think babies™
Michigan

Support for the early childhood workforce allows programs to work as intended

What we know

Michigan needs a strong workforce that is understood, well-equipped and fairly compensated in order for our early childhood system to be effective.

High-level skills are needed to work with infants and toddlers and their families. Yet, the early childhood workforce is not fully understood, is poorly compensated and has little room for advancement. Michigan must address its chronic workforce issues in order to move the state and our early childhood system forward.

Our early childhood workforce is disproportionately made up of women—often women of color — and they are some of the lowest-wage workers in the state.

1 in 5 child care workers live in poverty.

The median wage for child care workers was **$11.13** in 2019—placing them among the lowest-wage earners in Michigan.

Low wages have resulted in staffing turnover rates as high as **25-30%.** Many child care workers find better wages and benefits in fast food and other traditionally low-wage jobs.

Many early childhood workers are well trained, but higher levels of education or training do not translate into higher wages or promotions.

Most early educators have a bachelor's degree

53%
of those who work with infants and toddlers

and **73%**
of home visiting professionals

but are paid 22% less than their colleagues in the K-8 system.

Many express an interest in higher education: 73% of family child care providers and 76% of child care teachers. But those who want additional training struggle to obtain it: cost is the biggest barrier, along with the need to take time off and the lack of substitute coverage.

Recommendations

To ensure a robust workforce with strong wages, recruitment and retention strategies, Michigan can improve:

Compensation: Establish and implement cross-sector wage scales that are aligned with the compensation research done by Prenatal-to-Five Fiscal Strategies at the state level and in Detroit.

Pathways, Professional Development and Collaboration: In collaboration and alignment with intermediate school districts (ISDs) and higher education institutions, create a cross-sector career lattice to improve professional development, pathways, and other supports, while ensuring it is designed with adequate support and resources to move through and across.

Public Perception: Conduct a public awareness campaign to lift the value of the early childhood workforce and to support recruitment efforts.

Implicit Bias Training: Build on the state government efforts that require implicit bias training for licensed health care workers through implementation of this requirement for those licensed in the early childhood workforce.

Source

Sorenson, Pat. *Confronting Michigan's early childhood workforce crisis.* Michigan League for Public Policy, 2022.

Think Babies Michigan
is a collaborative of more than 2,000 members—leaders, experts, families, organizations and providers—working together to improve the lives of babies prenatally through age 3 in Michigan. Join at: www.ecic4kids.org/policy-thinkbabiesmi.