

Center- and Program-Level Factors Associated with Turnover in the Early Childhood Education Workforce

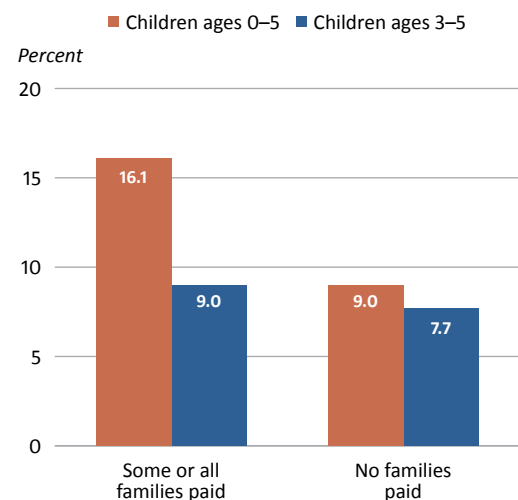
Turnover in the early childhood educator workforce affects the quality of the early childhood education environment¹ and has been linked to weakened language and social development.² Turnover also influences school effectiveness, as the academic and financial costs of turnover for student learning and school budgets are considerable.³ To inform policy and program guidance for early childhood education centers, the Early Childhood Workforce Development Research Alliance of the Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast & Islands wants to learn what factors can influence turnover in the early childhood education workforce, in particular whether center-level factors apart from wages—such as health insurance or retirement benefits and paid time off for professional development—can reduce early childhood educator turnover. This study used center-level data from the 2012 National Survey of Early Care and Education to examine factors associated with turnover in early childhood education centers.

Key findings

- **Higher wages were associated with lower turnover rates, but nonwage benefits, in general, were not.** Both descriptive and regression analyses found lower turnover rates in centers offering higher wages. The relationship remained even after other center-level factors, including program type, age group served by the center, region, student composition, and center size, were controlled for. Centers offering nonwage benefits had lower turnover rates than centers that did not; however, after regressions controlled for other factors, the differences were not significant except in low-wage centers, small centers, and “other” program types,⁴ where nonwage benefits were associated with higher turnover.
- **Turnover rates were highest in centers where some or all families paid for services and in centers serving children ages 0–5.** Turnover rates varied depending on who paid for services and the age group of children served. More than two-thirds of centers that provided free early childhood education were in the low-turnover category (turnover below 5 percent). Fewer than half of private-pay centers (centers where some or all families paid) were in the low-turnover category. The average turnover rate in private-pay centers serving children ages 0–5 (16 percent) was nearly double that in all other types of centers (9 percent or less; see figure). The relationship between these centers and higher turnover was significant even after regression analyses controlled for their lower wages and less-frequent provision of benefits.

1. Hale-Jinks, C., Knopf, H., & Knopf, H. (2006). Tackling teacher turnover in childcare: Understanding causes and consequences, identifying solutions. *Childhood Education*, 82(4), 219–226.
2. Whitebook M, Howes C, Phillips D. (1990). Who cares? *Child care teachers and the quality of care in America. Final report: National Child Care Staffing Study.* Child Care Employee Project.
3. Carver-Thomas, D., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2019). The trouble with teacher turnover: How teacher turnover affects students and schools. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 27(36), 2–29.
4. Centers that are not school-affiliated, Head Start, or public preK; includes private, parochial, and other nonpublic centers.

Turnover rates were highest in private-pay centers serving ages 0–5, 2012



Source: Authors' analysis of the 2012 National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE Project Team, National Opinion Research Center. 2017. National Survey of Early Care and Education [NSECE], 2012. Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research).