

## Snapshot of the 2018 Early Head Start Workforce: Who Are the Teachers and Home Visitors Serving Children and Families?



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### Introduction

In this brief, we use data collected in spring 2018 from a nationally representative sample to describe Early Head Start teachers' and home visitors' characteristics, the program activities (or processes) they are part of, and how well their programs operate (or function). We also examine how staff-specific program processes and program functioning are associated with job satisfaction for teachers and home visitors.

### Previous research shows teachers and home visitors are central to the quality of Early Head Start services

Adults who provide care and education to young children have a great responsibility, as children's early environment and relationships have profound and lifelong effects.<sup>1</sup> The [Early Head Start conceptual framework](#)<sup>2</sup> recognizes that the characteristics of teachers and home visitors who deliver core Early Head Start services to children and families are an important factor in achieving quality. The framework illustrates several pathways through which Early Head Start staff might influence service quality and promote enhanced outcomes for children and families. Staff characteristics such as teacher experience, depressive symptoms, and beliefs related to child development have been frequently (but not always) associated with the quality of early education and care.<sup>3,4,5,6</sup> Although research with home visitors is more sparse, one review of the research found mixed evidence that home visitors' educational attainment and experience are related to family outcomes.<sup>7</sup>

Program processes and functioning might also influence the quality of the support children and families receive. Strong professional development is often a key element of efforts to improve early childhood programs and is



### Selected key findings from spring 2018

- Most teachers and home visitors have postsecondary degrees. A large majority of staff without a postsecondary degree either have, or are working toward, a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential.
- Teachers with less education and home visitors with less experience are the most likely to meet with their coach frequently (at least once a week). For most other professional development activities, however, staff with different levels of experience or education receive the same level of support.
- In general, teachers and home visitors perceive their centers and programs to have positive organizational climates and they are satisfied with their jobs.
- Centers and programs are more likely to face challenges in hiring qualified staff than to face challenges in retaining them.
- Staff receiving more intensive professional development and working in centers and programs with strong leadership support and positive organizational climates are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs.

associated with quality in the classroom and in home visiting.<sup>8,9,10</sup> Other forms of support associated with classroom quality include support from leaders and the climate of the organization.<sup>11,12,13</sup> Teachers and home visitors who are satisfied with their jobs are less likely to leave their jobs.<sup>14,15</sup> Both ongoing professional development and efforts to retain staff might support more optimal quality of care and education.

The characteristics of Early Head Start staff, the professional development they receive, their job satisfaction, and their retention provide important context for understanding the quality of services provided to children and families. This brief describes key features of staff and their experiences, which may inform Early Head Start's efforts to support and retain teachers and home visitors.

## Research questions

Guided by previous research and the Early Head Start conceptual framework, this brief explores five research questions to better understand the characteristics and experiences of Early Head Start teachers and home visitors that might influence service quality and program outcomes:

1. What are the characteristics of Early Head Start teachers and home visitors?
2. What professional development do teachers and home visitors receive to support responsive relationships and other Early Head Start goals?
  - a. How do key aspects of professional development differ based on the education and experience levels of teachers and home visitors?
3. What leadership support and organizational climate do teachers and home visitors experience, and what is their job satisfaction?
4. What is the extent of retention and turnover among teachers and home visitors?
5. How are professional development, leadership support, and organizational climate associated with teacher and home visitor job satisfaction?

The answers to these questions could help Early Head Start policymakers and practitioners better understand the composition and needs of the Early Head Start teaching and home visiting workforces. As noted, prior research identifies relationships between these factors and quality of teaching and home visiting. Although we do not examine these relationships in this brief, data on these factors could inform policies and initiatives intended to build and maintain a high quality Early Head Start workforce.

Appendix A includes details about our sampling, measures, and methods.

## What does Baby FACES 2018 measure?

Baby FACES 2018 measures several aspects of teacher and home visitor characteristics and staff-related program processes and program functioning from the Early Head Start conceptual framework.<sup>17</sup> The findings in this brief are based primarily on data from surveys of Early Head Start teachers and home visitors, and of their center and program directors (see Exhibit A.1 in Appendix A for more information about measures).

### Overview of Baby FACES study

The Early Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (Baby FACES) is a nationally representative, descriptive study of Early Head Start. It was designed to inform national program planning, technical assistance, and research by providing descriptive information about (1) the quality, frequency, and intensity of Early Head Start services; (2) the characteristics, qualifications, and professional supports of Early Head Start staff; (3) the characteristics of the children and families served; and (4) how Early Head Start children and families are faring in key areas of well-being. It also allows for exploration of associations between the type and quality of Early Head Start services and child and family well-being.

Baby FACES uses a repeated cross-sectional approach to provide a comprehensive snapshot of Early Head Start with a nationally representative sample of programs, centers, home visitors, teachers and classrooms, and enrolled families and children in Office of Head Start (OHS) Regions I through X.<sup>16</sup> Using the cross-sectional design, Baby FACES was fielded in spring 2018 (Baby FACES 2018) and will be fielded again in spring 2022 (Baby FACES 2022).

This research brief uses data from the 2018 round, which measured teacher and home visitor characteristics and staff-related center and program processes and functioning. Data collection approaches included surveys of program and center directors, teachers and home visitors, and children's parents. The data are weighted to represent all Early Head Start programs, centers, staff, and children and families in Regions I through X.

- **Measures of teacher and home visitor characteristics** include teacher- and home-visitor-reported demographic information, languages spoken, education and other credentials, and early childhood education (ECE) experience. These staff also responded to questions from scales assessing their current mental health and beliefs about caring for and educating infants and toddlers (Appendix Exhibit A.1).
- **Measures of professional development** include directors' reports of their centers' or programs' policies and practices involving supervision, observations, professional development plans, training, and coaching for their teachers and home visitors. Teachers and home visitors reported details about the professional development they received, including supervision, observations, professional development plans, training, and coaching.
- **Measures of leadership support, organizational climate, and job satisfaction** are based on teacher, home visitor, and center director reports using scales designed to assess these areas (Appendix Exhibit A.1).
- **Measures of retention and turnover** are based on directors' reports of the average length of time teachers and home visitors stayed at their center or program, how many teachers and home visitors had left the center or program since the start of the program year (September 2017), and the difficulty of hiring and retaining teachers and home visitors.

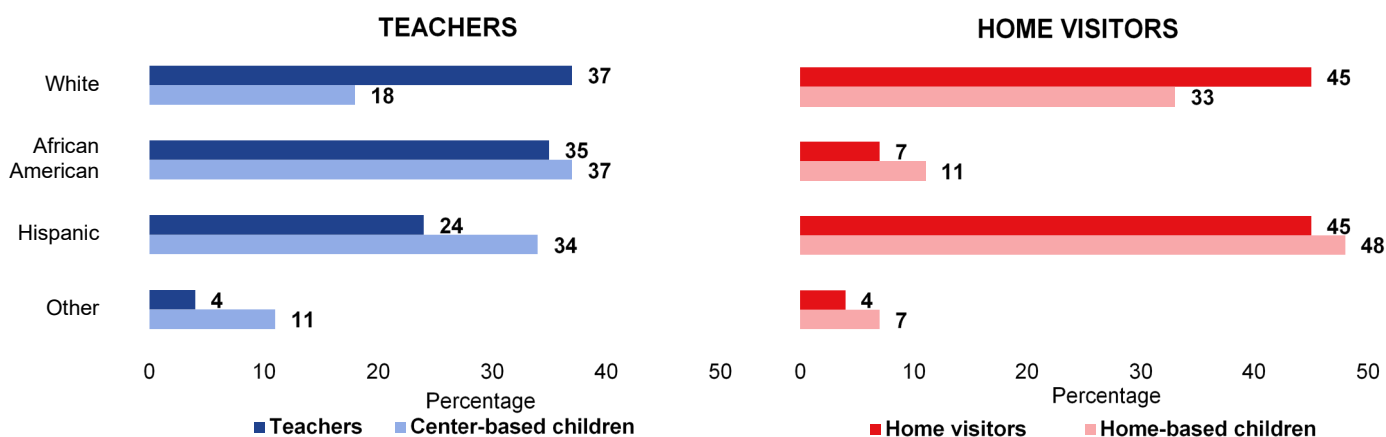
## What are the characteristics of Early Head Start teachers and home visitors?

The Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) have several requirements for the qualifications and competencies of infant and toddler teachers and home visitors. The HSPPS require that teachers have at least a Child Development Associate (CDA) or similar credential and either training or coursework in early childhood development, with a focus on infants and toddlers.<sup>18</sup> Home visitors must have a home-based CDA or similar credential, or equivalent coursework as part of an associate or bachelor's degree, although this requirement did not take effect until shortly after we surveyed home visitors. The HSPPS also require that programs make mental health and wellness information available to staff.<sup>19</sup>

### Demographics

As of spring 2018, almost all teachers and home visitors (98 percent of each group) identify as female. Most teachers are non-Hispanic White or African American, and most home visitors are non-Hispanic White or Hispanic (Exhibit 1). These teachers and home visitors have diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, as do the children and families they serve. However, the proportion of teachers of color (63 percent) is less than the proportion of center-based children of color (82 percent) in Early Head Start, and the same is true for home visitors of color (55 percent) compared to home-based children of color (67 percent).

### Exhibit 1. Staff, families, and children are racially and ethnically diverse



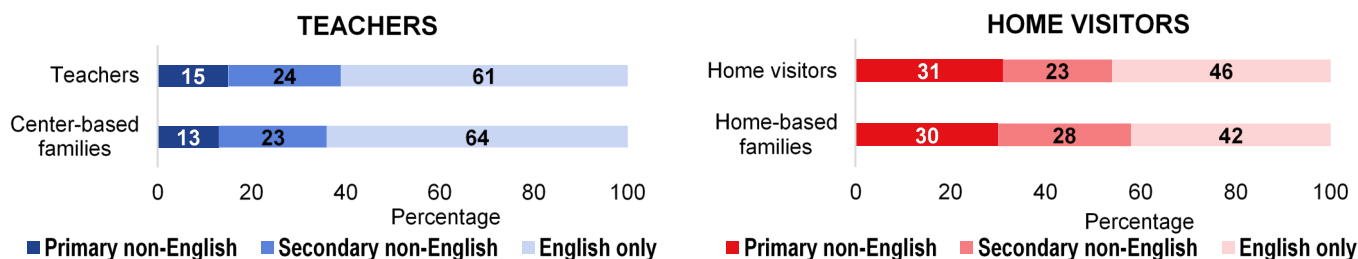
Source: Spring 2018 Baby FACES Staff (Teacher and Home Visitor) and Parent Surveys.

Note: White, African American, and Other are of non-Hispanic ethnicity only. Hispanic includes Hispanic/Latino ethnicity of all races. Other includes American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and multiracial.

## Language

More than one-third of teachers (39 percent) and slightly more than half of home visitors (54 percent) speak a language other than English. Fifteen percent of teachers and 31 percent of home visitors reported that a non-English language was their primary language; another 24 percent of teachers and 23 percent of home visitors said a non-English language was their secondary language (Exhibit 2). A non-English language is spoken in the households of about one-third of center-based children (36 percent) and more than half of home-based children (58 percent). For the vast majority of those staff and children, Spanish is the non-English language spoken.

**Exhibit 2. Many staff, families, and children speak a language other than English**



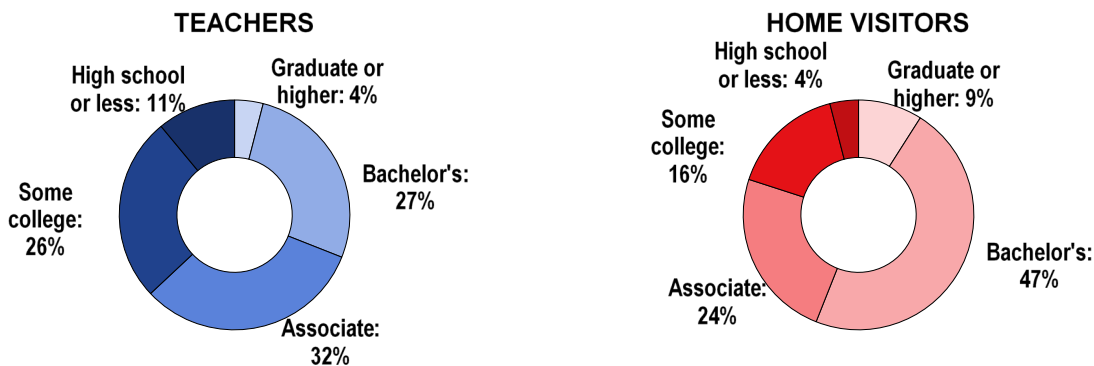
Source: Spring 2018 Baby FACES Staff (Teacher and Home Visitor) and Parent Surveys.

Note: Teachers and home visitors are categorized as “primary non-English” if the primary language they speak is not English, regardless of other languages spoken. (Virtually all of these staff also speak English.) They are categorized as “secondary non-English” if the primary language they speak is English, and they speak at least one other language. Center-based and home-based families are categorized as “primary non-English” if they speak a non-English language in the household more often than English, or if they only speak a non-English language. They are categorized as “secondary non-English” if they speak a non-English language in the household, but less than or equally as often as English.

## Education and credentials

Almost two-thirds of teachers (63 percent) and most home visitors (80 percent) have a postsecondary degree (associate degree or higher; Exhibit 3). The vast majority of staff with a postsecondary degree (93 percent of these teachers and 85 percent of these home visitors) have a degree related to ECE or prenatal, infant, or toddler development. A large majority of staff without a postsecondary degree either have an Infant/Toddler, Pre-K, or other type of CDA (80 percent of teachers and 60 percent of home visitors without degrees), or are working toward a CDA (15 percent of teachers and 20 percent of home visitors without degrees). Less than half of staff without a postsecondary degree have a state certification or license that meets or exceeds CDA requirements (19 percent of teachers and 43 percent of home visitors without degrees), with another 8 percent of these teachers and 12 percent of these home visitors working toward that certification. Overall, 96 percent of all teachers and 94 percent of all home visitors have either a postsecondary degree, CDA, or similar state certification or license.<sup>20</sup>

**Exhibit 3. Most teachers and home visitors have postsecondary degrees**



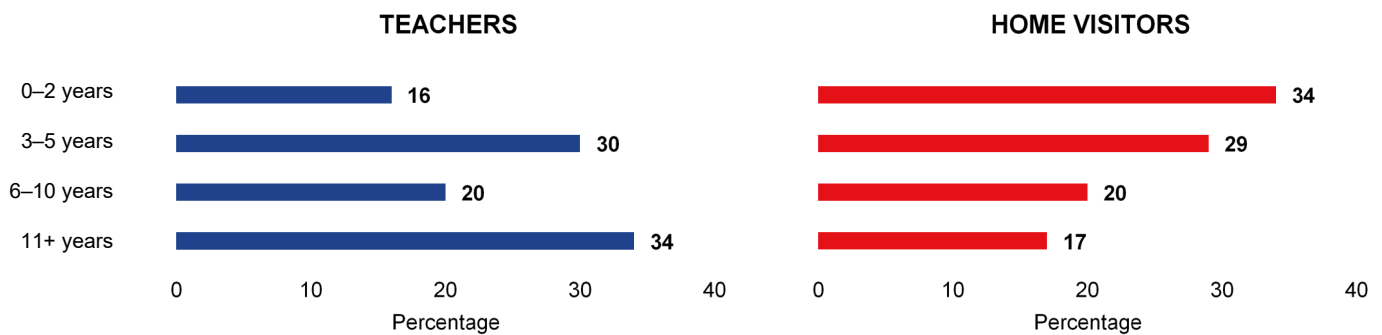
Source: Spring 2018 Baby FACES Staff (Teacher and Home Visitor) Surveys.

Note: “Some college” includes attending some college without earning a degree, and/or earning vocational or technical degrees.

## Experience

About one in six Early Head Start teachers (16 percent) and one in three home visitors (34 percent) are in their first two years of working with infants and toddlers as a teacher or home visitor; 34 percent of teachers and 17 percent of home visitors have 11 or more years of experience working with infants and toddlers and their families as a teacher or home visitor (Exhibit 4). On average, teachers have 9.2 years of teaching experience and 6.1 years of Early Head Start experience. In contrast, home visitors have an average 6.2 years of home visiting experience and 7.1 years of Early Head Start experience. These averages suggest that many teachers have teaching experience outside of Early Head Start, whereas many home visitors have experience in Early Head Start in roles other than home visiting. Exhibit B.1 in Appendix B has detailed results.

### Exhibit 4. More than half of teachers and about one-third of home visitors have more than five years of infant and toddler experience



Source: Spring 2018 Baby FACES Staff (Teacher and Home Visitor) Surveys.

Note: Teachers were asked how many years they have taught infants and toddlers. Home visitors were asked how many years they have worked as a home visitor serving families with infants and toddlers.

## Mental health

The prevalence of clinically significant depressive symptoms among teachers and home visitors is low. Almost all teachers (93 percent) and home visitors (91 percent) reported no symptoms at all, or low levels of symptoms that have no clinical significance. A small group of teachers (5 percent) and home visitors (8 percent) reported depressive symptoms that were elevated but did not reach the threshold of potential clinical significance. Only a minimal proportion of teachers (2 percent) and home visitors (1 percent) reported levels of symptoms consistent with potential clinical significance.<sup>21</sup> Classifications are based on the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale-Revised (CESD-R) scoring guidelines.

**93 percent of teachers and 91 percent of home visitors** reported no symptoms at all or low levels of symptoms that have no clinical significance.

## Teacher attitudes and beliefs about infant and toddler care and education

Most teachers hold developmentally appropriate beliefs about (1) the importance of relationships and responsiveness and (2) the role of adults in children’s learning.<sup>22</sup> Average teacher scores on these two subscales of the Teacher Beliefs about Infant and Toddler Care and Education measure are 5.4 and 5.5, respectively. These averages are close to the maximum score on a possible range of 1 (very strongly disagree) to 6 (very strongly agree) assessing the developmental appropriateness of beliefs about how to care for and support infant and toddler development.

## Summary and implications

- **Teachers and home visitors are racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse, as are the children and families they serve.** Teachers and home visitors of color are still somewhat underrepresented relative to the populations they serve, signaling an opportunity to focus policies and practices on hiring and retaining diverse staff.
- **Most teachers and home visitors have postsecondary degrees.** A large majority of staff without a postsecondary degree either have, or are working toward, a CDA.
- **A majority of Early Head Start teachers and more than one-third of home visitors have more than five years of experience working with infants and toddlers.** Many teachers have teaching experience outside of Early Head Start, whereas many home visitors have experience in other positions at Early Head Start programs.
- **Few staff reported levels of depressive symptoms high enough to be potentially clinically significant.**
- **Regarding infant and toddler care and education, most teachers hold developmentally appropriate beliefs about the importance of responsive care and supporting children’s engagement in learning.**

## What professional development do teachers and home visitors receive to support responsive relationships and other Early Head Start goals?

The HSPPS require programs to adopt a systematic approach to professional development that is individualized to staff needs.<sup>23</sup> Staff must receive training across a variety of topics, including implementing curricula, providing effective adult–child interactions, and engaging families. Programs must have a coaching strategy that assesses staff needs and provides coaching to staff who would benefit most. Coaching must be intensive and goal driven, and provided by a person with expertise in specific areas who models practices, provides professional development, and works with staff to improve their performance. Within these requirements, programs have flexibility in determining specific approaches to professional development. Programs might use that flexibility to tailor professional development to various roles and responsibilities, and to various levels of education or experience.

For this research question, we also examined differences in key aspects of the professional development received by teachers or home visitors with different levels of education and experience. These key aspects include frequency of one-on-one and group supervision; frequency of coaching; having an individual professional development plan; and being observed and receiving feedback. These are also the variables of interest in Research Question 5. For education levels, we compared staff with an associate degree or less to those with a bachelor’s degree or higher. For experience levels, we compared staff with 0 to 2, 3 to 5, 6 to 10, and 11 or more years of experience in working with infants and toddlers.<sup>24</sup>

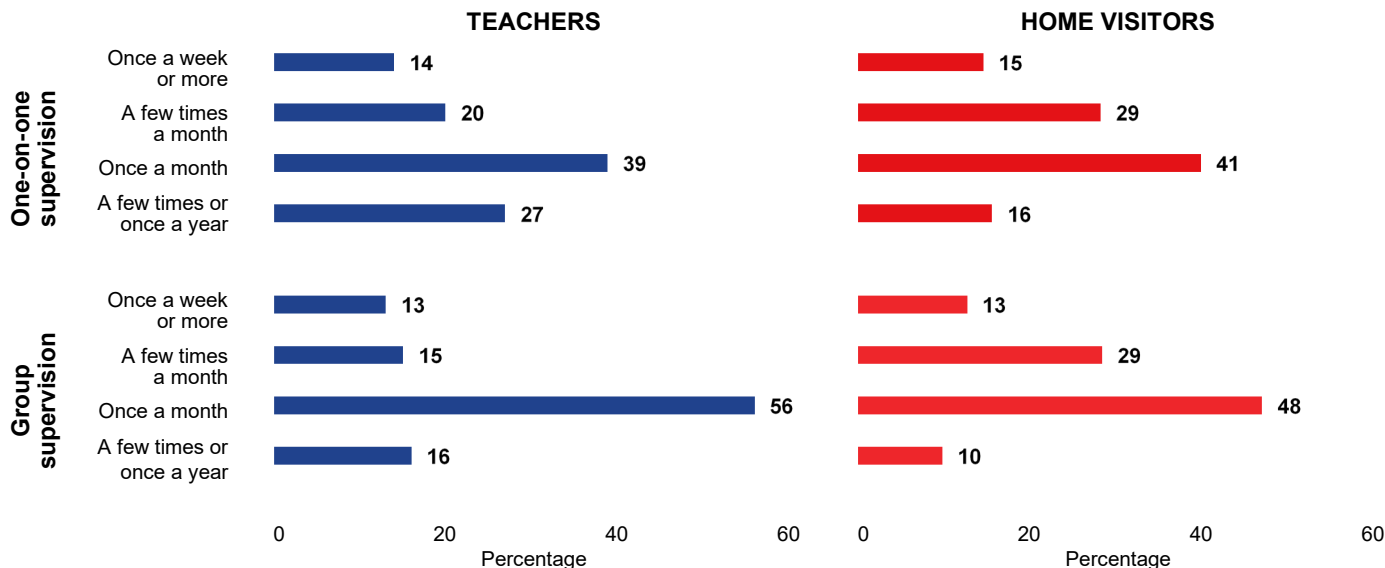
### Supervision

As of spring 2018, almost all center and program directors (89 percent and 98 percent, respectively) require supervisors to conduct regular and ongoing supervision—and give feedback on staff performance—in both individual and group settings. Four out of every five center and program directors (80 and 81 percent, respectively) also reported training supervisors on how to conduct reflective supervision. Most teachers and home visitors reported having one-on-one supervision meetings, and most reported having group supervision meetings. Supervisory meetings most commonly take place monthly, but many teachers and home visitors (28 to 44 percent, depending on the staff and type of meeting) have these meetings more often (Exhibit 5).

**85 percent of teachers** and **91 percent of home visitors** have **individual** supervision meetings.

**90 percent of teachers** and **84 percent of home visitors** have **group** supervision meetings.

**Exhibit 5. Supervision meetings with staff are usually held at least once a month**



Source: Spring 2018 Baby FACES Staff (Teacher and Home Visitor) Surveys.

Note: Percentages are among teachers or home visitors who have supervision meetings of that type.

Teachers and home visitors with different levels of education or experience have similar access to various types of supervision (individual and group meetings). Among staff who have supervision meetings, the frequency of those meetings does not differ by the teacher’s or home visitor’s level of education and experience, with one exception: one-on-one supervision for home visitors does vary with the home visitor’s level of experience. Home visitors with the least experience (0 to 2 years) have the highest likelihood of having individual meetings weekly or more often (Appendix Exhibit B.5).

**Observations**

Almost all center and program directors (95 percent and 90 percent, respectively) reported requiring supervisors to regularly observe staff. Most teachers (83 percent) and almost two-thirds of home visitors (65 percent) reported they had been observed since the start of the program year (September 2017) and received feedback from the observation. Teachers and home visitors with different levels of education and experience reported similar rates of being observed and receiving feedback (Appendix Exhibit B.5).

**83 percent of teachers and 65 percent of home visitors** have been observed and received feedback.

**Professional development plans**

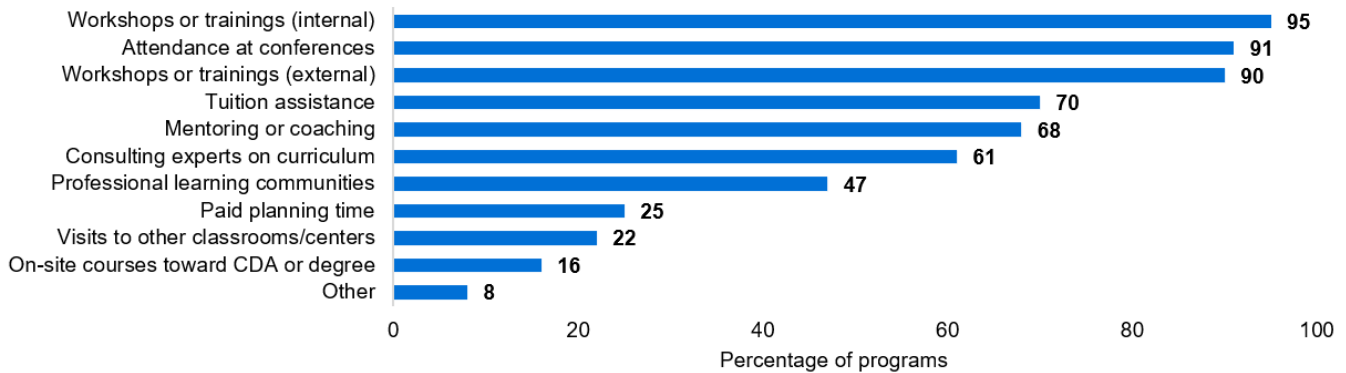
Virtually all program directors (99 percent) reported developing annual program-wide plans for staff professional development and surveying staff about their professional development needs to inform the plan. Most teachers (85 percent) and home visitors (82 percent) reported that they have individual professional development plans that are used to guide their professional development. Staff with different levels of education and experience reported similar rates of having an individual plan (Appendix Exhibit B.5).

**85 percent of teachers and 82 percent of home visitors** have individual professional development plans to guide their development.

**Training**

Program directors reported using Early Head Start training and technical assistance (TTA) funds in many similar ways. Conference attendance, internal workshops or trainings, and attendance at external workshops or trainings (Exhibit 6) are each supported by more than 9 in 10 programs. Use of TTA funds for other, potentially more intensive activities—such as professional learning communities, paid planning time, and on-site courses (toward a CDA, associate, or bachelor’s degree)—is less common (47 percent or less).

**Exhibit 6. Programs commonly support participation in trainings and conferences**



Source: Spring 2018 Baby FACES Program Director Survey.  
CDA = Child Development Associate.

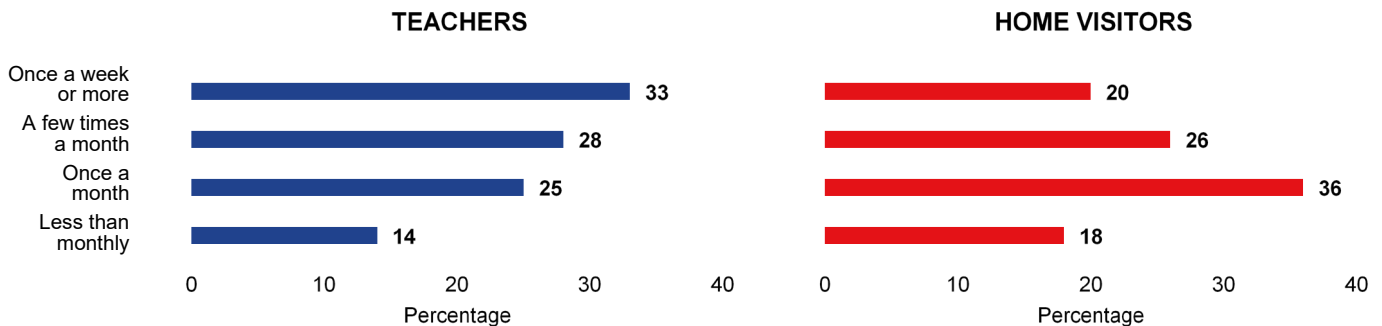
We asked teachers and home visitors if they had received training during the current program year on each of several potential topic areas. For almost all topics we asked about, most teachers and home visitors (80 percent or more) reported receiving training on the topic (Appendix Exhibit B.2). The main exception is training on supporting children who are dual language learners, which slightly less than 60 percent of teachers and home visitors reported receiving.

**Coaching**

Most center directors (83 percent) and program directors (77 percent) have coaches working with some or all teachers and home visitors. Sixty-six percent of teachers and 56 percent of home visitors reported having a coach. The percentage of staff who have a coach is similar across levels of education or experience (Appendix Exhibit B.5). Among staff who have a coach, a majority of teachers (61 percent) and a little less than half of home visitors (46 percent) meet with the coach more often than once a month (Exhibit 7).

**83 percent of centers** have some or all **teachers** working with coaches, and **77 percent of programs** have some or all **home visitors** working with coaches.  
**66 percent of teachers** and **56 percent of home visitors** have a coach.

**Exhibit 7. Many staff who have a coach meet with their coach more than once a month**



Source: Spring 2018 Baby FACES Staff (Teacher and Home Visitor) Surveys.  
Note: Percentages are based on teachers or home visitors who have a coach.

For teachers who have a coach, the frequency of coaching meetings varies based on teachers' level of education, but not experience (Appendix Exhibit B.5). Teachers with an associate degree or less are more likely to report having frequent coaching meetings (weekly or more often) than those with a bachelor's degree. Conversely, among home visitors with a coach, coaching frequency varies by home visitors' level of experience but not with education. Home visitors with the least experience (0 to 2 years) are most likely to have frequent



coaching meetings (weekly or more often) and least likely to have meetings less than monthly, compared with home visitors in all other categories of experience.

We asked staff with a coach if their coach used each of several potential approaches to assess their needs (for example, by observing their classrooms or home visits, or reviewing observation data with them) and support them (for example, by modeling practices, or suggesting trainings to them). For most of the approaches (8 out of 13) we asked about, a large majority of teachers and home visitors (80 percent or more) reported their coach used that approach (Appendix Exhibit B.3).

The majority (57 to 73 percent) of teachers and home visitors with a coach said their coach contributed a great deal to their effectiveness; provided a lot of support for their interactions with children (for teachers) or families (for home visitors); and provided a lot of support involving parent–child relationships (Appendix Exhibit B.4).

## Summary and implications

- **A large majority of teachers and home visitors receive a wide range of professional development across a variety of topics.** However, many do not receive intensive professional development. For example, more than half of home visitors with a coach do not meet with the coach more often than once a month. A majority of program directors did not report using TTA funds for more intensive training activities such as professional learning communities or on-site courses.
- **For most of the activities we examined, there are no differences in professional development received based on teachers' or home visitors' level of education or experience.** In a few cases, there is evidence that professional development focuses more on staff with less education or experience, and therefore potentially greater needs. For example, teachers with less education and home visitors with less experience are most likely to meet with their coach frequently (at least once a week).
- **Programs should weigh the intensity and depth of professional development against the breadth of topics offered and the expertise level of the staff member.** Higher-intensity efforts, such as frequent coaching, could focus on teachers or home visitors with greater needs for professional development.

## What leadership support and organizational climate do teachers and home visitors experience, and what is their job satisfaction?

Support from organizational leaders, organizational climate, and job satisfaction have been associated with decreased levels of burnout or turnover among teachers and home visitors.<sup>25,26,27</sup>

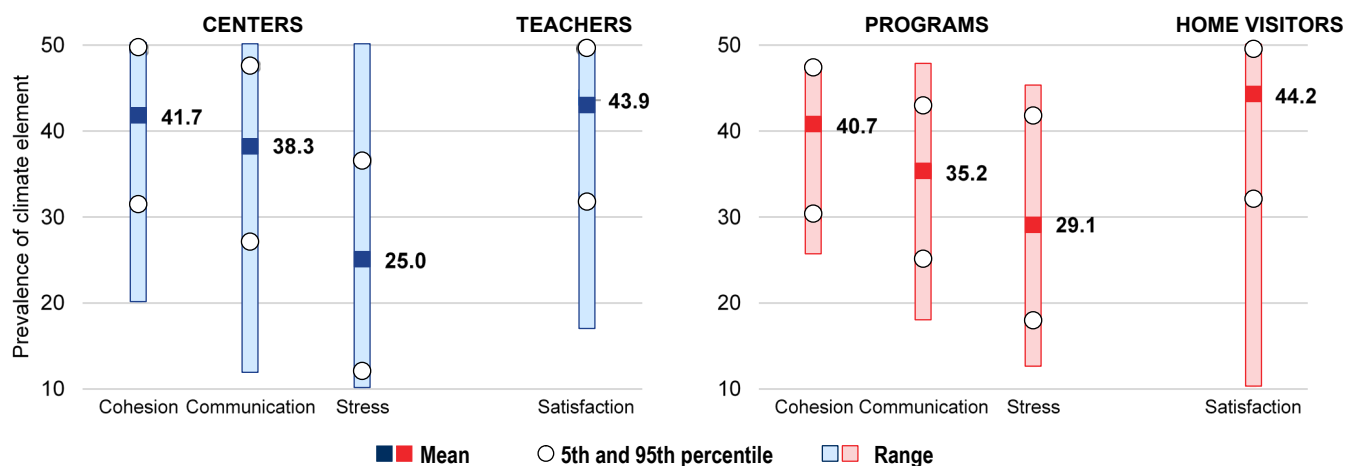
### Leaders' supportive behavior

Staff described their center and program directors as “often” engaging in supportive behaviors. This is based on average scores from the Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire-Rutgers Elementary (OCDQ-RE) for centers and programs (28.8 and 26.7, respectively, on a scale ranging from 9 to 36; Appendix Exhibit B.6).<sup>28</sup> Almost all directors engage in supportive behaviors at least “sometimes,” according to their staff. Specifically, 95 percent of centers and programs have scores greater than 18.5 and 19.6, respectively.

### Center and program cohesion, communication, and stress; and teacher and home visitor job satisfaction

Teachers and home visitors perceive a positive organizational climate at their centers and programs and they are satisfied with their own jobs (Exhibit 8). On average, staff tend to agree with positive statements about organizational cohesion, communication, and their job satisfaction, and disagree with negative statements about stress at their center or program. Average scores on the Texas Christian University Survey of Organizational Functioning (TCU SOF) for cohesion and satisfaction are located between levels indicating staff responses of “agree” (40) and “strongly agree” (50), whereas average scores for communication and stress are between levels corresponding with responses of “neither agree nor disagree” (30) and either “agree” for communication (40) or “disagree” (20) for stress.

## Exhibit 8. Teachers and home visitors reported favorable organizational climates at centers and programs, and high levels of satisfaction with their own jobs



Source: Spring 2018 Baby FACES Staff (Teacher and Home Visitor) Surveys.

Notes: The Cohesion, Communication, and Stress subscales in the TCU SOF contain items about the teacher or home visitor's perception of these components at their center or program, with the exception of one item in the Stress subscale that asks about the teacher or home visitor's own stress. These scores are based on combining teacher scores into center averages and home visitor scores into program averages. The Satisfaction subscale contains items about the teacher or home visitor's own job satisfaction; these scores are based on individual teacher and home visitor scores.

All subscales have a possible range of 10 to 50. Scores of 10, 20, 30, 40, or 50 correspond to consistently responding "strongly disagree," "disagree," "neither agree nor disagree," "agree," or "strongly agree," respectively, to statements about elements of organizational climate. Higher scores for the Cohesion, Communication, and Satisfaction subscales indicate a more positive organizational climate. Higher scores for the Stress subscale indicate a more negative organizational climate.

TCU SOF = Survey of Organizational Functioning, published by Texas Christian University's Institute of Behavioral Research.

### Summary and implications

- On average, teachers and home visitors reported their center and program leaders often engaged in supportive behaviors.
- Teachers and home visitors also said that centers and programs, on average, had positive organizational climates, and teachers and home visitors reported high job satisfaction. On average, respondents more strongly endorsed experiencing high cohesion and high job satisfaction than experiencing high levels of communication or low levels of workplace stress; this suggests that communication and stress are two areas in which programs could further support teachers and home visitors.

### What is the extent of retention and turnover among teachers and home visitors?

Teacher turnover is a serious issue for early childhood programs and is associated with several negative classroom, child, and family outcomes.<sup>29,30,31</sup> Low turnover is important in part because it enables continuity of care, a recommended practice that helps teachers establish responsive relationships with infants and toddlers.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, several qualitative studies have established that home visitor turnover is associated with a disruption in the home visitor-family relationship, and is a barrier to family participation, retention, and engagement.<sup>33,34,35</sup>

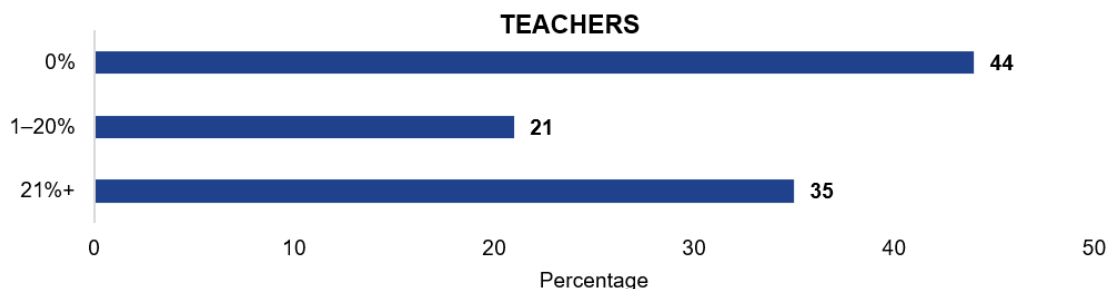
#### Tenure

Center directors estimated in spring 2018 that teachers stay at their centers for an average of 4.5 years (ranging from 0 to 26 years) and program directors estimated that home visitors stay at their programs for an average of 4.6 years (ranging from 1 to 20 years). Twenty percent of programs and 23 percent of centers reported that the average home visitor or teacher remains in the job six years or more, suggesting greater staff stability. However, in more than one-third of centers and one-quarter of programs, teachers and home visitors have an estimated average tenure of two years or less before they leave, indicating less stable staffing (Appendix Exhibit B.7).

## Retention and turnover

More than half of centers (56 percent) and programs (53 percent) experienced some teacher or home visitor turnover since the start of the program year (September 2017). In those centers and programs, directors reported that an average of about two teachers had left the center, and a similar average of two home visitors had left their program. However, the same number of departures can be more disruptive at smaller centers or programs. Although 44 percent of centers had no turnover, 35 percent of centers had more than 20 percent of their teachers leave since the start of the program year (Exhibit 9).

### Exhibit 9. Almost half of centers had no teacher turnover since the start of the program year, but some had high rates of turnover



Source: Spring 2018 Baby FACES Center Director Surveys.

Notes: Center directors were asked how many teachers had left their center since the start of the program year (September 2017) and how many teachers were currently at the center. Turnover rate is defined as the percentage of infant and toddler teachers who left the center (excluding floaters and rovers) as a share of total infant and toddler teachers working at the center (including lead teachers, assistant teachers, and classroom aides).<sup>36</sup>

Program directors were asked how many home visitors had left their program since the start of the program year, but not how many home visitors were currently at the program, so we did not calculate home visitor turnover rates.

## Difficulty hiring and retaining staff

Center and program directors were more likely to report difficulty hiring staff than retaining staff. Specifically, 81 percent of centers have difficulty hiring highly qualified teachers, and 75 percent of programs have difficulty hiring highly qualified home visitors. In comparison, 47 percent of centers and 51 percent of programs have difficulty retaining highly qualified staff (teachers and home visitors, respectively).

## Summary and implications

- **Centers and programs vary considerably in rates of staff retention and turnover. Some have more stable staffing situations, whereas others have short average tenures for teachers and home visitors; some centers have high teacher turnover rates.** Programs and centers might benefit from research into the factors that predict staff stability and turnover, particularly given the greater difficulty reported in hiring new staff and the importance of continuity of care for infants and toddlers.<sup>37</sup>
- **Centers and programs are more likely to have difficulty hiring highly qualified staff than difficulty retaining them.**

## How are professional development, leadership support, and organizational climate associated with teacher and home visitor job satisfaction?

Early childhood staff's satisfaction with their job might be influenced by several factors. Some research indicates that professional development, leadership support, and organizational climate are related to job satisfaction for teachers and home visitors; however, research does not consistently reveal these associations.<sup>38,39,40,41,42</sup> We used a multilevel regression model to examine the relative strength of associations between job satisfaction and the professional development staff receive, the supportive behavior of their center and program directors, and the organizational climate at their centers and programs.

The major limitation of these analyses is that they cannot serve as evidence that the program causes changes in outcomes. In addition, our key measures were all drawn from the same teacher and home visitor reports and many involve subjective perceptions. This might inflate any associations between job satisfaction and the other measures. Appendix A has more discussion of these limitations and the methods and variables we used.

With these limitations in mind, Exhibit 10 summarizes the key features of professional development, leaders' supportive behavior, and organizational climate that are associated with job satisfaction after accounting for the other variables in the model.<sup>43</sup> Detailed model results are in Appendix B.

**Exhibit 10. Several features of professional development, leadership support, and organizational climate are favorably associated with job satisfaction**

Type of feature	Associated with job satisfaction for teachers?	Associated with job satisfaction for home visitors?
<b>Professional development</b>		
<b>Frequency of one-on-one supervision meetings</b>		
Weekly or more often		+
At least monthly but less than weekly (referent)	n.a.	n.a.
At least annually but less than monthly		
Never—does not have one-on-one supervision meetings	-	-
<b>Frequency of group supervision meetings</b>		
Weekly or more often		+
At least monthly but less than weekly (referent)	n.a.	n.a.
At least annually but less than monthly	-	
Never—does not have group supervision meetings	-	
<b>Frequency of coaching meetings</b>		
Daily or weekly		
A few times a month or once a month (referent)	n.a.	n.a.
More than once a year, once a year, or never		-
Never (no assigned coach)		-
<b>Has an individual PD plan used for decision making about their PD</b>	+	
<b>Has been observed and received feedback from the observation</b>		
<b>Leadership support and organizational climate</b>		
<b>Leaders' supportive behavior of center or program director</b>	+	
<b>Communication at center or program</b>	+	+
<b>Cohesion at center or program</b>	+	+
<b>Stress at center or program</b>	-	

Notes: A plus (+) or minus (-) indicates a positive or negative association between the feature and job satisfaction. A blank cell indicates no association. An entry of "n.a." for a particular meeting frequency indicates not applicable because it is a baseline to which we compared the other frequencies within the feature.

For the leadership support and organizational climate features, we examined information about centers and center directors in relation to job satisfaction for teachers, and information about programs and program directors in relation to job satisfaction for home visitors.

All associations reported in this exhibit involve more professional development, greater leadership support, or a stronger organizational climate with higher job satisfaction. The negative associations occur for (1) some meeting frequencies, where a less-than-monthly frequency is associated with lower job satisfaction compared with the at-least-monthly frequency; and (2) stress, where higher stress is associated with lower job satisfaction.

Appendix A describes the methods and complete list of variables for the analyses, and Appendix Exhibit B.9 contains full results, including for the staff, center, and program characteristics that were covariates in the model.

PD = professional development.

**Professional development**

In Baby FACES 2018, multiple aspects of professional development are associated with greater job satisfaction for teachers and home visitors. They include more frequent supervision meetings for teachers and home visitors, more frequent coaching meetings for home visitors, and individual professional development plans for teachers. In most (but not all) cases, moderately frequent supervision and coaching meetings (at least monthly but less than weekly) are associated with greater job satisfaction than having no meetings or not having a coach.

However, more frequent meetings (weekly or more often) do not seem to provide an additional benefit, except for supervision meetings for home visitors. Other aspects of professional development are not associated with greater job satisfaction, including more frequent coaching meetings for teachers and being observed and receiving feedback (Exhibit 10).

### Leadership support and organizational climate

Several features of center and program leadership support and organizational climate are also associated with greater job satisfaction for teachers and home visitors, respectively. They include higher levels of communication and cohesion in both centers and programs. Lower levels of stress and more frequent instances of leaders' supportive behavior in centers are associated with greater job satisfaction for teachers, but the same features in programs are not associated with job satisfaction for home visitors.

### Summary and implications

- **In many cases, staff that receive professional development and those working in centers and programs with strong leadership support and positive organizational climates are more satisfied with their job.** Overall, these results suggest that program efforts to develop staff and strengthen organizational climate might bolster staff job satisfaction. According to previous research, this could in turn influence classroom quality, teacher turnover, and family engagement.<sup>44,45,46</sup>
- **Coaching frequency is associated with higher job satisfaction for home visitors only. For teachers, features of leadership support and organizational climate are more frequently associated with higher job satisfaction.** These findings might reflect that teachers work in environments with more opportunities for collaboration and influence from other staff, whereas home visitors work more independently. Efforts to strengthen organizational climate might benefit teachers more than home visitors, and more frequent coaching might benefit home visitors more, possibly by compensating for fewer existing opportunities for collaboration.

### Future research

Our analyses suggest possible directions for future research. Having found evidence that some features of professional development, leadership support, and organizational climate are associated with job satisfaction, studies could investigate these aspects in more detail. Other aspects of program processes and functioning are also worthy of study; the Early Head Start conceptual framework lists some of them, such as planning and implementing new initiatives, and the quality of program processes.

Studying other factors that could affect turnover—such as staff pay and benefits—and collecting more precise data on turnover (possibly from administrative data) could help answer questions about how to alleviate difficulties in hiring and retention. Additional analyses could explore relationships between the features studied in this brief, including organizational climate and job satisfaction and staff turnover. Research could also study the relationships between these factors and teaching and home visiting quality, and the child and family outcomes Early Head Start is designed to support. Finally, future studies of the Early Head Start workforce would describe changes since spring 2018—in particular, changes since the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, child care and early education programs across the country have faced unprecedented staff shortages, and it is possible that future studies on retention and turnover might find that these issues, which already affected many Early Head Start programs before the pandemic, have become even more challenging since then.

#### Baby FACES 2018 products

[Baby FACES 2018 data](#) are archived at the Child and Family Data Archive, Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), University of Michigan. Users can freely access the Users' Guide, but an application is required for access to the restricted data.

This brief and other reports and briefs using Baby FACES 2018 data sponsored by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation are available at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/project/early-head-start-family-and-child-experiences-study-baby-faces>.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>16</sup> The sample does not include Head Start programs or any Early Head Start programs in Office of Head Start Regions XI (American Indian and Alaska Native) and XII (Migrant and Seasonal Head Start). For reasons of cost, programs in Alaska and Hawaii were excluded. The sample also does not include programs under transitional management, outside of the continental United States, or not directly providing services to children and families. Teachers and families participating in the family child care option were also excluded from the sample.
- <sup>17</sup> Xue et al. 2021.
- <sup>18</sup> Head Start Program Performance Standards, 45 CFR Chapter XIII §1302.91 (2016).
- <sup>19</sup> Head Start Program Performance Standards, 45 CFR Chapter XIII §1302.93 (2016).
- <sup>20</sup> We asked teachers and home visitors three questions: if they had (1) an Infant/Toddler CDA, (2) a Pre-K CDA, and (3) some other kind of CDA. The last question could encompass (but is not limited to) a Home Visitor CDA, but the text of the question did not list any specific options. The question text for a state certification explicitly noted it could be a preschool, infant/toddler, family child care, or home based certification.
- <sup>21</sup> This category of potential clinical significance includes scores in the range of a possible, probable, or major depressive episode from the CESD-R scoring guidelines. Appendix Exhibit A.1 has more details about the CESD-R.
- <sup>22</sup> The measure is intended only for teachers; we did not ask home visitors similar questions.
- <sup>23</sup> Head Start Program Performance Standards, 45 CFR Chapter XIII §1302.92, 2016.
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- <sup>28</sup> Leaders’ supportive behavior on the OCDQ-RE measure has a possible range from 9, corresponding to “rarely” engaging in each of the supportive behaviors, to a maximum of 36, or “very frequently” engaging in each of the supportive behaviors. Scores on the measure in Baby FACES 2018 ranged from 9.5 to 36.0 for centers and 13.7 to 34.4 for programs.
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