

Results of Early Childhood Education (ECE) Staffing Survey: October/November 2007

Purpose of the survey:

The survey was devised by First Call in order to obtain a snapshot of key issues and concerns in the ECE field. The issues addressed in the survey were identified because of numerous and repeated anecdotal conversations and stories received by First Call through our Early Childhood Development networks about staffing issues and concerns.

Issues addressed in the survey:

- A lack of availability of qualified ECE staff.
- Concerns about the recruitment and retention of ECE staff.
- Concerns about the amount of professional development dollars allocated to ECE by the Ministry for Children and Family Development.

The survey:

The survey was designed to be short, succinct and easy to access. The survey was sent to 430 people on the First Call ECD e-mail distribution list. This distribution list goes to a broad range of community agencies and services, as well as child and family serving agencies.

There were nine questions. Some required a yes/no answer, one required the use of a rating scale, and there were three opportunities for respondents to write responses. The survey was anonymous, and First Call has no ability to identify the sources of the comments. The survey was open for five working days.

The results of the survey have provided a broad range of information from across the ECD sector. Information has come from a wide range of types of programs—self-identified by respondents in their comments. They include group childcare, infant/toddler programs, pre-schools, family childcare, family resource programs, Aboriginal programs and both the private and non-profit sector.

Self-identified geographic locations of respondents in BC include the Cariboo Region, Vancouver Island, South West BC, Northern communities, Fraser Valley, Okanagan, and West Kootenay.

Responses:

The survey was distributed through Survey Monkey, an on-line survey host. On the first day of the survey, October 30, 2007, 100 people responded. Survey Monkey closes free surveys after 100 responses are received. We received many requests to re-open the survey, which we did with the generous assistance of a friend of First Call who allowed us to use her account to collect more responses. In total, 329 responses had been received by the time the survey closed.



The Value of an Early Childhood Educator

Early Childhood Educators in the province of BC:

- Have specialized college training and adhere to a Code of Ethics;
- Hold individual "licenses to Practice" issued by the provincial government;
- Consider children's developmental ages and stages in every facet of their work;
- Hold a core value of the importance of play in children's natural development;
- Promote quality early childhood education;
- Work in provincially licensed and regulated community based childcare programs, preschools, Strong Start and other related programs.

Early Childhood Educators are the only social service provider whose wages are tied to a user fee system. Early childhood educators are passionate about their work and know their work positively influences and impacts children's development. They deserve to be valued for the work they do.

Source: *Early Childhood Educators of BC*



Question 1

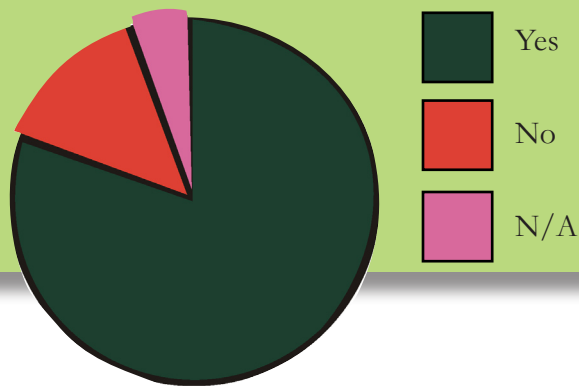
Have you experienced difficulty in recruiting and retaining Early Childhood Educators?

YES 296

NO 31

2 people skipped question

Experienced Difficulty with Recruitment & Retention



Question 2

Have you experienced difficulty in recruiting Infant/Toddler staff?

YES 229

NO 50

50 skipped question

Question 3

Have you had difficulty in recruiting group childcare staff?

YES 262

NO 50

17 skipped question

Question 4

If you answered yes to Question 3, please tell us why you think it is difficult to hire and retain staff.

286 written responses received

43 skipped question

Question 4: Key Themes

- Low wages, lack of benefits (75% of respondents cited this as the main issue).
- Competition with school districts, local stores and hospitality services who pay better and provide benefits.
- Well-trained ECE staff are leaving the field, as they cannot support themselves or a family on the pay received.
- Burn-out and stress of childcare providers.
- Extreme shortage of childcare providers to hire.
- Shortage of substitute childcare providers for sick days, vacation, etc.
- Fewer people going into ECE training because of low pay, long hours, and a lack of recognition for the work they do.
- ECE staff do not stay, as they see no future in the work.

Comments

“Wages are too low. There are ECEs all over our community who are working in other jobs and not using their amazing skills to work with young children. Most of them make more waitressing.”

“The pay is not equivalent to the amount of time and effort and love ECE staff put into their jobs. The burnout rate is high—approximately half leave the childcare industry within five years of receiving their schooling!”

“Staff leave the field for jobs in other pre-school programs in school districts that pay more.”

“[There are] not enough people in the area with ECE certification. Wages are not adequate for the level of education and expertise that is required.”

“We have not been able to go to our licensed capacity for day care spaces, as we are not able to recruit and retain staff. There is a shortage of spaces in our community as well as a shortage of staff.”

“I feel until we place the same value on the people that care for our children 0-6 as we do once they enter school, there will always be a staff shortage. It is criminal that a person serving donuts makes the same wage as an Early Childhood professional.”



Question 5

Have you had to offer extra benefits to recruit staff?

YES 174

NO 128

27 skipped question

Question 6

How critical do you think the ECE staffing situation is in your area?

Rate on a scale of 1-10

(1 is not critical; 10 is critical)

316 responded to this question

1 skipped question

1-5: 28 responses

6-10: 300 responses

(169 people responded with 10)

2 skipped question

Question 7

The BC Provincial Government has allocated funding for staff professional development. Do you think this will help address the recruitment and retention issues?

YES 80

NO 244

5 skipped question

Question 8:

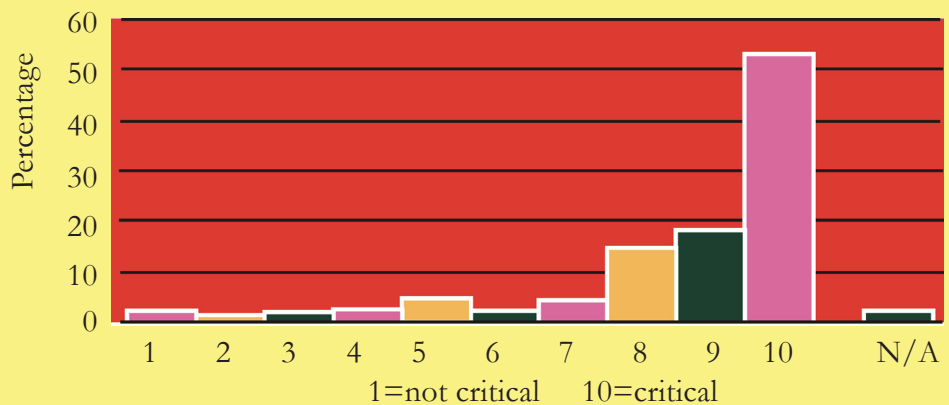
If you answered no to Question 7, please tell us why you don't think this will help.

248 written responses received

81 skipped question



Urgency of ECE Staffing Situation



Question 8: Key Themes

- Additional professional/training dollars will not substantially address recruitment and retention.
- Professional development money will not address the issue of poor wages, no benefits, and lack of recognition for the important work done by ECE staff.
- It is more important to use one-time only professional development dollars for wage enhancements to stabilize the field.
- Due to the shortage of trained ECE staff, professional development is not an issue, as centres cannot provide release time for staff.
- Staff do not feel there is any incentive to do more training as it does not affect wages. People without training can make more money than ECE staff in stores and restaurants.
- Need for more colleges in rural areas to provide ECE Continuing Education or affordable, subsidized distance education programs.

Comments

"This is going to take years to turn this around. At this point funding professional development is not the issue, we need more people entering the field."

"Professional development is not enough to address all of the recruitment/retention issues."

"I think monies for training would be helpful but not a solution. Let's start with wages... wages that can feed families and provide stability. I fear for the future of childcare."

"There needs to be allocated funding to subsidize wages first."

"This is a Band-aid. This is not sustainable funding. This is throwing out one-time-only dollars. This does not fix the root of the problem. A better planning and sustainable funding approach needs to happen from the top level down."

"Although ECEs are definitely supportive of professional development opportunities, many cannot take the leave to accomplish this, as there is no casual staff to take over their jobs at the centre. In addition, wages, health benefits and RSPs are what attract workers."

Question 9:

Is there anything else on this issue you would like to tell us?

237 written responses received.

92 skipped question

False Fixes...

Providing “nearly \$4.5 million to help early childhood educators maintain, polish and enhance their skills this year”... hasn’t helped.¹

- The staffing shortage is so extreme that the field reports they can’t release staff to participate in the professional development activities.
- Professional development opportunities do not address recruitment and retention issues.

Recently announced piecemeal “solutions”, including monetary incentives for Early Childhood Educators to return to the field and retroactive student loan assistance programs... won’t help.

- These changes do not address the low wages and lack of benefits for existing staff.
- BC still lacks a comprehensive childcare plan that would include the human resource issues which the early childhood sector is facing today.

¹ MCFD News Release, May 31,2007

The Early Childhood Educators of BC (ECEBC) supports this important work First Call has accomplished through the Early Childhood Development Roundtable. The results of this survey prove the need for an integrated, planned and funded system for early learning and childcare in our province; one that includes a strategy for a fair wage for early childhood educators and one that does not rely on parent user fees. ECEBC is committed to working towards this living wage and we look forward to our continued involvement with partners like First Call.

Question 9: Key Themes

- Need for a universal childcare system.
- ECE staffing issues.
- Stable/sufficient funding.
- Childcare in BC is in crisis.
- Recognition of ECE as a profession that is well respected and well-paid.
- ECE training.

Comments

“Without consistent quality childcare, we are placing our children at high risk. Economically, it has affected businesses due to few childcare spaces, which prevents parents returning to the work force, and in turn, they are now living within the poverty levels.”

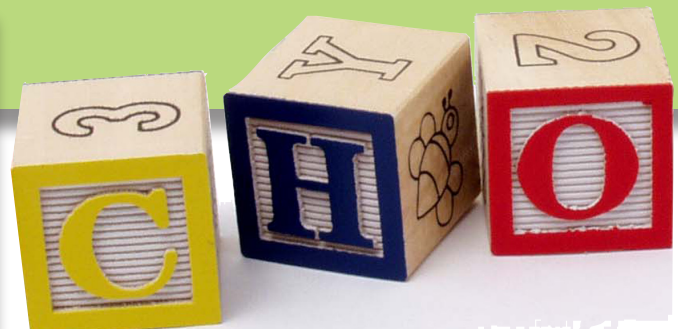
“On both a societal, government level we need to raise the profile and recognition of the work that ECE people do. Surely in light of all the research that has been done (see HELP website) we can, should and demand that we value and remunerate ECE staff who influence the early years”

“The government needs to set a standard for ECE professionals and recognize that the early years are in fact vital in a person’s development. The money spent on these years would in fact save considerably on the rehabilitation programs of later years; preventative education is a more effective approach.”

“Government wants to open new spaces for childcare, but how will they be staffed when we are already facing a crisis? We are not creating new spaces; we are closing centres (especially infant/toddler centres) because of lack of qualified staff.”

“Agencies are forced to hire who ever they can get vs. interviewing and hiring qualified staff and staff who will work well in a particular setting.”

“I have been in the field a while and it seems this is the hardest it has ever been to find subs for sick/away staff. I am pleased a survey is taking place so the government can understand this crisis we are in.”



Printed at the Provincial Health Services Authority Print Shop



First Call BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition

1416-4480 Oak Street, Vancouver, BC, Canada V6H 3V4

Tel: 604.875.3629 • Toll Free: 1.800.307.1212 • Fax: 604.875.3569

Email: info@firstcallbc.org • Web: www.firstcallbc.org