A Profile of the Alameda County Child Care Center Workforce 1995-2001

Continuing Evidence of a Staffing Crisis

An Alameda County Child Care Planning Council Report
Prepared by the Center for the Child Care Workforce

February 2002
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Alameda County
Child Care Center
Workforce
1995–2001

Prepared by the
Center for the Child Care Workforce
for the Alameda County
Child Care Planning Council
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Acknowledgments

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We gratefully acknowledge the directors, owners and other administrators who generously contributed their time and perspectives by participating in the 1995, 1998 and 2001 surveys.

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## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About this Study</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salaries, Benefits and Working Conditions</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Tenure and Turnover</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion: Policy Implications</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Executive Summary

Building a skilled and stable child care center workforce in Alameda County is a longstanding challenge that was heightened during the years 1995 to 2001 by a shrinking pool of child care teaching staff. This labor shortage was largely due to the vibrant economy of the late 1990s, persistently low wages and benefits in the child care field, and the class size reduction policy in K-12 public schools that created a new demand for qualified teachers. The economic downturn that has occurred since these data were collected may have eased some of the most extreme effects of the child care staffing crisis, particularly the long delays in identifying and hiring suitable replacements for departing staff. Yet while this economic fluctuation may offer a brief respite to the County’s persistent child care staff shortages, we can expect to see a return to such shortages as the economy recovers and skilled workers once again have more lucrative options.

Staff turnover and long delays in hiring new staff are particularly troublesome in child care centers because they not only disrupt the operation of a center, but staff instability undermines the quality of care provided to young children and children’s development as demonstrated in national research. In the 1990’s, staff turnover in Alameda County has remained at about 30 percent per year for teaching staff, a level too high to insure the quality of care needed to promote children’s development, which ultimately contributes to school readiness. Evidence that better educated staff have been leaving and are being replaced by less qualified staff further clouds this picture. Child care teacher and assistant education at the college level has been identified as a strong predictor of child care quality and improved cognitive, social, and emotional development for children in child care settings. This profile of Alameda County center-based child care indicates that staffing shortages, and low wages and benefits, consistently limited programs’ ability between 1995 and 2001 to grow and to provide high-quality services for children and families.

But in May 2000, after years of mounting evidence linking low wages and high turnover in child care settings to poor quality and inconsistent capacity, Alameda County child care advocates and community members successfully launched the Child Development Corps, a promising initiative to reward child care center staff and family child care providers with stipends based on their education and training and their longevity on the job. Now in its second year of operation...
the Child Development Corps,\(^2\) funded and administered by the Alameda County Children and Families Commission (Proposition 10), is among the first of several compensation initiatives in the United States to provide substantial incentives to all members of the child care workforce in the County to remain in the child care field and continue to increase their education. This study profiles the Alameda County child care center workforce just one year after the Child Development Corps was launched, and approximately eight months after stipend checks were mailed to participants, and thus it is too early to see the full impact of the Child Development Corps on child care centers. There is evidence here, however, that in spite of the contributions being made by the Child Development Corps to child care teachers, assistants, and directors, most child care centers still lack the financial resources to offer staff wages and benefits competitive with those in K-12 teaching and other industries, and thus additional solutions to the staffing crisis must also be sought.\(^4\)

This study was designed to provide a longitudinal view of child care center staffing and programs in Alameda County since 1995, and to explore trends regarding staff compensation, turnover and working conditions. In the spring of 2001, centers that had participated in a similar survey in 1995 and 1998 were again asked to offer staffing information. Additional centers were also surveyed to make the sample more representative of the variety of program types—nonprofit, for-profit and subsidized—currently in operation in Alameda County.\(^5\)

The present study builds on more than 15 years of commitment among a variety of agencies to documenting and improving the status and pay of child care jobs in Alameda County. These include the Alameda County Child Care Planning Council; the three local resource and referral agencies, BANANAS, Inc., 4C’s of Alameda County and Child Care Links; and the Center for the Child Care Workforce (CCW). We have sought to document the salaries, benefits and working conditions of child care teaching and administrative staff in Alameda County, and at the same time to gauge the changes these centers experienced since the most recent two surveys were conducted, a period of economic growth and prosperity in the San Francisco Bay Area.

**Highlights of Findings**

- Teaching and administrative staff salaries have remained low and essentially unchanged between 1995 and 2001. The average starting hourly wage for teachers, for example, declined by one percent in real dollars\(^6\) from $10.56 in 1995 to $10.42 in 2001. Increases in staff salaries were minimal. Even the highest-paid teachers in child care
centers, whose wages increased from $13.60 to $14.86 per hour over six years, gained an average of only 21 cents an hour per year, or a 1.5 percent increase per year.

- As in 1995 and 1998, teaching staff who are paid at the low end of the child care salary scale still fail to earn a self-sufficiency wage for families with dependents in Alameda County, which has been calculated at $20.57 per hour for a family of three. The average lowest-paid assistant teachers in the County’s child care centers earn $14,543 per year ($8.31 per hour), and the lowest-paid teachers do not fare much better, earning an average of only $18,235 ($10.42 per hour). See page 15 for a definition of the self-sufficiency wage.

- Senior child care center teaching staff continue to earn salaries that fail to recognize their educational attainments and their commitment to serving young children. The highest-paid teachers earn an annual average of $26,005 ($14.86 per hour), and the highest-paid assistant teachers earn an average of $17,975 ($10.17 per hour)—figures that remain essentially unchanged in buying power since 1995, given the rate of inflation.

- Directors’ salaries, while higher than those of teaching staff, have increased at a sluggish pace since 1995, and range on average from $34,405 to $43,050 per year.

- Health benefits remain inadequate for many Alameda County child care center teaching staff. Between 14 and 21 percent, depending on their positions, are not offered health insurance by their employers. Nearly 30 percent of centers offer teaching staff partially-paid health insurance plans, but this benefit may be of limited use or effectiveness for low-wage workers who must pay premiums or co-payments. Fewer than 13 percent of teaching staff receive fully-paid health insurance for themselves and their dependents.

- Annual turnover rates remained essentially constant between 1995 and 2001, with approximately one-fourth of child care teaching staff in Alameda County leaving the job each year. Fifty-five percent of child care center directors report that it took them six weeks or more to hire a permanent replacement when teachers leave. One-fifth to one-third of child care teachers and assistant teachers in Alameda County have been employed in their center for less than one year.
Six teachers, two assistants, one teacher-director and one director are on staff.

All six of these teachers have completed at least some college; two have a Bachelor's degree or higher.

All six teachers have college credits in early childhood education (ECE) or child development. One has obtained a Bachelor's degree or higher in ECE or child development.

Teachers paid the starting or lowest wage receive $10.42 per hour.

The highest-paid teachers receive $14.86 per hour.

One or two teachers will leave in the coming year, and it will take over six weeks to replace each one.

Sixty-three children are cared for each day.
About This Study

This survey of child care center teaching and administrative staff wages, benefits and working conditions is the eighth study of its kind to be conducted in Alameda County. The first study, in 1984, focused exclusively on the northern portion of the County, while subsequent studies documented child care employees in the County’s southern, eastern and northern regions.

This study is designed to provide a current profile of the status of child care teaching and administrative jobs, and to explore recent changes in compensation and other aspects of the child care work environment in Alameda County. The report describes findings from a survey of child care center directors conducted in 2001, and also draws longitudinal comparisons among the 1995, 1998 and 2001 findings. To capture changes over time, we returned to the same group of Alameda County centers that we surveyed in 1995 and 1998 (N = 71). We also used stratified random sampling techniques to select 206 additional sites in order to increase the sample size and to represent more accurately the diversity of Alameda County’s child care centers.

Alameda County has 652 sites and 351 programs. In the spring of 2001, the Child Care Staff Salary and Working Conditions Survey was mailed to a total of 277 center-based child care programs in Alameda County. One-hundred forty child care programs participated in the survey, representing a response rate of 51 percent. These responses account for nearly half (48%) of all child care center sites currently operating in Alameda County. Sixty-six percent of the longitudinal sample participated, accounting for 47 of the 140 programs in the final sample. The 140 programs participating in the survey, located at 313 sites, employ over 3,000 staff including: 1,636 teachers, 961 assistant teachers, 330 teacher-directors and 154 directors. (See Figure 2.)

The final sample of child care centers participating in the survey is roughly representative of the population of child care center types in Alameda County, which include religiously-based, private nonprofit, subsidized nonprofit and for-profit centers. Programs under the auspices of religious bodies such as churches and synagogues are somewhat over-represented. (See Figure 3.) Subsidized programs, which include publicly-operated school district, university and college-sponsored centers, as well as programs that hold subsidy contracts with the state of California, are under-represented in the 2001 sample.
Publicly-operated child care centers have been combined with subsidized nonprofits in most of our findings, but wage levels and turnover rates for these programs are reported separately. Since they receive more generous public funding from school districts and other sources to augment parent fees than do other subsidized nonprofit centers, publicly-operated centers historically have offered significantly higher salaries to teaching and administrative staff than have other programs. Staff employed by the publicly-operated programs have been and are likely to be unionized compared with low rates of unionization found in other program types.

This study compares staffing patterns in northern, southern and eastern Alameda County child care centers. Northern Alameda County includes the cities of Alameda, Albany, Berkeley, Emeryville, Oakland and Piedmont; southern
Alameda County includes Castro Valley, Fremont, Hayward, Newark, San Leandro, San Lorenzo and Union City; and eastern Alameda County includes Dublin, Livermore, Pleasanton and Sunol. Programs in northern Alameda County are somewhat over-represented, whereas those in the southern part of the County are under-represented. (See Figure 4.)

**FIGURE 4. Alameda County Center-Based Programs by Region**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Total Programs in County</th>
<th>Programs Participating in Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Demographics

Gender, Ethnicity, and Age

In most communities in the United States, child care teaching staff are predominantly women in their childbearing years, and are more likely to be women of color than are members of the general population. As a group, however, child care teaching staff in Alameda County differ from this pattern in certain respects.

While Alameda County teaching staff are predominantly women, men are more likely to be employed in the area’s child care centers, particularly at the assistant level, than they are nationally—at a rate of five percent for teachers and eight percent for assistants, compared to a three-percent national total for male child care teaching staff. (See Figure 5.)

![Figure 5. Gender](image)

The ethnic distribution of teachers is roughly representative of the ethnic composition of the adult population of Alameda County, with Latinos and Asian-Americans somewhat under-represented among teachers, and Caucasians and African-Americans somewhat over-represented. (See Figure 6.) Children, from birth to age 12 in Alameda County, however, are more ethnically diverse than the general population and from this perspective, Latino and Asian-American teachers, in particular, are under-represented in the Alameda County child care workforce. Latinos make up 27 percent, and Asian-Americans/Pacific Islanders 21 percent of the child population ages 0-12 in Alameda County, but only 14 and 13 percent of the child care teacher population, respectively. This under-representation of Latinos and Asian-Americans may have implications for the language
match of caregivers with children whose first language is other than English. Assistant teachers comprise a more ethnically diverse group, on average, than do teachers and come closer to matching the ethnicity of the child population, although Asian-Americans are under-represented. Assistant teachers are also significantly younger as a group than are teachers, with 41 percent under age 30. Only 32 percent of teachers are under age 30. Teachers are more likely to be between the ages of 30 and 50. Teachers and assistants are equally likely to be over 50. About 15 percent of teachers and assistants are over age 50. (See Figure 7.)

In terms of gender, ethnicity and age, the composition of the Alameda County child care workforce changed only slightly in the past six years. In 2001, there was a higher percentage of Latino assistants than in 1998.

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF 1) 100-Percent Data.
Education and Ongoing Training

The educational profile of child care teachers and assistant teachers in Alameda County reveals a well-educated workforce with specialized training in child development. More than one-quarter of all teachers have achieved a BA degree or higher, and nearly all have had at least some college education in preparation for their jobs. Over three-fourths of assistants have taken some college courses or achieved a post-secondary degree. These educational levels are higher than those of other members of the civilian workforce, who are less likely to have completed some college. (See Figures 8 through 11.)

Looking only at the acquisition of early childhood education (ECE) at the college level, the majority of teachers in all auspices are likely to have completed some college level education in this subject. Forty-one percent have completed the required 12 units and 27 percent have completed 24 units, the higher level of education required by some subsidized programs for teachers in California. (See Figure 12.)
One-third (33 percent) of all assistants, who have no pre-service educational requirements according to State Licensing, have completed no ECE courses at the college level. One-third (29 percent) of assistants have completed six units of ECE. Just below one-third of assistants (27 percent) have completed 12 units of ECE. Directors’ educational preparation in ECE is greater than teachers and assistants, with 53 percent having completed an Associate’s, Bachelor’s, or Master’s degree in ECE.

Over half of teachers (54 percent) and nearly two-thirds of assistants (63 percent) participated in 20 hours or more of ongoing training in child development or a related field during the previous year. Among those pursuing ongoing training, only 44 percent of teachers, and 60 percent of assistant teachers, received college credit. Receiving college credit for training is preferable because it allows staff to work toward degrees and other ECE requirements which may allow them to qualify for positions with more responsibility and pay.
Only a few differences in the educational attainment of staff emerged when we compared program auspices. Teachers and directors employed by independent nonprofits were more likely to have completed graduate degrees in ECE than in all other program types. Teaching and administrative staff of for-profit programs were more likely to report their ECE-related education as training other than college-level courses or degrees.

Differences in staff education are more pronounced among the different parts of Alameda.

*Includes teachers with an AA degree.
**Source: Cost, Quality, & Child Outcomes, 1995.**

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**FIGURE 11.** Educational Attainment of Alameda Child Care Teachers, Compared with Other United States Workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Alameda County Child Care Teachers</th>
<th>All U.S. Child Care Teachers</th>
<th>Civilian Labor Force, Men</th>
<th>Civilian Labor Force, Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School or Less</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA or Higher</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**FIGURE 12.** Teachers Reported Highest Level of Early Childhood Education (ECE)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 units or less</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 units</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 units</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s Degree in ECE</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree in ECE</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s and above in ECE</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ECE-related education</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
County than they are by program type. Staff employed by northern Alameda County programs have more education than their counterparts in other parts of the County. Teachers and assistants employed by northern Alameda County programs are more likely to have completed Bachelor’s degrees than those working in eastern or southern Alameda County. Teacher-directors and directors employed in northern Alameda County are more likely to have completed graduate degrees than their counterparts elsewhere in the County. The higher concentration of subsidized and Head Start programs, which typically have higher educational requirements, in the northern part of Alameda County may partially explain these differences.
Salaries, Benefits and Working Conditions

Salaries

The salary findings shown in Figure 13 reflect the average starting hourly wages and the average highest hourly wages offered to teachers, assistant teachers, teacher-directors and directors throughout Alameda County. Child care teaching staff continue to earn very low wages. Entry-level assistant teachers, for example, earn $8.31 per hour, or $14,543 per year. Entry-level teachers, over one-fourth of whom have a BA degree or higher, do not fare much better, with teaching positions beginning at an average wage level of $10.42 per hour, or $18,235 per year. Beginning directors earn an average of $19.66 per hour, or $34,405 per year.

Child care teacher salaries at all levels in the present survey fall far below $20.57, the self-sufficiency wage in Alameda County for a family of three, which has been found to be the average family size of child care teachers in previous child care research. The Self-Sufficiency Wage, a concept developed by the advocacy organization Wider Opportunities for Women, is based on the level of earnings that a family needs in a particular community in order to cover such basic expenses as food, housing, child care and transportation without any dependence on public assistance or subsidies.

Since the first Alameda County salary survey was completed in 1984, we have consistently identified significant differences in staff salaries among program types. Typically, publicly-operated programs (comprised of school district, university and college-operated centers) have been found to offer higher salaries, followed by other subsidized programs and private nonprofits. Religious and for-profit program salaries have been the lowest. According to the current findings, child care center teaching and administrative staff in publicly-operated programs continue to earn higher wages, on average, than staff in all other program types. Nonprofit independent programs now follow publicly-operated programs in the pay they offer to teachers. Those subsidized programs which hold contracts with the State of California, rely on reimbursement rates and are not publicly operated, no longer offer higher salaries than other types of programs. This trend toward a flattening of wages across all program types, with the exception of publicly operated programs, was noted in the 1995 and 1998 studies. With the exception of higher wages in the publicly operated sector, no other program type was found to offer higher salaries than any other.
### FIGURE 13. Average Salaries by Child Care Center Type

**Teachers**
- Religious: $9.66 \rightarrow $12.72
- Private Nonprofit: $11.04 \rightarrow $15.92
- Subsidized Nonprofit: $9.90 \rightarrow $13.63
- For-Profit: $9.61 \rightarrow $13.91
- Public: $14.20 \rightarrow $22.57
- Head Start: $11.33 \rightarrow $14.84
- TOTAL: $10.42 \rightarrow $14.86

**Assistants**
- Religious: $8.77 \rightarrow $9.84
- Private Nonprofit: $8.35 \rightarrow $10.75
- Subsidized Nonprofit: $8.04 \rightarrow $9.26
- For-Profit: $7.65 \rightarrow $9.51
- Public: $9.64 \rightarrow $12.89
- Head Start: $8.96 \rightarrow $10.43
- TOTAL: $8.21 \rightarrow $10.17

**Teacher Directors**
- Religious: $13.84 \rightarrow $16.11
- Private Nonprofit: $14.83 \rightarrow $19.14
- Subsidized Nonprofit: $15.35 \rightarrow $17.99
- For-Profit: $14.76 \rightarrow $18.67
- Public: $18.57 \rightarrow $21.72
- Head Start: $13.81 \rightarrow $15.89
- TOTAL: $14.79 \rightarrow $18.25

**Directors**
- Religious: $16.27 \rightarrow $19.10
- Private Nonprofit: $15.23 \rightarrow $24.10
- Subsidized Nonprofit: $17.68 \rightarrow $22.49
- For-Profit: $20.88 \rightarrow $30.75
- Public: $36.76
- Head Start: $17.17 \rightarrow $25.23
- TOTAL: $19.66 \rightarrow $24.61
No significant regional differences in child care salaries were found, as shown in Figure 14.

As shown in Figure 15, teaching and administrative staff salaries have remained low and essentially unchanged since 1995, even though this has been a period of rapid economic growth in Alameda County and surrounding Bay Area communities. In most cases, child care centers cannot compete with the better salaries, benefits and hours of work offered to elementary school teachers. Teachers of kindergarten through third grade in Alameda County public schools typically start near $33,280 and can earn more than $76,306 per year, depending on the school district in which they are employed. (See Figure 16.)

**FIGURE 14.** Salaries by Region of Alameda County
FIGURE 15. Trends in Average Hourly Wages: 1995–2001*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lowest-Paid Teacher</td>
<td>$10.56</td>
<td>$9.36</td>
<td>$10.42</td>
<td>1% decrease, or $.14 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest-Paid Teacher</td>
<td>$13.60</td>
<td>$13.87</td>
<td>$14.86</td>
<td>9% increase, or $1.26 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest-Paid Assistant</td>
<td>$7.57</td>
<td>$7.96</td>
<td>$8.31</td>
<td>10% increase, or $.74 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest-Paid Assistant</td>
<td>$9.46</td>
<td>$9.84</td>
<td>$10.17</td>
<td>8% increase, or $.71 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest-Paid Teacher-Director</td>
<td>$14.20</td>
<td>$13.05</td>
<td>$14.79</td>
<td>4% increase, or $.59 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest-Paid Teacher-Director</td>
<td>$16.88</td>
<td>$17.31</td>
<td>$18.25</td>
<td>8% increase, or $1.37 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest-Paid Director</td>
<td>$18.26</td>
<td>$15.84</td>
<td>$19.66</td>
<td>8% increase, or $1.40 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest-Paid Director</td>
<td>$21.45</td>
<td>$19.97</td>
<td>$24.61</td>
<td>15% increase, or $3.16 per hour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All wages and trends are in 2001 dollars. Wages reported for 1995 and 1998 were adjusted for inflation using the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports of changes in the Consumer Price Index for the Metropolitan Bay Area (Oakland, San Jose and San Francisco).

FIGURE 16. Child Care Teacher Salaries Compared to Public School Teacher Salaries

*Source: Salaries based upon 2001–2002 salary schedules for Oakland, Hayward, and Sunol Glen school districts.
Benefits

Health benefits are an increasingly important part of an overall compensation package for attracting and retaining employees. Depending on their job titles, 14 to 21 percent of full-time child care center staff in Alameda County lack health coverage from their employers. While more than half of the centers offering health benefits provide fully-paid coverage, as many as 29 percent of employers offer only partially-paid insurance plans to their staff. (See Figure 17.) Anecdotal reports suggest that child care teaching staff frequently do not utilize partially-paid health insurance plans because of premium costs and co-payments, a phenomenon that researchers have also noted in other low-wage industries. Only a small percentage of staff, ranging from nine percent of assistant teachers to 22 percent of directors, receive fully-paid health insurance both for themselves and for their dependents. For low-income workers who are also heads of household, fully-paid family health insurance is an essential component of achieving self-sufficiency.

Although teachers and assistant teachers gained an increased level of health coverage from their centers between 1995 and 1998, there were no significant

FIGURE 17. Percentage of Programs Offering Health Coverage to Child Care Center Staff

**Assistants**
- Full Coverage for Employee and Dependents: 2% (1995), 7% (1998), 9% (2001)

**Teachers**
- Full Coverage for Employee and Dependents: 45% (1995), 6% (1998), 12% (2001)
gains made between 1998 and 2001. (See Figure 18.) Subsidized nonprofits, however, offer teachers, assistants, teacher-directors and directors higher levels of health coverage than other program types. Child care centers in northern Alameda County offer more comprehensive health coverage to teachers and assistants than those in the County’s southern and eastern regions.

Several other employee benefits differ by program type. Paid pension plans are offered more often by subsidized nonprofits and private nonprofits than by religious or for-profit programs. Paid maternity/paternity leave is offered more often by subsidized nonprofits than by for-profits and private nonprofits, whereas reduced child care fees are offered less frequently by subsidized nonprofits than by all other program types. The National Child Care Staffing Study has associated reduced-fee child care benefits with lower program quality, perhaps because adult/child ratios are sometimes compromised as a result, and staff/parent roles may not be as clearly delineated. (See Figures 19, 20 and 21.) These trends in employee benefits are unchanged since 1998.

**FIGURE 19.** Percentage of Centers Offering Paid Pension Plan*

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*Centers’ average annual contribution is $1,756.57 for teachers and $636.18 for assistants.
FIGURE 20. Percentage of Centers Offering Paid Maternity/Paternity Leave to Employees

![Bar chart showing the percentage of centers offering paid maternity/paternity leave by type of center for teachers and assistants.](chart20)

FIGURE 21. Percentage of Centers Offering Reduced-Fee Child Care Services to Employees

![Bar chart showing the percentage of centers offering reduced-fee services by type of center for teachers and assistants.](chart21)
Working Conditions

Working conditions have remained essentially unchanged for child care teaching staff in Alameda County over the last six years. Virtually all centers provide written job descriptions and an annual evaluation for teachers and assistant teachers. While most programs offer full-time teaching staff paid breaks, which are required by law, approximately 10 percent of programs do not. As was true in 1995 and 1998, few centers provide a written salary schedule, paid preparation and planning time, or paid lunch to teaching staff. Paid preparation time is viewed by many in the early childhood field as an essential component of a high-quality program. (See Figure 22.)

**FIGURE 22.** Working Conditions Offered to Teaching Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Provided</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Assistants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paid Preparation or Planning Time*</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payment for Attendance at Staff Meetings</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payment for Attendance at Parent Meetings after Working Hours</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payment for Attendance at Onsite In-Service Training</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid Release Time for Offsite Training</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stipend for Professional Development Activities**</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written Job Description</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written Contract</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written Salary Schedule</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Grievance Procedure</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Evaluation</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid Breaks</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid Lunch</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Room</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yearly Cost of Living Increases</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Periodic Merit Increases in Wages</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation for Overtime</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Average weekly paid planning time reported is 4.5 hours for teachers and 4 hours for assistants.

**Average annual professional stipend is $283.21 for teachers and $162.50 for assistants.
Staff Tenure and Turnover

Recruiting qualified teacher and assistant teacher job candidates became more difficult between 1995 and 2001 as the pool of applicants for child care teaching jobs shrank in the period’s strong economy. As shown in Figures 23 and 24, approximately one-quarter of Alameda County child care center teaching staff leave the job each year, a phenomenon that has remained essentially unchanged since 1995. Turnover rates vary, however, by position and program type. Assistant teacher turnover is 29 percent, whereas teacher turnover is 22 percent. For-profits lost more teachers and assistants between spring 2000 and spring 2001 than did subsidized nonprofits and religiously affiliated sites. The latter, however, reported the highest degree of turnover among program directors. When compared with other program types, publicly-operated sites reported the least amount of turnover among teachers, assistants and directors. Programs of all types that offer the lowest salaries to teaching staff are more likely to report the highest rates of turnover. No differences were found in turnover by region in Alameda County.

These findings suggest that teaching staff, directors, children and parents routinely confront the difficulties of transitioning new staff into programs. In 1998, 40 percent of program directors reported that hiring a permanent replacement for a departing teacher required five weeks or more. In 2001, a staggering 55 percent of directors reported that this process now required six weeks or more. The situation with assistants has taken an even steeper downturn. In 2001, 47 percent of directors required five weeks or more to hire a permanent replacement for a departing

| Teachers | 22% |
| Assistants | 29% |

FIGURE 23. Teaching Staff Turnover 2001

FIGURE 24. Trends in Annual Turnover for All Programs

- Teachers
- Assistants
assistant, whereas in 1998, only 17 percent required this amount of time. As a result, child care center directors have found themselves spending a growing amount of their time recruiting new staff, interviewing, and conducting other related administrative duties, as well as filling in for teachers in classrooms.

One consequence of frequent turnover is that child care centers are often staffed largely with people who have relatively little experience at that center. At the time of this survey, 19 percent of teachers and 32 percent of assistants in Alameda County had been employed in their center for less than one year. (See Figures 25, 26 and 27.)
FIGURE 26. Trends in Time Required to Hire a Permanent Replacement

**Assistants**

![Bar chart showing trends in time required to hire assistants from 1998 to 2001.](chart)

**Teachers**

![Bar chart showing trends in time required to hire teachers from 1998 to 2001.](chart)
FIGURE 27. Length of Time Teaching Staff Have Been Employed at Center
Accreditation

Only five programs which comprise less than one percent of the total sample report that they have achieved National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation. A larger percentage, however, report that they are currently pursuing accreditation (9 percent).

**FIGURE 28. NAEYC Accredited Centers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Center</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Number of Centers with NAEYC Accreditation*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Nonprofit</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsidized Nonprofit</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For-Profit</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>111</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Three additional centers indicated that they were currently accredited, but did not indicate whether they were accredited by NAEYC or some other professional group.

**FIGURE 29. Centers Pursuing Accreditation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Center</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Number of Centers that are currently pursuing NAEYC Accreditation*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Nonprofit</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsidized Nonprofit</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For-Profit</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>108</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion: Policy Implications

These findings present a profile of child care center staffing in Alameda County, in terms of wages, working conditions and turnover, that is largely unchanged from the picture reported in earlier studies. Findings in 1995 and 1998 showed that child care teaching and administrative staff in Alameda County were contending with low compensation and high turnover, in the midst of struggling to provide services for a growing number of families, and they continued to do so in 2001. Wages have remained low for all levels of teaching staff during a period of economic vitality for Alameda County and the greater Bay Area, and small gains reported in health coverage between 1995 and 1998 appear to have leveled off in the current period. Turnover remains considerably too high for the staff consistency that is needed in order to provide high-quality child care services. Directors report that they spend even more time replacing departing staff than they did in previous years, suggesting that center staff, children and families face a significant amount of disruption long after staff members depart. The overall status of child care center teachers and directors appears similar to that five years ago, representing a continuation of conditions which undermine the quality of Alameda County’s child care services.

This view of child care center teaching in Alameda County may appear surprising to those who have followed the important contributions of the Child Development Corps, a major compensation and training initiative begun in Alameda County in 2000. In fact, encouraging signs of progress for the Alameda County child care workforce, not documented in this survey, are evident because of the Child Development Corps. In its first year, $4.1 million in stipends were distributed to qualified applicants, enrollment in community college early childhood education classes grew by 19 percent, and applications for Child Development Permits increased by 237 percent. During this same period, Child Development Permit applications in all other California counties rose only 8 percent. The Child Development Corps is offering child care teaching staff, administrators and family child care providers financial rewards for their current educational attainment, as well as financial incentives to continue to invest in their education. The Corps is an important strategy contributing to the professional development of a broad range of staff, however in itself it cannot solve the problems of an under-funded system of early care and education that is pervasive in California and throughout the United States.
It is not possible to evaluate the effects of the Child Development Corps on the Alameda County child care workforce from the research reported here, although an evaluative study of the Corps is now underway. The primary barrier is that stipends received by Child Development Corps members are not captured in this survey of center wages as reported by child care center directors since these payments do not directly influence staff wages. Moreover, it is relatively early in the implementation of the Child Development Corps to conclusively determine its effects. Notably, educational increases are likely to be too incremental initially to be captured in this report. Small improvements in education spurred by the Corps in the 12 months prior to the time of data collection, for example, may not prove to be statistically significant gains in a longitudinal analysis. However, if the trend toward provider enrollment in community college early childhood education classes continues, we expect to see significant improvements over time in the educational levels of the Alameda County child care workforce. It is noteworthy that while turnover remains high in Alameda County, it was found to have stayed constant for teachers, assistants and directors since 1998. In a comparable survey conducted at the same time in the nearby county of San Mateo, which had not yet implemented a compensation initiative, turnover was found to be ten percent higher than in Alameda County for both teachers and assistants. Additional research about the effects of the Child Development Corps on Alameda County’s broader child care delivery and professional development systems would be beneficial.

The study’s findings point to the need to make health care coverage more comprehensive for all levels of employees. One-fifth of all full-time assistants lack any form of health insurance from their center employer, and dependent coverage is infrequently offered to all levels of staff. Part-time staff are particularly disadvantaged in their access to group health plans offered by centers. The small improvements in the extent and level of center-provided health insurance observed between 1995 and 1998 have leveled off in the current period. The current nationwide trend toward rising health insurance coverage fees for employers, which are typically passed on to employees in the form of higher co-payments, is likely to intensify in the coming year. County-wide efforts are needed to identify resources beyond those of individual child care centers, which generally lack the resources to provide better health benefits to staff and their dependents.

As noted in a recent analysis of compensation policy by Marcy Whitebook of the Institute for Industrial Relations, University of California at Berkeley, there is a growing consensus that the child care market, in itself, cannot solve the longstanding problems of low wages and poor benefits, and their negative impact on the educational standards and stability of child care programs. Until there are more permanent solutions to improve child care wages—for example, by
significantly raising the level of public support for improving all child care jobs
and services—the Child Development Corps, health care initiatives and other such
efforts will play a crucial role in securing a skilled and stable child care workforce
in Alameda County.
Notes


2. Then and Now: Changes in Child Care Staffing, 1994-2001. Whitebook, M. This study reported and analyzed turnover in four California Bay Area Counties.

3. For more information about the Child Development Corps, call the Alameda County Children and Families Commission at 510-667-7451 or visit www.ackids.org.

4. The Child Development Corps disburses stipends to qualifying participants, thus wage levels will not be influenced by these payments.

5. Because of attrition in the original 1995 sample due to refusals or closures in 1998 and 2001, this remaining group became less representative of Alameda County programs overall.

6. All wages are presented in 2001 dollars. Wages reported in 1995, for example, have been adjusted using cost of living information for California Bay Area Counties from the Current Population Index, Bureau of Labor, U.S. Department of Census.

7. Unless explicitly noted, all reported means include the full samples from each time period. Additional comparisons were made to test the validity of the longitudinal findings, using a sub-sample which consisted of only those programs that participated at all three time periods. All trends reported are those found to be significant in comparisons of programs participating in the three data collection periods. From the perspective of documenting longitudinal trends, restricting the sample to the programs participating in 1995, 1998, and 2001 is ideal, however because of changes in Alameda County child care programs during this time, and attrition in the longitudinal sample, it was important to augment this smaller group of programs with additional programs to document the range of programs in 2001.

8. The program response rate was 39 percent.

9. Regional data was only available for 139 of the 140 cases.

10. The Asian-American category includes Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders; the category “Other” consists of American Indian or Alaskan Native, Multiracial, and Some Other Race.

11. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF 1) 100 Percent Data. This discussion of the congruence between children’s and center teaching staff’s ethnicity in Alameda County is speculative based on the available data sources. For example, even if the ethnicity of the teacher and assistant population were identical to that of children we do not know to what extent teachers of particular ethnic groups are matched with children of their own ethnic group. Furthermore, the likelihood of children being in center-based care is not evenly distributed across various ethnic groups, so the population data about children’s ethnicity is probably different than that for children, ages 0-12 enrolled in center-based care in Alameda County. This is an important topic worthy of further research.
12. S.W. Helburn, ed., Cost, Quality, & Child Outcomes, University of Colorado at Denver, 1995. Although collected in 1993, this is the most recent national data available on the educational levels of child care teachers. There remains a need for a more current, comprehensive study documenting the salaries and education of the U.S. child care workforce.

13. Percentages include the entire U.S. labor force ages 25 and over, either employed or currently seeking employment.

14. It should be noted that we were not able to test for differences between ECE related education among the staff of publicly operated nonprofits and others because of the small sample size for this question among those program types. As was true in most analyses, unless otherwise stated, these programs were combined with other subsidized nonprofit programs.

15. Although directors did not specify what “other” training included, it might include Montessori training or informal training not asked about in the question.

16. The public school district salary range reported is the range of annual salaries offered in three separate school districts in Alameda County, Oakland, Hayward, and Sunol Glen, for the 2001–2002 school year. These salary levels exclude any stipends assigned for bilingual or special education teachers.

17. Average lowest and average highest annual salaries are reported for child care teachers. For public school teachers, the range of annual salaries is reported.

18. Unless otherwise stated, all health insurance findings relate to benefit plans offered to full-time employees.

19. Fully-paid coverage indicates health insurance coverage that is fully-paid by the employer for the employee, and may be extended for the employer to cover dependents in full or in part.

20. A more detailed study about the level of health benefits coverage available to Alameda County child care workers is available from the Alameda Alliance for Health, which commissioned a study on this topic in 1998.

21. It is possible that these programs employ only part-time staff who, depending on their hours of work, might not be legally eligible for paid breaks.

22. In some cases, teaching staff move to another child care center or family child care home, and in others, staff leave the child care field altogether. No local or national data is available at this time that follows teaching staff after they leave child care center employment.

23. Program directors were initially asked whether they were currently accredited by a professional group. If they were not currently accredited, they were asked a follow-up question to determine if they were currently seeking accreditation from NAEYC. Figure 29 represents those centers that answered this follow-up question.

24. The increase in demand for community college courses and Child Development Permits occurred between the 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 academic years, the latter being the first year in which Child Development Corps requirements were in effect for Corps participants.


26. A longitudinal evaluation of the Child Development Corps, and of two other compensation initiatives introduced at the same time, is currently being conducted by PACE (Policy Analysis for California Education), a University of California, Berkeley research group.

27. Forthcoming in 2002, Center for the Child Care Workforce, A Profile of the Child Care Workforce in San Mateo County.