

workforce development

Outside of the home, early learning teachers play the most significant role in preparing children for school. Due to the large amount of time many children spend in early learning settings, teachers play a key role in developing the physical, social and intellectual abilities of children. Nationally, approximately 35 percent of children under the age of five are enrolled in some form of non-relative early learning and care arrangement during the week.

Consequently, there is a strong correlation between the quality and consistency of the early learning staff and child outcomes. Professional education and ongoing training clearly enhance professionals' overall ability to successfully nurture and teach the children in their care. Both formal education and on-the-job training are essential tools for developing quality educators.

Unfortunately, early learning programs have a difficult time maintaining a consistent staff. For many workers, child care is an unattractive occupation because of its low wages, long hours and scarce benefits.

In Greater Kansas City, early learning teachers earn an average wage of \$8.50 per hour. They often work with children for 50 or more hours per week, and sometimes put in additional unpaid hours for shopping, cleaning and preparing activities. Qualified early learning professionals are drastically undervalued, especially when comparing their wages to other professions.

AVERAGE HOURLY WAGE COMPARISON	
Profession	Starting Wage
Parking Lot Attendant	\$8.30
Early Learning Teacher	\$8.50
Bellhop	\$10.75
Tree Trimmer	\$13.00
Animal Trainer	\$13.08
Kindergarten Teacher	\$20.38

Source: Center for the Childcare Workforce. 2004 Current Data on the Salaries and Benefits of the U.S. Early Childhood Education Workforce.

“The significance is clear. The social, emotional, educational and economic advantages from high-quality early learning programs translate to better lives for children, their families, communities and society as a whole. Yet, poor pay and benefits threaten the delivery of these very high-quality programs that can make such a dramatic difference for the nation and its children.”

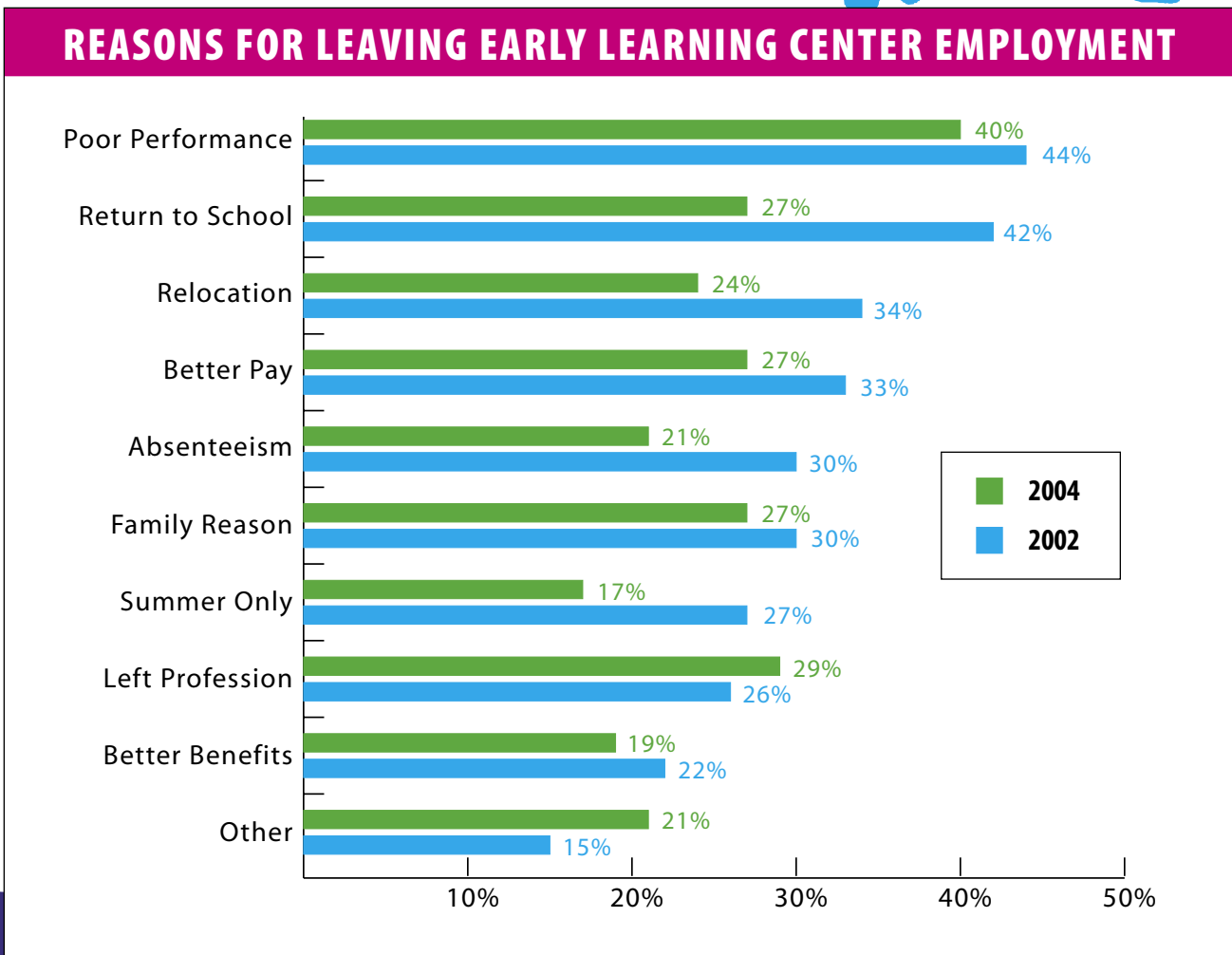
— Steve Barnett, Director of the National Institute for Early Education Research

Early learning centers reported that 20 percent of employees left their jobs in 2004. This average rate has declined in recent years and is comparable to turnover rates in educational services. Some early learning programs, however, had turnover rates in excess of 150 percent.

Turnover was highest for aides, assistant teachers and teachers. In 2004, 36 percent of aides, 24 percent of assistant teachers and 20 percent of teachers left their positions.



TURNOVER IN OTHER PROFESSIONAL SECTORS 2003	
Professional and Business Services	39.9%
Educational Services	20.8%
Government	14.4%



Workforce Development

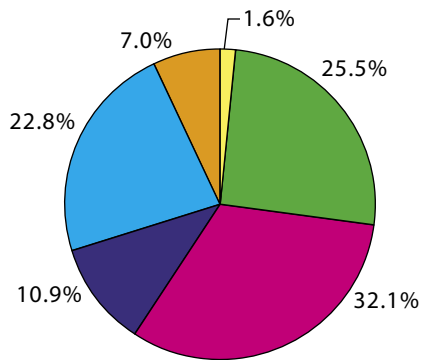
Staff Education

Improving the education of the early childhood workforce is proven to enhance the quality of early learning programs. Early childhood education and child development degree programs are designed to blend the essential nurturing overtones of learning and the engaging curriculum necessary for children to excel to their fullest capacity.

Public schools have successfully established and maintained a standardized requirement for teacher and staff credentials. However, due largely to limited budgets and nearly non-existent professional requirements, most early learning programs require no more than a high school diploma. In most instances staff in early learning programs have not had any specialized early childhood training.

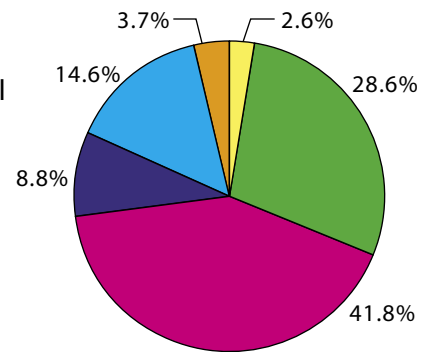
Greater Kansas City colleges and universities have created an impressive professional track for individuals wishing to pursue more specialized training or preparation. Eleven area two-year and four-year colleges offer credential and degree programs in early childhood education. Many efforts

GENERAL EDUCATION LEVELS



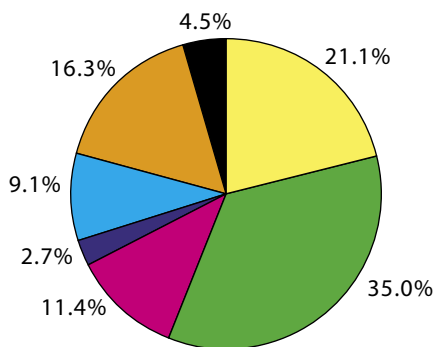
Center Teaching Staff

- = Less than high school
- = High school or GED
- = Some college
- = Associate degree
- = Bachelor degree
- = Graduate degree



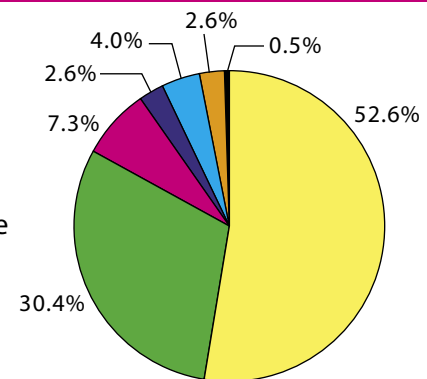
Family Providers

DEGREES OR CERTIFICATION IN EARLY LEARNING



Center Teaching Staff

- = None
- = Some college
- = CDA
- = One-year certificate
- = Associate degree
- = Bachelor degree
- = Graduate degree



Family Providers

have been made to meet the needs of early childhood professionals, including offering courses in the evening or onsite to assist students and professionals in pursuing degrees in the field. These concerted efforts have helped to increase the number of early learning and child development degree-seeking professionals. Currently, 10 percent of center staff and 13 percent of family child care providers are pursuing degrees in early learning — an increase from 9 and 12 percent respectively in 2002.

Community Response to Professional Development Needs

Many early learning professionals would like to pursue more education to enhance their skills, but the low pay rates in their profession make it difficult to afford tuition and books. Recognizing this need, the Greater Kansas City early learning community has responded with three unique programs centered on professional development: the Fern Webster Early Childhood Professional Development Fund scholarship program, the Quality Teaching for Quality Outcomes grant program, and the LINC Professional Development Scholarship.



LINC Professional Development Fund

The LINC Professional Development Fund provides center-based programs located in qualifying zip codes in Kansas City, Mo., with scholarships for teachers and directors seeking Child Development Associate (CDA) or Associate of Arts (AA) degrees in child development. The funds for this scholarship are provided through a grant from Missouri House Bill 1519 to Kansas City's Local Investment Commission (LINC).

In 2003-2004 a total of \$62,300 in scholarships were provided to more than 100 early childhood teachers and directors in Greater Kansas City. Nearly 900 credit hours in early childhood courses were paid for through the professional development fund. The majority of teachers taking these courses say they would never have enrolled had it not been for assistance the scholarship provided.

This scholarship program has been renewed for the 2004-2005 school year. Currently, approximately 50 people working in the early learning field are pursuing CDA and AA degrees at Penn Valley Community College through the program.

**Early Learning
Community Innovation:**

**LINC Professional
Development Fund**

Workforce Development

Fern Webster Early Childhood Professional Development Fund

The Fern Webster Early Childhood Professional Development Fund has been providing tuition scholarships to Greater Kansas City early educators since 1996. Assistant teachers, teachers, directors and family child care providers have taken classes at 10 different colleges and universities towards associate's and bachelor's degrees in child development or related degrees. Eligible scholars work at least 25 hours per week with children from birth to age five in the eight-county region and commit to remaining in an early education program for a period of time following graduation. Preference is provided to teachers who work in the urban core and/or work with infants and toddlers.

Program achievements since the inception of the Fern Webster Fund include:

- 580 individuals have completed over 20,000 college credit hours.
- 201 students have earned degrees under the scholarship.
- 104 are actively pursuing degrees.
- Typically, 30 students complete their degrees each year.
- The percentage of center teaching staff in Greater Kansas City with degrees in early education increased from just 8 percent in 1995 to over 30 percent in 2004.
- The percentage of family providers in Greater Kansas City with a degree in early education increased from just 2 percent in 1995 to over 19 percent in 2004.

Quality Teaching for Quality Outcomes

In 2003 the U.S. Department of Education awarded a \$2.1 million grant to the Mid-America Regional Council's Metropolitan Council on Early Learning to fund a new initiative called "Quality Teaching for Quality Outcomes."

The two-year grant provides professional development opportunities for early childhood educators employed at participating sites in Wyandotte County, Kan., and Jackson County, Mo. — counties which rank second in their respective states in terms of numbers of children under the age of five whose families have incomes below the poverty level. The grant currently serves over 100 teachers and directors at more than 35 early learning centers and homes in the two counties.

Educators participating in Quality Teaching for Quality Outcomes have access to college coursework in basic child development; curriculum training; and training in working with children with special needs, including those with learning disabilities, and those who have experienced abuse or neglect.

For more information about these workforce development programs, contact the Metropolitan Council on Early Learning at 816/474-4240 or email earlyeducation@marc.org.



Director Training

The Family Conservancy Director Training

The Family Conservancy responded to early education directors' training needs with a four-part training series based on a curriculum from the Development Corporation for Children's Business Development Center in Minneapolis, Minn. The 20-hour training sessions cover four topics: Administration and Finances; Building Positive Staff Relationships; Creating a Developmentally Appropriate Children's Program; and Leadership and Change Management. All four sessions in the series can be taken for clock hours, continuing education credit, or college credit through Kansas City Kansas Community College. In addition, the content of all trainings is connected to Kansas/Missouri core competencies and child development associate (CDA) subject areas.

To date, 53 directors have completed the training program, and 40 more are enrolled for Spring 2005. Response from participants indicates that the series met their professional development needs and they would recommend it to other directors.

Midwest WholeChild Development Group's Director's Toolbox

The Director's Toolbox, a new course developed by Midwest WholeChild Development Group's Career and Professional Development Institute, consists of a series of three modules for early learning program directors based on the work of Paula Jorde Bloom, Director of the Center for Early Childhood Leadership at National-Louis University in Wheeling, Ill.

The modules are: Leadership in Action — How Effective Directors Get Things Done; The Right Fit — Finding and Keeping the Right Staff; and Circle of Influence — Building Trust and Collaboration to Create Wonderful Places for Staff, Children and Families. Each module will contain 15 clock hours or 1.5 CEUs of credit. Students who complete all three modules will also receive an Early Learning Leadership Certificate.

Kansas/Missouri Director's Credential System

The Metropolitan Council on Early Learning is collaborating with key stakeholders throughout Kansas and Missouri to develop a Director's Credential System. The credential will provide directors with a pathway to develop the knowledge, skills and abilities they need to be successful in the early learning industry. The credential will also provide a system to recognize and document these achievements. The Director Credential will be earned through validation of accomplishments in identified areas within the core competencies for early care and education professionals. To earn the credential, directors will need to meet specific criteria in general education, teaching and learning knowledge and skills, management and leadership knowledge and skills, experience, and professional contributions. The Kansas/Missouri Director Credential will be available to any interested director who meets these specified criteria. For more information contact the MCEL at 816/474-4240.

**Early Learning
Community Innovation:**

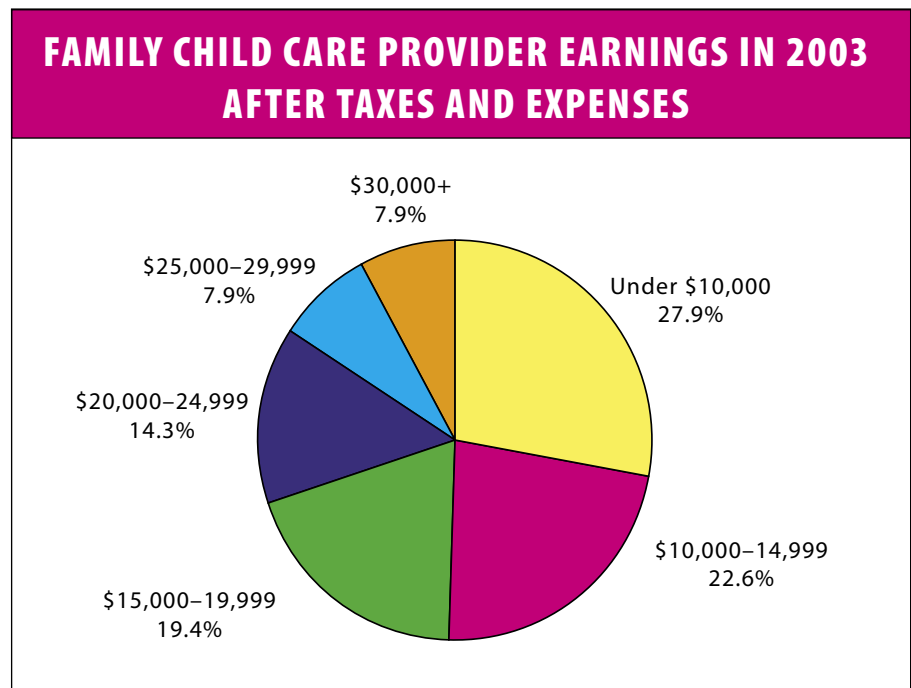
**Director Credential
Program**

Compensation and Benefits

Consistent teacher relationships are critical to the healthy development of children. Familiarity and comfort are keys to building strong social skills and developing an environment conducive to learning. Teacher consistency is a very crucial element, yet it is one of the most challenging to meet, as low salaries, modest benefits and poor training combine to lead to high turnover in early learning programs.



AVERAGE HOURLY WAGES EARNED BY CENTER STAFF		
	Average Low	Average High
Aides	\$6.60	\$7.60
Assistant teachers	\$7.30	\$8.70
Teachers	\$8.50	\$11.00
Teacher/Directors	\$10.20	\$11.90
Directors	\$14.10	\$16.00



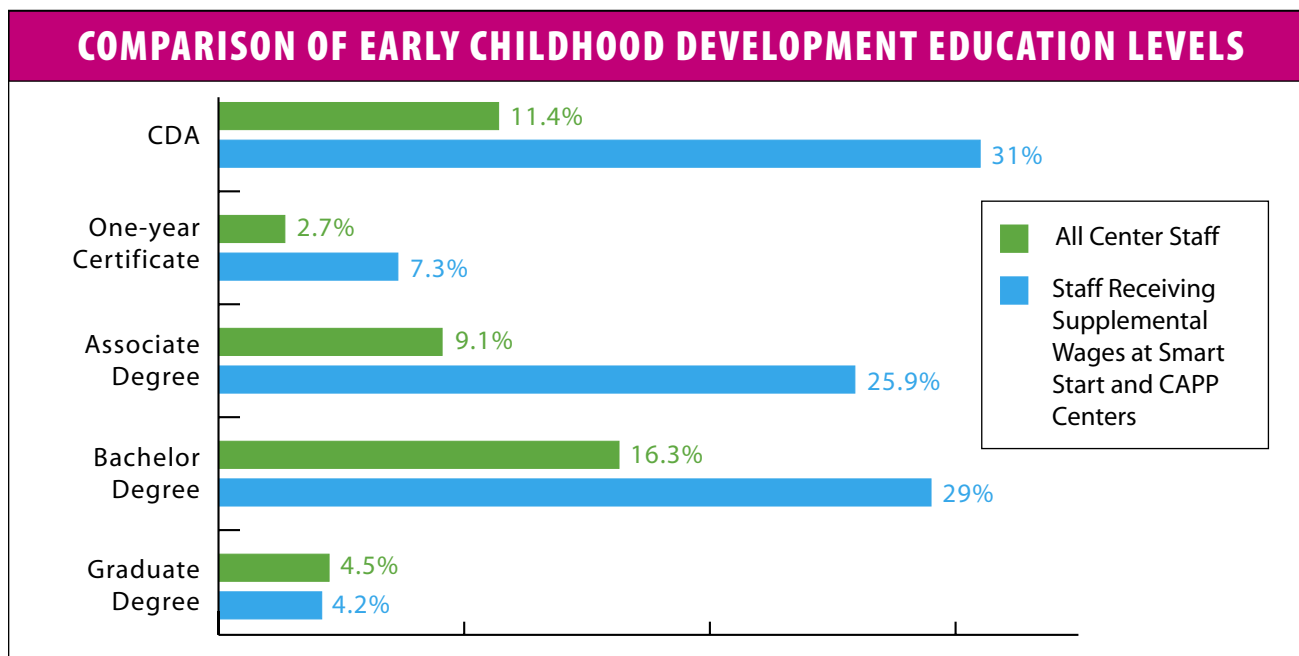
Overall, compensation for early learning professionals continues to be lower than other jobs that have fewer demands and less responsibility. The Greater Kansas City early learning community recognizes that turnover is closely tied to consistently low compensation and benefits and that in order to reverse turnover trends, compensation must increase.

Tri-County Smart Start and the Compensation Advancement Pilot Program

The Compensation Advancement Pilot Program (CAPP) and Tri-County Smart Start provide funds for supplemental wages and flexible benefits, based on position and education level, to early learning teachers in 30 centers across the metro region. The purpose of the program is to demonstrate how increased compensation of early education teachers results in improved program quality and positive outcomes for children. Participating programs have lower turnover rates and higher levels of staff education than other early learning centers in the region.

On the Kansas side of the metro area — in Johnson, Leavenworth and Wyandotte counties — the Tri-County Smart Start compensation program is funded through a Kansas State Smart Start grant. In Missouri, funding initially came from a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Early Learning Opportunities Act grant. Additional support from the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation allowed the CAPP to continue through 2004. The pilot program will end in early 2005. MCEL is evaluating the pilot's impact and seeking additional funding for continued and expanded compensation programs on the Missouri side of the region.

In June 2003, the National Association of Regional Councils honored the Mid-America Regional Council's CAPP initiative with its 2003 Achievement Award. The prestigious award is given to only one major metropolitan area regional council in the nation each year.



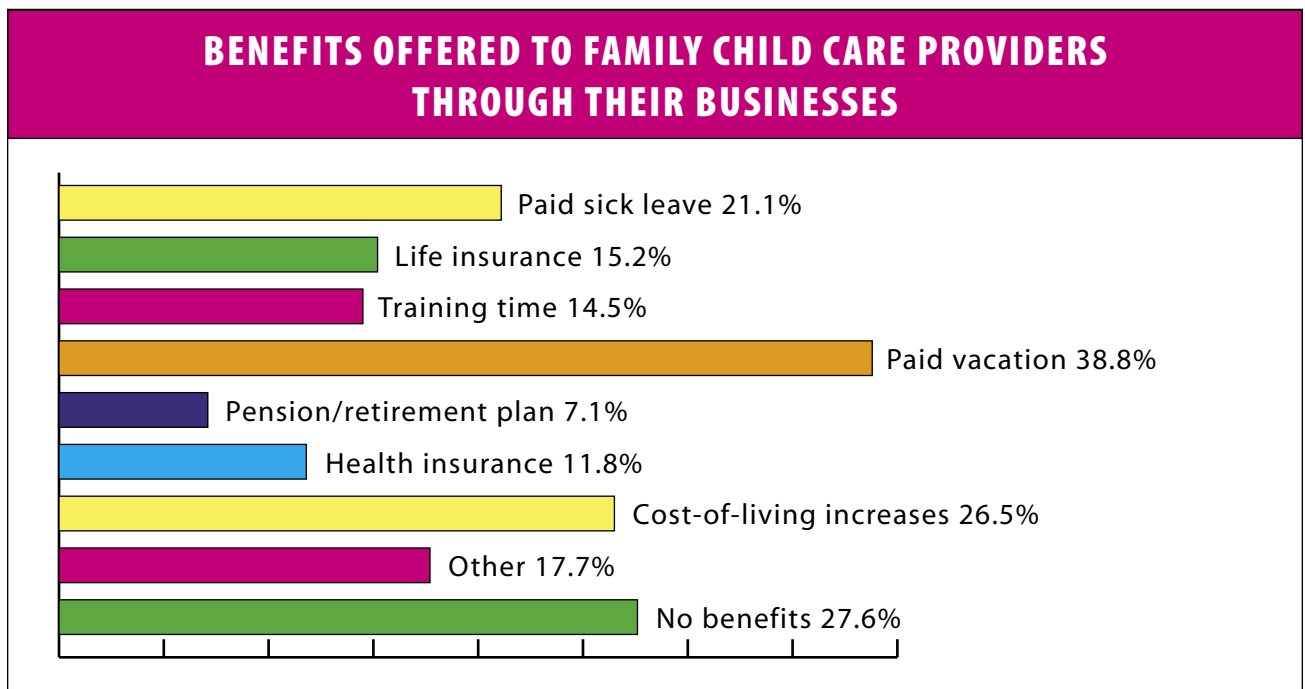
Mini-Grants for Quality Improvement

In 2004, the Tri-County Smart Start Operations Council developed a quality improvement mini-grant system. This system allows participating Smart Start centers to apply for funds that will help them implement pieces of their quality improvement plans, such as facilities improvements. With these grants, programs will be more likely to achieve higher quality and be able to provide better options for the children and families in the tri-county area. The mini-grant process is already serving as a model for replication by the Metropolitan Council on Early Learning for the other centers and family child care homes that are participating in the Quality Rating System, with funding from the Hall Family Foundation and the Francis Families Foundation.

Compensation and Benefits

Jobs in the early learning field typically offer few benefits. Overall, only 16 percent of full-time early learning center staff and only 11.8 percent of family child care providers receive health insurance benefits through their jobs. Of those who left early learning center employment in 2004, 19 percent cited the lack of benefits as their reason for leaving.

BENEFITS OFFERED TO EARLY LEARNING CENTER STAFF					
Benefits	Aides	Assistant Teachers	Teachers	Teacher/Directors	Directors
Health insurance coverage	7.4%	28.3%	45.2%	22.8%	49.6%
Paid time for onsite training	23.9%	49.3%	72.4%	38.6%	65.1%
Paid time for offsite training	22.1%	46.7%	70.6%	37.1%	66.2%
Paid vacations	13.6%	38.2%	60.3%	34.6%	62.1%
Paid holidays	17.6%	43.4%	66.2%	38.2%	69.1%
Paid sick leave	14.3%	39.3%	62.1%	34.6%	61.4%
Retirement	6.3%	25.0%	37.9%	21.3%	41.2%
Other benefits	3.7%	5.9%	7.7%	6.3%	8.1%





Early Learning Professional Associations

Early childhood professionals can participate in a number of professional associations that offer opportunities for networking, continuing education on best methods and practices in early learning, and other professional resources. The Greater Kansas City area offers several active organizations with a broad range of missions, from professional recruitment and career development to identifying needs and issues and shaping legislation.

Local Organizations

Leavenworth County Child Care Providers Coalition ● 913/682-0665

Wyandotte County Child Care Providers Coalition ● 913/321-5545 or 913/371-3625

Blue Springs Child Care Association ● 816/229-0507

Eastern Jackson County Child Care Connection ● 816/229-2259

Northland Early Education Council ● 913/342-1110

Citywide Family Child Care Providers Association ● 816/241-5534

Statewide Organizations

Child Care Provider Coalition of Kansas ● 785/256-6144

MidAmerica Association for the Education of Young Children ● 913/341-9702 ● www.gkcaeyc.org

Kansas Association for the Education of Young Children (KAEYC) ● 785/587-9785 ● www.kaeyc.org

Missouri Association for the Education of Young Children (MOAEYC) ● 573/884-3374 or Toll Free 877/296-2852 ● www.aeyc-mo.org

Kansas Head Start Association ● 913/422-1700 | khsa@kc.rr.com ● www.ksheadstart.org

Missouri Head Start Association ● 573/884-0650 ● www.moheadstart.org

National Organizations

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) ● 800/424-2460 ● www.naeyc.org

National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) ● 801/269-9338 ● www.nafcc.org

National Child Care Association (NCCA) ● 800/543-7161 ● www.nccanet.org

National Head Start Association (NHSA) ● 703/739-0875 ● www.nhsa.org

USA Child Care ● 703/709-0800 ● www.usachildcare.org