



OchsCenter

CCR&R Infant/Toddler Educator Needs Assessment

Final Report
September 2021

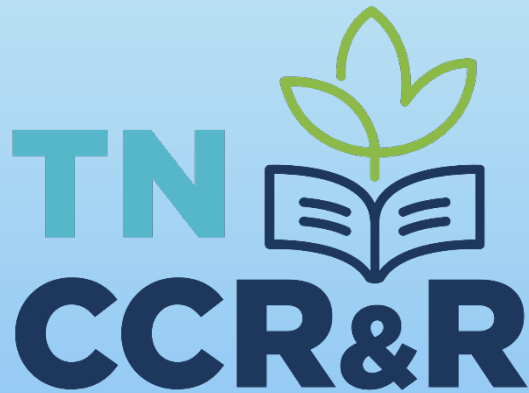
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Cooperating Agencies





Purpose and Methodology

Purpose: to learn about the needs of Infant and Toddler educators and recommendations for addressing their needs

Methodology: iterative, mixed-mode approach





Phase 1: Challenges and Work Environment

Purpose: to hear about needs of Infant and Toddler Educators

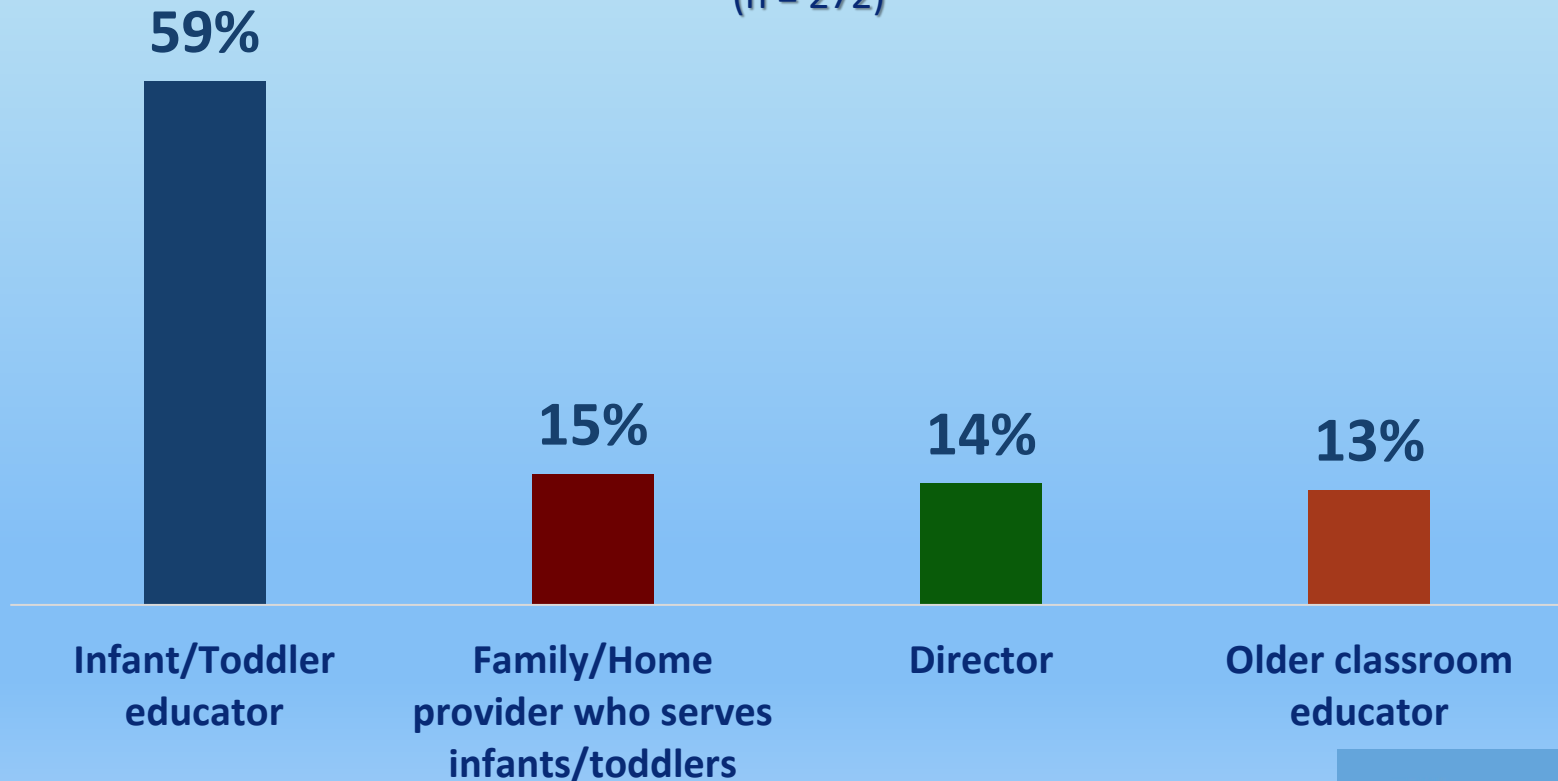
- Focus groups with CCR&R Infant and Toddler quality coaches
- Key informant interviews with agency directors, educators, CCR&R leadership, and CCR&R lead coaches



Phase 2: Challenges and Work Environment

Online survey

(n = 272)





Phase 3: How to Address Challenges

Focus groups and key informant interviews

- Focus groups with Directors and CCR&R Infant and Toddler Coaches and management
- Key informant interviews with agency directors, family and group home owners, and agency and state leadership





Challenges experienced by Infant and Toddler Educators



Emerging Themes

- **Lack of respect for early child care as a profession**
- **Workplace environment**
- **Classroom design and curriculum**
- **Low wages and lack of benefits**





Ways to Elevate Respect

- Recognition and acceptance that elevating the profession is a shared responsibility for all stakeholders.
- Educators need to embrace their role as a professional. This requires dressing and interacting with parents in a professional manner.
- Educators should explore ways to continue their education and stay abreast of current research about infant and toddler development.
- The phrase “day care” should be removed from forms and communications across all state agencies.





Sources of Stress for Infant and Toddler Educators

- Knowing their job could result in life or death for the infants and toddlers.
- Developmental stages associated with need for more individualized attention. Infants and toddlers communicate their needs by crying, eating on demand, and acting out to get needed attention.
- Expectations of first-time parents.
- Lack of social skills development due to isolation from pandemic.



Suggestions for Reducing Stress for Infant and Toddler Educators

- Provide more specialized training or job shadowing so they are better prepared for their jobs.
- Provide a “floater” so educator can step out for a break to revitalize.
- Provide opportunities for educators and parents to communicate daily.
- Create a network of educators to share ideas about effective ways to manage stresses associated with infant and toddler education.



Well-Designed Classroom

- Ensuring adequate storage space for materials and toys.
- All Infant and Toddler classrooms should have a rocking chair and changing table.
- Designing a designated cozy space that is easy for the educator to join the children.
- Classrooms should have low shelves containing touchable books.
- Open baskets for variety of toys, rattles, and blocks.

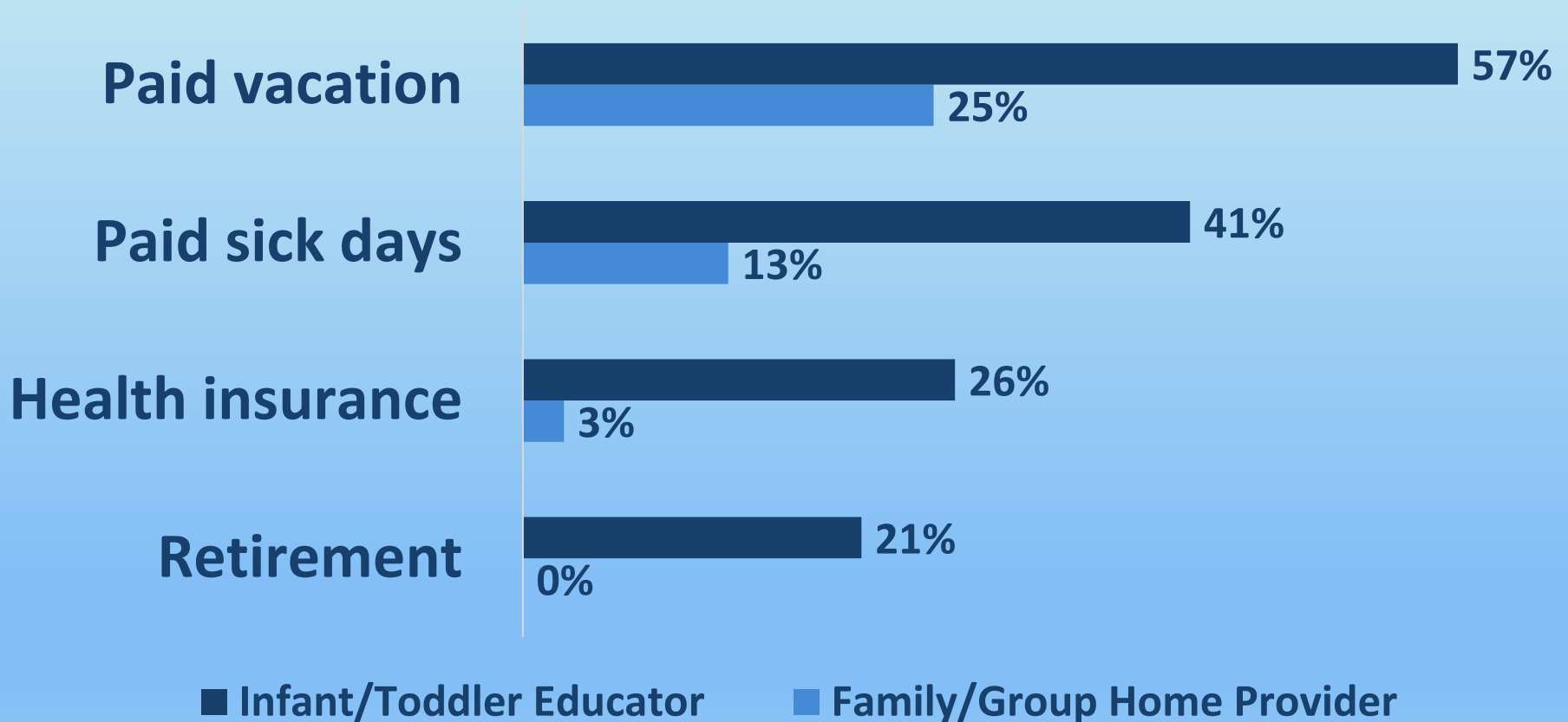


Training Needs

- **Developmentally appropriate practice**
- **How to communicate effectively with parents**
- **How to use curriculum and lesson planning**
- **How to design an inclusive classroom to accommodate infants and toddlers with special needs**
- **How to recognize autism and create an inclusive environment**
- **How to expose children to different cultures**
- **Self-care**



Low Wages and Lack of Benefits





Barriers for Participation in WAGE\$[®] Tennessee

- Rural areas lack or have limited internet service. The cost to operate a satellite phone is cost prohibitive for Family and Group Home providers who rely on that for their internet service.
- Lack of understanding of the benefits of the program and how to navigate the process to complete the necessary paperwork.
- Fatigue and lack of time to enroll in the necessary coursework.
- Lack of comfort with attending classes and participating in formal education courses.



Recommendations for Increasing Participation in WAGE\$[®] Tennessee

- Send postcards and emails introducing the program and a short explanation followed by individual phone calls.
- Individualized supports that might include assistance in completing required paperwork.
- Explore different options for allowing program requirements to be met through other means than formal education, such as a weekly visit from CCR&R so they could award the certification.
- Offer a “pre” WAGE\$[®] Tennessee program to increase providers’ confidence in their ability to successfully complete academic coursework.
- Create a CDA track just for Family and Group Home providers to be completed at a community college.



Conclusions

- Overwhelmingly, this study found that child care professionals are passionate about the need for quality child care.
- Educators believe that early child care sets the foundation for future learning and impacts the children for the rest of their lives.
- They understand that infants and toddlers need stable relationships to thrive fully and lack of consistency resulting from high staff turn-over may have a detrimental impact on their development.





Conclusions

Educators can begin by

- **projecting a professional image.**
- **adopting language that places Infant and Toddler education on the education continuum.**
- **embracing opportunities to further their education and training.**



Conclusions

Parents can begin by ...

- recognizing educators as partners in their child's development and life journey.
- exploring ways to collaborate with educators so that learning is re-enforced at home.



Conclusions

Directors and owners can begin by ...

- **being more intentional in demonstrating their appreciation for the contribution educators are making to ensure infants and toddlers are safe and meeting developmental milestones.**
- **reviewing existing policies and procedures to determine if changes can be made to mitigate stressors experienced by educators.**



Conclusions

Policy makers can begin by ...

- advocating for birth to three education.
- reviewing existing rules and regulations to ensure that undue burdens are not being placed on educators.



“Please listen to our thoughts and take them seriously. We aren't complaining, we are telling you what we actually need to continue in the career we love.”

Questions or comments?



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