS	Overall	Directors	Educators	Family/Group Home
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)	28.2%	26.9%	28.8%	30.3%
Brain development	28.0%	25.6%	30.7%	29.2%
CDA certification courses	20.4%	22.7%	20.9%	13.5%
Children learning during free play	42.2%	43.7%	39.9%	42.7%
Children's language and literacy development	44.5%	38.2%	49.7%	51.7%
Children's mental health	51.6%	51.3%	55.2%	46.1%
Children's nutrition and meal prep	18.8%	19.3%	16.0%	22.5%
Developmentally appropriate practices	35.3%	41.6%	30.1%	28.1%
How to build strong relationships with families/family engagement	37.8%	42.9%	31.3%	36.0%
How to discuss children's needs with parents	54.1%	60.1%	54.0%	38.2%
How to use technology for your business	36.3%	40.3%	22.7%	50.6%
Inclusion of children with disabilities	34.7%	31.9%	42.9%	27.0%
Self-care / how to deal with burnout	49.8%	55.5%	44.8%	43.8%
Small business practices	30.0%	35.3%	15.3%	42.7%

Table 3: Training Format/Locations

Training Topics	On-site training	Training in a central location	Training plus on-site coaching	On-site coaching	On-line	No preference
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)	32.6%	22.5%	19.6%	15.2%	59.4%	18.8%
Brain development	35.0%	23.4%	20.4%	13.1%	56.2%	16.1%
CDA certification courses	33.0%	25.0%	20.0%	14.0%	59.0%	15.0%
Children learning during free play	35.3%	22.7%	21.7%	13.5%	51.7%	15.4%
Children's language and literacy development	28.0%	21.6%	22.0%	14.2%	57.3%	13.8%
Children's mental health	26.5%	24.9%	18.6%	16.6%	52.2%	17.4%
Children's nutrition and meal prep	28.3%	20.7%	18.5%	16.3%	54.3%	18.5%
Developmentally appropriate practices	35.8%	18.5%	22.5%	16.8%	51.4%	15.0%
How to build strong relationships with families/family engagement	33.0%	23.2%	21.1%	14.6%	51.9%	14.1%
How to discuss children's needs with parents	33.6%	21.5%	17.7%	15.8%	50.9%	14.3%
How to use technology for your business	37.6%	24.2%	18.0%	19.7%	42.7%	14.6%
Inclusion of children with disabilities	35.3%	20.6%	24.1%	21.8%	48.5%	15.3%
Self-care / how to deal with burnout	27.0%	19.3%	16.0%	15.6%	55.5%	16.0%
Small business practices	27.2%	21.8%	20.4%	15.6%	54.4%	18.4%

Preferred time for training

Table 4: Preferred Time for Training

Weekday morning	21.6%
Weekday afternoon	25.3%
Weekday evening	**42.2%**
Saturday morning	**41.6%**
Saturday afternoon	17.8%
Saturday evening	6.5%
Sunday morning	3.3%
Sunday afternoon	7.1%
Sunday evening	4.7%

Preferred time for one-on-one coaching

Table 5: Preferred Time for One-on-One Coaching

Weekday morning	**37.1%**
Weekday afternoon	**66.9%**
Weekday evening	24.9%
Saturday morning	20.0%
Saturday afternoon	10.6%
Saturday evening	4.9%
Sunday morning	1.0%
Sunday afternoon	2.7%
Sunday evening	2.0%